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# Top-Notch Magazine

AUG. 10<sup>th</sup> 1914

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August 10

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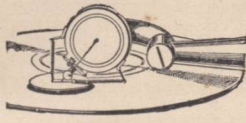
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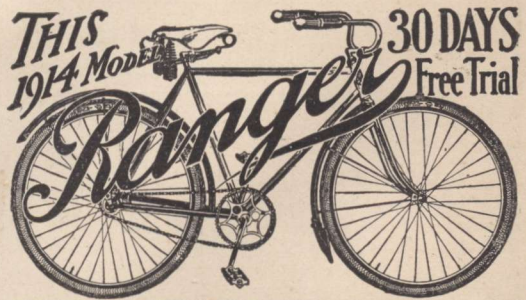


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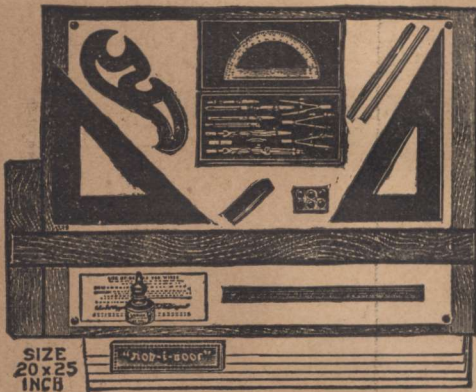
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# TOP-NOTCH MAGAZINE

VOL. XVIII

AUGUST 10, 1914

No. 1

## *The Hazard of the Film*

By *Bertram Lebhar*



(A COMPLETE NOVEL)

### CHAPTER I.

#### SLIGHTLY SINISTER.

**I**N plain view from Mr. Sig Solbaum's office window a horde of Cherokee Indians were executing a weird war dance around a white girl who was tied to a stake, in imminent peril of incineration from a bonfire which flared at her feet.

The incident annoyed Mr. Solbaum. He pressed a button on his desk. "I wish," he growled to the office boy who responded to his summons, "that you'd run out and tell those fellows to make a little less noise. Anybody'd think they were working for a phonograph company. Ask Sanderson if he can't

just as well take them somewhere else. With all the vacant lots in Westchester County to select from, I don't see why he's got to use our back yard for a prairie."

The office boy ran out and repeated this criticism to a short, chunky man in a red sweater, who held a megaphone in his right hand. As a result the savage redskins abruptly ceased their gyrations, the helpless lady was released, and the fantastic group moved rapidly away, led by the man in the red sweater, who, as he strode across the long grass, turned and glanced resentfully at an open window on the second floor of the Solbaum Film Company's studio. Nothing could anger Sam Sanderson more than to be interrupted while staging a



scene, but of course he realized that the wishes of the man who filled his pay envelope were not to be ignored.

Mr. Solbaum viewed the exodus with satisfaction, and resumed his study of the strip of gelatin in his hand, which he examined by means of a magnifying glass. He was thus engaged when the door of his office opened and an undersized man with a bald head and a cast in his left eye entered the room and stepped, with a soft, catlike tread, to Solbaum's desk.

The soft, catlike tread was a characteristic of the newcomer, Lew Lundy, the confidential secretary of the president of the Solbaum Film Company. During his five years' tenure of that position nobody connected with the concern could recall ever having heard his footfall, although his comings and goings were frequent. This weird trait had caused his business associates to bestow upon him the sobriquet of "Lightfoot Lew." The fact that his stealthiness was not confined to his feet caused everybody but his employer to regard him with suspicion.

He grinned slightly now as he glanced over Solbaum's shoulder at the strip of gelatin in his hand. "What do you think of it?" he inquired. He spoke habitually as if he were suffering from a severe cold in the throat.

"Wonderful!" the other exclaimed, an expression of mingled admiration and envy on his pudgy, slightly sinister countenance. "Simply wonderful! If the facts and figures are as you have given them to me, Lew, this thing is going to revolutionize the industry."

"The facts and figures are exactly as I have given them to you," Lundy assured him. "I have investigated most carefully. That film was colored at one-eighth of the cost of the ordinary stencil process, and the operation from start to finish took only one-tenth as long. Have you seen how it looks on the screen?"

"Not yet. What I see through the glass is good enough for me. However, I suppose I might as well take a look." He arose, and, followed by his confidential secretary, went downstairs to the "try-out room"—a miniature moving-picture theater, wherein all the films manufactured by the company were put through a "dress rehearsal" before they were sent out.

The place was deserted now. Lundy did not call in the operator. He took the fragment of film from Solbaum, and, putting it in the machine, switched off the lights and projected it upon the screen. It showed a girl gathering roses in a garden, a St. Bernard dog crouching at her feet. The roses were red, the foliage green; the girl wore a blue dress, her hair was brown, and her face and arms a natural flesh tint. The coloring of the dog was equally realistic.

"Wonderful!" Solbaum exclaimed again, gazing upon the exhibit as though fascinated.

"Natural-color photography can't produce anything like that," said the other. "This is one instance where art puts it all over nature. It's as good as the best stencil work."

"At one-eighth of the cost!" Solbaum muttered, awe in his tone. "It is marvelous! It will put the black-and-white films out of business. How much did you say the Winner concern paid for the patent rights, Lew?"

"Sixty thousand dollars!"

The president of the Solbaum Film Company sighed. "What a bargain! If the facts are as you have presented them to me, it's worth millions." He sighed again. "If only I'd seen Hinman first."

Lundy grinned. "You did see him first—and turned him down cold."

His employer scowled at this unpleasant reminder. "In the shape this idea was in then, it didn't seem worth



considering," he replied. "He admitted himself that there were lots of drawbacks that he would have to overcome before the thing could be made practical. Naturally, I sized it up as the wild dream of a rattle-brained inventor. But if only he had come to me again when he'd perfected his invention, instead of taking it to that fellow Bradford!"

A baleful glint came to his beady eyes as he mentioned the name of the president of the Winner Film Company, and there was more than mere regret and envy in his tone. Wilson Bradford and he had once been partners, and the former's withdrawal from the Solbaum Film Company had not been an amicable arrangement. It was generally known throughout the trade that before Bradford had stepped out of the firm and formed a new company of his own, he had left the mark of his big fist on his erstwhile business associate's right eye. That was several years ago, and the physical manifestations of the bruise, of course, had long since disappeared; but mentally Solbaum still carried that black eye. There were few men he hated more than Bradford, and the success of the Winner concern was a thorn in his side.

"If Hinman had sold his invention to anybody else but that man, I could stand it," he muttered.

"I know just how you feel," Lundy sympathized. "Perhaps, though," he continued, as he turned off the lamp of the projecting machine and switched on the lights of the room, "it isn't too late."

"Isn't too late! What do you mean?"

"Isn't too late for us to get control of the patent," the other explained. "I closed a deal with Hinman this morning—got him to give us an option in writing."

"Hinman!" Solbaum stared at him in astonishment. "He's dead. Been

dead six months. What's the matter with you, Lew?"

"I don't mean the inventor, of course, I'm speaking of his son. He's the man I've been dealing with. Of course, if the old boy had been alive I couldn't have done a thing. He was solid for Bradford. That fellow grubstaked him while he was working on his invention, and believed in him when you and all the other producers were jeering at his pretensions. If Hinman had lived, nobody but the Winner company could have had that patent, no matter what the circumstances. But with the son it's different. He's inherited his father's estate, but he don't recognize any sentimental obligations to Bradford. I found him strictly business, and when I pointed out to him that his father had made a fool of himself by selling the patent rights to the Winner people for a beggarly sixty thousand, I got him interested right away. I offered him seventy thousand and a small royalty, and he jumped at it like a monkey grabbing at a peanut." He produced a folded paper from his pocket. "Here's the option. I had him sign it before a notary, so as to be sure it would be binding."

Still his employer stared at him incomprehendingly. "I don't get you, Lew. What's the use of that paper? Hinman's heir has no further control of the patent. It's been bought and paid for—by Bradford."

Lundy shook his head and emitted a throaty laugh. "Bought, but not paid for," he corrected. "Bradford's buying it on the installment plan. He paid ten thousand dollars to bind the bargain, and he made another payment of ten thousand to the Hinman estate six months ago. He still owes forty thousand dollars, and he's got until the first of next December to pay it. If he don't hand over the balance by then he forfeits his right to the patent."

Solbaum gave vent to a sharp ex-



clamation. "You're sure about that, Lew?" he asked eagerly.

"I've seen the contract. There's a clause in it which provides that if the party of the second part—that's Bradford, or the Winner Film Company—doesn't pay the full amount within the time specified, the deal is to be considered off, and the ownership of the patent reverts to the party of the first part. I understand that old Hinman objected to that clause, being willing to trust Bradford for any length of time, but his lawyers insisted upon its going in, and the inventor let them have their way."

"December first!" Solbaum muttered, wrinkling his brow as if he were going through the mental process of working out a mathematical problem. "That's just six months from to-day."

"And lots of things can happen in six months," Lundy remarked pointedly. "It was that thought which made me go after the option. Bradford's been pretty successful so far, but his luck may change. Six months from now he may be down and out. I've heard of men more successful than he is suddenly going down the toboggan."

His employer nodded. "Especially when they were given a good push!" he muttered, an evil gleam in his eyes.

The other looked at him as if puzzled by this figure of speech. Solbaum paced the center aisle of the miniature theater for several minutes, his hands in his trousers pockets, his fat chin resting on his chest. Suddenly he straightened up and touched his confidential man on the shoulder. "Come back into the office, Lew," he said eagerly. "I want to have a talk with you."

That talk, which took place behind a locked door, brought a dubious grin to Lundy's face. "So that's what you meant when you spoke of a good push!" he remarked when it was over. "Well, you've given me a tall order, boss, but I'll do my best to fill it."

## CHAPTER II.

### THE COLOR OF HIS MONEY.

DANIELS, purchasing agent of the South River Railroad of New Jersey, shook his head and smiled. "That is our very lowest figure, Mr. Bradford," he said. "And if you want to put the deal through I should advise you to speak quickly, for I want to tell you that my people are not very partial to the proposition at all. Several of the directors were opposed to allowing the road to be used for such a highly sensational purpose, and I had a hard job overcoming their objections."

Wilson Bradford, president and general manager of the Winner Film Company, in whose private office the interview took place, shrugged his broad shoulders. "It seems a pile of money to pay for a bunch of scrap iron," he remarked whimsically. "However, we won't haggle about it. Get the contract drawn up as soon as possible, Daniels. Remember, in addition to furnishing us with the two locomotives and the six passenger cars, you're to give us the right of way over the trestle on the unused siding for half an hour and guarantee that we won't be interfered with by any of the employees of the line during that time."

His visitor bowed. "I'll have the agreement ready for your signature tomorrow," he promised; "but there's one other detail I must mention. We must have your check in full, in advance."

The film man frowned. "What's the matter? Isn't my credit good?" he asked.

Daniels coughed behind his hand. "Well, to be quite frank with you, Mr. Bradford, some of our directors seem to have an idea that a man who is—er—plunger enough to waste—er—to invest such a large sum of money in this manner——"

"Isn't to be trusted unless he shows the color of it!" Bradford finished the



sentence for him with a good-humored laugh. "It is very evident, my dear Daniels, that your directors don't know a whole lot about the moving-picture business. Plunger, eh! Why, I don't mind telling you, now that the deal is closed, that I expect to clear a profit of at least fifty thousand dollars on these pictures. The 'State's Rights' ought easily to bring in that much."

"If that's the case, I'm sorry I didn't soak you a little harder," the railroad man remarked jocosely.

"I've got my fingers crossed," Bradford rejoined, grinning. "However, in order that you shouldn't feel like kicking yourself, I'll admit that I'm running a certain amount of risk. Sometimes we have hard luck with the films. Last week, for instance, I sent a touring car crashing over the brink of the Palisades and, on account of an error in timing, both my camera men on the job failed to get it. We lost several hundred dollars on that scene. So you see," he continued, with another laugh, "I haven't that fifty thousand in my pocket, yet."

"Let's hope there'll be no such mishap, this time," said the railroad man. "We'll do everything in our power to help you make the thing a success. But I am compelled, Mr. Bradford, to insist upon payment in advance."

"All right," the other acquiesced easily. "We won't quarrel over such a trifling detail. I'll have the check ready for you as soon as the contract is signed. Mind you," he added, as he shook hands with his visitor, "I shall expect you people to consider this matter strictly confidential. Not a whisper about it must get out until after the affair has been pulled off. If our intentions were to become known, some of our competitors might try to horn in and steal our thunder. I wouldn't feel exactly tickled pink to go to the trouble and expense of staging this spectacle, and then have some camera men from

a rival concern come along and get the benefit of my investment."

"You can rely upon our discretion," Daniels assured him.

As his visitor went out, Bradford stepped into the big, glass-roofed studio which adjoined his office. A score of men and women, their faces a ghastly green under the concentrated glare of the powerful lights, were enacting an elaborate ballroom scene. From the "side lines" Wynne Lexington, the director, was shouting instructions at them and gesticulating wildly.

"How did you like it, Mr. Bradford?" the latter inquired, his manner suddenly becoming mild as the camera ceased purring and the lights were switched off. "I've been having a lot of trouble with that scene, but I think we've got it down pretty good, now."

"Couldn't be better, old man," said the other. Bradford was not the kind of employer who deemed it a mistake to praise his subordinates to their faces; which was one of the reasons why nearly every man and woman who worked for him held him in a regard which amounted almost to affection.

"By the way, Wynne," he continued, lowering his voice, "you may be interested to know that I've just closed that deal with the railroad people. Weather permitting, the big show will take place at three-thirty next Friday afternoon. If you've got a few minutes, now, I'd like you to come into the office and go over the scenario with me."

The two men were animatedly discussing the details of what, in their sanguine opinion, was to be "the biggest thriller ever put across," when an office boy interrupted them by bringing in a visiting card.

Bradford's face lighted up as he glanced at the name engraved on the card. "Is he alone?" he inquired.

"No; there's a lady with him—a young one," the boy replied.

"I'll go over the rest of this with you



later, Wynne," Bradford said hurriedly. Thrusting the scenario into a drawer of his desk, he left the room with an impetuosity which brought a knowing smile to the face of the director.

An old man with grizzled hair and a tanned, weather-beaten countenance, and a blond, blue-eyed girl of twenty, were waiting in the outer office. Bradford shook hands cordially with the former and greeted the latter with an ardor which caused the clerks on the other side of the mahogany barrier to exchange grins of the same ilk as the smile which had come to the face of Lexington. Although they knew their boss was always genial, they could not help drawing their own conclusions from his present demeanor.

"We've come to see that wonderful machine of yours, Mr. Bradford," the old man announced. "June wouldn't give me any peace until I'd accepted your invitation."

"Not only the machine," the girl corrected him, blushing; "we want to see the whole plant, Mr. Bradford. I'm anxious to see a photo play in the making. I hope you haven't regretted the impulse which made you ask us to come? I know that visitors are looked upon as nuisances in moving-picture studios."

"Not all visitors," Bradford assured her fervently. "The latchstring of the Winner studio is always out for you and your grandfather, Miss Channing. I can't tell you how much I appreciate this honor. I was afraid you weren't really serious when you promised to come."

"Serious!" Her grizzled companion chuckled. "She's been talking about nothing else ever since. You see, Mr. Bradford, June has a particular reason for being interested in your business. She——"

"Now, grandpa, I asked you not to mention that," the girl interrupted him, biting her lip.

"Excuse me, my dear, I forgot," the old man apologized. "Still, I don't see why you should keep it a secret. Mr. Bradford might be able to——" She cut him short by laughingly putting her hand over his mouth.

Bradford would have given a whole lot to know his fair visitor's particular reason for being interested in his business; but, observing her embarrassment, he changed the subject by inviting them to come inside and begin their tour of inspection. "You've chosen a good day for your visit," he said. "We're going to make a trick picture, this afternoon, and I think you'll be amused to see how easily the magical effects shown on the screen are produced."

It took some time to show the visitors over the plant. Bradford derived so much enjoyment from the experience that he would have spun it out even longer, if June's grandfather had not reminded her of an engagement which compelled them to leave.

"I hope you'll come again," the film man said eagerly, as he accompanied them outside, and assisted the girl into the limousine which was waiting for them outside the studio door. "There's lots more that I didn't get a chance to show you."

"We surely will," she promised. "We've had a delightful time. That trick picture was a revelation to me. I've often watched the men and women on the screen walk across the ceiling like flies, and wondered how the miracle was worked." She laughed, a rippling, silvery laugh which struck Bradford as being the sweetest music he had ever heard; and he flattered himself that he possessed a musical ear. "I'm ashamed to say that I never suspected that the thing was done by the simple expedient of inverting the scenery," she continued, "with the chandelier fastened to the floor, and the chairs and tables nailed to the ceiling, upside down. Wasn't it interesting, grandpa?"



"Very," the old man agreed enthusiastically. "But what I'd particularly like to see, Mr. Bradford, is an outdoor picture being made."

Bradford hesitated. Several times during their visit he had been on the point of telling them of the big thriller which he had under way, and of inviting them to witness it; but each time he had cautiously refrained. Past experience had taught him that it was bad policy to have outsiders present at the production of such important scenes. They were apt to get in the way, and to bother him by asking questions at a time when it was necessary to give all his attention to his work.

But now, he gazed wistfully at June Channing's pretty face and threw discretion to the winds. "Have you any engagement for next Friday afternoon?" he inquired. "We're going to do something particularly big out in the open, then."

"Oh, what is it?" June cried eagerly.

"It's—well, I won't tell you about it now, but if you and your grandfather could spare the time, Miss Channing, you'd see something well worth seeing."

"We'll try to come," said the old man. "Thanks for the invitation, Mr. Bradford."

"There won't be any try about it—we'll surely come," his granddaughter announced. "I wouldn't miss it for worlds." She held out her little gloved hand, and allowed it to linger in the grasp of Bradford's big fingers a trifle longer than the duration of a conventional handshake. "Au revoir—until next Friday afternoon," she said.

"Be sure to be here at one sharp," he called after them, as the automobile started. "We'll have to be off by then and won't be able to wait for you."

"We'll come on time," she called back to him, waving her hand from the window of the limousine.

Bradford stood watching the car until it was out of sight, so wrapped in his

thoughts that he failed to observe an undersized little man with a cast in his left eye. The latter was now walking rapidly away, his feet moving over the flagstones in uncanny silence; but during Bradford's conversation with the occupants of the automobile, he had stood close by, eagerly straining his ears to catch all that he could.

### CHAPTER III.

#### BRADFORD'S THRILLER.

A BIG gray touring car containing half a dozen young men with bulging muscles and low foreheads drew up at the curbstone a block away from the Winner studio shortly after noon the following Friday. The chauffeur glanced at a scrap of paper in his hand. "This is the place," he announced, speaking with the accents of the Bowery. "Our orders are to wait here till he comes."

"Here's the little runt now," one of the group exclaimed, as Lew Lundy appeared from around the corner. The latter stepped up to the car, looked its occupants over with a critical eye, and grinned appreciatively.

"I guess you'll do, boys," he commented hoarsely. "You look like a bunch who could make a lot of trouble."

"If any guy doubts it, let him start something," one of the young men remarked beligerently.

Lundy's grin widened. "There probably won't be anything doing for a couple of hours," he said. "Just hang around here until I give you the word to move."

He retraced his steps and rejoined a slim, lantern-jawed man with a pallid complexion, who was concealed in a dark doorway directly opposite the main entrance of the Winner studio. This man, who was known to his associates as "Spindle" Carson, was a former assistant director of the Solbaum Film Company. The excessive



pallor of his countenance was due to the fact that he had only recently completed a period of confinement in a grim, gray building a short distance up the river, his stay therein being the result of an unauthorized attempt on his part to derail a slow freight train in order to provide the material for a sensational film. Since his incarceration the Solbaum concern, appreciating his reckless disposition and his disregard for other people's rights, had employed his talents in various ways; and it had occurred to Lew Lundy that he would be a valuable assistant in the carrying out of the delicate task which his chief had set him.

As the pair stood in the doorway, watchfully waiting, they saw a limousine car stop across the street, and a girl and an old man alight and enter the studio. "Peach!" Carson commented, eying the girl critically. "Who is she, Lew?"

"I haven't been able to find out her name yet," Lundy replied. "She and the old boy are friends of Bradford's. He invited them down to see the big picture made."

"What kind of a picture is it going to be?" the other inquired curiously.

Lundy shrugged his shoulders. He was not trying to be evasive. He was as much in the dark as his companion as to the nature of Bradford's contemplated thriller. All that he had been able to glean was that the Winner company was going out somewhere to do something particularly big. He hoped, and confidently expected, however, to have more detailed information concerning the project before that afternoon was over.

A motor omnibus arrived at the studio a little later, and men and women came out of the building and, chattering and laughing, climbed into the big vehicle.

"Evidently it isn't going to be a costume piece," Carson remarked, observ-

ing that the members of the company wore their street clothes. "What the deuce are they bringing out now?" he continued, as several men came out of the studio carrying stretchers, on which reposed still, ghastly-looking forms.

"Dummies, of course," Lundy muttered. "Guess it's some kind of disaster they're going to do. Those figures look like dead and wounded."

The chauffeur of the motor bus started to crank up his engine. Lundy's companion called his attention to this. "They're going to start in a minute," he whispered. "Hadn't we better go and tell those fellows to get ready?"

"There's no hurry," Lundy replied coolly.

The big car started to move. Bradford, accompanied by Ruth Channing and her grandfather, came out of the studio and entered the limousine, which rolled off in the wake of the other automobile. Still Lundy, greatly to Carson's astonishment, remained in the doorway.

"They're turning the corner," he cried excitedly. "They'll be out of sight in a minute. If we don't want to lose them, Lew, isn't it about time we started to get after them?"

"There's no hurry," the little man said again. He walked slowly across the street, stooped, and picked up the stump of a cigarette that was lying in the gutter. It seemed to interest him greatly. He studied it attentively for a few seconds; then he put it in his pocket, and turned and beckoned to the man in the doorway.

They went around the corner to where the gray touring car and its cargo of low-browed huskies was standing. "Do you know the way to South End, New Jersey?" Lundy inquired of the chauffeur.

"Sure; I used to court a girl out there."

"Well, that's our next stop," Lundy announced, as he and Carson seated



themselves beside the driver. "You needn't try to break any speed records, though. That moving van of theirs can't go very fast; so we've got plenty of time."

But half an hour later, as they rolled along a dusty Jersey road and caught sight of the Winner party ahead of them, he instructed the chauffeur to put on full speed. "If we pass them it's less likely to make them nervous than if we hang on their heels," he explained. In order to make sure that he wouldn't be recognized by Bradford, who knew him well, he covered the upper part of his face with a pair of motoring goggles. At his suggestion, Carson, who was also known to some of the members of the other party, took the same precaution.

They arrived at South End twenty minutes ahead of the Winner party, and, leaving the gray car, they all concealed themselves in an old barn which commanded a view of the main street of the quiet little town.

From this hiding place they observed the arrival of the big motor omnibus and the limousine. They saw the occupants of these vehicles alight and proceed on foot up a steep hill, the summit of which overlooked a tall railroad trestle.

"Guess they're going to do a train picture," Carson remarked.

"It looks that way," said Lundy. "Unless I'm greatly mistaken, that's the same trestle we used last spring for our train-robber film." Leaving their hiding place, he walked across a vacant lot to the street, and, strolling past the Winner company's deserted omnibus, stooped and picked up something which lay in the gutter.

"That's the second cigarette stump I've seen you pick up this afternoon, Lew," said Carson curiously. "What's the idea? Ain't going into the snuff business, are you?"

"Not exactly," the other replied.

"It's just a hobby of mine." He dropped the cigarette end into his pocket. "Go back to those other fellows, Carson, and tell them not to come out until they hear from me. I'm going for a short walk."

He returned to the barn a few minutes later. "I've found out what they're going to do," he announced. "It's a corking good stunt. They're going to send two real trains crashing into each other, on the trestle. A head-on collision of two powerful locomotives, each drawing three passenger cars, and running at full speed. Some picture, eh, Carson?"

"Peach!" the other agreed. "I'd like to see the crash. I've often wondered whether I'd ever be lucky enough to be an eyewitness to a real smash-up. Say! when it comes to realism, you've got to hand it to that fellow Bradford, eh, Lew? What a pity that we didn't bring a camera man along," he mourned. "We might have got in on the picture, too."

Lundy shook his head. "If we did we couldn't use it. Bradford would go to court and get out an injunction restraining us."

"But where do we fit in, boss?" one of the low-browed, husky young gentlemen inquired. "You said the game was for us to come down here and break up the scene. Well, what do you want us to do? You don't expect us to go up on that trestle and hold back them engines, do you?"

"No; I don't expect you to do that," Lundy assured him. "Fact is, when I hired you boys for this job, I didn't know exactly what was coming off. I supposed it was to be a different sort of scene—one which you could ruin by butting into the picture and starting a rough-house. Those tactics wouldn't quite fit the present situation. However," he added optimistically, "I guess we'll be able to find something for you



fellows to do, before the afternoon is over."

Carson whispered a suggestion in his ear which made him grin dubiously. "We might try it," he said, "but we'll see first if we can't find some way a little less risky. I don't believe in taking unnecessary chances."

He produced a pair of field glasses and through them surveyed the group on the hill. Evidently the collision was to be filmed before any posing was done, for the entire company had settled down under some trees, a short distance behind the four camera men who, stationed as near as possible to the trestle, were focusing their lenses upon the structure.

Suddenly Lundy jumped up. "I've got it!" Carson heard him mutter.

"Got what, Lew?" the latter inquired anxiously.

Lundy handed him the field glasses. "Take a look at those camera men. See that fence to the right of them? See that signboard on the gate? Well, read what's on it, and you'll get my idea."

With the aid of the glasses Carson had no difficulty in reading the notice on the gate, but when he had done so he continued to look bewildered, until Lundy explained the plan he had in mind. Then his face lighted up, and he slapped the little man enthusiastically on the back.

"Lew," he exclaimed admiringly, "you're a genius. When it comes to generalship, old scout, Napoleon W. Bonypart, himself, had nothing on you."

## CHAPTER IV.

### BUTTING IN.

I WOULDN'T have missed this for worlds," June Channing said enthusiastically, as she sat on a camp stool under a tree, with the members of the Winner company grouped about her. "But aren't you very extravagant, Mr. Bradford, to destroy two real trains

just for a picture? Couldn't you have done it in some other way? After seeing that trick picture made in the studio, the other day, I should imagine that you could get the effect of a collision without actually wrecking the trains."

"Yes; it could be done in another way," Bradford informed her, smiling. "In fact, there are several ways of going about it. We could use two toy trains, for instance, and then enlarge the negatives to the proper scale, afterward. That's the way some companies manage when the scenario calls for a collision. Others construct their trains out of wood and canvas and push them into each other. You'd be surprised how well even that device looks when it appears on the screen."

"Then why didn't you go about it that way?" June demanded reproachfully. "Think of the money you might have saved!"

Bradford laughed. "Yes; I could save many dollars by faking the scene," he admitted. "But I couldn't get the big effect I'm looking for. After all, Miss Channing, there's a lot of difference between a fake and the real thing. You don't get the colossal crash, the twisted steel, the clouds of scalding steam, by using toy trains or canvas dummies—at least, you don't get them the way we're going to get them to-day." His handsome face glowed with enthusiasm. "And the press publicity ought to help us to sell a lot of films." He laughed again. "Don't you worry about my being extravagant. If the pictures come out all right I'll—well, I assure you I don't exactly expect to lose money on the production."

"And the pictures will come out all right?" the girl asked.

"If they don't it won't be our fault," he replied. "We've done our best to guard against mishaps. The railroad people have had their experts figure the thing out so that the locomotives will



come together in the center of the trestle; but, anticipating the possibility of an error in timing, we've guarded against the danger of having the big smash occur out of focus of the cameras. As you can see, we've four camera men on the job. We don't usually use more than one or two, but with a film as expensive as this, it's best to take no chances."

At the screech of a locomotive whistle in the distance, June jumped to her feet, and a ripple of excitement went through the group. "Here they come, now!" the girl cried breathlessly.

"Not yet," said Bradford. "That's probably one of the trains advancing to the field of battle, but it'll halt half a mile from here. The other train will do the same thing. They won't start again until the pistol is fired." He extended his hand to her. "I'll have to leave you, now, Miss Channing. I've got to give those camera men a few words of final instruction."

As he moved away he passed a jolly trio consisting of Dakota Pearson, the leading lady—who, in private life, was Mrs. Wynne Lexington—Buntz Bates, the Winner company's stout comedian, and Charles Oglivie, the leading man. They were sitting on the grass, chuckling over a letter which Miss Pearson had received in the mail, that morning, from an Iowa farmer who had fallen in love with her face on the screen. Such missives were no novelty to her—she received about a dozen every day; but this one she found particularly amusing. The honest Iowan urged her to abandon her film career and marry him, assuring her that she would have nothing to do except feed the hogs, help with the plowing, attend to the housekeeping, and bring up the eleven children left him by a previous matrimonial venture.

Bradford paused beside this group. "Either of you fellows got a cigarette?" he inquired.

"Try one of these," said the leading man, offering his morocco case.

"Thanks," said Bradford, helping himself. "Your monogram on them, eh! Lordy, old man, but you're getting classy!"

Oglivie smiled. "When's the big crash coming off, Mr. Bradford? We're getting feverishly impatient."

"It'll be all over in another ten minutes," Bradford replied. "Take my advice, folks, and enjoy your breathing spell while you've got it. After the steam has cleared from the wreck there'll be plenty for you all to do. We're going to put you inside a burning coach, Miss Pearson, and have Charlie rescue you and carry you, unconscious, the full length of the trestle."

"Fine!" the leading lady approved enthusiastically.

As Bradford walked over to the camera men the two powerful locomotives, each drawing a train of three passenger coaches, could be seen in the distance, advancing slowly toward the battle ground. Each came to a stop half a mile from the nearest end of the trestle, and stood snorting and quivering as if it had sensed the impending combat, and was eager for the fray.

Director Lexington and two officials of the railroad stepped up to Bradford. "All ready, sir, whenever you give the word," one of the latter announced.

"Just a second!" Bradford exclaimed, as a happy thought came to him. He hurried over to where June was sitting. "How would you like to give the signal for them to start, Miss Channing?" he inquired.

The girl's blue eyes sparkled. "Do you really mean it!" she cried delightedly. "I can't tell you how much I'd appreciate the honor, Mr. Bradford. Why, it'd be better than christening a battleship!"

Bradford laughed and took from his pocket a small revolver. "Don't be afraid of it," he said. "It contains only



blanks. To avoid mistakes we've arranged to fire two shots. When you pull the trigger the first time, it will be a signal to the drivers to stand ready. When you fire again, they will start."

Taking the gun from him, June advanced a few steps toward the foreground, her fair face flushed with excitement. She glanced at Bradford and, receiving a nod from him, held the weapon high above her head and pulled the trigger. As the report rang out a shrill scream came from both locomotives—a scream which seemed to the people watching like an expression of defiance and rage.

Everybody except Bradford stood still. He rushed over to the camera men. "All ready, boys?" he inquired. Then turned toward June. "All right, Miss Channing," he shouted. "Let 'em come!"

As the girl pulled the trigger, the driver of each engine opened wide the throttle and jumped from the cab. The two iron monsters came roaring toward the trestle, their funnels belching sparks and thick volumes of black smoke. And as they leaped forth to the fray, the four camera men calmly began to turn their cranks.

Just then, a gate in a fence to the right of the camera squad flew open, and six young men, seemingly in a state of great terror, rushed out, closely pursued by five angry billy goats. The panic-stricken group collided with Solinger, the nearest camera man, with a force which sent both him and his machine sprawling.

Bradford framed his mouth for a shout of warning, but the only sound that came from him was an involuntary grunt as he was swept off his feet by a tempestuous attack in the rear from one of the goats. Perkins, another camera man, went down at the same time, the victim of another of the infuriated animals, and before Bradford could scramble to his feet—which didn't

take very long—the two remaining photographers were rolling down the slope, bowled over by the group of fleeing young men, who fled in their mad haste like a herd of stampeding cattle.

The five huge, shaggy billy goats who had wrought this havoc, their beards bristling, their eyes glinting hatred of the human race, then turned their attention to the crowd in the background. Panic reigned. Women screamed in terror. Some of the men sought safety by climbing trees. Others, more valiant, resisted the onslaught of the horned furies with sticks and stones. Buntz Bates, the stout comedian, prominent among these heroes, received a blow from a four-legged battering-ram which sent him to the grass for the count. Billy Tuesday, as intrepid in real life as on the reels, had all the breath knocked out of him while intervening between Miss Dakota Pearson and the biggest specimen of the goat family he had ever seen.

Amid the ensuing confusion the two trains on the trestle met with a mighty crash. The cars leaped from the track. The locomotives telescoped. Showers of broken metal mingled with clouds of hissing steam. Angry flames spurted from the wreckage.

It was a thrilling spectacle, and it would have made a wonderful picture. But, although the camera men recovered their balance and their presence of mind with astonishing alertness, and sought desperately to right their overturned machines, not one of them was in time. The great smash-up went unfilmed. Bradford's investment was a total loss.

## CHAPTER V.

### NOT LIKE HATING.

MR. SIG SOLBAUM laughed until the tears rolled down his fat cheeks as he listened to the interesting story which his confidential secretary



told him. "It was a master stroke, Lew!" he said. "I'd have given a whole lot to be there to see it. How on earth did you come to think of such an ingenious scheme?"

Lundy grinned. "It was that sign on the gate which suggested the idea to me. When I looked through the field glasses and read: 'Warning! Keep this gate closed. Goats inside are dangerous,' it came to me like a flash that here was a better way of going about the job than by using that East Side gang I'd brought along with me.

"You see, boss," he continued, "I knew those goats and what they were capable of. It wasn't the first time I had dealings with them. Last spring we used that same trestle for a train-robber film, and I happened to be along with the outfit. While we were rehearsing, one of the men opened that gate, and what those nannies did to us then was sufficient to convince me that they had a butting average which made all other goats look like a lot of amateurs. I'd forgotten all about that experience, but as soon as I glimpsed the signboard it came back to me, and I realized my opportunity."

"Experience is a great teacher," said Solbaum, and laughed again. Then, suddenly, he became serious. "I, too, have some good news, Lew," he announced, lowering his voice and leaning forward in his chair. "I've been making some inquiries regarding the state of Bradford's finances, and the information I have gleaned is decidedly encouraging. He isn't nearly as prosperous as the trade in general supposes. In fact, I understand he is pretty close to the ragged edge. He's been stretching his credit to the breaking point, lately. Last week, I understand, he had difficulty in meeting his pay roll."

"If that's the case," said the other, "that expensive black eye I handed him

to-day must have put him out of business."

"If not quite that, at least we can be sure it's got him gasping for breath," Solbaum declared with a malicious smile. "Keep up the good work, Lew, and we'll have him on the rocks before he's many weeks older."

A shadow crossed the confidential secretary's face. "I'm not so sure of that," he remarked anxiously. "There's one thing I've discovered that doesn't look good to me: Bradford had a couple of guests with him this afternoon—an old man and a girl. The same pair visited him at the studio, the other day. He seems to be pretty chummy with them. The first time I saw them, it seemed to me that their faces were familiar; but I couldn't place them. This afternoon, however, I managed to get a line on them. The old man was Captain Zeke Channing, and the girl was his granddaughter. You've heard of Captain Channing, of course? He's the old retired deep-sea skipper whom the newspapers made such a fuss about, a few years ago, when he went down into Wall Street and cleaned up a fortune. To-day he's reported to be worth half a million."

Solbaum frowned. "Well, suppose he is?" he demanded impatiently. "Just because you've seen him visit the Winner studio a couple of times, Lew, we don't have to take it for granted that he's going to put money into Bradford's business."

Lundy shrugged his shoulders. "Maybe not—only I happen to know that he's interested in that patent—"

"Financially interested?" the other interrupted him apprehensively.

"No; I don't think it's gone that far—yet. But I was hanging around outside the Winner studio, this afternoon, when the crowd came back, and I heard Captain Channing, when he parted with Bradford, invite him to call at the house some evening and tell him



'more about that wonderful film-coloring machine.' We can be sure Bradford won't lose any time taking advantage of that invitation, and if he don't persuade the old boy to invest a hundred thousand or so in the Winner company, he's not as smooth as I've always given him credit for being. Especially," Lundy added, "as he'll probably have the girl's influence to help him."

"The girl's influence?" repeated Solbaum.

"I mean Miss June Channing. I was watching her and Bradford this afternoon out at the train-wrecking party, and from the way she acted when he was around—well, it was plain to be seen that she don't exactly hate him. I understand the captain is very fond of his granddaughter, and if he thought that it would add to her happiness to loan Bradford money, I reckon he'd do it, even if he wasn't interested in the invention on his own account."

Solbaum got up from his desk and paced the full length of the office several times, his hands thrust in his trousers pockets, his chin resting on his chest. Suddenly he stopped short. "I believe, Lew," he said, "that Captain Channing still has the old ship on which for twenty years he sailed the seven seas. I remember reading a story about it in one of the Sunday papers, a few weeks ago."

Lundy nodded. "It's a three-masted schooner. He's got her moored in the Erie Basin. I understand the weather-beaten old hulk isn't fit for anything except the bone yard, but the old man holds on to her for sentiment's sake."

Solbaum's beady eyes twinkled. "You might go and see him, to-morrow morning, Lew, and ask him for permission to use the schooner in a picture. Explain to him that we won't harm her. It won't be necessary even to take her from her moorings. All we want is the

privilege of posing our company aboard her."

"I guess I can manage that all right," said Lundy, with a puzzled air. "But what's the idea, boss?"

"It will give us a chance to get acquainted with the captain," Solbaum explained. "Of course you'll invite him to come and see the picture made, and be sure to ask his granddaughter, too. They seem to be interested in the making of motion pictures, so I've no doubt they'll accept. And if we can get them that far," he continued, "I guess it won't be difficult to persuade them to come up here, afterward, and look our plant over."

"And what then?" Lundy inquired, his manner showing that he was still puzzled.

His employer smiled mysteriously. "After Captain Channing has looked our plant over, Lew, I'll be willing to wager a box of fifty clear Havanas against a Pennsylvania stogie that not a dollar of his money goes into the Winner concern."

"You expect he'll want to invest with us instead?" ventured Lundy. "Is that the idea, boss?"

"Decidedly not," Solbaum replied emphatically. "I don't want any of the captain's money. You ought to know, Lew, that we don't need any additional capital. No; that's not the idea at all."

"Then you're wrong to knock Bradford to him?"

"Wrong again, Lew. I don't intend to say a word against Bradford. That wouldn't be good policy. I'm simply going to show the old man over our plant, and let him form his own conclusions. But," he continued, chuckling at his secretary's bewilderment, "perhaps I ought to explain that our plant, when he sees it, won't be quite the same as it is, now. There will be—er—something added."

He proceeded to make Lundy acquainted with the nature of the con-



templated addition. "Great idea!" exclaimed Lundy at last. "And to think that a little while ago you were handing it to me for thinking of that goat stunt! Boss, when it comes to schemes, I'm a piker alongside of you."

## CHAPTER VI.

### A MATTER OF JUDGMENT.

THE informaion which Solbaum had received regarding the state of Bradford's finances was not misleading. For some time past the president and sole proprietor of the Winner Film Company had been sledding on pretty thin ice. A damage suit resulting from the accidental infringement of a copyright had gone against him. The foundering of a steamer which was carrying an original set of South American films which had cost him a small fortune to produce had been another heavy blow to him—and there had been several other untoward incidents. The phenomenal luck with which he had started his career as an independent producer seemed to have deserted him at last.

But Bradford was not the sort of man to wilt under adversity. It is no exaggeration to say that he was not even worried concerning the outlook. He had supreme confidence in himself and the future possibilities of the Winner Film Company.

Hinman's wonderful device for coloring films would, he felt, bring him big returns. Although the apparatus had been installed in his office for several months, thus far he had sent out only two films which had been tinted by the new process. There were technical reasons why he had not as yet made more use of the invention. The results on these two releases had been more than encouraging. The exhibitors had received the innovation with an enthusiasm which convinced him that he had a gold mine in the patent. True,

he did not own the invention yet, but he had no doubt of his ability to raise the money for its purchase within the time specified in the contract.

With the expectation of cleaning up a lot of money in a little time, he was planning to invest every dollar he had and all that he could borrow in a series of big "special features" which he would sell on the "State's Rights" plan: Each of these was to be thrilling and elaborate enough to justify the proprietors of the moving-picture houses which exhibited them, in doubling the price of admission. The expense of producing such spectacular reels would be great; but, as he had told Daniels, the railroad man, the profits were likely to be enormous.

The train collision was to have furnished the big scene of the first of these ambitious ventures, and the fact that it had proved a fiasco was a heavy blow to him, for he had figured on putting the money he made on this film into the productions that were to follow.

Nobody would have suspected from his demeanor, however, how hard he had been hit by the failure of his camera men to film the costly smash-up. It was characteristic of him to be cheerful when there was least reason for it. On the trip back to the studio he was the most jolly of all the disappointed company, and seemed to see only the humorous side of the situation.

His gameness made a great impression upon Captain Channing and June. "That fellow's a good loser," said the old man to his granddaughter, after they had parted with Bradford at the studio door.

"Indeed, yes," June responded with enthusiasm. "I don't know another man who wouldn't have lost his temper under such trying circumstances. It was really splendid, the calmness and good humor which he displayed. It is such tests as that which bring out a man's real character," she added softly.



Her grizzled companion took a more prosaic view of the matter. "There must be big profits in that business," he remarked meditatively, after a pause. "When a man can see all that money go bang right in front of his nose, and treat it as if it was a joke, he must be raking in the shekels hand over fist. I wonder if he could use a partner," he muttered, after another pause. "I wouldn't mind having a finger in that pie, myself."

"Why don't you ask him?" June suggested eagerly. The prospect of having her grandfather associated in business with Wilson Bradford was by no means disagreeable to her.

"Perhaps I will," the captain replied. "I had that in mind when I asked him to call and tell me more about that wonderful machine of his. It looks to me as if he's got a mighty good thing, there."

"I wonder if he'll call," said June wistfully.

"If he doesn't I'll look him up again," said the old man. He was always on the alert for opportunities to make promising investments.

It was not necessary, however, for him to renew his invitation to Bradford. This young man was not in the habit of letting any grass grow under his feet, and that same evening he rang the doorbell of the trim, brownstone house in a quiet, uptown side street which had been the retired seaman's first purchase after he had "struck it rich" in Wall Street. Here, since the death of her parents, June Channing had made her home.

But it was not to discuss his film-coloring machine with the captain that Bradford had called there. This was made evident by the expression of disappointment which came to his face when the maid informed him that Miss June was out, but that Captain Channing was at home.

"I guess I won't disturb the captain,"

he said awkwardly. "I'll just leave my card and——" But, as luck would have it, June's grandfather happened to cross the hall at this moment and, seeing the visitor, welcomed him effusively.

"Come right in, my boy," said the old man. "June has gone out to see her dressmaker," he continued, with a shrewd suspicion as to the motive of the film man's visit, "but she'll be back presently. Glad you came. Fact is, I particularly wanted to see you on a matter of business. I know you didn't come here to talk business," he added with a quizzical smile, offering his guest a chair, "but I've got a proposition to make you which may be to our mutual advantage."

"A proposition?" Bradford repeated wonderingly.

"I've got a few thousand dollars lying idle," the captain began with characteristic directness, "and I'm looking for a good investment. In that connection it occurs to me that the Winner Film Company might be able to use more capital."

Bradford stared at him in astonishment. "Are you offering me a loan?" he inquired.

The other shook his head. "I'm not talking about a loan. What I have in mind is the purchase of an interest in your concern. The idea of going into the film business sort of appeals to me. If you could use a partner, Bradford, we might be able to get on together."

The Winner man hesitated. He was not looking for a partner. There were several reasons why he preferred to run his business alone. But, on the other hand, there were reasons why Captain Channing's proposition sounded attractive to him. As Solbaum had stated to Lew Lundy, he had been stretching his credit to the breaking point of late, and was in doubt as to where he was going to obtain the capital with which to carry out the ambitious plans he had in mind. The money which the captain would put



into the concern would solve that problem. Then, too, the prospect of being associated in business with the grandfather of June Channing was a decided inducement. Such an arrangement, he reflected, might help him in the furtherance of another ambition which had taken root within him the first time he had met that attractive young woman.

"Your offer looks good to me, Captain Channing," he said presently. "I'll admit that some additional capital would be a great help to me, just now. Still, if you don't mind, I'd like a little time to think the matter over."

"Of course," the other assented. "I didn't expect you to decide right away. Consider it carefully, my boy, and let me hear from you as soon as you've made up your mind. Here comes June, now, I guess," he exclaimed, as he heard the street door open. "By the way, Bradford, has she shown you any of her photo plays, yet?"

"Her photo plays? Does she write them?"

The captain grinned sheepishly. "There! I've gone and done it, now. She made me promise that I wouldn't mention them to you. She had an idea that it might look as if she were trying to work a pull, instead of succeeding on her own merits. Well, now that the cat's out of the bag, I wish you'd look at her work and let me know what you think of it. Personally, I think they're very good indeed—much better than many I've seen on the screens—but then I suppose I'm a prejudiced judge."

"I certainly shall be glad to see them," said Bradford. "Perhaps—" he stopped short as June came into the room. "Good evening, Miss Channing. The captain has just told me that you write scripts. I hope when you send them out you are not going to forget the Winner company. I shall feel very much slighted if you don't give us the first chance to read them."

"But you have read them," the girl announced, with a reproachful glance at her grandfather. "At least, your scenario editor has—and rejected them all."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Bradford, somewhat embarrassed. "That's tough luck. Did she give you any reason?"

"She wrote me that the plots were very weak, and that she'd advise me to devote more study to construction before I attempt to write any more," June replied. She laughed as she said this, but there was a slight trace of resentment in her tone.

"Mrs. Hobbs is always brutally frank," said Bradford, "but she means well. She's got an idea in her head that it is her duty to hand out gratuitous advice to beginners. Most companies just send scripts back without giving any reasons for their rejection, but she always makes it a point to explain. I hope she hasn't hurt your feelings, Miss Channing?"

"Not at all," the girl assured him. "I appreciate her candor. I suppose her judgment is sound?"

"She's one of the best in the business," said Bradford enthusiastically. "I'm afraid there's no disputing her verdict. I'll tell you what I'll do, Miss Channing. Let me take those scripts with me, and I'll submit them to Mrs. Hobbs again, and get her to write you in greater detail just what is the matter with them. I'm sure you'll find her criticism helpful in your future work."

"Thank you; I'll be glad to do it," said June. "But I can't let you have them now. I have sent them to another company. I thought it was just possible that your editor might be mistaken," she added, with a slightly ironical smile.

"All right; send them to me when you get them back," Bradford suggested.

The girl frowned. "You are quite taking it for granted that I will get them back?"

"I suppose that was rather tactless of



me," he rejoined with a laugh. "But to be frank with you, Miss Channing, I haven't any doubt that they'll come back. If Mrs. Hobbs found the plots weak and the construction poor, there's no chance of any other company taking them. Don't be discouraged, however. It takes a lot of practice before one can write a successful photo play. Keep plugging away and you'll get there by and by."

At this moment the maid came into the room with a letter. "For you, miss," she said, handing the missive to June.

June opened the envelope, and a cry of joyous surprise came from her as she glanced at the contents. "Good news?" asked her grandfather.

"The very best," she replied excitedly. "I think this will interest you, Mr. Bradford." She smiled triumphantly. "I am afraid, though, it may shatter your faith in the infallibility of your wonderful Mrs. Hobbs. This letter is from the company to which I sent those photo plays. They have accepted three of the five."

"Bully for you!" exclaimed Bradford, without the slightest display of chagrin. "Accept my heartiest congratulations. May I ask what concern it is that has bought them?"

For reply she handed him the type-written letter. It announced that three of the five scenarios which she had submitted had been found acceptable, and requested her to call at her earliest convenience. It was written on the business stationery of the Solbaum Film Company.

## CHAPTER VII.

### IN THE ENEMY'S CAMP.

**E**ARLY the next morning Lew Lundy called upon Captain Channing and asked his permission to use his schooner, the *Kentucky Belle*, for a moving picture.

"We're going to put out a big ma-

rine film called 'The Smuggler's Bride,'" he said, "and as soon as our director saw your boat, he decided that it was just what he was looking for."

"Well, I guess I've no objection," said the captain, "so long as you'll guarantee not to harm her. When are you going to make the picture?"

"This morning. The company are waiting at the studio, now, for me to telephone them that it's all right to go ahead. Maybe you'd like to come along and watch them at work," Lundy suggested. "If you can spare the time, sir, I think you will find it interesting. Usually we don't have visitors when we're staging such an important film, but since you've been kind enough to loan us the boat, we'll be glad to make an exception in your case."

The captain eagerly accepted this invitation. "Could I bring my granddaughter with me?" he inquired. "She's particularly interested in motion pictures. I don't know whether or not you know it," he added proudly, "but she's just sold three plays to your company."

"No; I didn't know that," Lundy replied, with an expression of astonishment. "What a queer coincidence! Yes; by all means bring Miss Channing along, sir. I'm sure she'd enjoy it, and if she's writing plays for us, it won't do her any harm to get acquainted with the members of our troupe."

A little later Wilson Bradford and Director Lexington, on their way to the Winner studio, were passed by a touring car which contained three passengers. "Did you see who was in that machine?" said Lexington.

Bradford nodded. "Miss Channing and the captain."

"And that crook, Lew Lundy, of the Solbaum outfit," Lexington said, frowning. "It was Solbaum's own car, too; I recognized the chauffeur. Excuse me for suggesting it, Mr. Bradford," he continued, "but doesn't that strike you



as being a—er—mighty queer combination?"

The other shrugged his shoulders. "I guess Miss Channing and her grandfather have a good reason for being there," he replied. "Anyway, it seems to me that it's none of our business, old man."

Lexington, feeling snubbed, remained silent for some minutes, but as they were entering the studio he said suddenly: "I've been making an investigation regarding what happened over in Jersey yesterday afternoon. I have satisfied myself that the thing was no accident."

"Are you sure of that?" asked Bradford grimly. "Whom do you suspect?"

"Solbaum. It's more than a suspicion, too. I have discovered that Lundy and a gang of East Side thugs arrived in South End, yesterday afternoon, just before we got there. Nobody can make me believe that their presence there was a coincidence. They had heard of the big stunt we were going to pull off, and they went out there to wreck the picture."

Bradford thought this over. "I know Solbaum isn't wasting any affection on me," he muttered, "but I'm wondering whether even he would be spiteful enough to resort to such a shabby trick. And how could they have found out what we intended to do? We took every precaution to prevent our plans from becoming known. Not even the members of the company knew where we were going until we were ready to start."

Lexington hesitated. "Well, I don't like to suggest it, Mr. Bradford," he said diffidently, "but, after what we saw, just now, I can't help wondering whether it wouldn't be a good plan in future not to take any outsiders into our confidence."

His employer looked at him sharply. "Consider? I don't quite get you."

The director hesitated again. "I be-

lieve you told Captain Channing and his granddaughter, in advance, what we were going to do," he said at length. "Of course I don't suspect for a minute that they would deliberately tip off the Solbaum outfit," he added hastily; "but inasmuch as we have seen that they are evidently friends of Lundy's, isn't it plausible to suppose that they might have been indiscreet enough to mention the matter in his hearing?"

Bradford looked anxious, but suddenly his face lighted up. "That theory won't hold water. Come to think of it, I didn't give the Channings any details as to what we were going to do. I merely told them we had something big on, and invited them to be present. Lundy must have got his tip from somebody else."

In the meantime Mr. Lew Lundy was giving Captain Channing and June some interesting information regarding the motion-picture industry in general, and the Solbaum firm in particular, as they rolled in Sig Solbaum's car toward the Erie Basin, where the schooner *Kentucky Belle* was moored.

"No; the game isn't what it used to be," said Lundy. "As I was saying, the other day, to a friend of mine who inherited a hundred thousand dollars and was thinking of investing it in a film concern, it's a good business to keep out of. There's no money to be made at it any more. The expenses are so heavy, nowadays, that they eat up all the profits. Believe me, Captain Channing, I could name you right off half a dozen concerns that are on the verge of bankruptcy at this minute." With his sound eye he shot a sidelong glance at the old man.

"How about the Winner company?" the captain inquired. "I suppose that's all right, eh?"

Lundy framed his mouth for a reply, then paused and shook his head. "You must excuse me, but I'm not mentioning any names," he said significantly.



"I had an idea that Bradford was doing very well," said the captain.

Lundy merely smiled. From the corner of his eye he observed with secret satisfaction that the old man's mien was exceedingly thoughtful.

"Maybe after you've seen the picture filmed, you'd care to come back with us to the studio and look the works over," Lundy suggested presently. "I ain't given to boasting, captain, but I can honestly say that there isn't a concern in the country that has such a complete and up-to-date plant. Why, we've got one machine that's really a mechanical marvel. Our Mr. Solbaum invented it, himself. Believe me, it's going to revolutionize the business."

"What does it do?" asked June.

"It colors films, miss. Colors them mechanically, but does the work so perfectly that you would think they were tinted by hand."

The girl looked astonished. "But the Winner company has a machine like that, too," she remarked.

"And Bradford holds the patent on it," the captain added, with a puzzled frown. "He told me that no other film company could use it."

Lundy laughed amusedly. "Oh, you're referring to the Hinman device. Yes; I've heard about that. I guess Bradford wasn't telling you any lie. I believe he does hold the patent on that invention. But Mr. Solbaum's machine is a different thing altogether. It's as superior to the Hinman article as a steam plow is to a spade. Wait until you see it working! It produces a much more perfectly colored film—and at one-tenth of the expense. Bradford, himself, realizes its superiority. The other day he came around to see the boss, to make arrangements for leasing one of our machines. We've only one model, now, but later on we're going to make others, and lease them to the other concerns."

"And Bradford would rather use

your machine than his own?" the captain said dubiously.

"Sure. It would lessen his expenses. I'm sorry for poor old Brad," Lundy continued. "I understand he paid Hinman a big price for that patent, expecting that he was going to make a fortune with it. So he would, no doubt, if our machine hadn't come along and made his look like a counterfeit penny with a hole in it." He grinned. "I guess he realizes, now, that he didn't buy any radium mine."

He shot another glance at Captain Channing. There was a grim expression on the latter's face. "Then he must have known about this other invention, and yet he told me that his was the only film-coloring machine in existence," he muttered. "He said that all the other companies used stencils, or tinted their films by hand."

"I guess you must have misunderstood him," said Lundy. "Unless——" he stopped short. "Say, captain, he didn't make any attempt to get you to buy the patent from him, did he?"

"No; he didn't make me any such proposition, but——"

"Because that would explain why he told you that," Lundy interrupted. "Naturally his only hope, now, is to find some one who'll take it off his hands, and if that was his game, you couldn't blame him for trying to make you believe that his was the only coloring device in the world."

"I am sure that Mr. Bradford would not resort to such dishonest methods," June protested indignantly.

Lundy shrugged his shoulders. "Business is business, miss," he told her. "In commercial life things like that are considered quite fair, eh, captain?"

"I suppose they are," the old man assented. "I shall be very pleased to visit your studio, Mr. Lundy," he continued. "I am exceedingly anxious to see that machine of yours."



## CHAPTER VIII.

## SOWING THE SEED.

MR. SOLBAUM grinned complacently as he glanced out of his office window at the two automobiles which had come to a stop in front of the studio entrance, one an omnibus containing the actors and actresses of his company, the other his own private car. From the latter a well-groomed, strikingly handsome young man was assisting a girl and an elderly man to alight.

The well-groomed, strikingly handsome young man was James Montgomery Uppington, leading man of the Solbaum troupe. Lew Lundy had introduced him to the Channings on the deck of the *Kentucky Belle*, and ever since that moment he had been acting as if June Channing's beauty had gone to his head. During the rehearsals on the schooner, he had glanced in her direction so frequently that he had incurred the censure of Sam Sanderson, the director; and when the picture was finished and the troupe started for home, he had begged the privilege of being permitted to ride with the captain and his granddaughter in the touring car, instead of accompanying his comrades in the omnibus—an opportunity of which he had made the most by paying devoted attention to the girl while Lew Lundy entertained the captain.

There were few women who could resist the fascination of Mr. James Montgomery Uppington's personality, as was evidenced by the bushels of billets-doux which every mail brought him from those who actually had fallen victims to his likeness on the screen. June could not help feeling flattered by the fact that this popular idol of the film was exerting himself to make a good impression on her. The complacent grin on Mr. Sig Solbaum's face broadened as he observed from his office window the gracious smile which she

bestowed upon the leading man as the latter assisted her from the car.

A few minutes later Lew Lundy entered the private office and introduced the visitors. "The captain was kind enough to let us use his schooner for a scene, this morning," he said.

Mr. Solbaum acknowledged the introductions with a bow that would have done credit to his leading man. "I shall be delighted to show you around," he said. "We are not making any interiors to-day, so you won't be able to see any studio posing; but if you are interested in the mechanical end of the business, I think we shall be able to entertain you."

He conducted the visitors through the various departments; showed them the stage crew at work in the studio, building an elaborate setting for use the next morning; took them into the developing and printing department, where all the work of finishing the negatives and making the positives was done by machinery; the "joining room," where a dozen young women were engaged in fitting the strips of gelatin together, arranging the various scenes in consecutive order, and inserting the printed captions or "leaders" in their proper places; and the shipping department, where another group of young women were packing the finished reels in tin boxes for shipment to the exchanges. These exhibits did not especially interest Captain Channing and his granddaughter, for they had seen practically the same processes in the Winner studio; but an eager expression came to the retired seaman's face when Solbaum presently ushered them into a little room on the glass door of which were the words, "Coloring Department."

"Here is the latest addition to our plant," their guide announced proudly, walking up to a queer-looking device which stood on a table in the center of the room. It was a large, square tin box, from the top of which protruded



a row of glass tubes, each filled with colored fluid.

The captain studied the machine with great interest. Certainly, as Lew Lundy had said, it was built on radically different lines from the Hinman film-coloring apparatus. "We are not using it to-day," said Solbaum, "but I can show you how it works. Lew, kindly bring me some of the positive prints we made yesterday." Lundy went out and returned almost immediately with some strips of film. "You will observe that these are the ordinary black and white prints," said Solbaum, handing one of the strips to the captain, who examined it closely and nodded.

"Now watch!" Solbaum exclaimed, taking the strip and inserting it in a slot at one end of the tin box. "Please note the time, too," pointing to a clock on the wall. "The rapidity with which this machine does the work is, of course, one of its chief merits."

He turned the key of an electric-light bracket on the wall, with which the apparatus on the table was connected by a cord. There followed a loud whirring from the interior of the tin box. A few seconds later a bell rang, and he turned off the current and opened a little door at the other end of the machine.

"Now, look at the film," he requested, with the air of a magician producing a rabbit out of a high hat. "Note the time, too! Less than three-quarters of a minute has elapsed since I inserted it." Captain Channing stared in astonishment at the damp strip of gelatin he handed him, and June, looking over his shoulder, murmured her appreciation. "In a couple of minutes the colors will be dry," Solbaum told them, "and then I will take you to the projection room and show you how it looks on the screen. You can't get a proper idea of the perfection of the coloring merely by looking at the film."

He led them into the miniature theater in which the reels were tested, and

when they saw the fragment of colored film projected on the screen, their wonder increased. The tinting was so artistically executed that it seemed incredible that it had taken less than a minute to produce the result.

"It is marvelous!" said Captain Channing enthusiastically. "I am very glad that I have been permitted to see this. If I hadn't seen it done with my own eyes, sir, I could scarcely have believed that it was possible. I thought the Winner company's coloring machine was wonderful, but this—this is a vast improvement, eh, June?"

"It certainly works quicker," June admitted with evident reluctance.

"Quicker! I should say so!" Lew Lundy chimed in. "Ten times as quick. And look at the class of work it does, too. You don't get that grade of tinting from the Hinman machine. Why, some of the daubs that——"

"Don't knock, Lew," his employer interrupted him virtuously. "You know I don't approve of that. The Hinman invention is a good enough thing in its way. For one thing, it does away with the eye strain, which was a disagreeable feature of the old process of coloring by hand. I have no doubt the trade would have received it with enthusiasm if I hadn't brought out this more practical device."

As they stepped out of the projection room they met a tall, thin man who wore a green shade over his eyes. "Here's somebody you might like to meet," said Solbaum to his visitors, putting his hand on the tall man's shoulder. "This is Mr. Perkinson, our scenario editor—the most expert judge of scripts in the business. Perkinson, let me present you to Captain and Miss June Channing."

The scenario editor bowed. "Channing!" he repeated, raising the green shade from his forehead. "No relation to the Miss June Channing who writes photo plays, I suppose?"



June smiled and blushed as she acknowledged that she was the same person. "I received your letter last night, Mr. Perkinson," she added, "and I was coming in to see you before we left."

"Well, I am indeed glad to meet you, Miss Channing," said the scenario editor warmly. "Those scripts of yours are excellent. Sorry we couldn't use the other two. They're very good, too, but not subjects we care to handle."

Solbaum's face wore an astonished expression. "Do you mean to say that this little lady has been writing scripts?" he exclaimed. "You didn't mention that, Lew."

"I meant to, but it slipped my mind," Lundy apologized.

"And she's sold some to us?" Solbaum continued, addressing Perkinson.

"Three," the latter answered. "And exceptionally good, too."

"Indeed!" his employer rejoined. "That's strong praise, coming from Perkinson, Miss Channing. He isn't in the habit of handing out bouquets."

"They're three of the best scripts that have come into my hands for a long time," the scenario editor declared enthusiastically. "Their construction is perfect, and the plots are of unusual strength and originality."

June blushed again, and turned with a smile to her grandfather. The latter chuckled. "Queer how opinions sometimes differ," he remarked whimsically. "She sent those same plays to another concern, and they told her that the plots were weak and that she didn't know anything at all about construction."

"Impossible," Perkinson protested indignantly. "The man who said that didn't know his business. Would you mind telling me what concern it was, Miss Channing?"

"The Winner company," replied the captain, as June hesitated.

"Did Bradford really roast your work like that, Miss Channing?" asked Solbaum.

"It wasn't Mr. Bradford. It was his scenario editor, Mrs. Hobbs," June replied.

"Oh, Mrs. Hobbs!" Solbaum laughed significantly. "Now I understand. I thought it was Bradford. He usually reads most of the scripts, himself. You needn't feel discouraged by Mrs. Hobbs' criticisms, Miss Channing. Without meaning any disrespect to the lady, what she doesn't know about photo plays would fill a whole library."

"Then why does Bradford employ her?" asked the captain.

Solbaum shrugged his shoulders. "Mrs. Hobbs is a widow, and an unusually attractive woman," he replied. "You know the old saying about love being blind. I understand they're engaged to be married." As he spoke he shot a covert glance at June, and observed that although she made a brave effort to maintain her self-control, she was visibly affected by the announcement.

"Well, my dear," said the captain presently, "I guess it's about time for us to be getting along. We've certainly enjoyed this visit very much, haven't we?"

"I've had a delightful time," June declared, a catch in her voice.

As they were leaving the building, Mr. James Montgomery Uppington, the leading man, approached them, and managed to mingle with his farewells a modest hint that he would like to call upon the Channings.

For a few seconds the girl hesitated. Then she smiled graciously at him. "My grandfather and I would be delighted to see you," she replied.

## CHAPTER IV.

NOT JAIL, BUT JEERS.

AFTER the visitors had departed, Solbaum and his confidential secretary exchanged congratulatory handshakes. "Well, I guess we've upset



Bradford's little apple cart, so far as his getting any financial aid from that quarter is concerned," said the former.

"It couldn't have been better," agreed Lundy. "It went off like clockwork. By the way, talking about clockwork, what on earth did you have inside that box that made all that commotion when you switched on the current?"

"The electric fan from my desk!" Solbaum laughed. "Sounded realistic, didn't it?"

"You're a genius," Lundy approved. "It looked so good that I'd have been fooled, myself, if I hadn't known. I was watching the old boy closely, and I'm sure he never suspected that the strip of colored film that came out might not have been the one that went in as black and white. Why, he was so enthused, I'll bet it wouldn't have taken much persuasion to get him to buy stock in the wonderful invention."

Solbaum smiled and shook his head. "Nothing like that. I'm not yearning to go to jail. We'll be content with discouraging him from investing in the Winner concern."

"Well, I guess we've done that all right," said Lundy. "There's another point I'm curious about," he continued. "How the deuce did you know that Bradford had turned down the girl's scripts?"

Solbaum smiled again. "I didn't know it until she said so. I had a hunch, though, that such was the case. When I accidentally spied her name on some manuscripts in Perkinson's 'rejected' basket, yesterday, I said to myself that, taking into consideration her friendship for Bradford, the chances were that she wouldn't have sent them to us without submitting them to the Winner company first. At all events, I figured it would be a good investment to buy some of her work—an easy way of getting into her good graces."

Lundy looked at him admiringly. "It was a master stroke. Of course,

though, you don't intend to keep on buying scripts from her. That would be pretty expensive business."

Solbaum nodded. "If she sends any more, we'll have to stall her off by telling her that we're overstocked at present. No use throwing away our good money now that we've gained our point. Did you observe, Lew," he continued, "what a hit Uppington made with her? That boy's out to bag an heiress, and when I dropped him a hint of the size of the captain's bank roll, he jumped at the chance. Give him three weeks and he'll make that girl forget how Bradford spells his name."

Possibly Solbaum and his confidential secretary would not have been so confident of the success of their plan, if they could have heard the conversation which took place between Captain Channing and his granddaughter as soon as they were outside the studio.

"That was a wonderful machine they showed us, eh, my dear?" the old man remarked. "Reminds me of a device a couple of swindlers tried to unload on me in San Francisco, fifteen years ago; only their machine, instead of coloring films, manufactured ten-dollar bills." He laughed. "You put in a piece of perfectly blank paper and turned a crank, and, presto, right before your eyes a brand-new ten-dollar note came out."

June looked at him in astonishment. "Then you suspect——"

He interrupted her with another laugh. "For a man of my years, my dear, I've got pretty sharp eyes—sharp enough to notice that there was a tiny hole in the strip of black-and-white film before they put it in the machine, and that there wasn't any hole in the strip of colored film which came out less than a minute later. Possibly if it hadn't been for that telltale mark I might have supposed that it was the same bit of gelatin, instead of a duplicate, colored probably by hand."



"But what was their object in trying to fool us?" asked the girl, frowning. "They didn't make any attempt to sell you any stock in the invention."

"Maybe they were waiting for me to make the advances," the captain suggested dryly. "Those fellows are smart enough to realize that it isn't good policy to appear too anxious. Or possibly they were merely trying to discourage me from investing in the Winner concern," he continued. "I can't imagine what they could have to gain by that, but it struck me that they were mighty anxious to give Bradford a black eye."

"Then possibly he—what they said about Mrs. Hobbs wasn't true, either," June suggested casually.

"I wouldn't be surprised if it wasn't," her companion responded dryly. "I wouldn't place much stock in anything they said. We'll have to tell Bradford about this visit. Maybe he'll be able to explain what their game is."

Later that day Director Lexington, who had been out on an errand for Bradford, returned to the Winner studio with a smile of triumph on his face. "Well, I've fixed it, all right," he announced. "Let me tell you, though, that it was no easy job. Those South River Railroad people are the stubbornest lot I've ever been up against. But at last I got them to listen to reason. They've agreed to pull off another collision for us, and they'll waive their demand for payment in advance. They'll take your note for thirty days."

"Good work!" said Bradford. "That means a whole lot to me, Wynne. I was beginning to be afraid that, after all, we'd have to fake the collision scene. Now we'll get busy and rush that feature out. It ought to bring a pile of money."

"And this time we'll keep a sharp lookout for interference," put in Lexington. "We'll take good care that none of the Solbaum crowd is around." He looked at his employer anxiously. "Go-

ing to invite Miss Channing and the captain again?"

"I believe I will," Bradford replied. "If for no other reason," he continued, with a smile, "I'd ask them just to show you that your suspicions concerning them are absurd."

But the contemplated invitation was never extended. Armed with it as an excuse for calling again, Bradford rang the bell of the Channing residence that evening, and was received by June, whose eyes were red with weeping.

"Haven't you heard?" she sobbed. "My grandfather is dead. He was seized with a stroke this afternoon, and died on the street. He was on his way to your studio when it happened."

## CHAPTER X.

### THE DELAY THAT PAID.

EARLY the following Wednesday morning the Winner motor omnibus drew up in front of the studio, and the entire company, reinforced by a score of "extras," trooped out of the building and crowded into the big vehicle.

With the exception of Bradford and Lexington, none of the troop knew whither they were bound or what they were setting out to do. At least, if any one possessed such knowledge, it had not been gleaned from the head of the Winner concern or his director. They had taken every precaution to keep their plans to themselves. They had even adopted the expedient of shipping the wax-faced dummies who were to serve as "dead and wounded" to the scene in advance, so that there would be no danger of anybody recognizing them as the "props" which had been used on the previous occasion, and deducing therefrom that the big collision scene was to be done over again.

As Lexington and Bradford came out of the studio, a little behind the others, the former glanced sharply



about him in all directions. "Want to make sure that there are no suspicious characters hanging around," he explained to his companion. "I have an idea that's how they worked it last time—watched us come out and trailed us to the scene."

The other shook his head. "They couldn't have done it that way; for, according to my information, they arrived at South End some time ahead of us. That's conclusive proof that they must have been tipped off in advance. And I'm going to find out where that tip came from before I'm many days older," he resolved grimly. "If there's a leak we've got to locate it. We might as well shut up shop right now if we can't prevent our plans from being handed out to Solbaum."

Bradford nodded. "Yes, we've got to stop that, of course. I can't believe, though, that there's a traitor in our camp. There isn't a man or woman working for me whom I wouldn't be willing to trust with the combination of the office safe. It must have been an accidental leak which put Lundy wise."

Followed by Lexington, he climbed to the front seat of the bus, and in an undertone gave the chauffeur his instructions. The big vehicle started to move, but as it turned the corner Lexington ordered the driver to stop. "Forgotten something?" Bradford inquired as the director hurriedly alighted.

The latter nodded. "I'll be back in a couple of minutes," he said over his shoulder. He did not take the time to explain that, glancing back as the car started, he fancied he had caught sight of somebody skulking in the shadow of a doorway opposite the studio.

As he rounded the corner at a run he was just in time to see Lew Lundy cross the street and stoop to pick up something which lay in the gutter in front of the studio entrance.

With a triumphant exclamation the

big fellow hurled himself upon Solbaum's confidential man, his strong fingers closing with a viselike grip around the latter's puny wrist.

"You let go of me," whined his captive, wincing with pain, "or I'll have you pinched for assault." As he spoke his imprisoned hand, yielding to the pressure of his assailant's grasp, unclenched and dropped what it was holding to the ground.

The Winner man picked it up, and an expression of bewilderment came to his face as he examined it. Lundy grinned at his evident perplexity. "Maybe you'll apologize now for your cruel suspicions," he sneered. "There's no harm in a man making a hobby of collecting cigarette ends, is there?"

"Depends upon where you go to do your collecting," Lexington replied, still examining the stub of the cigarette which the Solbaum man had dropped. It was a high-grade cigarette, tipped with a short tube which was quite an improvement over the ordinary cork tip. Lexington's face suddenly lighted up as he looked into this hollow space. "Ah, I get it now!" he exclaimed. "Very clever, Lundy! Quite an original idea!"

He drew a penknife from his pocket, and with it extracted a tiny scrap of paper which was wedged in the tube. The smile of triumph on his lips gave place to a scowl as he read the laconic note penciled on this scrap of paper. He turned fiercely to Lundy. "If you weren't such an insignificant little toad I'd consider it my pleasant duty to break every bone in your body!" he growled. "If you dare to show yourself around here again you won't get off so easy," he threatened. Then he went back to the waiting omnibus, and climbed to his seat beside Bradford.

"Get what you wanted?" the latter inquired.

"I did," he replied grimly. "I've found——" He chopped off the rest



of the sentence. On second thoughts he had decided not to tell his employer of his discovery just then. Knowing the latter's impulsive temperament he felt sure that he would insist upon taking immediate action regardless of the consequences; and, although he, too, was impatient to bring matters to a crisis, Lexington, who was a cautious man, told himself that they could not afford to do anything until after the picture was finished.

## CHAPTER XI.

### ANOTHER BUTT.

WITH a roar that told of throttles wide open, two engines, each drawing three reeling coaches, came rushing toward each other and met in the center of the trestle with a crash that reduced both powerful locomotives to a mass of broken metal, and sent two of the passenger cars volplaning from the structure into the stream below.

"Great!" cried Bradford joyously. "It was a much better smash-up than the other one. That's some consolation for having to do it over again." He ran over to Sollinger, one of the four camera men, and slapped him approvingly on the back. "That was a narrow escape you had, old man. When I saw that chunk of iron heading your way I thought you were done for."

Sollinger was, indeed, deserving of congratulations; for, as he turned the crank of his camera, a twenty-pound iron engine step had come whizzing toward him and buried itself in the ground at the edge of his stand. Yet so perfect was his nerve and his devotion to duty that he had stuck to his post and kept right on grinding without making any attempt to dodge the formidable missile.

"I was lucky," he remarked cheerfully. "I guess we've got it all right this time, Mr. Bradford. Why, if we'd

had a chance to rehearse it I couldn't have asked for a better focus."

Two of the three camera men, who had been stationed at points several yards apart, reported that they also had been successful in filming the big crash, so that this time there seemed to be no possibility of the venture's proving a failure. Bradford's spirits went soaring. The only damper upon his happiness was the fact that June Channing was not there, and the thought of the tragic event which was responsible for her absence. But, although recollections of the part the attractive girl had played at the previous attempt to film the collision persisted in cropping up at intervals, he did not have much time now to think about her and her sad loss. Following the big smash-up there was much to be done. Before the clouds of smoke and steam had cleared from the wreck, Director Lexington, scenario in hand, was giving instructions to the group of players assembled on the grassy slope. The work of "rescue" was to be begun immediately. Dummies and some real live people were to be dragged from the burning debris and carried by dauntless heroes along the trestle. It was to Lexington that the task of directing this scene fell, but Bradford was there to watch every detail, and offer suggestions. Earlier in his career he had been a director, and there were few men in the business who were his peers at stage managing.

"Now, then, Oglivie, we're waiting for you," Lexington called to the leading man, and Bradford wondered at the unwonted sharpness of his tone. "You know your cue? You're to take an ax and chop away at the wreckage of the first coach. We're going to plant a dummy there, representing the body of your rival in love. With much difficulty you succeed in dragging him out, and—what's the matter?"

The question with which he inter-



rupted himself was prompted by the leading man's queer behavior. The latter had been squatting on the grass when the director began to talk to him. Now he started to rise, but sank back again with a groan. "Are you sick, old man?" Bradford inquired solicitously.

Oglivie groaned again. "It's my ankle," he announced. "I must have sprained it somehow."

"That's too bad," Bradford sympathized. "We'll have to get a doctor for you." He turned to the director. "Hang it all! This puts us in a bad fix, eh? Charlie's the most prominent figure in this scene, and if he can't go ahead——"

Lexington interrupted him with an impatient exclamation. Bending, he seized the leading man by the arm and yanked him roughly to his feet. "Can't go ahead, eh!" he growled. "Now you quit your stalling, Oglivie, and get on the job in a hurry, or I'll give the doctor a real case."

"You—you Simon Legree!" the indignant actor gasped. "How dare you treat me like this! I won't stand for it." And he sank down on the grass as his assailant relinquished his hold on him. "Mr. Bradford, I protest against this outrage. Am I to be handled in this brutal manner just because I am not in shape to go on with my work?"

Bradford, thus appealed to, glanced anxiously at his director. "Better go easy, Wynne," he whispered. "After all, he may not be stalling."

"I'll bet everything I own that he is," Lexington declared hotly. He glared contemptuously at the leading man. "I suppose Solbaum is paying you well for that sprained ankle?" he sneered.

"Solbaum! What do you mean?" Before he realized what he was doing, Oglivie, in his excitement, jumped to his feet. "Mr. Bradford, I register another protest. Am I to be insulted

as well as assaulted by this—this person?"

"What's the idea, Wynne?" Bradford inquired. "Surely you don't suspect——"

"Suspect!" the other interrupted him fiercely. "It's no longer a case of mere suspicion. I've got the goods on this gentleman. He's the snake in the grass who's been tipping off our plans to Solbaum. Look here!" He drew from his pocket two cigarette stubs.

"I did not intend to bring this up now," he continued. "I thought it advisable to wait until the film was finished before exposing this man, so as to avoid the trouble and expense of having to do his scenes over again. But since he's taking this attitude, there's nothing to be gained by waiting. It is very evident that, in addition to his other treachery, he intends to make all the trouble he can to prevent us from finishing the film; so we'll be better off without him."

"But what proof have you that he's been betraying us to those fellows, Wynne?" asked Bradford.

"I hold the proof right here," said Lexington, showing the cigarette stumps. "He and Lundy had worked out quite an ingenious arrangement. Sitting behind the chauffeur, Oglivie was able to hear the directions you gave him; and as soon as he got that information he jotted it down on a scrap of paper, put the paper inside one of these cigarettes, and, as we started off, carelessly threw the cigarette into the gutter—for Lundy to pick up."

"Well, I'll be hanged!" Bradford ejaculated, while murmurs of indignant astonishment came from the group who had gathered around them. "How did you find this out?"

Lexington explained how he had caught Lundy in the act of picking up the cigarette end. "And there's no question that it came from this rascal," he added. "His monogram is on it."



"Well, if that's all the proof you've got," put in the leading man, "you haven't much of a case against me. You couldn't hang a stray dog on that evidence. How do you know that somebody else didn't borrow some of my monogrammed cigarettes and——"

Lexington cut him short with a contemptuous laugh. "I didn't say that was my only proof," he said quietly. "When we arrived here to-day, I took the trouble to watch you closely. Not content with tipping off your confederate that we were bound for this place by dropping the first cigarette outside the studio, you dropped another one at this end containing the information that we were going to do the collision scene over again. I saw you throw it away as we were getting out of the bus, and I picked it up."

Oglivie's face showed his discomfiture. "Mr. Bradford," he blustered, "this man is trying to frame me up. He had never liked me, and he has hatched up this ridiculous story to make trouble for me. My ankle is feeling much better now, and if you want me to go ahead with my work, I'm ready. Of course, after the shabby treatment I've received I ought to hand in my resignation to take effect immediately; but I don't want to put you to the expense of having to do those first scenes over, so I'm willing to remain until the finish of this picture."

Bradford shook his head. "You're through," he declared gruffly. "You couldn't pose for another inch of film for the Winner company even if it cost me ten times as much to finish without you. My advice to you is to get as far away from here as you can before I lose my temper."

"And we'll make it our business to see that the other concerns know what kind of a man you are," said Lexington. "The crooked deal you've given us will put you on the black list."

Oglivie shrugged his shoulders.

"Blacklist me all you want," he called back defiantly as he started to walk away. "I shan't starve. Solbaum has offered me the lead of his new Western company at double what you paid me."

Lexington made a menacing move in his direction, but his employer hastily grabbed his arm. "What's the use, Wynne?" he said. "Let him go. We don't want any violence before the ladies. Besides, we've no time to waste on him. Remember we've the right of way here for only half an hour. If we don't get a move on, the wrecking crew will be coming along to remove the débris before we're half through. Pick out somebody for Oglivie's part and let's get busy."

## CHAPTER XII.

### A PIECE OF REALISM.

LEXINGTON selected Tom Anthony, a young actor who had long been yearning for this opportunity, to take the rôle of the discharged leading man, and the company went to the trestle, where they took positions within or close to the battered cars and gave a representation of the aftermath of a great railroad disaster.

Everything went off without a hitch. Anthony, in his new stellar rôle, proved himself equal to the occasion. All the other members of the company had been carefully rehearsed in the studio, for Lexington realized that the limited amount of time at their disposal on the actual scene would not permit any rehearsing there. Oglivie, too, had been painstakingly coached for his part beforehand, so that his substitute was laboring under a disadvantage in having to give an impromptu rendering of his rôle. Fortunately, however, the latter had watched his predecessor at rehearsals, and this served him in good stead now. He acquitted himself so well that Bradford promptly decided



that he would not have to look farther for a permanent leading man.

Several hundred feet of film had been run off, and the company were preparing to return to the studio, when a slim, sad-faced man, a stranger to all of them, who had stood for some time on the "side lines" watching their work, stepped up to Bradford. "Beg pardon," he said timidly, "but who's the head of this outfit?"

"What do you want of him?" asked Bradford, eying him with some suspicion.

"A favor, sir," the other replied. A wistful expression came to his face. "I suppose the pictures you make go all over the country?"

"All over the world," Bradford amended, smiling. "What's this favor you want us to do for you?"

The stranger's astonishing reply made him suspect for a moment that he had to deal with a madman. "In a couple of minutes," he announced, in a matter-of-fact tone, "I am going to make a dive from that trestle. If it wouldn't be inconveniencing one of your camera men too much, I'd like to be photographed in the act."

Bradford laughed incredulously, and his laugh was echoed by Lexington and several other members of the company who had gathered around the pair.

"Unless you're anxious to break your neck, I shouldn't advise you to try it," said Sollinger, the camera man. "That trestle is a hundred feet high. If you want to commit suicide there are lots of more comfortable ways than that."

The queer stranger shrugged his shoulders. "I'm not contemplating suicide, and I've no fear that I'll break my neck. This is an easy proposition for me. I've dived from much higher places than that and got away with it. Get your camera ready and I'll show you."

He made a move as if to go to the trestle, but Bradford hastily grabbed

him by the coat sleeve. "This is madness," he protested. "I don't know whether you're in earnest or not, but if you are we're not going to let you go ahead with any such fool stunt. We'd be murderers if we let you take that leap."

"No, you wouldn't." The man smiled faintly. "Maybe you'll be easier in your mind when I tell you that I used to be a professional high diver at county fairs. I worked for one season at Coney Island, where I——"

"That's right," Bunty Bates, the stout comedian, broke in. "I recognize you now. I thought your face seemed familiar. You were at Steeplechase Park four seasons ago, weren't you? A brother of mine had the airship concession down there that year, and I used to spend a lot of time in the park."

The sad-faced man nodded. "That's right," he said. "So, you see," he continued, addressing Bradford, "you don't have to worry about me. This gentleman can tell you that for a man of my experience this stunt is nothing at all. Now, what do you say to letting one of your camera men put me on film?" Once more the wistful expression came to his face. "I'm going to ask a little more than that, though. I'm hoping that when the picture is made you'll send it out, same as the others, so that it'll be shown all over the world."

Bradford shrugged his shoulders. He was somewhat reassured by Bunty Bates' identification. "If you're determined to do it," he said, "of course we'll be glad to take the picture and to use it." He turned to Lexington. "Maybe we could work it into this production," he said in an undertone. "It can't have too many thrills in it to suit me."

The director nodded. "I was just thinking the same thing. We could easily alter the scenario to suit. Might make him the driver of one of the



wrecked locomotives, for instance. Overcome with remorse at the tragic consequences of his carelessness, the half-crazed engineer staggers from the wreck and plunges from the trestle to his death!" His face glowed with enthusiasm. "Great grief! What a corking piece of realism it would be!"

Bradford laughed nervously. "What's worrying me is that it may turn out a little too realistic. However, I suppose it's no use trying to stop him."

Greatly to his relief, his fears proved groundless. Removing his coat and waistcoat, the high diver poised himself on the edge of the trestle where it bridged the deepest part of the stream below and dived with as little concern as if he were stepping from a street car. His lithe body shot into the water and disappeared, but when he bobbed up a few seconds later and struck out for the shore, the thrilled spectators realized that he was safe and sound.

"You're a wonder!" exclaimed Bradford, wringing the hand of the dripping man as he came out of the water. "That'll make a peach of a picture."

"The cameras got me all right?" asked the diver.

"Sure they did. We had two stationed above, on the embankment alongside the trestle, to catch you as you started, and two down here to get the finish. Every move you made is on the film." Bradford stared at the man curiously. "If I'm not too personal I'd like to know what your idea was in doing this stunt. Why are you so anxious to appear on the film? You didn't ask to be paid for it."

"I don't expect to be paid for it—at least, not with money," the other replied. "I've got a reason."

He appeared reluctant to divulge what that reason was, so Bradford let it go. "I'm wondering whether you'd care to consider a proposition to join our company," he said.

The man, whose name, they learned

presently, was Barry Zimmerman, appeared astonished at this offer. "If you could use me I'd be glad to sign up with you," he said. "It would fit in so nicely with my plans. But I'm afraid I shouldn't be able to make good. I'm no good as an actor. I tried it once on the vaudeville stage in a one-act play with a tank feature, and I was so hopeless in everything except the diving that they gave me the hook."

Bradford smiled. "Well, we shan't expect much of you in the acting way. We can double you in the playing parts—make up somebody to look like you, I mean, and let him act for you. What we want to use is your nerve. There's no doubt that you have plenty of that."

"If that's all you want of me I think I could suit you all right," said Zimmerman simply. "I'm game for any kind of stunt you want me to do. Next week I'm thinking of making a dive from the Brooklyn Bridge, and——"

"How much salary would you expect?" inquired the film man.

"Would forty a week be asking too much?"

Bradford, congratulating himself upon the great bargain he was getting, assured him that it wouldn't. "And if you're as valuable to us as I believe you're going to be, you won't have to ask me for a raise," he promised.

The company returned to the studio, taking the new member with them, and Bradford's elation over the result of the morning's work was increased when the films were developed and were found to be as perfect photographically as they were from a dramatic standpoint.

On account of having to repeat the scenes which included Oglivie, it took another three weeks before the big five-reel production was finished. When that day arrived Bradford and Lexington shook hands in mutual congratulation as they sat in the projection



room watching the finished result as it was put through its first run.

"It's a masterpiece, old man," said Bradford enthusiastically. "There's a punch in every foot of it. It's sure to be the biggest seller we've ever put across."

The director's face reflected his employer's enthusiasm. "As full of thrills as a Christmas pudding is of raisins," he added. "I can see the States Rights buyers burning up the telegraph wires to rush in their orders."

But their optimism was short-lived. That night, when everybody had gone home and there was nobody on the premises but the night watchman, a fire, caused by a short circuit, started in the perforation room and spread so rapidly that by the time the firemen reached the scene the whole building was in flames.

Bradford received the news at the Screen Club, after midnight. They had been unable to reach him before. When he arrived at the smoldering ruins he found Lexington there, white-faced and grim. "It couldn't be worse," he announced brokenly. "The film's totally destroyed. Everything's gone up in smoke!"

### CHAPTER XIII.

#### THE FINAL CURTAIN.

LEW," said Mr. Sig Solbaum anxiously to his confidential secretary, "I sincerely hope and trust that last night's—ahem—painful catastrophe at the Winner studio was none of your work?" He looked his employee searchingly in the eye.

"Positively not, Mr. Solbaum," the other replied emphatically, returning his gaze squarely. "I had nothing to do with it, and I defy anybody to prove that I did. I swear that it was the biggest surprise of my life when I saw in the paper this morning that the place had burned down."

Solbaum exhaled a deep breath of re-

lief. "I am glad to hear you say so, Lew—exceedingly glad," he declared. "There are limits to everything, and that, of course, would have been going a little too far." A broad smile replaced his uneasy expression. "Now that you have set my mind at rest on that score, there is nothing to prevent me from fully enjoying the good news. I understand that Bradford lost everything in the fire, and that the amount of his insurance is scarcely enough to cover the plant."

"That's my understanding, too," Lundy responded cheerfully. "Talk about luck! I was just beginning to think that, after all, he was going to have the laugh on us. Ever since they got wise to Oglivie I've been trying to make new connections in the Winner outfit with no success. I've never seen such a loyal bunch as that fellow has working for him. And such a quick-tempered lot, too! Three times in the past week I've been viciously assaulted just for trying to exchange a good morning with some of them as they came to work."

His employer looked him over commiseratingly. "Oh, well, I guess your troubles are over now, Lew. There won't be anything more for you to do in that direction. Last night's bonfire, you can be sure, rings down the final curtain on the Winner Film Company. I imagine there's not as much fight left in Bradford as in a moth which somebody has stepped on."

Lundy laughed at this figure of speech. "I've seen some moths, though, that had to be stepped on three or four times before they could be made to understand that they were out of business," he remarked philosophically. "And I've got a feeling that Bradford is that kind of a moth."

Later developments gave them cause to believe that Lundy's estimate of the head of the Winner company was not far from correct. Although Bradford



was dazed at first by the crushing blow which had been dealt him, he did not remain long in that condition. Before the ruins of his factory were cold he was already talking optimistically of his future plans.

"If this thing had to happen," he told Lexington, "it's a good thing that it came at this time of the year. If it had occurred in midwinter it would have hit us much harder. Now, at least, we've got all outdoors for a studio. And, thank fortune," he continued fervently, "we've got Barry Zimmerman. It surely was a lucky day for me when I ran across that dare-devil. If he doesn't break his neck before his contract is up, his sensational stunts are going to put me on easy street. He's the find of the year, and the movie fans won't be able to get enough of him. My idea now, Wynne, is to get busy right away on a big outdoor thriller featuring him. That is sure to be a big money maker, and it'll give us all plenty to do until our new quarters are ready."

Another film concern for which Bradford had done several favors in the past showed a proper fraternal spirit now by offering him the use of its mechanical plant until his own was in shape again. He gratefully accepted this accommodation, which solved a big problem for him.

Another circumstance which did a whole lot to keep up his spirits was the loyalty manifested by the members of his company in his time of trouble. The day after the fire Bunty Bates, the stout comedian, selected by the others as their spokesman, made a graceful little speech in which he assured Bradford of the determination of every man and woman in his employ to stand by him, and of their willingness to work for half pay, if necessary, until he was on his feet again. Their devotion was doubly appreciated by their employer, because he happened to be aware of the fact that recently several of them had

received letters from Solbaum offering them big advances of salary to come over to his concern.

With this encouragement, Bradford immediately got busy producing the new multiple reel play which was to feature the daring deeds of the latest addition to the troupe. Barry Zimmerman had indeed proved himself a valuable acquisition. As an actor he was a failure, as he had predicted that he would be; but when it came to nerve he was certainly "there with bells on."

Zimmerman had already made good his boast that he would dive from the Brooklyn Bridge. That sensational feat had been filmed by Sollinger's camera and incorporated in the ill-fated railway drama which had been destroyed in the fire. The plucky fellow now told Bradford that he was perfectly willing to attempt the feat over again. He also suggested several other hair-raising stunts to be used in the new thriller. In addition to his astonishing nerve, he possessed a lively imagination which he employed in thinking out new and startling ways of risking his neck.

Mrs. Hobbs, the scenario editor, was away on a vacation, so Bradford and Lexington put their heads together and drew up a scenario which embodied several of these suggestions. Some of the exploits the reckless man proposed to do they tabooed—as, for instance, a mad plan he had conceived of tying himself to a monster skyrocket, charged with eight hundred pounds of powder, and being projected into space to make the return trip by means of a parachute. Lexington, his zeal as a director overcoming his scruples, was disposed to let him try it, realizing what a sensation the feat would be; but Bradford firmly put his veto on it.

Solbaum, learning of the Winner troupe's new activities, displayed some anxiety. He realized that Bradford had a big money maker in Zimmerman, whose fame the newspapers were be-



ginning to sing. "We'll have to get that fellow away from him somehow," he said to Lundy. "Either that or——" He paused significantly.

"Or what, boss?" his confidential man inquired.

"What you accomplished so successfully at the railroad trestle could be done over again—with variations," Solbaum replied, lowering his voice. "We can't afford to let him get away with these pictures, Lew."

It was not necessary for Lundy to carry out this suggestion, however. One morning, when the new production was half done, a queer thing happened. Mrs. Hobbs, the scenario editor, returning from her vacation, accompanied Bradford to the field where the pictures were being made. She had never seen the new-stunt man—at least, to be more accurate, she had not seen him since he had joined the Winner outfit—and as soon as she set eyes on him she startled everybody by giving a scream, rushing over to him, and throwing her arms around his neck.

Zimmerman returned her embrace with compound interest. Later, the mystified onlookers received an explanation of this queer behavior.

Mrs. Hobbs, they learned, was not really a widow, but merely a grass widow, and her name was Mrs. Barry Zimmerman. She and her husband had quarreled and parted several years before, and after the separation she had resumed her maiden name, Hobbs. It was this change which had prevented her husband's finding her, although he had been searching for her for years. He never, as he now confessed, had known a happy moment since the day he left her.

"So that was the reason you were so anxious to put yourself on the films?" guessed Bradford. "You were hoping that it would help you to find your wife?"

Zimmerman nodded. "You see, I

had tried every other way," he said, "without success. As I stood watching you folks at work on the trestle that day, the thought suddenly came to me that here was a scheme worth trying. Of course, I didn't dream that my wife was in this business, too, but my idea was that if I could get into the pictures she might see me flashed on some screen, and that when she saw how I was risking my neck she might come back to me. I figured that if she still had one little spark of affection for me it would make her look me up and beg me to quit taking such desperate chances."

Mrs. Zimmerman squeezed his hand fervently. "You must promise me, dear, that you will never risk your life or limb again," she urged. "I am sorry, Mr. Bradford, but I must insist upon his handing in his resignation right now. I won't hear of his continuing in this hazardous business."

"But he'll finish this picture first?" protested Lexington anxiously. "He'll pull off the rest of the stunts that the scenario calls for? You're not going to leave us in the lurch, old man?"

Zimmerman glanced questioningly at his wife. She shook her head firmly. "I'm sorry, but I can't permit it. Now that I've got you back I'm not going to run any chance of losing you again. They'll have to get some one else for the part."

The stunt man turned to Bradford with a deprecating smile. "It's too bad, but I've got to do as she says," he told him. "Besides, I myself don't feel like taking any more chances. When I couldn't find her, and was almost ready to believe that she was dead, I didn't care what happened to me; but now it's different. I've got everything to live for now, and I'm going to take such care of myself that you'll never catch me out in the rain without an umbrella."

When tidings of this new setback



reached Solbaum he chuckled with delight. "I'm real sorry for that fellow, Lew," he said ironically. "He certainly is having hard luck. Every time he picks a plum it turns out that it's got a worm in it. Well, I guess this settles him for good and all. That crazy dare-devil was his last card."

Lundy looked dubious. "I'm not so sure of that. He may still have one trump left, and the best in the deck. I mean the Channing girl. It seems that in spite of all that we did to queer him in that quarter, he's still very friendly with her. At the funeral, I understand, she cried on his shoulder. Since then he's been visiting her nearly every evening. Now, if he should win her and all her money——"

"All her money!" the other interrupted him with an ironical laugh. "That's a joke. I guess you haven't seen the newspapers this morning, Lew. They contain some interesting news about your friend, the late Captain Channing. It appears that the old man wasn't as wealthy as was generally supposed. He had been making some bad investments of late, and, to cap the climax, shortly before his death he went and got himself mixed up with a flashy promotion company which went to the wall with liabilities of nearly a quarter of a million. The newspapers say that his estate will have to settle with the creditors and that there won't be anything left for the girl. Even the house she lives in will have to go under the hammer." Again he laughed ironically. "So Bradford's chummy with her, is he! Well, now that he knows that she's not an heiress, you watch how quickly he will drop her."

#### CHAPTER XIV.

##### PIRATES!

THE newspaper report concerning Captain Channing's estate was not exaggerated. The old, retired skipper had been beguiled into accepting the

presidency of a shoddy promotion company with glittering prospects—on paper. He had been given to understand by the sharpers who got him into the deal that all that was required of him was the prestige of the use of his name on the firm's letterhead, and that his personal liability would be limited. But when the crash came it was found that they had deceived him in that respect. They had fixed things so that the greater part of the financial responsibility fell upon his shoulders—or, rather, upon his estate.

"Will it really take everything to settle with the creditors?" Bradford asked June Channing.

The girl nodded. "I am afraid so. My lawyers tell me that when everything is paid up there won't be more than a few hundred dollars left. Even the house will have to be sold." She smiled sadly. "All that will be left me will be the *Kentucky Belle*. They're not going to take the old schooner."

Bradford laughed softly. "Well, I'm almost inclined to say that I'm glad things have turned out this way."

"Glad?" She looked at him wonderingly.

"Glad on my own account, I mean," he explained. "If you had been a rich princess it would have made it more difficult for me, a poor, struggling film man, to ask the great favor I'm going to ask of you now. As it is, I've hardly the courage to go ahead."

June laughed and blushed. "If you weren't a poor, struggling film man perhaps I shouldn't permit you to go ahead," she returned. "If your business were prosperous, Will, it might look as if you were asking me out of pity for my penniless condition."

"Well, of all the preposterous ideas!" he protested indignantly. "However, if it really does make a difference, thank fortune for the run of bad luck I've been having lately—in business, I mean."



"Of course, dear," the girl said presently, "we mustn't think of getting married just now. You've got to wait until you are on your feet again before you can think of adding a wife to your expenses. In the meantime," she added, with another blush, "I'm going to have Mrs. Hobbs—Mrs. Zimmerman, I should say—give me some points on how to write photo plays so that later on I can be a real help to you. And that reminds me that I've got a suggestion to make to you now—I was thinking of it this morning; wouldn't it make a good thriller if you were to take a schooner and set her on fire? Not a fake fire. I mean the real thing, with a big explosion at the wind-up which would break her in two."

Bradford's face lighted up. "That would be a peach! You've got the right idea, little girl. I've been thinking for some time of putting out a pirate play, and that would be just the thing for the big scene. But," he continued, his face falling, "I guess we'll have to pass it up for the present. Just now I couldn't afford to buy a schooner and blow her up. Perhaps later on, when——"

"We'll do it right now," she interrupted him eagerly. "You won't have to buy a schooner, Will. There's the *Kentucky Belle*. Didn't I tell you that they're not going to take her? Surely she would answer the purpose!"

He stared at her incredulously. "Would you be willing to let us use her in that way—set fire to her and blow her up?"

"Why not?" she asked. "She isn't of much use for anything else. And I can't afford to keep her. It's your chance to make some big money, Will, and I'm sure grandpa wouldn't mind having her destroyed for such a worthy cause."

Two weeks later Lew Lundy stepped with his soft, catlike tread into his employer's private office. "I've found out

what they're up to, boss," he announced. "It's a big pirate spectacle they're putting out, and for the big scene they're going to blow up Captain Channing's old schooner. They've got her moored off City Island, and she's chock-full of gunpowder. They're going to set fire to her to-morrow morning. They intended to do it this afternoon, but the rain stopped them."

For a long interval Solbaum sat back in his desk chair with his chin on his chest, pondering this situation. "Oh, well, I suppose we can afford to let them get away with one film," he said presently. "That won't make Bradford's fortune. Although, I don't know——" He stopped short, and a glint came to his beady eyes. "Didn't you just say that the boat was full of gunpowder now, Lew?"

Lundy nodded. "Yes; they loaded her up with the idea of setting her off this afternoon, and when the rain prevented it they left her that way so as to be all ready for to-morrow."

His employer chuckled. "Lew," he said, lowering his voice almost to a whisper, "wouldn't it be a good joke if there should be an accident to-night—a premature explosion which would destroy that schooner? Just imagine Bradford's face when he goes there in the morning to make his picture and finds only a bunch of wreckage floating on the water!"

Lundy grinned. "It would be a good joke," he agreed, "but a little too dangerous, it seems to me, Mr. Solbaum. Too much chance of a come-back."

The other shrugged his shoulders. "There ought to be a way of doing it with a minimum of risk," he said. "Think it over, Lew. Have a talk with 'Spindle' Carson. He'd be just the man for the job, and I have no doubt that if we made it worth his while he'd be willing to take a chance of being sent up the river again."

Lundy went out and returned several



hours later. "It's all right," he said. "Carson will do it. He's been up to City Island to look the ground over, and he says that it ought to be a cinch. There isn't even a watchman on board. You don't mind, of course, if it costs a little money? I had to promise Spindle a couple of hundred dollars before he'd consider the proposition."

"That will be all right," his employer acquiesced. "This will no doubt be the last expense we'll be put to in order to acquire the Hinman patent. It is sure to be a knock-out blow to Bradford."

The following morning, over his coffee and rolls, Solbaum read with great enjoyment an account, in his morning paper, of "the mysterious blowing up of the schooner *Kentucky Belle*, anchored in the Sound, off City Island. The newspaper said that the boat had been completely destroyed.

He went to his office in great good humor, and remained in that frame of mind until later that day, when an office boy brought in the card of a visitor. "Tell him I'm out," Solbaum said hastily, changing color as he glanced at the name on the pasteboard.

"Tell it to me yourself, Solbaum," suggested Bradford pleasantly, as he came suddenly into the room. "I had a hunch that you'd send back some such message, so I followed the boy."

Glancing at his visitor apprehensively, the nervous little man in the desk chair was astonished to discover that the big, broad-shouldered Winner man did not look the least bit like a person who had just received a finishing blow. On the contrary, he seemed to be bubbling over with good spirits.

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE TIDE TURNS.

I SUPPOSE you've heard what happened up City Island way last night?" Bradford began dryly.

"That's rather a vague question," parried Solbaum cautiously. "If you will be good enough to be a little more explicit——"

"I am referring to the premature blowing up of the schooner which I was going to use in a picture to-day."

"Oh, that!" the other exclaimed, with a nod of his head. "Yes; I believe I did read something about it in my paper this morning. I didn't know that it was your boat, though. I don't believe the newspapers made that fact clear. Too bad, Bradford—you've been having such a lot of bad luck lately!"

The Winner man smiled. "This wasn't bad luck," he declared quietly. "Under the circumstances, I regard it as a very fortunate occurrence."

Solbaum stared at him with an astonishment that was wholly genuine. "A fortunate occurrence?" he echoed blankly. "Weren't—didn't you just say that you had intended to use the schooner in a picture to-day?"

"Of course, in that respect the explosion was a misfortune," Bradford admitted, still smiling. "But, after all, that is a trifling matter, comparatively speaking. We can easily buy another schooner for the picture."

Solbaum's malice made him drop his mask. His lips curved in a sneer. "You talk very big," he scoffed. "I'd like to know where you're going to get any money to buy schooners! I should imagine that a schooner of beer would be about your limit."

The Winner man received this taunt calmly. "It is evident that you haven't heard about the tin box," he remarked. "Of course, the morning papers didn't have that part of the story."

"What tin box?" Solbaum demanded impatiently.

"The box that we found floating on the water after the explosion. It came from the cabin of the schooner. When we opened it we found, to our astonishment and delight, that it contained



about seventy thousand dollars worth of mining stock. It belonged, of course, to the late Captain Channing. He bought the shares at the beginning of his financial career, when he was still going to sea. It was one of his first investments. At the time he thought he had been stung—for several years they were considered worthless. But now those mines are rated among the richest in the world. Disgusted with his purchase, he thrust them into a secret compartment in the cabin of the *Kentucky Belle*, and afterward forgot where he had put them. His granddaughter recalls that when the mines began to yield pay dirt, the old man often expressed chagrin at not being able to recall what he had done with the certificates. The bonds now, of course, belong to my fiancée, Miss Channing. I know that you will be glad to hear that she has decided to sell them and invest the proceeds in the Winner Film Company."

"If she's wise she'll hold on to her money," sneered Solbaum. "Seems to me that you've lost enough money already, without squandering the fortune of your future wife."

"I must admit that I have been unlucky," Bradford said mildly. "As you say, I've been losing a lot of money lately. But I am confident that I am going to get most of it back. In fact, I have a hunch that I am going to be considerably richer when I step out of this office."

"What do you mean?" demanded Solbaum.

"I mean that I expect to go out of here with your check in my pocket. That is what I came for."

"My check! What for?" repeated Solbaum indignantly. "Are you trying to blackmail me?"

"You'd be foolish to look at it in that way," his visitor rejoined. "I am merely going to ask you to compensate me fairly for the losses I have sus-

tained at your hands. I have a bill in my pocket for one railway collision and one schooner explosion. I expect you to pay that bill."

"And why should you expect that of me?" the other blustered.

"It's no use, Solbaum," Bradford interrupted him, with a laugh. "We've got your man, Spindle Carson. We camped on the shore at City Island last night, in order to watch the schooner, and we saw him go out to her in a launch and blow her up. He did the trick before we had a chance to stop him, but we got him as he came ashore afterward. Evidently you have not heard what happened to him. He was injured by the explosion, received a blow on the head from a flying spar as he was getting away in the launch. He isn't badly hurt, but we've got him in bed in a cottage up at City Island, and he thinks he's going to die. Probably that is the reason that we didn't have much trouble in getting a confession out of him. His statement implicates you and Lundy so clearly, both in last night's affair and in what happened at the railroad trestle, that I have no doubt it will be an easy matter for me to recover heavy damages from you if you are unwise enough to let the case go to court. I am talking, of course, about the civil action I shall bring."

"Give me a little time to think it over," Solbaum begged hoarsely. "I want to make sure that you're not bluffing before I pay any money."

"I'll give you twenty-four hours," said Bradford generously. "In the meantime you can look over this bill and this copy of Carson's confession. We had him swear to the original before a notary." He stepped toward the door. "When you've made up your mind, you can mail me your check," he said over his shoulder as he went out.

The check came to him before the twenty-four hours were up.





# Chats With Baseball Stars

Ty Cobb, Interviewed by J. A. Fitzgerald

**U**P on your toes now, fans, if you want to grab a few hot ones right from the bat of Tyrus Raymond Cobb! Yes, sir, the greatest baseball player of his time—or of any other time in the opinion of experts—is about to bat out a few for your benefit. There's no need of telling you that you've got to step lively to keep up with Ty; no need to remind you that greased lightning is cold molasses compared with his speed. Fellow ball players—especially opposing pitchers—insist that the famous star of the Detroit Tigers is the most sudden person in the well-known and more or less popular world.

I chased him for two days before I caught up with him, using trolleys, subways, automobiles, elevators, telephones, speaking tubes, and a set of corn-fed feet in the effort to intercept his mad flight. All this occurred many weeks ago, but my ankles are still smoldering. A dozen times I was about to tag him when some captain of industry, or some prominent government official, or some eminent actor, or some society leader would pull him out of the base line and

spirit him away. Popular? That doesn't describe it. Just start chasing him once. And be sure to take a chiroprapist with you. You'll need him.

I ran him down close to the plate—the breakfast plate. A thrill shot through me as I observed that there were "two on" at the time. Two on, and Ty Cobb up! You fans can appreciate that situation. Before proceeding further it becomes necessary to state that the two were eggs and that they were on toast. My sympathy went out to the shivering hen fruit. What chance did it have against the deadly aim of the national game's greatest swatsmith? He dropped his bat—I mean his fork—when I addressed him, and, rising with a genial smile, extended his hand. He expressed regret for the trouble his elusiveness had caused me.

"Some demand for little Tyrus?" I suggested.

He wouldn't have it as strong as that. "You just happened to be trailing me at the wrong time," he explained. "I have a lot of good friends in New York, and as this is my first trip East this



season, they've all been kind enough to look me up. They've kept me running the social bases at a lively clip."

"Too bad you aren't triplets."

"That would help some," he admitted. Then, with a wink and a knowing smile: "In a lot of ways."

He didn't offer to explain the last statement. It wasn't necessary. As he is generally credited with receiving fifteen thousand dollars for six months of baseballing, it doesn't require a vivid imagination to see what he was driving at. Three times fifteen thousand are—well, you can figure it out for yourself. This was the nearest we came to discussing his financial relations with the Tigers. Ball players are not garrulous in these days of princely salaries concerning their share of the plunder. But, thanks to the conflict now raging between the two older major leagues and the Federal League, the new organization, which insists on sharing the major-league pie, the fabulous sums paid to the stars of the game are pretty well known. And the Federal League has made no secret of the fact that it would be willing to pay Cobb twenty-five thousand dollars a season to look after one of its landscapes.

WHILE Tyrus is stirring his coffee, let's take a good look at him. The chap whose remarkable baseball ability has lifted his earning capacity to the plane of the corporation lawyer or bank president, and whose sensational work on the diamond no longer occasions unusual comment, is a splendid specimen of clean-cut American manhood. Six feet tall, his one hundred and seventy-five pounds of muscle and bone—the latter below the nose, a condition somewhat rare among ball players—are distributed with an evenness that gives him almost a lean look.

One glance is enough to convince you that he is built for rapid transit. Even

in repose he has a speedy look. The hands that have kept him at the head of the major-league procession, the hands that have enabled him to show a clean pair of heels to upward of ten thousand professional ball players season in and season out, are worthy of special mention. At first glance they appear to be a trifle small for the work they are called upon to perform, but as you study them closer you observe that they are broad across the knuckles, that the fingers are powerful, that all the strength of the lithe, young athlete appears to be centered in them. Watching those hands you are better able to sympathize with the thousands of ambitious line drives that have had promising home-run careers cut off by them.

Ty Cobb has blue eyes, fairly large, keen, and smiling. Those alert lamps of his corroborate the impression of speed given by his architecture. His forehead is high and is getting higher, but there is still enough light-brown hair in sight to warrant the use of a comb and brush. He has fine, even teeth, a winning smile, and a chin that shows determination and confidence. In short, few of fiction's baseball heroes have anything on this Cobb person when it comes to looks. He is a careful dresser without being fussy. A Southerner, he speaks with a slight drawl, using excellent English and never being at a loss for words to express himself.

It scarcely seems necessary to touch upon his ability as a player. His record in that respect is well known. Some baseball players excel in one or several departments of the game; Cobb excels in every branch of the pastime. For years he has topped the game's greatest batters. He is one of the most daring base runners the game has ever known. The fact that many opposing players throw the ball to the second base ahead of him when he is racing down the line—thereby conceding him a base—is a



tribute to his speed. His mental and physical equipments are in perfect harmony. Few players have shown such ability to outguess their opponents; to upset the strategic moves of the rival team. Sporting writers call him "the ball player without a weakness." His intelligence, pleasing personality, and preëminence in his calling make it easy to understand why he is so much sought after by all classes of fandom. With all the adulation that has been showered on him, he has managed to keep his feet on the ground. He can always be depended upon to hit over three hundred in the common-sense league.

WELL, I'm waiting for you to shoot," he said, with a smile. He held the fork in his right hand as he spoke. It may have been imagination on my part—it must have been—but I fancied that the eggs were trying to slide under the toast.

"I thought you were a left-hand batter," was the first ball I shoved at him.

"I am," he returned, "but I can eat with either hand. See?"

By way of illustrating he took a sharp swing from the shoulder. Fork met egg with a—to tell the truth, I don't know just how you would describe the collision. I started to say "dull, sickening thud," but that won't do. Those eggs were poached, you know, and—I've got the word! Splash! That's it. The minute the fork struck the egg, it—same egg—shot away toward the center of the plate. Only the sharpest kind of fielding on the part of Ty prevented it from going over the rim, down the leg of the table, and out into Broadway.

"You hit that one on the nose," I suggested.

"It came near getting away from me," he admitted. "It took a nasty bound."

In its eagerness to take an extra base

the egg ran into its fellow egg, and presently they were so tangled up you couldn't tell which was which. Quick as a flash Ty turned back the racing eggs by tilting the plate, thereby completing a double play unassisted.

"Fastest pair of eggs I've ever seen," he observed. "They were trying to work the double steal on me."

The waiter, playing up close for a tip, whispered to the center fielder: "Shall I bring you an egg cup, sir?"

"No," said Ty with a chuckle; "bring me a blotter."

I waited until he had the eggs under control before taking a running jump into his past. His perfect fielding of those eggs amazed me. You who have tried to field a loose egg with a fork will understand what I mean. You'll admit that there are few more difficult plays in the dining room. Ty accepted nineteen chances without the semblance of an error. Nineteen times he scooped up forkfuls of the slippery stuff while it was going at top speed, and shot it to his classic countenance with unerring accuracy. Not once did he drop a throw—or throw a drop.

"What do you regard as the most amusing episode of your baseball career?" I asked.

"My release when——"

"Your release! Do you mean to say that you have experienced that unpleasant sensation?"

My surprise amused him. I knew that many of the present stars of the diamond had suffered that humiliation earlier in their careers, but that the great Cobb was included in this category was news to me. And I imagine that it will be to a majority of the fans.

"Yes," he went on, "I carried the can at one time. But only for a brief period. I felt pretty badly then, but now I can afford to laugh at the experience. To be candid, I think I am just a little bit proud of it. You know what I mean



—proud of the fact that I surmounted that handicap."

He said that while many ball players knew of the incident, it was not generally known to the fans. "It happened at Augusta, Georgia," he said with a smile. "That's where I started my professional career in 1904. I make it my home now."

"You were born near there," I reminded him.

"I was born in a little place called Narrows, twenty-seven years ago. Royston, Georgia, a few miles from Narrows, has been charged with that offense, but that is wrong. My folks moved to Royston, and it was there that I spent my boyhood. Well, as I was saying, I broke into regular baseball by way of Augusta. As I remember, I had three hits in my opening game. I was going along, leading the team at field and bat, getting ninety a month and happy as a youngster could be, when the manager handed me my dismissal. I was stunned, but I was not the only one. The fans didn't know what to make of it. The manager never gave me any satisfactory explanation. I have since concluded that he thought I was too small to play baseball. I was seventeen at the time and in the sliver class."

"How long were you idle?"

"Only a day or two. I signed up with the team in Anniston, Alabama. I had been there but a short time when the Augusta fans persuaded me to return to their team. The manager who had released me had been turned loose himself. I went back and finished the season, and remained there most of the following season. By the way, it might be interesting to call attention to some of the other players on that old Augusta team. Nap Rucker, Eddie Cicotte, and Ducky Holmes—all men who have made names for themselves in major-league circles—were members of that outfit. Detroit rescued me from the

bushes in the latter part of 1905, and I made the regular team the following year. I have been with Detroit ever since."

**T**YRUS launched into a eulogy of the famous automobile manufacturing center. Detroit—largely through his efforts—won the American League pennant in 1907, 1908, and 1909, and at the time of this interview he was of the opinion that the 1914 flag would be found fluttering in the lair of the Tigers.

"Do you ever get tired of the game?" I asked him.

"Never! It may sound strange, but I'm just as enthusiastic over the sport as I was when I started playing. And that's so far back that I can't remember when it was. It seems to me that I have been playing ever since I was able to toddle."

He went on to state that he had always played in the outfield; that he had always been able to hit the ball. "But I lose my batting eye now and then," he added.

"Where do you lose it?"

"Where most of the sluggers in the American League do," he returned; "in Washington!"

This was a tribute to Walter Johnson's pitching ability. He said that Johnson, and Gregg, the Cleveland twirler, were the two boxmen whose deliveries puzzled him most. Johnson, in the opinion of the country's leading batsman, is without an equal in his department of the game.

"How do you spend your time in the off season? Have you any other business?"

"When I'm not away from home on a hunting trip you'll find me with Mrs. Cobb and the two children. Tyrus, junior, aged four, keeps me busy answering questions until the season opens. Say, there's one great boy, all right!"



The proud father delayed the game long enough to let me have a partial list of Tyrus, junior's, accomplishments. Lack of space prevents printing the list. "He's got everything" according to his daddy.

"Have you ever tried to elevate the stage?"

"Once, but never again! I fell for one of those luscious offers that theatrical managers pass out to ball players and signed up to do a little pinch hitting with a comedy drama. As an actor——" He stopped short, and shook his head despairingly.

"Run it out!" I ordered.

"Well," he resumed, "as an actor, Faversham and Sothern have nothing to fear from yours truly. Every time the bleachers—I mean the gallery—applauded, I felt as if I was expected to slide under a piano or something. No, baseball is my business; I'm going to stick to it."

"Have you ever had any other ambition?"

"I wanted to be a surgeon."

It was suggested that in dissecting the deliveries of opposing pitchers, stabbing "flies" and ripping the hide off the ball he was experiencing some of the joys of that profession.

"That's right!" he returned. "And now and then I get a chance to 'sew up' a game with my wooden needle."

Another line of questions developed the fact that Ty Cobb is of Scotch-English ancestry; that his parents strongly opposed his adoption of a baseball career; that he has a brother—Paul—playing with the Ogden, Utah, team. He also volunteered the information that he prefers Shibe Park, Philadelphia, to the Polo Grounds, New York.

"Have you any message for young men who aspire to big-league honors?" he was asked.

"I am glad you asked me that ques-

tion," he said thoughtfully. "I get scores of letters every week from young men in all parts of the country asking my advice on the quickest way to get to the major organizations. First along I tried to answer all these communications, but I had to give it up. But talks like this one give me a chance to reach thousands of ambitious young players. To these I would say that the prime requisites for a major-league career are speed and the ability to hit the ball. The youngster who can run and hit the ball needn't worry over the other details. The big-league schooling will supply them in a hurry. And you can't make it too strong about the necessity of leading clean, temperate lives. Baseball no longer has any use for the man who dissipates."

### Dubious Compliment

MRS. JONES was an ardent worker in the cause of the prevention of cruelty to animals, and, when Mrs. Brown came to tea, told her a pathetic tale of a mule that she had rescued from a cruel master the day before.

The visitor was very interested, and, when she rose to go, said:

"I am so glad you have told me all those fascinating things about animals, dear Mrs. Jones. I shall never see a mule again without thinking of you."

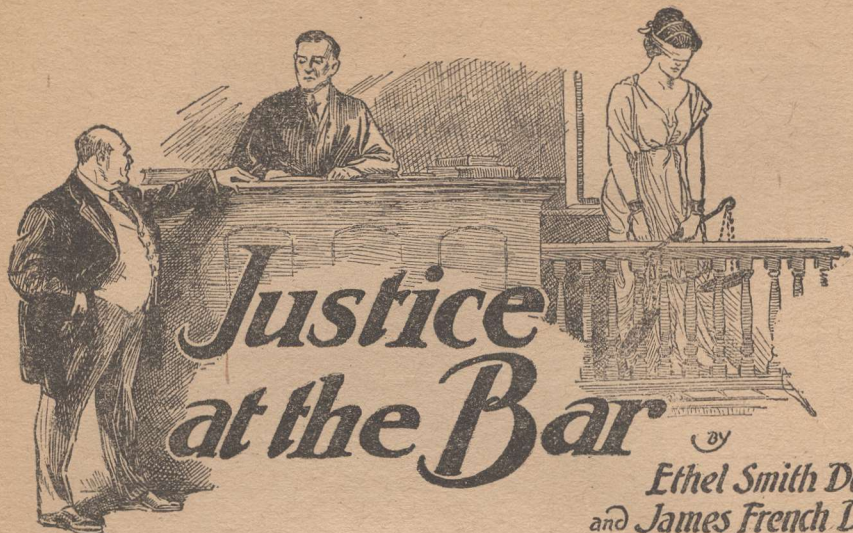
### Beyond Belief

EDISON is a bit of a wag in his way, and he knows how to choke off inquisitive visitors to his laboratory.

"What is that?" asked an interviewer, pointing to a queer-looking model.

"That," replied the inventor gravely, "is a motor to run by sound. You attach it to a cradle, and the louder the baby howls the faster the cradle rocks. I ought to make a fortune out of that—don't you think so?"





# Justice at the Bar

by  
*Ethel Smith Dorrance*  
and *James French Dorrance*

## PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

The story in brief for the benefit of new readers.

**J**ULIAN RANDOLPH has been none too honorable in his career as a lawyer, and when he resolves to reform for the sake of Lora Nelson, whom he loves, he finds that his past comes back to curse and tempt him. As a reward for defending the guilty brother of Marcus Nordhoff, political boss, on a charge of murder, he has secured the appointment to fill a vacancy as justice of the supreme court. The boss has also promised him the party nomination for the full term to follow.

Finding upon investigation, however, that the boss is about to play traitor to him, Randolph reverts, in his resentment, to his old dishonorable methods. He remembers that, before the trial, Nordhoff's brother, Clifford, confided to his care certain papers, including a certificate proving that Marcus Nordhoff, using his brother's name, once contracted a bigamous marriage with one May Morrison. And the signature of May Morrison is in the unmistakable handwriting of Roxana Frisbee, Randolph's erstwhile secretary and star witness in perjury.

With the idea of obtaining redress for the girl, he brings her face to face with Marcus Nordhoff. The latter's better instincts are aroused, and he provides liberally for Roxana Frisbee. On the way home he remembers that the matter of the nomination has not been mentioned. If Randolph wants to blackmail him, he will be compelled to give

him the nomination. If Randolph refrains from blackmailing him, the boss concedes, in a burst of generosity, he's a man, and deserves to get it.

Randolph is nominated, and elected. But Lora Nelson is told that he attained his success by blackmailing Nordhoff, and she refuses to see him.

## CHAPTER XXX—(Continued.)



**W**ITH a sigh of relief, Julian sank back into his chair. His eyes wandered aimlessly to the desk calendar which Herder, the methodical clerk, kept written up to the minute. They became riveted on a particular entry for the last day of the week, an entry which read:

Saturday — a. m.  
Decision due on  
Writ of Mandamus,  
Public Service Commission  
vs.  
The Traction Corporation.

He was familiar with every phase of the extended battle between the corporations and the people in which this case represented a final engagement. He had watched the struggle of the reformers—dreamers, many had called



them—to force through the legislature a bill to authorize the forming of a special commission to take charge of transportation matters. He had been a member of the legislature during a portion of the period, and had seen the bill, in various forms and under several sponsors, fail of passage, owing to the corrupt practices of the transportation lobbyists.

He had noted the time when the public became aroused to such a pitch against the carrying companies that the proposal of the Public Service Commission became a factor in the campaign. He had seen the corruptionists give up the fight at Albany, forced to return to inner works of defense.

The bill finally had been passed and the desired commissions created. To one were intrusted the special problems of the metropolis, while the other looked after those of the rest of the State.

For years New York City had been crying for a single fare through the tubes under the harbor into one of its boroughs. The franchises under which Consolidated Traction operated seemed to assure to the public this reasonable rate of fare, but by virtue of using an old steam railroad right of way for part of the distance, the corporation had succeeded in collecting two fares.

This vital public question had been one of the first put before the Public Service Commission, and, after extended hearings, an order had been issued establishing a single fare. The Traction corporation had gone eagerly to the fray, ignoring the order as it intended to ignore the commission in the future.

Court action had followed. The attorney for the Public Service Commission had sued out a writ of mandamus to compel the Traction officials to put into effect the single-fare rate. Holding that the enforcement of this rate would be an unjust raid upon the corporation's treasury, its counsel had moved the va-

cating of the writ. And the decision now lay with Randolph.

Up to the moment of Robert Partland's entry into his chambers this afternoon with the company's brazen offer to give the justice a successful whirl in the stock market without risk, Julian had believed that the case had come to him in natural course. He had been congratulating himself that his decision in the Skinny Priest case had served as sufficient warning to litigants in search for secret favors.

But after his experience with Partland he no longer felt sure of either point. Possibly the Traction people had manipulated matters so that the case fell to him. They evidently did not believe him sincere in his desire to be an honest judge, despite his having broken with his party over the election case.

Deep depression settled over him. It seemed as if all humanity had united in an effort to pull him back into the black waters of trickery and double-dealing, the mire of graft from which he was struggling to rise.

And even the spiritual support of Lora Nelson's encouragement had been withdrawn from him without a word of explanation. That she should have cast him out was the deepest hurt of all—but one that he did not propose to endure in inaction.

He was reviewing the most practical form of his next attempt to reach her when his clerk brought in the card of Bruce Nelson, and underneath the name a line was scribbled: "A matter of vital importance to both of us." The "both" was underscored.

In a flash Julian sensed the real weight of the danger which threatened him. Bruce Nelson's coming on the heels of his expulsion of Partland from his chambers could mean but one thing. He was satisfied that this second visit was not a coincidence. The junior Traction lawyer had had time to return to his office with the news of Randolph's



lofty stand. Nelson, with all the weight of his years and his prominence, had come to apply a heavier whip. The real crisis of his judicial career was at hand. He tried to prepare himself to meet it.

For a minute he delayed answering the waiting clerk. "What next?" he thought, with an audible sigh. "Her uncle! It's hard that he should come on such a mission."

## CHAPTER XXXI.

### THE LAST LITTLE MATTER.

IT did not require intimate knowledge of Randolph's visitor to be aware that the great corporation attorney was not accustomed to cooling his heels in any man's outer office. The famous Nelson temper must already be at the boiling point. Yet Julian did not speak the word that would open the door of his private office.

He was thinking that Nelson's visit was sure proof of the desperate need of Consolidated Traction. They did not dare to rest on their legal rights in the matter of that single fare, because they were in the wrong.

During these minutes of hesitation, while Sam Herder waited in wonder that even the judge should delay admitting a man of such importance, Julian mechanically worded in his mind the opinion he would return in the important case before him. Then: "Show Mr. Nelson in, Sam," he said.

The greeting which Randolph extended to this leader of the metropolitan bar was tinged with reserve, but even so was sufficiently cordial to surprise the visitor. It increased the difficulty of the lawyer's opening. Indeed, it was Julian who finally gave the desired cue.

"I seem to be unusually popular with your firm to-day," he said. "Mr. Partland has just been here."

"So I understand." Nelson showed some slight embarrassment. "It is because I am afraid he bungled matters—put us in an unfortunate light before you—that I find myself here."

"Mr. Partland was most direct," said Julian coldly. "There was no misunderstanding him."

"I should have attended to this matter myself in the first place, Randolph. Partland has a rough way of putting things that sometimes sets highly strung nerves on edge."

"He did more than that to-day, Mr. Nelson."

"Then let me smooth the discord he made and begin afresh," was the suave rejoinder. "We are greatly concerned over your decision in this public-service commission holdup. The possibility that you might be misled by the public clamor for a single fare occurred to us, and it seemed advisable to talk the matter over privately with you. We hope you will see that a decision against the corporation would not be conscientious."

"And you expected to convince my conscience by sending Partland to offer me a bribe?"

"Harsh words, Mr. Justice!" exclaimed the senior counsel. "Mr. Partland must have put it bluntly, as I feared. Forget his visit and listen to me. We think it unjust and wrong that the power of making rates should be placed in the hands of five politicians, however great they may be and however high their characters. If you sustain them in this low-fare matter, it will be but the preface to other raids upon our treasury. It will put an end to the future transit development of the city. No sane man would think of going into a new public utility enterprise, with all the expense involved, and then, at the end of it——"

Julian halted him with a gesture, but before speaking took up a printed brief which bore the heading of Nelson,



Sheen & Partland. "I am certain, Mr. Nelson, that you went into all that most fully in this document. Why is it necessary to explain it again?"

"Then you have decided to rule with us?" Nelson smiled. "I want to thank——"

"I have decided, yes. But I do not say what." Julian's interruption was crisply voiced. "I simply state that, in my opinion, you have overlooked no point in the corporation's favor when presenting the case."

"But surely you have made up your mind to decide with us?"

"My decision will be announced in open court next Saturday morning. I do not consider it 'conscientious,' Mr. Nelson, to give any one an advance hint of its trend."

The face of the veteran lawyer clouded and his lids dropped until his keen eyes were peering through narrow slits.

"You force me, Justice Randolph, to take a step I should have been happy to avoid," he said icily. "Consolidated Traction cannot afford to have an adverse decision in this case, even in your lower court. You must decide with us, and I must have your promise to do so before I leave this room."

"Must?" queried Julian. "And when did the Consolidated purchase the supreme court?"

"Well, sir, we bought one member of that honorable body something over a year ago when Julian Randolph signed an agreement to take no more personal damage suits against the corporation."

Julian could not repress a start of surprise at the daring of his visitor.

The older man continued: "You have not forgotten that we hold your signature to an agreement which, if properly handled, will bring about your impeachment. We should dislike extremely to make the document public,

but we must be protected from this lofty attitude which you have assumed so tardily."

"That agreement was signed when I was an attorney and had a right to accept retainers anywhere," objected Julian. "It was signed before I had any thought of becoming a judge."

"Then all I can say is that it is unfortunate—for you—that you could not see farther into your future; for I can assure you that it will be sufficient to drag you from the supreme-court bench in disgrace if you force us to use it."

"Are you not overlooking the fact that this same document bears the signature of Mr. Partland, your junior partner, and that he signed for your firm? The production of that paper would result in the disbarment of all of you." Although Julian spoke bravely, he did not fully succeed in hiding his concern.

Nelson's answer was firm and assured: "Partland is prepared to assume individual responsibility. He will look out for himself, and he has not set himself up to pass judgment upon his fellows."

Too well did Randolph realize the truth of this. With the help of the firm's influence in certain quarters, Partland probably could squirm from under any charge against him on the ground that he had been forced to enter into the restraining agreement by Randolph's own sharp practice against the corporation.

"Even so," he said, "I don't believe you can affect my place on the bench by anything that happened before I took the oath of office. I am not afraid to stand on my record since."

Nelson reached over to a revolving bookcase which stood between them, and took out a volume containing the constitution of New York. Rapidly he turned the pages until he reached a section for which he evidently was looking. "Let me refresh your memory on



our method of impeachment in the Empire State," he said, then read impressively:

"Article 6, Section 11. Judges of the court of appeals and justices of the supreme court may be removed by concurrent resolutions of both houses of the legislature, if two-thirds of all the members elected to each house concur therein."

He smiled blandly as he glanced up at Julian and noted how the broad shoulders of the younger man were sagging, how intently his eyes were fixed on the flat top of his desk.

"What chance would you have with the legislature, Mr. Justice?" Nelson prodded mercilessly. "You have broken with your party, a party which has a safe margin over two-thirds of all the members of each house. A word from the leaders, and out you must go. You don't doubt, I hope, that they will speak that word for the Consolidated, and that they will be glad to even up the Skinny Priest score?"

This was an argument that seemed unanswerable. Julian knew it, and Nelson knew he knew it. There was nothing for him to say.

"I am sure you are not going to force us to any such harsh measures," proceeded Nelson, in a gentler tone. "I'm willing to make it as easy for you as possible. The legal points involved are fine ones. Perhaps, after all, it will be best for the greater number of citizens to protect the treasuries of the public-service corporations. I can write you a decision that will save your face. All you need to do is to affix your signature, and the written proof of your worst mistake is yours."

There was no answer, and the attorney continued: "Come, man, take the sensible view of this disturbing dilemma. Think of the long future ahead of you. You can still be known as the people's judge if that is your ambition. Remember that impeachment means absolute ruin. There is

no coming back after that. And surely you can see that you haven't a chance with the legislature when the organization is against you? I have had such experience in such matters. What do you say? Shall I write the decision for you to sign?"

Julian's face was a mask when he finally looked up. Nelson would have been more satisfied had there been outward evidence of his defeat. But the words of the justice satisfied him:

"I—think—you—had—better—write—it." Julian's face was drawn, his manner deliberate.

"The wisest decision you ever made, Randolph!" approved Attorney Nelson. "I was certain you would take a common-sense view of the matter. I am glad personally, as well as professionally. I will have the decision for you Saturday morning."

Smiling cynically, Bruce Nelson closed the door. His thoughts were pleasant as he hastened back to his own office. Once more he had won the fight for the corporation he served with body and soul. Another judge had proven as putty in his relentless grasp. He chuckled to himself.

Then his thoughts took a more intimate turn as the mental picture of his beautiful niece appeared before him. In his heart there pulsed a vast thanksgiving that she already knew the real Randolph and had cast him out of her life. Lora had told him of her decision some days since. He was even more content with it now, for she was the one creature whom he would never sacrifice, not even to serve Consolidated Traction. After this latest exhibition of weakness in "the shyster," he never could have let the girl enter into the marriage. He rejoiced that Partland had warned her himself. For that, if for no other reason, he would freely forgive the junior partner for having made a botch of this last little matter.



## CHAPTER XXXII.

BY AID OF CARROTS.

THE court of Justice Randolph had never worn its dignity more heavily than this morning. An attorney of national fame was summing up his attack on the employers' liability act which had recently become a law of the State by legislature enactment. The decision to come from the judge would be of importance, and that dignitary was giving strict attention.

The various corporations which were large employers of labor were represented by lawyers that overflowed the space within the rail, while the seats given over to spectators were filled with labor leaders, who, through their presence in numbers, were making a demonstration for the man who toils. In every face, from judge to stolid bailiff, was shown the tenseness of the session.

The attorney who was closing had reached his climax, and stood with arm upraised in the utter silence that lent eloquence to his noisy peroration, when an outer door swung open with a crack which sounded as loud as a scream. Many necks and eyes turned in time to see a newcomer slip in—one who claimed immediate interest.

Giving full credit to his meager figure, he could have claimed scarcely more than fifteen years. His youthfulness of itself would have attracted attention in this room so dedicated to the serious legal troubles of grown-ups. In addition, his garb was remarkable, from the long-visored plaid cap and frayed, shrunken overcoat to the immaculate riding uniform of khaki and trim boots of yellow leather. His long arms swung awkwardly, and his uncovered head was glorified by a brick-red thatch.

Carrots Mulrooney had been in a police court twice in his life, a fact which had emboldened him to open the door with considerable assurance. But when he stood within this chamber of

august justice, challenged by hostile eyes, seeing, instead of the genial figure that he sought, a black-gowned, majestic being enthroned on a distant dais, panic clutched him.

He hesitated in the main aisle, his hands twisting the plaid cap. But an intense look suddenly blotted out the fright on his freckled little countenance. Straightening, he started blindly up the aisle, heedless of the outraged bailiff at his heels, who was obviously determined to shoo him out.

With a scowl, the famed attorney lowered his effective arm. Caught by the new arrival's unique appearance and the unknown motive that moved him so rapidly, the aggregation of legal talent and spectators gave the lad their full attention.

With muttered threats and grasping hand, the aged officer behind him shuffled over the strip of matting. Just a foot ahead of his clutch skipped the boy. Could he make it?

With a sudden spurt and an adroit shoulder twist, the little chap reached and grasped the gate before he was stopped. "What d'y' mean? You beat it, kid!" commanded the bailiff in a hiss quite audible throughout the room.

"I gotta see the judge," Carrots whispered back as hissing as his captor.

"This ain't no children's court; come along with you!" insisted the officer, his hand sliding warily from the boy's arm to the collar of his shrunken overcoat.

"I've gotta see the——" began Carrots more loudly, shaking at the restrictive hand in time to the palpitations of his heart.

But both his fright and the words were cut short by a familiar voice. "Let him pass, bailiff. He's a messenger of mine," said Julian.

As Carrots smiled a radiant greeting, his wizened appearance vanished; even his freckles seemed transfigured. Slipping through the gate, he made his way to the side of the bench with the



independence of one American gentleman going to confer with another. The justice leaned over.

After one backward glance to make certain that the ubiquitous bailiff could not hear, the boy whispered into Julian's ears. "She's going to ride at four this p. m., boss," he said. "Hope you didn't mind my disturbing your work, but you gave me leave to come here, you know."

The weariness on the face of the judge instantly lightened at the message. "Are you sure? I thought she only rode mornings," he whispered back.

"Well, instead of coming this a. m. she telephones along about ten-thirty that she'd want the filly at four. Didn't take me long to get feelin' sick and come down here to cure it."

Although the lid of his left eye lowered at this point in an expressive wink, the look of importance still sat on Carrots' solemn face.

"Here's something for medicine," said Randolph.

Both faces remained serious as a crinkly piece of paper was rolled into a ball and passed from a large white hand into a small brown one.

"Thank you, boss." Carrots turned half about; then, with a backward glance of extra stealth, he added: "Think I done it pretty neat, don't you?"

Julian nodded his congratulations, and had almost regained an upright position when, impelled by the look, half of threat and half of awe, with which the boy regarded the presence of the waiting bailiff, he leaned over to hear one more whisper: "Say, boss, can you get away? Will he leave you off?"

Julian's smile was too wide for concealment as he replied: "I guess I can, old chap."

Lora Nelson still refused to admit her most widely advertised suitor to her presence. The household servants said "Not at home" to his calls in per-

son, and "May I take the message" to those over the telephone.

Julian had determined to force a meeting. His disturbing experience with her uncle the previous afternoon had only increased in his mind the necessity of talking to her face to face. So he had asked Carrots to let him know if an opportunity came to see the girl.

It was with a light heart that, his duties over, he removed his robe of dignity and emerged from it an eager, boyish lover. Mounted on Charlemagne, he reached the park just in time to overtake Lora entering it, her small groom in attendance.

Julian cantered up and drew in beside the startled girl. He didn't speak at once. He just bared his head and looked at her. At first she met his eyes, flushed and breathless. Then, knowing that she would have to struggle hard against the appeal of him, she was angered, and tightened her rein.

"Will you kindly pass me, Julian? I don't wish to ride with you!" She commanded rather than asked this, in a voice as flat as the rustle of last season's leaves which fluttered under foot.

"I won't, Lora, for I wish to ride with you more than you could possibly wish me not to."

"You are discourteous."

"Maybe so, dear. But you have established the precedent in the last two weeks."

She glanced at him defiantly. "I suppose it has looked that way," she said. "Petty, and not very—very gentlemanly of me!"

"Being what you are, Lora, you must have some good reason for your lack of consideration of me. I don't resent humiliation at your hands, but I wonder if you quite realize how it has hurt?"

"I have a good reason." She turned toward him in one of her sudden moods



of boyish frankness. "I don't mind telling you. It won't change things any. I haven't liked to seem rude, but I didn't dare to see you, to talk with you—even to write you. Now I am stronger?"

"You didn't dare! Why?"

She laughed a short, scornful laugh. "Do you think a woman with a weakness for you could be expected to resist your silver speech, your personal magnetism, your dominating spirit, when even juries can't? I could keep silent—that I could manage to do."

Julian leaned toward her. "Thank you, sweetheart," he murmured. "Your declaration that you still care for me is none the less appreciated for the severity of its wording. And I accept your apology."

"My apology?" exclaimed the girl with indignation.

"Yes. Now I'm going to show you how foolish you were by not talking to you at all. You are going to talk to me, to tell me what it is all about."

Although he spoke lightly, Julian was very grave as he straightened up in his saddle and took a fresh grip on his lines. The flush gradually faded from Lora's face. She looked pale and wretched. For a while they rode in silence.

"Well?" asked Julian at last.

Lora Nelson turned quietly to face him, but with a harder light in her black-lashed eyes than he had ever seen there before.

"For some weeks there has been a standing question between us, Julian," she said. "It is, after all, a good thing that you have forced this interview upon me to-day, for I am now quite ready to answer you. The man I marry must be a man who is morally, as well as physically, brave—a man with honor. You are ineligible."

"And yet you love me?" he murmured.

"Yes, I love you. But that is my

sorrow instead of my glory, as it should be. I could not possibly marry you. Oh, I don't want to pretend any loftiness of principle that isn't really in me; but just for self-protection I couldn't—just because, as I once told you out here in the park, I want to be happy. I never could be happy married to you—not as long as you are what you are, Julian Randolph! In public a cheat and in private a hypocrite!"

"My dear, my dear!" he protested. "It is an old story—what they say about my public career—but exactly what is this other accusation?"

"Don't try to soothe me, don't try to use that famous mesmeric voice on me; I'm past its influence now!" cried the girl in an abandon of resentment. "You have befuddled my judgment of your career, but you can't continue to deceive me about your private life."

Lora's unhappy vehemence ceased suddenly at sound of a violent commotion in their wake. The shriek of an automobile horn was followed by the scream of a tortured beast and the shouts of frightened people. Pulling up, they both turned in their saddles and gazed back in time to witness the end of a terrible accident.

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

"ONE O. K. GENT."

LORA and Julian had just crossed an open roadway and were well into the bridle path on the other side when they turned. But they were easily able to divine what had happened.

Carrots, who had loitered some distance behind with an obvious disinclination to eavesdrop, had dashed suddenly into the crossroad straight into the pathway of a high-power touring car. In his effort to avoid the horse, the chauffeur had not calculated on the skidding of the wheels on the slippery macadam. The heavy machine had knocked the plunging animal out of its



path, struck a lone tree trunk by the roadside, and tumbled back, a shattered wreck. The groom had been thrown, and now lay pinned under a forward wheel.

At once angry fumes began to arise from the rear of the car; the gasoline tank had caught fire. Its occupants, in a panic, shaken but miraculously uninjured, scrambled to the ground and hurried with the bystanders to a safe distance, leaving the boy pinioned by one arm which he was wrenching in a valiant effort to free himself. Then a cry of agony broke from his lips, and he collapsed and lay still. He seemed mercifully to have fainted.

With ghastly faces and craven trembling of knees, the people were hurrying still farther from the expected explosion, when a man in riding clothes rushed suddenly from the bridle path straight toward the danger, dropped to his knees, and grasped the spokes of the wheel which held down the arm of the boy.

"A fool—he's a fool!" muttered the chauffeur.

"You can't do it—save yourself!" cried the owner of the car.

"Back! Everybody back!" came the gruff command of a traffic policeman, riding up.

But the man under the front of the belching car was straining, with scarlet face, every muscle of his powerful frame tense with effort. "Lora!" they heard him cry. "Officer! Somebody—quick—pull him out as I lift! Now!"

At the call, the policeman jumped from his horse, and, to his credit be it said, rushed to aid in the rescue. But he was only in time to drag back a young woman who came running from the bridle path just as the car burst into a bright flare of flames.

Then they saw the rescuer, stumbling toward them, his coat torn, his face smeared with streaks of black, half carrying, half dragging the limp body

of the boy. As he reached the roadside and safety, the tank of the automobile exploded with a deafening roar and a volcanic puff of smoke.

It was with a strong sense of unappreciated righteousness that the protector of public safety then released his infuriated charge. "Julian—Julian!" she sobbed as she reached Randolph and tried to help him.

They laid the small groom prone upon a grassy bank by the roadside, and tenderly bent over him to learn the extent of his wounds. The crowd closed in around them, but they scarcely heeded.

Avoiding the arm which had felt the crunch of the wheel, they searched for other broken bones, straightened out his two lank legs; then, pushing back the vivid thatch of his hair, wiped the dust from his thin, freckled face. Tears were falling from the eyes of the girl when she raised them close to those of the man.

"He has only fainted, Julian. And you—you are unhurt? Oh, thank God—thank God!"

Julian turned to the policeman. "His arm is broken. Send an ambulance call. I'll take him to my home, if you'll be kind enough to get me a taxi, and you can direct the ambulance surgeon there." He gave the name and address. "And, officer, please take charge of our horses. They go to the Saddle Club Stables."

An automobilist who passed just then offered his luxurious limousine, and into it Julian lifted the boy, who was recovering consciousness. "Easy, Carrots," he murmured. "You'll feel better in a jiffy. We'll soon have you comfortably settled in my quarters, and the Jap will coddle you like a twin brother. I'll tell him what pals we are. There now, I know that was a bad twinge, old chap, but——"

"Lay his head in my lap," said Lora,



getting in. "What is it, Carrots? What is it you want?"

She bent to hear the whisper of the boy. Then a surprised and vaguely hurt look crossed her face. "You don't want me to hold you? You prefer the judge? Oh, I see! Yes, he certainly is an O. K. gent!"

She smiled over him as she helped to settle him across Julian's knees. "You're standing it like a grown-up, young fellow," Julian encouraged. "It won't last long, and while you're getting well you will visit me, and you can invite your family and everybody you know to come and see you."

He smiled down into the tortured eyes, and bent with Lora to catch the whisper of the pallid lips. "You sure are one O. K. gent," murmured Carrots. "I never meant to make such a mess of your ride."

Then a spasm of pain seized the boy. Gasping, he collapsed and passed into a second faint. "We won't try to bring him to until we get home," said Julian. "It's more merciful."

"You are a brave man, Julian," said Lora huskily. "You don't know how grateful, how happy it has made me to find you so brave."

His smile faded. "You say I am physically brave to-day. Well, dear, I am trying with all there is in me to learn to be morally brave. I have never defended my past to you. But, supposing I had been absolutely honest since I was elected—would that convince you of my sincerity?"

"Yes, yes, Julian, only——"

"Well, Lora, I have been," he assured her.

"But what about——"

"I've seen Miss Frisbee once alone since I've known you," he interrupted, anticipating her question, "once when she came to my apartment unexpectedly to see me on business that she considered important. I finished with her that night, and she proved yesterday

that she was quite reconciled. Didn't you notice an announcement about her in the morning papers?"

"No; what do you mean?"

"She was married to Million Mulligan yesterday while on a motoring trip. He has been interested in her since the first time he saw her, and I think he will make her happy. I hope so, for her life so far has been very hard. And I'm sure she'll be the salvation of Mulligan."

"And are you glad, Julian—really glad?"

"For shame, Lora! I love you—you—in a way that excludes all other interests. You must believe that. You believe it, don't you?"

Gravely he searched the quivering, tear-stained face raised to his. "I do!" she said.

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

### RANDOLPH'S REGRETS.

IT was with pleasant anticipations that Lora permitted Robert Partland to hand her out of the Nelson limousine, when it halted in the covered driveway before the great town house of the Berkeley Armisteads. The musicale of this evening was certain to be worth while, the supper to follow would doubtless be delicious, and the dance afterward would be held in the finest private ballroom in all brilliant Gotham. Besides, Vida Armistead was Lora's most intimate friend.

She felt sorry, though, that Julian had found himself unable to come. He must attend to some judicial matter, and Lora was determined that at no time, no matter how urgent her desire to have him with her, must she interfere with his career. Uncle Bruce, also, had begged off on account of a "sudden legal entanglement" which would occupy him for the entire evening in his library at home; and had suggested his junior partner as her escort.



Partland had shown such eagerness to serve, and, at her hesitation, seemed so hurt that, although she could not overcome her resentment of his gratuitous information about Julian, she found herself accepting his offer. After a few minutes she was chatting with him in their old confidential manner on their way to the function. She purposely forbore any mention of Randolph, even denied herself the pleasure of praising his courage in the park. And he on his part made no reference to his last call upon her.

They found that they were rather late; the guests were already seated in the half circle of chairs that filled the ballroom floor. Already the orchestral prelude on the program was beginning. Vida, radiant in her favorite rôle of hostess, was still standing in the lower hall for a murmured welcome. She shook hands with Partland; then, as he went off to find chairs, seized Lora's shoulders and touched a featherlike kiss to her cheek.

"I'm so glad you came, dear," she exclaimed in her sweet, genuine way. "I was afraid you wouldn't feel up to it."

"Feel up to it?" repeated Lora. "My feelings could scarcely be improved."

"Or your looks, either," agreed her friend. "What a wonderful gown—that silvery effect is lovely on you. You are brave to keep up this way—it must have been a good deal of a shock."

Lora thought of the little groom. "Why—why how did you learn of it? You don't mean to tell me that the evening papers have got it for a story?"

"Oh, my, no!" exclaimed Vida, with such a gasp of horror that Lora was surprised. Then her hostess changed the subject and asked about Mr. Nelson.

"I'm simply loaded down with regrets this evening," answered Lora, "and I can vouch for the sincerity of all that I bring. Honestly, Vida, all my little

world is in the clutches of the law. Uncle Bruce sits at home in the library fretting out somebody or other's defense, and Julian Randolph is in his chambers struggling with some decision equally vital and equally hard."

Vida Armistead raised her dark brows. "I am sorry that your uncle couldn't come."

"Judge Randolph's regrets are even more heartfelt, I assure you," said Lora. "He loves music, and I have described to him the joys of your aftermath dances."

Her hostess gazed at her curiously. "You certainly are a wonderful girl!"

"At least I feel wonderfully happy to-night—I couldn't stand it to feel more so!"

The curiosity in the face of her dearest friend changed to pity. "Come, come, dear," she murmured, "you shouldn't pretend before me. Julian Randolph's regrets—Lora, didn't you guess that he wouldn't be invited?"

"Not invited, Vida! Whatever are you talking about?"

"Dearest girl, I've heard everything, and, while my heart aches for you, I thoroughly approve."

"You've heard what, and from whom?" Lora's low voice was tense.

But her friend did not answer, for a rustle of programs was followed by an expectant silence in the ballroom. Vida drew her within, where Robert Partland was waiting by their chairs, just as the pure, passionate notes of the "Elizabeth's Prayer" thrilled the air. A great prima donna had consented to sing if she might do so early, in order to reach the Metropolitan at a certain hour. It was a great privilege to hear her at such close range.

Probably Lora Nelson, ardent musical devotee though she was, was the only person present who did not hear the song. She had expected to enjoy the treat, but found herself too disquieted to listen. She smiled and



clapped her hands with the rest at the end, but without realizing at all what she was doing. She never did know what the next number was. With an odd flutter of foreboding at her heart, she was thinking over Vida's strange manner, Vida's look of pity, Vida's ambiguous words. Her announcement that she had not invited Julian to her musicale was no less than startling. Why hadn't she? Hitherto she had been one of his most zealous social advocates. Why hadn't she expected her closest friend to "feel up to" coming to the affair? If it was the accident to her groom in the park that Vida had heard of, certainly no sane person could taboo Julian for his part in that!

It seemed to Lora now that she remembered a puzzled expression on Julian's face when she had asked him that afternoon during their trip home from the park whether he was coming to the musicale. She had hoped—had expected that he would wish to escort her. He had hesitated, had glanced at her with a question in his eyes, then apologized to her most convincingly, and sent regrets to Mrs. Armistead. And he had not been invited!

Then in a flash the solution came to her. Julian knew the friendship that existed between Vida and herself, and, not having been invited, he wished to spare her the mortification.

Much gay chatter through the next interlude. Then the trio of the Rhein Maidens brought silence, and the opportunity to consider another phase of this unexpected problem. Vida had heard something about Julian. Who had been talking to her? Lora herself had been talked to on the same subject.

It was not until the after-supper dancing began that the girl found opportunity to ask a question of the person who had talked to her. "Take me into the conservatory," she suggested when Partland came to claim the first

number. "I'm tired, and the first few dances are bound to be crushes."

They passed through a small forest of the famed Armistead palms, and sat down beside a fountain. Then she turned upon him. "Have you been carrying tales to Vida?" she asked bluntly.

"Why—why, she's like a sister of yours," he stammered. "I—I thought you'd want her to know."

"Robert, what is your reason for taking up this new profession of talebearing?"

His affection for her was so great that the sight of her evident displeasure almost silenced him. Yet her cold look urged him to utter a defense.

"I knew that Vida had this informal Wagner fest on the books, and I was afraid that it would make you uncomfortable if Randolph came. I wanted to spare you the embarrassment of meeting him so soon; so I told Vida of our little talk over the tea cups, and that—that you'd given him his congé, you know, and that——"

Partland's words came stumblingly, then ceased altogether when he glanced up to find Lora's eyes still steadily upon him. "And might I inquire into the motive of this determined surveillance of my most personal affairs?"

"Lora, dear, don't take this manner toward me—surely we've been friends too long for that!" said the lawyer. "As I told you the other day, my one excuse for what you call surveillance is that, knowing your fineness, Randolph is no fit man for you to——"

Lora interrupted. "Julian Randolph is the finest man I've ever known."

"Julian Randolph is the wrongest man I've ever known," contradicted Partland more firmly.

"You don't know him at all or you wouldn't say that," exclaimed the girl. "Does a man have to remain wrong just because he starts wrong? Are we puppets in a play, unalterably tagged either



'good' or 'bad'? How stupid of anybody to judge anybody else, since we all have in us the worst and the best possibilities! Isn't it much more of an achievement to fight your way back after you've strayed from——"

"Perhaps, if one does it, Lora. But Julian Randolph hasn't."

Lora's eyes flashed a warning. "The bare details you told me the other day were true," she said, making an obvious effort to control herself. "But the conclusions you drew from them were quite false."

Partland laughed harshly. "Oh, if you've talked to his honor, the judge, there's nothing that will convince you. The subtle sophistry and golden tongue of the crook lawyer would convince any——"

"That will do, Robert. You have done worse than insult me. You have maligned my dearest friend." Lora's anger blazed. "As I expect to marry this subtle-minded and golden-tongued crook before long, you will oblige me by seeking out Vida Armistead at once and telling her that you have made one of your rare mistakes."

"But, Lora, you don't mean——"

"There is one other thing you can do for me, the last I shall ever ask of you," she added, starting for the door. "Have the footman call my car. I wish to go home—at once—alone!"

She was about to pass him with an air of finality when the abject misery on his face caught her attention. She stopped and gazed at him thoughtfully for a moment. "It seems to surprise you that a bad man can, by trying, turn himself into a good man. It is no wonder, then, that——"

But Partland plunged indiscreetly once more, and spoiled her softer mood. "You'll find him out in time," he insisted, his face flushed, his hands shaking with agitation. "No one could be what Julian Randolph has been and long satisfy an idealist like you."

"I was about to say," she resumed frigidly, "that if you do not believe in change, it may surprise you as well to find that friendships can cease. However, the case of our own will accustom you to the fact."

With a nod, she passed into the hall and up the stairway to the dressing room.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### LORA REACHES A RESOLVE.

IT was midnight before Lora reached home, for she managed to arrange a satisfactory little chat with Vida in her boudoir. As she entered the house, she noticed that the desk lamp was still burning in her uncle's library, tiptoed to the door, and peered smilingly in—a radiant picture in her silver gown. But there was no one in the room to appreciate it.

"He's gone to bed and forgotten the light again," she thought.

Approaching his huge claw-foot desk, she was about to click off the current when the telephone standing at her right hand gave her a sudden inspiration. Sinking into the desk chair, she called a number.

"Hello, is this Judge Randolph's apartment?" she asked. "You don't expect him until later to-night? This is Miss Nelson. I thought I'd call up again to ask how the young boy is resting now. Asleep? That's fine! Good night!"

"He sure is one O. K. gent!" She murmured the boy's tribute as she hung up the receiver. "He sure is," she thought, "and everybody's bound to recognize the fact soon. Right you are, young Carrots! I shall always love you for demonstrating the fact to me."

Leaning her bare elbows on the desk, she sank into musing. Lora was very happy this midnight. Perhaps through her defense of him at Vida's musicale,



she felt nearer to Randolph than ever before—and nearer to the joy of life. The misery of the past several weeks had prepared her to appreciate the relief, the exultation, and the hope now surging through her.

Sitting there quietly, her hands clasped in her lap, her gaze resting idly on the desk, her eyes were suddenly caught by the typewritten name, "Randolph, J., at the bottom of a sheet of paper that lay before her. The paper had all the appearance of the copy of a judicial opinion, such as her uncle had often shown her. She picked it up—it was dated the following day. How strange that the opinion should lie at this hour on her uncle's desk! How was it that a lawyer should know the decision in advance at all?

She began to read through the legal phrases. This, she realized, was the decision in the fight which her uncle was making for Traction against the new public-service commission. Her interest increased, for so firm had been her stand on the side of the public that her uncle, unusually irritated by the expression of her opinions, had declared the subject taboo in the house.

With instinctive foreboding, the girl glanced at the other papers on the desk. There were several carbon copies of the judicial document in carbon, and one which seemed to be the original. Beside the pile of typed sheets lay several papers scribbled over in her uncle's writing, all scratched and interlined.

She looked up the first of these and compared it with that which bore Julian's name. The context was identical.

The girl had lived too long in the home of Traction's chief counsel not to know what it all meant. Her uncle had written decisions for judges before when the cases involved big stakes. She knew that these opinions were bought and paid for, that the price usually was as high as the deed was dishonorable,

Lora had no illusions regarding her relative, and for him attempted no excuses. Although fond of him for his tenderness to her, she knew that, in plain terms, he was the crooked lawyer of a crooked corporation. But her occasional protests, which had been the result of her youthful disillusionments, had been so received that she realized she could never be her uncle's keeper.

She again seized the original and the copied sheets, matching them down to the last word of their polished phrases.

At the end, she dropped the papers as if they had scorched her fingers. It was true then—it was true! Julian had allowed her uncle to dictate this decision against the people. No matter what method Traction had used to force him, the thing was heinous—it was the death warrant of her respect for him.

So that was what both had been so busy over while she went with Partland to the musicale!

There could be no doubt about it. Her uncle had written the decision, and that very evening must have compared the typewritten copies with his script, in order that there be no blunders in it, not even a misplaced mark of punctuation. The original would go to the judge in the morning for his official signature, and by him would be handed down from the bench. The copies were doubtless for the newspapers.

Then all at once a storm of protest caught her. What was the use of her understanding and her strength, of Julian's finer perceptions, of their love, if together they might not conquer? Why might not she through affection pull him up to their love's level as easily as Traction through greed could drag him down? Why had she this passionate sympathy for the people, if not to fight for them—this longing for happiness, if not to achieve it—this supreme love for Julian, if not to help him live right? Flushed, tremulous, almost gay, Lora reached a resolve.



## CHAPTER XXXVI.

FOR THE GAME OR THE FINISH.

LORA had decided to go to Julian in the morning before court opened. Surely for her sake, at her spoken plea, he would refuse to hand down this decision which her uncle had written for the benefit of Traction and the defrauding of the public.

So it was that, pale and sweet of expression, she arose to greet the judge in his outer office upon his arrival the following morning. That Julian was surprised to see her was patent. He looked more haggard than she had ever seen him, and his eyes shone more brilliantly than usual from behind their heavy lids. But his manner was, as always, irrepachable.

"I planned to come to you this afternoon," he said as he followed her into his chambers and closed the door.

She turned and faced him. "It would have been too late, Julian." Her voice trembled.

He scrutinized her white face, then shook his head sadly. "More suspicions, Lora?"

The girl lifted to his face her beautiful, honest eyes. "Not suspicions—facts this time," she said. "I have come to you this morning to test your love for me, Julian—not for the sake of testing it, but for an object that is worth while. I am going to ask you to do something hard for me. You are going to do it, and it will help to make us very happy. I—I know——"

"Yes, Lora," he prompted gently as she hesitated.

"I know that you are to hand down an opinion in the Consolidated Traction case this morning. I happen also to know that Uncle Bruce wrote the decision. Julian, you must not side against the people in this. No matter what pressure they put upon you, no matter——"

"Did he—did your uncle tell you this?"

"Don't let us waste time on side issues," she urged. "There need be no evasions between us now, for I know your strength as well as your weakness, dear. I saw the first draft in his own hand and the copy he sent for your signature this morning. You have made a grave mistake, Julian, but there is still time to right it. You have been untrue to your trust, but only in thought, and I know they must have oppressed you heavily. But you will—you must——*Don't* be angry," she interrupted herself, suddenly caught by his strange, resentful look as he stared at her. "There is no time for anger. There is no time for anything but plain words between us. You must think—think—and decide how best to do justice to the public before you go into court. Why, Julian, surely you are not——" She paused, almost frightened at his expression.

"So you think I have let your uncle write my opinion, do you?"

"I—I know it, Julian."

"Then all my past efforts haven't given you the least germ of faith in me?"

"If I had no faith I shouldn't be here, Julian."

"Tell me," he asked stiffly, "could a woman such as you really love a man who would let her dictate the right and wrong of his life to him? If I weren't a man for my own sake, I should think——"

"Better let a woman dictate than Consolidated Traction," interrupted Lora, but unsteadily.

"Sit down, please," said Julian, and himself sat down at his desk. "I have studied this case carefully. The points of law involved are fine ones. Justice must be done the people, but care should be taken not to do injustice to the corporation."

"Injustice could scarcely be done Traction, Julian."



"Injustice may be done anywhere," he said, with grave emphasis.

As she looked across at him her eyes shrank from his hard gaze, then fell upon a document on his desk. She recognized it as the first copy of the opinion she had studied so minutely.

"I—I don't understand you this morning, Julian," she cried. "I thought yesterday that there would be no more misunderstandings between us—that there could be none. You have acknowledged to me that the methods which put you on the bench were not what they should have been. But I know of one way to atone for them—to make yourself the most upright judge in the entire State. Make your emblem of office really your robe of honor. The only time in which any one has to fight is now, Julian. Your greatest fault has been your temporizing. Can't you promise me, not that you will let me dictate about this case, but that you will decide it absolutely according to your own conscience before you go into court? If you will promise that, I shall be satisfied. It means everything—everything to me, Julian."

The cruel expression of his face softened. With an impatient gesture he pushed back the dark, thick hair from his forehead and walked over to stand before her, gazing down upon her as though curiously. "You seem to know a great deal, Lora, but evidently not everything about this case. Is it news to you that if I promise what you ask, they will probably force me from the bench?"

Startled, she sprang to her feet and faced him. "If it means leaving the bench, leave it, Julian! Would that matter much?"

He shook his head with a short laugh. "And it was for you that I struggled so to gain the honor!"

"But life is not the victory, Julian. *Life is the fight*. Even though it is harder and longer, fight to be honest;

it is more of life. Can't you—won't you promise?"

"I would do anything for you that was possible, Lora. You believe that, don't you? But in this matter I must follow my own judgment. I made my decision irrevocably several days ago—remember that. If I did a thing that seemed right to you merely to please you, you would never——"

A sharp knock at the door silenced him. His clerk entered. "They are waiting for you in the courtroom, Mr. Justice," Herder said. "I—I disliked to interrupt, but it is after the hour."

With a poignant feeling of despair in her young life, Lora saw him pick up from his desk the draft of the decision which her uncle had written. She walked to a window. Julian followed, and, with the same harassed look she had noted, stooped to whisper something close to her ear.

"I love you, Lora!" was what he said.

She heard his hurried step across the room, then the door quietly closed. He had gone—gone with the decision in his hand! And he had not promised her!

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

### THE JUDGE DECIDES.

NO convicted criminal up for sentence ever turned toward a courtroom with a heavier heart than did the beautiful Miss Nelson this morning. She had decided to be present when Justice Randolph pronounced the words that were to kill her life's happiness.

Under the guidance of an attendant she went straight to the room in which Judge Randolph was holding court. Strangely enough, she never before had entered a courtroom. This was in obedience to one of her uncle's rare commands.

When she remembered that he would unquestionably be present this morning, she halted nervously at the door. He never would understand her presence,



and doubtless would be violently displeased. But the thought did not affect her determination; she only hoped that he might not notice her.

She shrank into the very last seat. The crowd was considerable, especially within the inclosure for members of the bar, so that it was some seconds before she distinguished the spare figure of her uncle. She looked also for Robert Partland, and felt relieved not to find him. Partland would have understood too well why she was there.

Following the gaze of other eyes, her look soon became directed to a door at the side of the room. The door opened suddenly to admit Julian, his clerk at his heels.

He ascended the bench and faced the group of distinguished attorneys within the rail. He did not waste a single glance upon the spectators. In his hand he still held the typewritten sheet which she had examined in her uncle's library—which would become his opinion by the annexation of his scrawled "Randolph, J."

When he began to read it, Lora sipped the last dregs of her misery. In her own previous study of the paper certain of its phrases had become indelibly stamped upon her mind. As she recognized them now, falling from Julian's lips in his famous voice, she knew that up to that moment she had hoped—that to the very last, upheld by the vain faith of women when they love, she had believed that somehow the final blow might be averted.

"Investment in public utilities should not be disparaged, lest the public itself, in the long run, be made to suffer," read Justice Randolph with magnificent enunciation.

"How Uncle Bruce does like to safeguard the poor public!" she thought cynically.

"The legislature was wise in providing for the judicial review of orders of decrees of the public-service commis-

sion when they relate to the reduction of rates, which may mean the diminution of income by hundreds of thousands of dollars annually."

"Judicial review?" her mind re-echoed. "Judicial review, by Uncle Bruce!"

As the reading continued, Lora feared lest she had overestimated her strength. She felt for the back of the bench in front of her with the intent of steadying herself and slipping away, when there came a pause in the reading. The paper on which was recorded her guardian's masterpiece fell to the stand in front of the judge. Randolph's eyes were sweeping the room for the first time. When they fell upon her, he began to speak again.

"I have been reading from a motion which the learned counsel for the Traction corporation voluntarily prepared for me. It shows the decision they would like the court to reach. It is clear that the public-service commission has the right to order this reduction of rates. It is equally clear that the court has the power of review as to the reasonableness of the order. The court has so reviewed, and finds the single fare entirely reasonable. The motion to quash the writ of mandamus is denied. Mr. Clerk, call the next case."

Through a mist Lora saw her uncle gather up his papers and prepare to leave the room. The desire that he should not see her brought her to her feet, and she hurried toward the door. But before passing through it, she turned and sent to Julian a radiant look.

She did not quit the building, but hurried to his chambers to await his coming on the adjournment of court. A thousand fine phrases came to her mind; but when at last he came to her, she could not speak. She just stretched out her two hands and looked at him.

As he grasped them, Julian shook his



head ruefully. "They may try to impeach me before the legislature," he said, "but if they oust me they'll have to fight for the pleasure."

"Julian, why did you do it just that way?"

"I wanted to make it as strong as possible."

"Then why didn't you tell me?"

"I hurt you for the moment, I know, Lora, but it was to establish your confidence in me, to show you that my decision had been made already in a cause even better than your request—for the cause of justice. And I was hurt, too, dear, at your lack of faith—only a little bit hurt, and for just a moment, though; for I know that I deserve suspicion. It will take time to build up your absolute faith."

"Say, rather, it *has* taken time, Julian."

"When you say that," he told her softly, "you make me feel that I have won my great fight—I have conquered myself. Whether I continue on the bench or not, I have worn my robe with honor—I've been the people's judge."

"You are my judge! You are my judge!" she exclaimed.

"Yes, Lora!" He smiled. "And I am, only because you have always been mine!"

THE END.

### What Is Horse Power

AMONG many engineers there arises discussion as to the incidents surrounding the origin of the term horse power as applied to the steam engine. The following quotation from "Farey on the Steam Engine," published in 1827, will be welcomed by many:

"The machinery in the great breweries and distilleries in London was then moved by the strength of horses, and the proprietors of these establishments, who were first to require Mr. Watt's engines, always inquired what number

of horses an intended engine would be equal to.

"In consequence, Mr. Watt made some experiments on the strong horses employed by the brewers in London, and found that a horse of that kind, walking at the rate of two and a half miles per hour, could draw 150 pounds avoirdupois by means of a rope passing over a pulley, so as to raise up that weight, with a vertical motion, at the rate of 220 feet per minute. This exertion of mechanical power is equal to 33,000 pounds—or 528 cubic feet—of water raised vertically through a space of one foot per minute, and he denominated it a horse power, to serve for a measure of the power exerted by this steam engine."

This estimate is much beyond the capacity of the average strong horse. Smeaton and other early engineers estimated that 22,000 pounds per minute was more accurate.

### A Question of Clothes

AN old lady in the Scottish Highlands engaged the young son of a farmer to act as page, and fitted him out with a livery which was to be worn only on special occasions. On the day of a dinner party a shockhead was thrust into the drawing-room, and a voice inquired:

"Please, ma'am, am I to put on my ain breeks or yours?"

### Hens of Leisure

YES, since John came into his money we have a nice country house, horses, cows, pigs, hens, and——"

"That must be charming!" broke in the other woman. "You can have all the fresh eggs you want, and——"

"Oh, well," hastily interrupted the first speaker, "of course, the hens can lay if they like to, but in our position it isn't at all necessary."



# The Breath of Suspicion

By J.A. Fitzgerald



(COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE)

## CHAPTER I.

### HANDS OFF!

**S**OUNDS of angry voices coming from the vicinity of the stage door gave the members of the Avon Theater Stock Company the impression that some outsider was endeavoring to convince Jones, the eccentric guardian of that portal, that he had a right to invade the sacred domain of the drama. They judged that one of the voices belonged to Jones, although none of them had ever heard the doorman speak above a whisper. As the voices rose higher, something familiar about one of them caused the players to halt the process of making up long enough to shove their heads through the dressing-room doors and glance along the corridor that led to the stage entrance.

What they saw at first glance impelled them to step into the hall to get a better view of the scene and the belligerents. To say that they were surprised to see that Harris, the leading man of the company, and Jones were creating the disturbance is putting it mildly. With the exception of Miss

Dean, the pretty little ingénue, Harris, a thoroughly conceited fellow of middle age, with viciousness stamped all over his weakly handsome face, found it difficult to speak courteously to the other members of the company. That he should be involved in an argument with the doorman was inconceivable. Beyond filing numerous protests against his passion for onions, Harris had never deigned to notice the humble Jones.

The two men presented a strange contrast as they faced each other—Harris immaculate from the tip of his shiny patent-leather boots to the top of his coruscating silk hat, Jones disreputable from a sartorial standpoint, his faded black slouch hat pulled down to meet the upturned collar of his shabby coat. Dark-blue goggles covered his eyes, but a shapely nose, strong mouth, and firm jaw showed beneath them. What Jones really looked like was a mystery. In the three years that he had been guarding the Avon's stage door no one had ever seen him without either hat or glasses.

"What right have you to interfere in my affairs?" shouted Harris.

Jones stepped closer to the angry



leading man. The doorman was at least four inches taller than any one ever believed him to be. He had straightened up now, and was standing chin to chin with Harris. "What right have I?" came in an even tone. "The right of every decent man who sees a black-guard trying to make an impression on an innocent little girl."

Harris noticed for the first time that the other members of the company were looking on. "Anybody would think that you were her guardian," Harris returned, with a sneer.

"Lucky for you that I am not," came in the same even voice.

Harris pushed the doorman away from him, but Jones came right back. "Why, before I'd allow any onion-eating tramp to butt——"

The leading man got no further. In the flash of an eye, Jones' fingers closed about his throat and backed him up against the wall with a suddenness that upset the silk hat and sent it rolling around the dusty floor.

Bruce, the stage manager, and several of his assistants took a hand in the argument at this point, and induced the doortender to loosen his grip on Harris' breathing apparatus. "More professional jealousy, eh?" said Bruce, chuckling. He never missed a chance to take a shot at the leading man.

Harris picked up his hat and smoothed the ruffled nap with his sleeve. "If you say a single word about me to Miss Dean," he threatened, "I'll have you fired."

He scarcely had finished speaking before the swinging doors parted, and Miss Dean stepped into the picture. Her flushed cheeks made it plain that she had heard all that had transpired. "It won't be necessary for Mr. Jones to tell me anything," she said to Harris. "I know all that I want to know about you."

Harris forced a laugh, bowed low, and retired to his dressing room. The

other members of the company, inwardly tickled at the manner in which Jones had handled the bumptious leading man, hurried back to the task of getting ready for the evening performance. They had viewed with apprehension Harris' brazen efforts to impress the girl, but fear of disrupting a highly prosperous organization as well as the delicacy of the situation had prompted them to remain silent. Only seventeen years old, fresh from a dramatic school, it was the most natural thing in the world that Elsa Dean should be flattered by the attentions of Lester Harris, an actor with good looks and an established reputation.

In the time she had been with the company she had given every promise of becoming a successful actress. The bill was changed every night, so she had a splendid opportunity to show what she could do in a wide variety of parts; and the way she acquitted herself won the plaudits of press and public alike. She was popular with her fellow players, and when they realized that Jones had opened her eyes to the danger of listening to Harris they were grateful to the eccentric doorman.

Elsa showed that she appreciated Jones' interference in her behalf by joining him after the others had started for their rooms. "I want to thank you, Mr. Jones," she said sweetly. "Mr. Harris has helped me with my work, and I thought it was good business policy to be courteous to him."

"If you need any help in the future," said Jones, "there are enough of us around here to assist you; but give Harris a wide berth."

"Has he got such a bad reputation as that?" asked Elsa naively, her eyes wide with surprise.

"I don't know anything about his reputation," replied the doorman, "but I do know that he has a wife and two children in Liverpool. There are three



good reasons for a pretty girl to give him a wide berth."

The little actress remained silent for a few minutes, then extended her hand. "You won't have any cause to warn me again," she said. "I'll follow your advice." She started toward her dressing room, but retraced her footsteps. "I knew I had something for you," she said. "In the excitement I forgot all about it. I was introduced to a friend of yours to-day, and——"

"Who was it?" interrupted Jones.

Miss Dean was fumbling in her hand bag. "An awfully nice man named Hogan," she replied. "I was in the box office when he came to buy seats, and Manager Randall introduced us."

"Tommy Hogan, the wholesale vegetable man?" asked Jones.

Elsa nodded in the affirmative. "He told me to give you this with his compliments." She drew a large onion from her bag and handed it to him.

Jones took it eagerly and bit it in two. "Um!" came the munching comment. "That's fine! Hogan has the best onions in town."

## CHAPTER II.

### A STRONG WEAKNESS.

A LOVE scene between Miss Dean and Harris that night took three curtain calls. The realistic acting of the young woman was a surprise to the other members of the company who were familiar with the dramatic incident behind the scenes earlier in the evening. Her performance was sufficiently realistic to fool the leading man into the belief that she was in earnest and not acting at all; his conceit convinced him that she was throwing all her ardor into the scene to convince their fellow players that she thought as much of him as ever. Indeed, some of the other actors were inclined to feel the same as Harris about her acting until they heard her assure him that she would

not need his services as an escort after the performance.

On being rejected, the leading man hurried through the door that led to the auditorium and the office of Manager Randall, instead of passing through the stage door to the street. This change from his habit made it certain that Jones' job would be hanging in the balance in a very few minutes.

"You're in for it now, old pal," Bruce whispered to Jones. "Harris has just slipped out to give the boss an earful of his troubles."

Jones was removing three or four of the jackets from a fresh onion when the stage manager spoke to him. "I shouldn't have lost my temper," the doorman said quietly. "I'm sorry I grabbed him by the throat the way I did, but it can't be helped now."

"We're all sorry," Bruce said with a laugh; "sorry that you didn't press a little harder! I expect the old man will want a report from me, and rest assured I won't give you any the worst of it."

A violent ringing of the telephone in Bruce's office interrupted their conversation. "There's Randall now, I'll bet," said Bruce, starting for the telephone. "Stick around a while in case he wants you."

Bruce's guess proved correct. Manager Randall was on the other end of the wire. "Come out front as soon as you've finished," said the manager.

Ten minutes later Bruce joined Randall in his office. The manager was pacing up and down nervously. "What was that row back stage to-night?" he began.

"Harris and Jones got tangled up for a few minutes, but it didn't amount to anything," replied Bruce.

"It amounted to this much," said Randall; "Harris was just in here threatening to run out on me. He says there is a conspiracy among the company to damage his reputation. He also says



that Jones tried to kill him." Bruce tried to dismiss it all with a laugh. "It's all very well for you to treat the matter lightly," the manager went on, "but we never needed Harris more than we do at this minute with that big production of 'Romeo and Juliet' coming along next week. I haven't got any use for Harris as a man, but you cannot deny that he is a corking good actor, and that he has the women of the town flocking here to every performance. I came very near laughing when he spoke about having his reputation damaged, but I didn't dare. Men like Harris are more sensitive about their reputations than men of highly moral character."

"Harris is only bluffing when he talks about quitting," Bruce assured him. "He's got the best stock job in the country right here, and he knows it."

"I know all that," admitted Randall; "but we can't take any chances. Harris is in a position to jump us at any time. What did Jones tell Miss Dean about him?"

Bruce started for the telephone without replying. "What are you going to do?" asked the manager.

"Bring Jones in here and let him tell——"

"Heavens, no!" exclaimed the manager. "Anything but that. I can't bear the smell of onions. You know what happened. Tell me yourself."

"I didn't hear the first of it," Bruce went on, "but I understand that Jones told Harris he would expose him if he didn't cease his attentions to Miss Dean. Jones threatened to tell her that Harris was a married man, and Harris got furious. He called Jones a few names, and Jones shut off his wind for a brief period. Unfortunately for Harris, Miss Dean heard the whole quarrel. To-night she turned him down cold, and he rushed out here to you with his sad story. That's all there is to it."

Manager Randall kept silent for some

time. "Did Jones have Harris right?" asked the manager. "Has he been forcing his attentions on Miss Dean?"

"I wouldn't say that he forced them on her," replied Bruce; "but he goes out of his way to flatter her, and, as she is only a child, he hasn't had much difficulty in getting her interested. His actions have got most of the company boiling. We haven't told you because we figured you had enough trouble out front. A bad feature of the situation is that the girl is here without anybody to look after her."

Bruce watched the manager closely. Randall was chewing on the end of a cigar, evidently in deep thought. The stage manager guessed what his employer was thinking about. He had a daughter about Elsa's age. "Jones was right!" exclaimed Randall, after a lapse of several minutes.

"I knew you'd see it in that light," put in Bruce. "I'm glad——"

"Not so fast," interposed Randall. "Jones was right, but I'm in an unfortunate position. Harris has demanded that I discharge him, and he threatens to leave the company unless I do so. Harris knows he has me where he can put the screws on. He has been widely advertised to play *Romeo* in the big production; his admirers are anxious to see him in the rôle, and there isn't another man in the company capable of playing that part. I hate to let Jones go, but I've got no alternative."

Bruce looked his disappointment. "Harris appears to have the upper hand," he said, "but I hate to see poor old Jonesey get the gate. It seems a shame to can him for a commendable act."

"You don't feel a bit worse about it than I do," returned Randall. "Barring his onion debauches, I'm very fond of Jones. He is one of the most faithful, honest, uncomplaining men I've ever had in my employ. No one ever has



guarded that door with such discretion and tact."

"Jones is a queer chap, but he's morally sound," said Bruce. "I wonder who he is and what he really looks like."

Manager Randall shook his head. "I gave up that puzzle more than two years ago," he declared with an air of finality. "When he applied for the job as doorman his covered-up appearance and slouching gait didn't impress me very much, but there was something in his voice that convinced me he was honest. Several times during the first six months he was here I tried to draw him out about his past, but he baffled every effort in that direction. His smoked windows and general get-up make me think he is hiding from some one."

"He sticks to his disguise in the hottest weather," said Bruce.

"Where does he live?" asked the manager.

"He has a room down near the water front," replied the stage manager. "He left his old rooming house several months ago when one of the lodgers tried to snatch his hat from his head. Jones knocked the fellow down."

"What do you make of him?" asked Randall.

"He has me up in the air," confessed the stage director. "Sometimes he looks as if he might be fifty, other times his erect carriage suggests a man in the late thirties. He's a mystery, all right. Of one thing I am certain, though; he has been an actor in his day. He knows the classic pieces backward, and is familiar with most of the standard modern dramas. He stands in the wings and watches us rehearse, and he has given me no end of help with his quiet suggestions."

"No, honest?" ejaculated Randall. "I gathered that he had been on the stage at one time, but I didn't regard him as a man of any education."

Bruce smiled at the manager's surprise. "Jones knows 'Romeo and Juliet' backward," he went on. "We've all been astonished at his knowledge of Shakespeare. He has given valuable hints to many of the company, but he has taken special pains with Miss Dean."

Manager Randall's lips parted in amazement at this information. "Is Miss Dean going to get away with *Juliet*?" he inquired.

"She'll eat it up," replied Bruce. "Jones appears to have taken a fancy to her."

Randall laughed softly to himself. "Can it be that the doorman is in love with her and jealous of Harris?" was his next query.

"Not a chance," said Bruce. "Miss Dean has been courteous to him and he is repaying her kindness. She brings him onions every day." The two men laughed heartily at the thought of such a strange offering. "Jones is surely the champion onion punisher," Bruce went on. "It's the funniest dissipation I ever heard of."

"Remarkable!" said Randall. "Positively remarkable! He won't be in want of his favorite fruit from now on. I introduced Miss Dean to Tommy Hogan, the vegetable man, to-day, and saw him give her an onion for Jones. It seems that Jones spends half his salary at Hogan's store. By the way, Hogan is plumb daffy over Miss Dean."

"She might do worse than marry a big, wholesome chap like Hogan," said the other. "He's got a lot of coin and a big business." The stage manager stood up and reached for his hat. "Why not give Jones another chance?" Bruce suggested.

"But how will I pacify Harris?" protested the boss of the theater.

Bruce studied the wall paper for a few seconds. "I've got it!" he said, putting his hand on Randall's shoulder. "Jones has his salary overdrawn, and



you don't feel like firing him until he works it out. Get me? That will hold Harris for a week, and by that time he may not feel so bitterly toward the doorman."

"I'll follow your advice," said Randall.

### CHAPTER III.

#### RUBBING IT IN.

HARRIS' overbearing attitude during the next few days made it clear to the other members of the company that Jones' days as doorman were numbered. Despite the eccentric doortender's failing for the unsterilized scallion, they were very fond of him; his unobtrusive manner, willingness to make suggestions, and ability to dispose of undesirable stage-door visitors had earned their highest regard. His interference in behalf of Miss Dean, whom they all loved, convinced them that he was a real man for all his shabbiness and peculiarities. On the other hand, Harris had been unpopular with his associates from the outset.

Several of the players endeavored to learn from Bruce the nature of the punishment in store for the doorman, but the stage director declined to discuss the situation. After the interview with Randall, he had informed Jones where matters stood and had promised to do his best to get him another job when the blow fell. The uncomplaining manner in which Jones received the bad news made Bruce more determined than ever to fight to the last ditch to save him.

Rehearsals for the "Romeo and Juliet" production occupied the whole time of the actors when they were not appearing at regular performances. Manager Randall expressed himself delighted with the progress that had been made and complimented Bruce on his ability. He was especially pleased with the work of Miss Dean, and ventured the opinion

that her performance would create a sensation.

"That little girl will have the whole country at her feet in a few years," Randall said to Bruce one afternoon as they were watching the balcony scene from the darkened auditorium.

"I don't know anything about her antecedents," said Bruce, "but I'll wager that some of her ancestors trod the boards. She's a natural-born actress. You don't get that kind from the dramatic foundries. Look at that expression!"

"She'll take that scene away from Harris, master actor that he is," predicted the manager.

"He's kicking about it already," said Bruce. "He's good and sore on her for turning him down, and he hasn't failed to show his animosity. Notice what he did then? Actually yawned in the middle of one of her speeches. Fortunately, she hasn't acquired enough of that artistic-temperament thing to notice his deliberate attempts to crab her performance."

"She's too happy and interested in her work to pay any attention to him," Manager Randall declared. "She was telling me this morning that her mother is coming on from New York for the first performance. *Juliet* is the most important rôle she ever has played, and she wants her mother to see it."

Bruce nodded without taking his eyes from the stage. "She showed me the letter," he said. "No use talking, that man Harris gets me so mad I'd like to take a wallop at him."

Randall looked about to make sure no one was near them. "Between you and me," he said, "I'm going to look around for a new leading man after this production. I'm getting tired of this fellow's dictatorial manner. He was after me again to-day, demanding that I fire Jones without any further delay. I pleaded with him to let the man stay until Saturday night, and,



after a great deal of argument, he agreed to do so. Jones will have to get out at that time. I can't stall Harris any longer."

"He certainly has gone out of his way to rub it into the doorman," Bruce said savagely. "He insisted the other day that some one had broken into his dressing room. Nothing was taken, but he said the place was all mussed up. He didn't mention any names, but handed me some onion skins which he said he found on the floor. I wanted to tell him he was a liar, but I kept my temper. That shows you the smallness of the man. I'll take an oath that Jones hasn't been in one of those rooms since he's been here."

"I'm sure of it," said Randall. "But it only shows how determined Harris is to get him."

"I was going to suggest," Bruce began slowly, "that you slip an extra dollar or two into Jones' envelope this week. You can't imagine how helpful he has been with this production. Miss Dean admits that his coaching is largely responsible for her finished performance."

Bruce hurried back to the stage to give a few instructions as to how the next scene should be played. He read some of the lines and explained the business. "That's immense!" shouted Randall from the auditorium.

"We played it differently yesterday," Bruce called back, "but at Jones' suggestion we changed it. I think it's a great improvement."

Harris threw his manuscript on the floor, and stalked down to the front of the stage, his face livid with rage. "I'm through right now, Randall," he roared, "unless you make that doorman stay where he belongs! I'm sick and tired of having him making suggestions when I'm rehearsing, and I don't intend to stand for it."

Harris' violent explosion brought the rehearsal to a stop. Bruce, making an

unsuccessful effort to conceal his anger, looked at the leading man. "Jones has not made any suggestions to you, Mr. Harris," he said with forced calm.

"I know he hasn't," answered Harris. "But he has no business butting in. He's not the stage manager."

Harris shot a defiant glance at Bruce when he made this last ungracious thrust. Randall, plainly worried, came down the aisle and tried to smooth the ruffled leading man. Jones had retreated to the first entrance at the outburst from Harris. "Jones means well enough," began the manager. "We're all working for the success of the piece, and——"

"That doesn't go down with me," came the angry interruption from Harris. "If his suggestions are so necessary, I'll quit right here."

A painful pause followed this last announcement. Harris glared down at Randall, tapping his foot impatiently. Bruce and the men of the company looked as if they would have taken delight in strangling the leading man. The women gazed on him with contempt.

"You'd better go back to the door, Jones," Randall said, looking toward the dejected figure in the first entrance.

A wave of sympathy swept over the members of the company as the in-offensive doorman started for his post.

## CHAPTER IV.

### TWO KINDS OF MEN.

MONDAY night—the night of the widely advertised production of "Romeo and Juliet"—found the Avon Theater packed to the doors long before eight o'clock. Advance notices in the newspapers calling attention to the lavishness of the production and the superb acting that might be expected from the principals had keyed theatergoers to the highest pitch. Critics who had enjoyed the privilege of witnessing the final rehearsals dropped tantalizing



hints of the treat in store for patrons of the drama. All the notices predicted that Miss Dean's portrayal of the leading feminine rôle would establish her as one of the country's leading actresses.

Elsa was all aflutter when she reached the theater; the high color in her cheeks, the eagerness in her lovely blue eyes, the manner in which she started at the slightest sound, all indicated nervous tension. The buzz of conversation from the front of the house served to unnerve her, despite the fact that she knew she was letter-perfect in her part.

Bruce noticed her excitement. "That'll all vanish the minute you face the footlights," he said encouragingly. "The thoroughbred horse is always nervous going to the barrier."

"Mamma's out front," Miss Dean exclaimed in a half-hysterical voice. "She arrived this afternoon."

The stage manager glued his eye to the peephole in the curtain. "Is she in a box?" he asked.

"No," replied the actress. "I wanted her to take a box seat, but she was afraid she would make me too nervous. She's away in the back of the house."

"She'll have good reason to be proud of her little girl to-night," Bruce said, starting off down the corridor.

Manager Randall hurried back of the curtain to see that everything was in readiness.

"Are they all here?" he asked when he met Bruce.

Bruce gazed toward the doorman. "Everybody in, Jones?" he inquired.

"All but the leading man," Jones replied.

The two men pulled out their watches. "He ought to be here now," Randall said nervously. "It's ten minutes to eight."

"He'll be here, all right," was Bruce's confident rejoinder. "He wouldn't miss this ovation to-night for the world."

"I hope he doesn't make a fuss when he sees Jones," said the manager. "You

know I said I was going to fire him last Saturday night."

Bruce had persuaded Randall to give Jones another reprieve, and he felt that it was up to him to reassure his employer. "Harris will be too excited to-night to give Jones a thought," he said.

"What humor was he in to-day?" asked Randall anxiously.

"A little bit more peevish than usual," replied the director. "That's only natural on an opening day."

Randall paced up and down the corridor. "Maybe we'd better get Jones out of the way," he suggested, "and be on the safe side. This Harris is an unreasonable ass, you know."

"All right," agreed Bruce; "if that's the way you feel about it." He started toward Jones, intending to send him up in the fly gallery on some pretense or another. As he did so, the doors swung back with a bang and Harris bounced into the corridor; then, seeing the doorman, he deliberately turned around and started back to the street.

Randall rushed after him and seized his arm. "Where are you going?" he asked.

"I'm through with you and this joint," the leading man retorted. "You've broken your word to me. You've chosen between me and this unspeakable Jones, and now we'll see whether you can get away with it."

Bruce, alarm written all over his face, realized that it would take some tall persuading to get Harris to change his mind. "Jones has been fired," explained the stage director. "He will go after this performance."

Harris shook off the two men. "I don't care," he cried. "Randall gave me his word that he would keep the man out of the theater. I'm through."

The members of the company, all made up, had left their rooms, and were awaiting the outcome of the argument with breathless interest. "But you can't leave me in a hole like this,"



protested Randall. The manager was almost in tears. "Come, be a good fellow, and hurry into your clothes. The curtain will go up in fifteen minutes."

Harris' only answer to this plea was to brush Bruce and Randall aside and dash to the street. As the door closed behind the leading man, stillness settled over those he had left behind. Randall sank to the stump of a property tree. Bruce knew that it was time for prompt action, but he hesitated about speaking to the manager. The other members of the company, figuring that all the hard work of preparation had gone for nothing, stood about in a daze.

During the discussion, Jones had remained at his post, nibbling at an onion and doing his best to appear inconspicuous. Now he was walking up and down, biting his nails. Suddenly he started toward Randall. Bruce saw him coming, and warned him away, but the doorman ignored him and took a stand in front of the manager.

"Mr. Randall," he began.

The other raised his head, and, seeing the shabby figure in front of him, jumped to his feet. "Go away from me!" he said. "I'm getting just what I deserve for sticking to you."

"It's because you did stick to me that I want to try and help you out," the doorman went on.

"How can you help me out of this predicament?" demanded the irate manager.

"I'll jump in there and take Harris' place," came the startling reply from Jones.

This was too much for Randall. "What! You play *Romeo*! You'd make a fine *Romeo*, reeking with onions! Bah!" Randall pointed toward the door as he said this.

"I'm perfectly willing to get out," said Jones calmly, "but I want to repay you for your many kindnesses to me. Harris' detestable conduct has given me that chance. You need me more than

you need any one in the world right now. Your curtain is due to go up in ten minutes. I'm your last chance to save the performance."

Randall looked from Bruce to the other members of the company and back again. "Is this man crazy?" he asked.

"Have you ever played the part, Jones?" asked Bruce eagerly.

"Hundreds of times," was the reply that sent the listeners back on their heels.

"But, man alive, you're too old!" protested Randall. "We'd have to get you a pair of crutches."

By way of reply, Jones stepped back a pace, pulled the shabby slouch hat from his head, removed the goggles, turned down his coat collar, squared his shoulders, and faced the company. The remarkable transformation stunned them. Instead of the bent, slovenly figure they had been accustomed to seeing inside the Jones attire, there stood before them a man in the full flush of mature manhood, his six feet of vigor capped with crisp, black, curly hair. The hair was the biggest surprise. Even Bruce, who was more intimate with the doorman than any of the others, was certain that the slouch hat covered a bald head.

"Well, of all things!" exclaimed Randall. He was walking around Jones to make sure that the rejuvenated doortender was really alive.

Jones caught the humor of the situation and smiled for the first time within the recollection of those about him. There was a flash of fire in the honest brown eyes, the look that comes to the eye of a man who is fighting for another chance. "Time's flying!" suggested Bruce.

The manager approached Jones. "Do you really think you can get away with it?" he asked. "I'm awfully sorry I made those rude remarks, but I guess you're man enough to allow for them.



You know we don't know anything about you."

Jones smiled good-naturedly. "There isn't the slightest chance of my falling down," came the confident assertion. "I would suggest that you make a brief announcement to the effect that Harris has withdrawn from the caste. You need have no hesitancy in assuring the audience that they will see a creditable performance."

"Go ahead, and good luck to you!" said Randall at last.

"There's just one other detail to be settled," put in Jones. He looked toward Miss Dean. "I don't know how she feels about playing opposite me."

All eyes were on the pretty leading woman. She relieved the tension by walking over and taking the doorman's hand. "I'm proud of the chance to act with a real man," she told him.

## CHAPTER V.

### INTO THE BREACH.

**BRUCE** rushed Jones to the dressing room that had been occupied by Harris. The orchestra was playing the overture. The stage director was a bit apprehensive as to Jones' ability to make up properly for the part, but one glance at the way the doorman's nimble fingers spread the rouge on his cheeks and adjusted the attire of *Romeo* relieved his mind on this score. He saw that Jones was skilled in the art of preparing for stage work. Jones hummed to himself as he proceeded with his make-up, with the unfeigned light-heartedness of a man who was back where he belonged.

In an incredibly brief space of time Jones was out on the stage waiting for the curtain to rise. Miss Dean and the members of the company pressed about him and complimented him on his appearance. Where Harris would have brought nothing more than a strikingly handsome face to the part, Jones

brought an athletic figure and good looks of a stronger, more wholesome type. Manager Randall announced Harris' withdrawal, at the eleventh hour, from the caste, and, though a hum of conversation followed the announcement, interest in the performance was so great that not a person left the house.

Miss Dean, looking more adorable than she ever had looked before, in the opinion of her admirers, was given a tremendous reception on her first entrance. Jones received a welcome in which curiosity stayed the hand of cordiality. The minute he stepped on the stage a piercing scream came from the audience, disconcerting players and spectators alike. This had the effect of spoiling his entrance, but in a few minutes the audience was spellbound under the charm of his voice, vibrant with the emotion so essential to the successful portrayal of the most famous lover of all time.

Quick to appreciate the difficulties under which he had taken the rôle, the audience cheered the actor to the echo at the finish of the first act. Miss Dean's performance throbbed with life, and the acting of the pair in the balcony scene roused the audience to the highest pitch of enthusiasm. They took a dozen curtain calls; flowers by the basketful were passed over the footlights to Miss Dean, and in her happiness she scattered roses about the audience, taking careful aim when she threw one toward a smiling-faced, ruddy-cheeked fellow in one of the lower boxes.

There was no let-up in the enthusiasm during the rest of the superb performance, and the final curtain found most of the men in the audience on their feet demanding the name of the actor who had played the leading rôle. Jones stood in the center of the smiling group of players and waved his hand at his wellwishers. "Your name! Your



name!" came the shouts from the auditorium.

The members of the company looked at him expectantly. Jones was the only name they had known him by, but they felt certain that it was not his. "Harris" appeared opposite on the program, and the spectators were determined to learn who was his successor. Seeing this, Miss Dean stepped to the footlights.

"Mr. Jones is the only name we know him by," she said with a girlish laugh.

This satisfied the spectators, and they filed out of the theater, singing the praises of Jones and Miss Dean. Randall and Bruce were waiting for the two principals when they came off stage and started for their dressing rooms. As a matter of fact, Bruce didn't wait for the final curtain to hit the floor before he dashed out on to the stage, and, taking both of Jones' hands in his own, shook them until he was exhausted, and the manager was patting him on the back. Miss Dean and the others were assuring him that it was the finest performance they had ever witnessed.

"I was afraid that scream would upset you," said Bruce.

"What was the matter with that woman?" asked Miss Dean.

"We don't know," replied Manager Randall. "She had fainted when we reached her. We carried her to my office and called a physician out of the audience. He worked over her for a long time before he restored her. She's all right now."

"Who was she?" Bruce inquired.

Randall hesitated about answering. He looked at Miss Dean in an anxious manner. A frightened look came into the leading woman's eyes. "Who was she?" she gasped.

"Your mother," replied the manager.

Elsa started toward the auditorium, but Randall drew her back. "She is all right now," he assured her. "She is

waiting for you in your dressing room. I brought her back a few minutes ago."

Miss Dean, followed by the sympathetic eyes of the company, started on a run. She had not taken half a dozen steps when an attractive-looking woman burst from the wings and sped toward the group in the center of the stage. "Mother!" cried the girl, but the woman kept right on, unheeding her daughter's cry.

"Robert, my Robert!" she cried as she neared the astonished players. With one accord they turned toward the doorman. They saw Jones' face go white as chalk as he sprang forward and caught her in his arms. He stroked her cheek tenderly. "It's all right, little woman," he whispered.

Elsa, who had been watching the tableau like one in a trance, recovered her speech. "My daddy!" she cried.

Manager Randall and the others turned away. Jones was first to break the silence that followed. "You've all been very kind to me," he said to the company, "and I feel that you are entitled to some explanation of the incident you have just witnessed. You will understand better when I tell you that my wife and myself have not met before in fourteen years. I hadn't seen my little girl since she was three years old."

The members of the company edged a bit closer, anxious to hear every word of the story. The sceneshifters, all of whom had been intensely interested in the mysterious doorman, halted their work to listen. "To begin with," said the doorman, "my right name is Robert Dunbar." The surprise that showed in the faces of some of the company made him pause again. "I see that some of you are familiar with part of my history," he added, with a smile.

Mrs. Dunbar had regained her composure by this time. "I think it is I who should do the explaining, Robert," she suggested. He nodded. "My hus-



band is the victim of a woman's wretched jealousy," she said. "Fourteen years ago he was the most popular actor in London. I had gained recognition as an actress, and we were very happy, except for my fits of jealousy. He was hailed as the greatest *Romeo* of his time, and his prospects for the future could not have been brighter."

Recollection of the happiness of the old days overcame her for a few seconds. "Three years after the baby came," she went on, "an actor whose attentions I had rejected, knowing my great love for my husband, dropped a hint that it would be well to keep an eye on Robert. This actor has since told friends of mine that he only did it for a joke, but you shall see the suffering his alleged jest caused! I didn't need any more fuel to set my jealousy on fire. Then I conceived a plan to keep other women away from my husband. I knew that he had a fondness for onions, and I played on that weakness. I put onions in almost everything that he ate. He had onions in one style or another, but mostly raw, for every meal. It was not until he lost his job and could not get another that I realized what I had done. He couldn't find an actress in London to play opposite him, and his career was ruined. It was then I confessed my perfidy. The day after I told him, he disappeared. When I learned that he had left all but a few pounds of his savings to myself and our little girl, my remorse knew no bounds. That was fourteen years ago. I didn't see him again until he stepped on the stage to-night. At sight of him I screamed and lost consciousness."

Mrs. Dunbar couldn't control her emotions any longer. She buried her head on her husband's shoulder and cried softly. Elsa, her eyes dim with tears, did her best to comfort her.

"I can take up the wretched story," Dunbar broke in. "It reached the

newspapers, and I was laughed off the London stage. I came to America and had no trouble getting an engagement. Then, to my horror, I found that the onion habit had mastered me. I couldn't get along without them. I craved onions as some men crave liquor. I lost one job after another through this. Finally, I was forced to abandon acting altogether. At the finish I couldn't even hold a job as a super. But the fascination of the theater was too strong to be shaken off. Early in the struggle I dropped my name and adopted the disguise you are familiar with. I was afraid some of my old friends would identify me. My passion for onions enabled me to keep by myself. When I got the job as doortender I did my best to hold it. I knew it was my last stand. That argument with Harris was the only trouble I had."

Mrs. Dunbar caught her husband by the arm. "Did you say Harris?" she inquired eagerly.

The members of the company wondered what was coming next. "Yes," replied Dunbar. "A fellow named Lester Harris——"

"Why, he's the man who told me you would bear watching," cried Mrs. Dunbar. "You remember, you and I were not in the same company the year we parted. Harris was our leading man, but you didn't know him."

"Well, doesn't that beat all!" exclaimed Randall.

"I'm sorry now I didn't press a little harder that time I had Harris by the throat," said the doorman, smiling at Bruce.

Mrs. Dunbar looked inquiringly at her husband for an explanation of this statement. He assured her that it meant nothing, first taking the precaution to throw a warning look at his daughter.

"Didn't you ever try to overcome the onion habit?" asked Randall.

"A dozen times," was the reply.



"Once in St. Louis I kept away from them for six weeks. I held my job, but my health began to fail rapidly. I consulted a physician, and he prescribed a diet of onions. After that I gave up the struggle."

"There's no cure for it," interposed Mrs. Dunbar. "I am the victim of my own folly. Until I conceived the onion plot the sight of onions made me ill. In order to lull his suspicions I had to eat them at every meal. After he left I found I could not get along without them. Like him, I changed my name and came to this country with my little girl. Her name is Eleanor Dunbar. My funds gave out, and I had to go to work. When I came to look for a job, it dawned upon me that I knew more about onions than anything else. I despaired of being able to market my peculiar knowledge, but just as I was about to give up I landed a position as secretary to a vegetable dealer. It didn't take me long to realize the possibilities of onion cultivation. I started on a small scale, and was successful from the start. I am now the sole owner of Silver Onion Farm, the largest plantation on Long Island."

Dunbar's eyes glistened at this information. "Why, I've been eating your onions ever since I struck town," he said. "I get them at Tommy Hogan's."

"Hogan is one of my best customers," returned Mrs. Dunbar with a laugh.

"Hogan will be a closer relative than that before long," predicted Randall, looking at Elsa.

Every one realized that there wasn't much more to be said. Manager Randall reached out and shook Dunbar's hand warmly. "I'll never forget what you did for me to-night," he declared. "Onions or no onions, you can have Harris' place if you want it, and I'll furnish free cloves in the pay envelope."

A big laugh greeted this offer.

"Many thanks," put in Mrs. Dunbar; "but Robert will never have to work again. I've got enough for the two of us—money and onions!"

It was a happy family that sat about the table in a near-by restaurant until an early hour the next morning. All three decided that a long vacation was in order, but they couldn't agree as to where it should be spent.

"What's the matter with Bermuda?" asked Elsa.

"The very place," agreed her parents with enthusiasm.

### Startling Increase

AS illustrating the enormous powers of rapid increase exhibited by both the animal and vegetable kingdoms, which have insured the unbroken continuance of the various types of existing life from the earliest geological ages, while being an important factor in the production of new forms, the following instances may be of interest:

A common weed, the *Sisymbrium Sophia*, produces three-quarters of a million seeds, and these, if they all grew and multiplied, would in three years cover the whole land surface of the globe!

Darwin calculated that the elephant, the slowest breeding of all animals, would in 750 years, from a single pair, produce 19,000,000 animals, while rabbits would, from a single pair, produce 1,000,000 in four or five years. Many forms of fish, such as the cod, are even more productive.

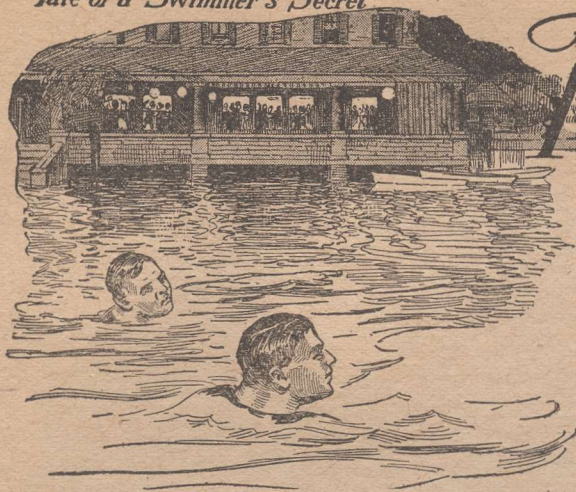
### In Case of War

INSTRUCTOR: "Now, what is strategy? Give me an illustration."

Recruit: "Why, when you don't let the enemy know that you are out of ammunition, but just keep on firing."



*Tale of a Swimmer's Secret*



# The Valor of Fear

*By Gilbert Patten*

(A COMPLETE NOVELETTE)

## CHAPTER I.

WITH THE FAMOUS STROKE.



GAIN, for the thousandth time, perhaps, Paul stood before the carved mantel of the old fireplace and studied "The Swimmer." For him the small, graceful, wonderfully molded bronze figure had always held a strange and inexplicable fascination. As a boy he had admired and almost worshiped this perfect specimen of his father's genius, and now, since returning from abroad, where he had spent three years as an earnest student of the plastic art, he found himself far better qualified to appreciate the great talent of the parent, who, after reaching middle age, had taken up sculpture, and had been the creator of nearly half a hundred notable and cherished works.

Supported by a slender column, the figure was that of a man swimming, breasting imaginary waves, with arms and legs outstretched in the famous "Sabold stroke" which had made Doctor Stephen Sabold famous when he, in a private match witnessed by a number of

specially invited guests, defeated Kapulena, the champion swimmer of the world. Nevertheless, beyond the fact that the statuette had doubtless commemorated that triumph, Paul could not understand why his father had refused to part with it for any consideration, while yielding up other and far more valuable productions of his genius to the competing collectors who came with extravagant offers after the craze for Sabolds began.

Time and again, speculating on the mystery, he had stood before the old fireplace at Seacliffs, as he was now standing, seeking to read the riddle, which seemed as unfathomable as that of the Sphinx. And always there had crept over him a sensation of awe, a feeling of being drawn and attracted by the tiny bronze figure, yet at the same time a conviction that the thing was baffling him and holding him at bay. He felt it again to-day, and yet, a healthy young man of twenty-four, he believed himself mentally well balanced and free from superstition. It was annoying, and his broad, high forehead was troubled by a deep frown,



Then he shook himself sharply, and, with an impatient gesture, lifted a hand and swept back a lock of chesnut hair.

"I'm a fool!" he exclaimed, with a forced laugh.

"Have you just discovered that, Paul?" The words brought him quickly round to face his older brother, who had silently entered the library and was regarding him with a cynical smile.

Between Harond and Paul Sabold the contrast was marked. The elder was dark and powerfully built, while yet his long, free limbs were not overmuscled, and his well-knit body showed no traces of laxity or grossness. The life of a gentleman of leisure which he had chosen to pursue had not lured him to abandon the scientific course of calisthenics by which in his earlier years his father had drilled him to become a thorough athlete. Averse to labor though he might be, his intelligence had warned him that the price of continued physical perfection was constant daily work, and no day did he let pass that he did not spend at least one hour out of the twenty-four keeping himself in trim. His vanity was the spur that drove him.

On the other hand, Paul, the fairer brother, slenderer and more delicately constituted, had seemed to take pleasure only in the culture of his mind. Precocious as a child, and an omnivorous reader and student, it had been necessary to hold him in check in order to safeguard his strength; and except for the care and solicitation of his father, who had ever shown especial fondness for him, he might have broken his health in boyhood.

Across the mellow Oriental rug the brothers faced each other. The laughter had vanished from Paul's face, but the cynical smile still lingered on Harond's. A faint breeze, salty with the tang of the sea, gently stirred the curtains of the open windows through which the July sunshine streamed.

From afar came the throb of waves beating against the ocean-gnawed face of Deepwater Cliffs at the southern end of the island. The chime clock on the landing of the hall stairs musically proclaimed the hour of ten.

"I didn't hear you come in, Harond," said Paul at length, with a desire to break the unpleasant silence.

"Didn't you?" returned the other, with a slight lifting of his heavy eyebrows. "Evidently you were too absorbed in admiration of the little man of mystery. Tell me, what is there about the Swimmer that fascinates you so? You have always been afraid of the water, yet, to my knowledge, you have spent a great amount of time staring at that thing. I caught you at it often before you went away, and, now you have returned, I find it interests you as much as ever. If you swam, if you had ever even tried to learn, I might understand, but——"

"I do," Paul interrupted impulsively; "I swim. I learned in France."

Harond stared. Then he laughed, flinging himself down upon a high-backed Louis the Sixteenth chair and gazing at his brother in evident great amusement. "What is it you are telling me, Paul?" he cried. "You learned to swim—in France? I knew that one might learn many things in France, but to swim—— And you, of all persons—you who used to be afraid of a mill-pond if it was a little rough, and who shuddered and shrank in terror from the sea when it was lashed by a storm! You must be joking."

"I'm not," declared Paul, flushed and defiant. "I made up my mind I would conquer my fear, and I did—in a measure, at least. I had an American instructor. He was patient, and he succeeded in teaching me confidence at last."

"Confidence—in a tank!" scoffed Harond. "That means nothing. You would probably lose your head in terror



if you were capsized from a boat. Yet it is really too bad father did not live to know that you had learned to paddle around in water at least deeper than may be found in an ordinary bathtub. He never could seem to understand why it was that you were afraid."

"Perhaps it was a premonition, a warning that the sea, which he loved, would some day destroy him."

"He died in bed here at Seacliffs."

"But from the effect of being nearly an hour in the icy water when the *Varuna* sank; he never recovered from that. The sea destroyed him as truly as if he had been drowned when the boat went down. Yet," added the younger brother, with a little touch of pride, "though I have never forgotten the cause of my father's death, though I did learn to swim in a tank, I have swam in the surf at Ostend—I have felt the pull of the undertow, and I did not lose my head in terror."

"Paul," said Harond brutally, "I think you lie!"

## CHAPTER II.

### A MAN'S WORD.

THE older brother's remark was like an open-handed blow in the face. Paul stiffened and paled, every nerve, every sinew of his slender body tense, his hands clenched. He took a single step forward upon the broad rug, and then stopped, his attitude for a moment that of one arrested on the point of a spring.

Harond's only movement was to sink a bit more upon the chair, letting his head rest against the high back, while he regarded his brother with a look of indifference and disdain that was the height of insolence. The color which had fled leaped back into Paul's cheeks.

"I knew you would change your mind," said Harond. "You haven't forgotten the time you attempted that when you were fifteen."

"And you were eighteen!" Paul flung back. "No, I haven't forgotten. I told you that I never would forget, and that some day you would pay. The settlement would have taken place right here if I had not remembered, just in time, that mother is seriously ill in this house. I shall continue to remember."

"You're amusing, Paul. You can't fool me with that bluff. You never had the courage of a chicken, and you wouldn't fight any more than you would swim in the surf at Ostend. I suppose it was pity for your weakness that led father to pamper you and make such a pet of you. I know he was far prouder of me, even though he never showed me any affection to speak of. I was an athlete, and, as a boy, I swam with him. Wonder though he was, in reality the greatest swimmer in the world, more than once I made him go his limit to beat me in a race. He taught me the trudgeon, the crawl, and the Sabold, which, for distance, when one learns to make a perfect finish with both arms and legs, is the best of them all. He did great things, our father, Paul; while under thirty-five he made a reputation as a physician, and then before he was forty the world began to know him as a sculptor. Yet to me the greatest of all his accomplishments was the Sabold stroke with which he defeated Kapulena. It was of this, too, that I think he was the most vain; for he was a vain man, Paul."

"My father had no vanity in him!" blazed the younger man resentfully. "In all the world there was never a man more modest and unassuming. While still young he made a great reputation as a physician, yet he remained simple and unaffected, the friend of the poor and the brother of all mankind. When he became noted as a sculptor, in the days when collectors and men of wealth were ready to pay any price for his work, he remained unchanged and un-



spoiled. In the last year of his life there was nothing he enjoyed more than to spend an hour or two smoking and chatting with old Mart, the fisherman, and two or three times every week he visited him in his cabin on the Northern Ear. My father vain! Bah!"

Harond sat up straight, laughing silently. "Poor Paul!" he jeered gently. "You may be bright enough in your way, but you are a student of books, not of human nature. It was vanity that led Doctor Sabold to assume the pose of simplicity, which he well knew was most effective." There was a silence; then Harond went on pensively: "Mart adopted a foundling from the State orphan asylum. Vesta was only eleven years old when our father died. She is eighteen now. Have you seen her? She's rather pretty, in a way. You have not seen her in four years, have you? She has been to school over at Twilight, but of course she is raw and crude as a girl reared upon an island two miles from the mainland naturally would be. If she had had the proper bringing up I fancy she might have turned out something of a lady, even though no one knows who her parents were. Coming up as she has, she's common and silly. As a child she was unusually attractive. Had father lived I believe he would have seen to it that she was properly educated and trained. For let me tell you now that it was the disappointment of his life that *you* were not a girl."

It was another blow, well aimed, and intended to sting. Paul fell back to the mantel, at which he made a blind grasp with one hand that struck the Swimmer and sent it toppling over.

"Look out!" said Harond, rising. "Don't damage the piece of work which father prized so highly that no one could secure it at any price. You think he was not vain, eh? There's proof of his vanity! I've studied the Swimmer

myself, and thought about it a great deal. It's a model of Doctor Sabold, as near as his skill could make it. The secret? Listen! There is no duplicate in existence. He would not let it pass out of his hands for fear duplicates might be made. Why? Because some day he hoped that a reproduction of the Swimmer, life size, would be called for to adorn some famous art museum—not bearing the name it now bears, but that of Stephen Sabold. Perhaps you will call that modesty!"

He laughed again into the face of the younger man, who, still grasping the edge of the mantelshef, gazed at him steadily with an expression of contempt.

"Harond," said Paul, in a low, steady voice, "I won't attempt to tell you how sorry I am to hear you speak like this of our dead father. I'm sorry, even though I have never liked you any more than you have liked me. We are brothers, but there has been no love wasted between us. You were the first-born, and you have always been mother's favorite. But," he continued, a little ring of satisfaction which he could not suppress sounding in his voice, "even though you were courageous, an athlete and a swimmer, and I possessed none of these qualifications, I know that, deep down in his heart, father always cared more for me than for you. I held a place there which you could never win."

"He pitied you for your weakness," repeated Harond.

"Perhaps. But what I speak of was not pity; it was affection. Queer though some thought him to be, queer though you have unfeelingly said he was, it was the queerness of genius that ordinary minds did not understand."

The older man shrugged, his lips curling. "Which means that you have a superior and discerning mind. Paul,



you're still a child; you'll never grow up."

"If it is true that children are guileless, you never have been a child. As far back as I can remember, you schemed in a hundred petty ways to put me wrong with our parents. You succeeded in a degree with mother, but never with father. Except for him, when we grew older, my home would have been intolerable. When he died you did succeed in hurrying my departure from home. I was more than willing to go, for it was my ambition to develop the talents I believed I inherited from my father. But I know why you wanted to get me away; the will my father left was singular; at mother's death, everything beyond a liberal annuity to you was to come to me. When you learned that, you raved and called it the will of a lunatic. Mother declared that father must have been mentally unbalanced when he drew up the document. She had several long talks with me, and I finally agreed that, when she passed away, there should be an equal division between you and me. I was under age when I made that agreement; no papers were drawn up."

"Bah! It isn't necessary. I can break the will when the time comes. I have been given that assurance by the best legal counsel."

Paul lifted his hand. "Don't add to that repulsion for you which I have never been able to conquer! For my mother's sake, I am willing that you should share equally with me. I gave her a promise I do not intend to break. You cannot understand that a man's word means anything to him. For that reason, and in order to be alone at mother's side in case her present illness should prove fatal, you sent me no message, no information of her condition, all the while telling her you had cabled me. Three weeks ago they thought she might die any hour, for she never recovered from the shock of father's

loss. Yet you would have kept me in ignorance until it was all over. I was first informed of the facts by an anonymous letter. Then I cabled Doctor Cauldwell, and when I got his answering cable, I lost not a moment in making arrangements for my passage. You were astonished and enraged when I arrived home, and——"

"Oh, cut it!" Harond interrupted harshly. "The trouble was in the telegraph office at Twilight. The operator over there lies when he says I never gave him any messages to you. He in a shift——"

"You know he couldn't hold his position a week if that were true and you complained about it."

The dark brother strode forward to the middle of the rug, his manner threatening, but Paul did not shrink; instead of that, his hands, hanging open at his sides, he met Harond's ugly eyes with a calm, steady look in which, despite the latter's sneer about his lack of courage, there was no sign of shrinking.

"Do you mean to call me a liar?" asked Harond.

"I'm simply returning your polite compliment of a short time ago."

Suddenly Harond snapped his fingers. "What do I care what you think or say? You remind me of Crazy Moll. She's back here—back from the State Asylum for the Insane, where she's been for the last six or seven years. They say she's harmless, so you needn't be afraid of her, and you ought to find her congenial." Laughing noiselessly, and snapping his fingers again, he turned and walked out of the library.

For several minutes Paul stood with his head slightly bent, gazing at the door through which his brother had passed from view. His face was calm, almost sad, and there was a light of great regret in his blue eyes. "My brother!" he said presently, in a low voice. "My mother's favorite son!"



He turned and righted the Swimmer on its base. Once more he stood gazing at the tiny, graceful bronze. "Harond thinks he has learned your secret," he murmured. "He's wrong. It's a thought—an idea—an inspiration—something still hidden deep in your heart. If my father had lived ten minutes longer he would have revealed it to me. Somehow—now, this minute—I seem to feel him here at my side. He's striving to speak to me—trying to open the blind eyes of my soul! Why am I so dull, so much a clod of common clay!"

Clasping the slender supporting column, he slowly bowed his head until his forehead touched and rested against the cool bronze.

### CHAPTER III.

#### FROM THE PATH ABOVE.

PAUL kissed the faded cheek of his sleeping mother and softly tiptoed from the chamber. The nurse silently closed the door behind him. Descending the stairs, he found his cap, and left the house. For a few moments he stood on the steps gazing off toward the hills of the mainland beyond Twilight Harbor, where the sun was sinking. Far down in the south, where lay the open ocean, a purple haze was banked low on the horizon, its upper edges tinged by a golden afterglow. The beating of the sea against Deep-water Cliffs had sunk to a murmur. Gulls, soaring and veering above the Raceway and the Fang Rocks, where the outgoing tide was gnawed to a white foam, uttered harsh and doleful calls.

Descending the steps, Paul turned toward the old path that led to Shelter Cove. How well he remembered that path which he had trod so often in the days of long ago! Always a dreamer, he had spent many happy days at this island home of his parents, which had been built originally for summer oc-

cupation, but where, in his later years, Doctor Sabold frequently had spent eight or nine months out of each twelve.

At the point where the path began to dip down into the cove, Paul paused and looked back at Seacliffs, bulking white and fair against the eastern sky, in which a few faint stars were beginning to gleam with a softened silvery glow. His heart was stirred by old memories and old dreams. He was saddened by the thought that his father, who had loved every foot of Sounding Island, was gone; and saddened still more by the knowledge that his mother, white-haired and sweet and always resigned to the fates the gods saw fit to give, must soon set forth upon the same mysterious journey.

The gulls had ceased their calling when he began descending the path. A little way down, he paused. The vanished sun had flung a flare of orange light into the sky, and in its reflected glow upon the water he could see a boat coming across from the mainland. It was keeping to the north of the Fang Rocks, but with no more than the necessary margin of safety. "It's Harond!" thought Paul. "He has been away since noon. Never a single day does he miss going to Twilight, for all of mother's illness!"

Beside the path there was a flat rock on which he had rested hundreds of times. He seated himself upon it. Against the background of rising land he was invisible from the water.

Soon he could hear the rapid put-put of the motor, growing louder with each moment. The boat came skimming swiftly into the cove, and swung alongside the float, at the far end of which a landing could be made even when the tide was full ebb. A tall, graceful figure stepped out and turned to give some directions to Henry, the second occupant, who was an all-round handy man at Seacliffs. Then Harond left the float and started up the path.



A sudden aversion to meeting his brother came upon Paul, but as he rose to his feet he heard a voice that stopped him in his tracks. It came from below and was that of a woman, blurred in a mumble of toothless age. Yet it was familiar. "Crazy Moll!" murmured Paul. "She's the only human being for whom Harond ever showed a trace of fear."

Then he caught his brother's voice, harsh, but a trifle unsteady and vibrant with anger. His words rose clear and distinct: "What do you mean by hiding, and bobbing out at me in such a manner?"

"It's my memory that bothers me," muttered the old woman. "Sometimes I can remember many things; sometimes I can't seem to remember at all. But the doctor gave me money. They'd never taken me away if he'd lived. I'm back now. But he's dead—he's dead! All day yesterday I sat beside his grave over by the blue pines. I talked to him, and he talked to me; but I couldn't understand all he said—the ground, the ground they have piled upon him smothered his voice so that sometimes I couldn't hear his words."

"You'd better keep away from this part of the island, old woman. If you become annoying, I'll apply to the authorities and have them take you away again."

"Better not—better not try it!" she retorted. "The doctor told me to forget, and I promised—but I might forget my promise. Crazy—I'm not crazy; it's my memory, I tell you. Yesterday I remembered, and I talked to him about it. What was it we talked about? I told him I'd see you, but what made me tell him that? He gave me money sometimes. Perhaps that was it. I want money. Give it to me."

"Oh, you're mad!" said Harond. "You don't need money. If you did, I have none for you."

"Wait; I'm thinking. I can almost

remember. It's a secret. Did you ever swear to keep a secret—never to breathe it to a living soul? I did once, but I can't remember what it was. Perhaps I'll remember in a minute."

"Well, get out of my way now!" said Harond. "The path is narrow, and I'm in a hurry."

Evidently the aged woman did not move quickly enough to suit him, for, stumbling, she fell, uttering a cry. Paul went leaping down the path.

"It's a shame, Harond!" he exclaimed, brushing past and stooping to lift the whimpering old creature. "She's harmless, and you might treat her with the courtesy due her sex."

The elder brother turned to stare scornfully as Paul lifted the feeble woman, then mounted the path with long, springy strides, leaving Paul with Crazy Moll. Raised to her feet, the woman clung to the young man with her skinny hands, mumbling and half sobbing.

"Come," he said; "I'll help you up the path. You must go home to old Mart's. He shouldn't let you wander around at all hours, but I don't suppose he can help it, with his work."

Harond had vanished when they reached the top of the path. The moon, a huge ball of molten red gold, was pushing up swiftly to smother the nearer stars. As they climbed slowly into its mellow glow, Crazy Moll peered at Paul's face. "I know you," she said thickly. "I can remember you. You're the fair one. There's something I want to tell you, but I don't know what it is. To-morrow I'll sit beside the doctor's grave and talk with him again. Did you ever have something in your head that was lost? It's here—here in my head; but I can't find it! I can't find it!"

"Come!" urged Paul gently. "I'll take you across to the Northern Ear—I'll take you home."



## CHAPTER IV.

## LITTLE SISTER OF SOUNDING ISLAND.

THEY were drawing near old Mart's cottage when Vesta met them. The golden moon had shrunk and become a silver shield. By its light the girl recognized them both. She was bareheaded, and her luxuriant hair flowed over her shoulders. A moment she hesitated, startled, and then came forward quickly.

"I—I was just starting out to look for her," she faltered. "Is there anything the matter? She never stays away after nightfall." Her voice was full and rich and low; the voice of the little Vesta Paul had known, yet changed wonderfully. He put out his hand impulsively.

"Vesta," he said, "I haven't seen you in a long time. Is it possible you're a young woman?"

She had flung her right arm round the old woman; she gave him her left hand shrinkingly. "I heard you were back, Mr. Paul," she said, a little catch in her throat. "I'm very glad to see you again. It has been a long time, hasn't it?"

"You were a little girl when I went away. I remember you the last time I was over here—swimming, swimming like a mermaid off the ledges yonder. And I was afraid of the water; I couldn't swim—then. I can now," he added proudly. "I forced myself to learn."

Together they took the old woman to the cottage. Before entering, Crazy Moll stared again, long and hard, at Paul. "The fair one!" she mumbled. "Some day it'll come to me, what I want to remember. It's somewhere in this old head of mine. I'll find it some day. And when I do—ah, when I do! I'm hungry—hungry and tired."

"Supper's on the table, Aunt Molly," said the girl. "You can eat, and then

you had better go to bed. Father may not get in for another hour."

Paul and Vesta were left alone. He hesitated. "Would you mind if I stayed a little while and talked to you?" he asked. "I want to talk to some one."

They went round to the front of the cottage, which faced the water, and sat on the porch, Vesta leaning against a post, with the moonshine on her face. Harond had said she was pretty "in a way"; Paul found her far more than that. Also Harond had said she was common and silly; Paul waited for her to show it, and waited in vain.

They talked of the many things that interested them both. He questioned her about herself, and she told of going to school at Twilight. He found that she had become a reader, not only of light literature, but of other and better things. She was timid at first, but as he drew her out and she forgot her shyness, he wondered that a girl of the country, an island girl, could be so interesting.

She was eager to hear about his life abroad, about his studies and his accomplishments in the Latin Quarter of Paris. She had so little to tell about herself, she said, and all he had to tell was so wonderful and so fascinating to her. Not once did she simper or giggle. Harond had lied; she was not silly. Then Paul suspected why his brother had said it.

"Vesta," he asked suddenly, "has my brother annoyed you?" She was startled. The moonlight was strong enough to show him the hot flush that suffused her face. "If he has," he said savagely, "I'll——"

"Only once—only twice," she corrected herself. "After the second time he—he—well, he understood."

"Tell me, what did he do?"

She lifted her head proudly. "I can take care of myself."



"What did he do?" persisted Paul.

"He—tried to kiss me!"

"And you——"

"I struck him—with my fist."

Paul sprang up. "I'm going back to Seacliffs, Vesta!"

In a moment she was beside him, both hands grasping his arm. "That was ten months ago. He has never troubled me since. Please, for my sake, never mention it to him. I've never spoken of it to any other living person. I shouldn't have told you, Mr. Paul."

"You used to call me Paul; don't hitch on the Mister now, Vesta. Harond is my brother, but he does some things that infuriate me. He even tried to keep the knowledge from me that my mother——" He stopped short, turned swiftly, grasped her shoulders, and swung her round again until the light was on her face. "Vesta," he cried, "did you send me that letter telling of my mother's illness?"

"Yes, Paul."

"Oh, little girl—my little sister of Sounding Island! That's what I used to call you long ago. You are still my little sister, and you always will be. I won't forget what you have done for me, Vesta—I won't forget!"

Presently she looked up at him and smiled, and before he left she made him promise that he would have no quarrel with Harond on her account.

From the shadow of the lilac bush at the corner of the cottage she watched him striding away until the distance infolded him. Still she did not stir. Both her hands supporting her chin, she stood there, as motionless at the tiny bronze Swimmer in the library of Seacliffs. The clanking of oars, telling that her father was pulling in from his traps, aroused her at last.

"His little sister!" she whispered to herself as her arms dropped limply by her sides. "And I always will be! What more could a girl like me expect!"

## CHAPTER V.

### THE OTHER ONE.

PAUL dined alone. Harond had not waited for him. He was smoking in the library when Paul entered. The younger brother stopped short at sight of the elder, and seemed about to turn back. "Oh, come on in," urged Harond. "Did you gallantly escort the old hag back to the fisherman's hut?"

Paul frowned. "Sometimes," he said, "you are a plain brute, Harond. Have you forgotten that that old woman was the only nurse who could possibly be obtained at the time of your birth? Have you forgotten that a three days' storm made it impossible to cross to the mainland? You owe her respect and decent treatment for that, at least."

"Oh, I suppose so," said Harond; "but before they took her away she became a pest, following me around and looking into my face and jabbering about something she couldn't remember." He yawned and looked at his watch. "By the way," he said suddenly, "Caroline Maddox tells me she met you in Paris last winter."

"Caroline Maddox!" repeated Paul, surprised. "You know her?"

"She is summering at Twilight. Colonel Maddox is with her. They are stopping at the Algonquin. She is a very beautiful young woman, Paul; most attractive and—an heiress. Her father is a senile old fool, but his gout keeps him chained to the hotel piazza most of the time fortunately."

Paul knew now why his brother made daily trips to Twilight Harbor. Caroline Maddox was the most beautiful girl Paul had ever feasted his eyes upon; the mention of her name had set his heart leaping. Before his mental vision sprang a picture of her as he had beheld her in all her loveliness that first day in the studio of Philip Brevort, where she was sitting for her portrait. His nerves were vibrating



with electric thrills. Caroline Maddox at Twilight, and he had not known it!

"There is another nuisance, however," Harond was continuing, chewing at his cigar with a touch of savageness. "Ranford Coburn is his name. He pursues her like a head-hunter. She's young, you know, and she seems to enjoy the chase." He rose and began pacing the rug. "But I'll beat him to it, confound him! I called him to-day when he got to boasting about his swimming and the professionals he had defeated. To-morrow is the Fourth, and they celebrate at Twilight. Water sports make up a part of the day's doings, and I challenged Coburn to a match—a half-mile race. He had to accept. I'll show him up."

Paul scarcely heard; he was thinking of Caroline and her witchery—her laughter, her sensitive mouth, the pearly perfection of her teeth, the luring side glance of eyes half veiled by lowered lids; he recalled the touch of her hand as she bade him good-by; felt again the warm, clinging pressure of her fingers. And she was at Twilight, only two miles away!

Harond was staring at him. "You're as flushed as a bashful girl, Paul. She had you going, did she? She told me all about it. For an art student you were most unusual, and that was the reason she found you interesting. She laughed about it when she told me."

The color ebbed, leaving the face of the younger brother pale. Brevort, the painter of portraits, was likewise a reader of souls; and he had warned Paul, telling him that Miss Maddox was a creature of unstable fancy, of fickleness and ice, as luring as a glacier sun-kissed at dawn, and as deadly dangerous. Paul had not believed the artist; he did not believe Harond now. "We were good friends," he said simply.

The older man snapped his fingers. How Paul hated that little trick! Tipping back his head, Harond blew a

whiff of smoke toward the beamed ceiling. "You are getting to be very frank with me, my boy. I'll continue to be frank with you, as I always have been. I'm going to win that girl. If you come over to Twilight to-morrow you'll see me take a step in the right direction by showing up Coburn."

"I can't come. Both of us cannot leave mother at the same time. You must realize that you are away too much. You'll regret it some day when you return."

"Now, don't think you can preach to me, or tell me what I must do. I don't take such stuff kindly from you. You're here, and there's no reason why we both should hang around all the time. I don't propose to let anything keep me from the little job of putting the gaff to Coburn." He flung the remnant of his cigar into the open grate. "I'll go up and sit by mother a while now. That will keep her pacified."

Left alone, presently Paul turned again to the mantel on which stood the little bronze figure. "If you would give me your secret," he murmured, "perhaps I could defeat Harond himself."

## CHAPTER VI.

"A SCREAMER—WHAT?"

THE pier in front of the Algonquin House was crowded with guests of the hotel in gay summer garb, villagers "dressed to kill," and natives of the surrounding country wearing their Sunday best. The band was playing a lively air. It was the Fourth of July, and the hour of the afternoon for which the water sports were scheduled. Already there had been a dory race, a tub race, and a swimming contest for boys; and now the crowd was waiting patiently for the half-mile swimming match between Ranford Coburn and Harond Sabold.

"I don't believe nobody can beat that



feller Sabold," said one of a group of natives.

"Ye're right, Si," agreed a wizened old man, puffing hard at a real five-cent cigar. "He kin swim, that critter kin. His father was the only one I ever see that could git through the watter faster, and it was the doctor that learnt this feller Harond what he knows about it. I'd like ter see Coburn beat him, but Coburn jist can't do it."

"Why is it," inquired a lanky countryman, "that this here Sabold seems ter be so unpop'ler round here? I never run acrost nobody that perfessed ter love him."

"Wull, it's this way," explained Si, holding his cigar wrong end to between two fingers of his right hand; "he's so almighty sniffy and high-toned that he thinks ord'n'ry folks is jist common dirt, and he never misses a chanct ter show it, nither. Not much like his father, he ain't. The doctor was alwus hail-feller-well-met with ev'rybody, and he had more friends 'mong the local people than 'mong the summer folks. The doctor'd been married seventeen year when this Harond was born, and I guess he'd figgered that he wasn't never goin' to have no chicks at all.

"Harond's mother come so close to dyin' that folks said there'd never be another one, that was sartin," Si went on. "There *was* one, three years later, when the doctor's wife had got up some past forty, and that was the last. Paul's a pritty decent chap, but he alwus was sorter differdent and shy; he never seemed to think hisself better'n common people, though he didn't mix with them as free as his father. But the fust was the mother's pet, which I s'pose is natteral enough, and I cal'late she plumb spoilt him. This Harond he never did like his brother; seemed to regard Paul as sort of an intruder—bullied him when he could, I understand. After the doctor died Harond he made it so disagreeable that Paul

he had to git out. Went abroad to study art and become a sculpture, same as his father was; sort of a silly idee, I own up, for why anybody like the doctor should give up his business at which he was makin' a fortune to go in for makin' figgers with gobs of clay is more'n I kin understand. Paul he's back, his mother bein' sick and not likely to pull through; but we ain't seen northin' of him round here. He'd better stick around, too, if he ever hopes to git his sheer of the propperty, for I cal'late Harond'd gobble it all if he could. That's about the size of the whole business."

"Gee whiz, Si!" suddenly exclaimed the first speaker, jostling the loquacious old man's elbow. "Just looker that peach! The one with the two men and the white-haired dame. Ain't she a screamer—what?"

A strikingly handsome young woman was passing with three friends. She was tall, slender, graceful in every movement, with a milk-white skin faintly tinted with pink, curving lips, and teeth that flashed delightfully when she laughed. In her hair she wore a pink rose.

"Yeh, she's some looker," agreed Si. "She's stoppin' up to the hotel. Name's Maddox, and her old man's one of them Southern kernels. They're all kernels or majors or somethin' of the sort, ye know. I reckon she's responsible for this swimmin' race that's comin' off, for both Sabold and Coburn is rushin' her. Take my word, she's too good lookin', and the man that ketches her better put her in a cage. Them kind is hard to hold even arter you git 'em hitched."

"Here comes the swimmers!" said the lanky countryman.

Preceded by three officials, who were compelling the crowd to fall back and open up a narrow lane, Sabold and Coburn were advancing along the pier. Each wore a blanket draped over his



shoulders; their splendidly muscled legs gleamed bare from the knees down. Sabold was slightly the taller of the two. He carried himself with an air of confidence that was distinctly disdainful. Coburn looked serious and resolute.

At the head of the steps leading down to the float from which the start was to be made, Harond stopped. Not more than twenty feet away his brother was bowing over the hand of Caroline Maddox. In a moment he reached the group. "How's this, Paul?" he demanded. "I thought you were at Sea-cliffs with mother. She——"

"She is better—much better to-day than she has been for weeks. Doctor Gribben came across more than an hour ago, and agreed to remain until I returned. He said there was no reason why I should not come over to see you swim. Old Mart brought me." He motioned toward the weather-beaten, grizzled old fisherman, who stood a few feet away, gazing steadily at Harond with an expression of dislike that nearly bordered upon hatred.

Harond hesitated. "Oh, very well," he said presently. "But it was not to see me swim that you came."

A few minutes later the contestants tossed off their blankets on the float, and stepped forward, side by side, ready for the start. Exactly a quarter of a mile away lay a stationary buoy which they were to pass round on the outer side before returning. The judges' boat lay a short distance from the float, waiting. The timekeeper held a split-second watch in his hand. Behind Harond and his rival, whom he yearned to defeat, the starter lifted his hand, pointing a pistol skyward.

"Ready!"

The two splendidly built men poised themselves for the get-off. The pistol barked. Both Sabold and Coburn left the float and cleaved the water as cleanly as bow-shot arrows. In a mo-

ment they were swimming side by side, both using at first the under-arm side stroke of the distance swimmer. Behind them, and somewhat to one side, the judges' boat followed. The watching crowd cheered.

For a little distance neither man seemed exerting himself greatly, although both were making surprisingly rapid progress through the water. Each was watchful of the other. Presently Coburn changed his style, shifting to the trudgeon stroke and shooting ahead amazingly. As if he had been warned of the other man's purpose by some subtle sense, Sabold changed to the same stroke at precisely the same instant, and still they forged along side by side at no advantage for either one.

Caroline Maddox had forgotten Paul Sabold. She had gone to the rail of the pier, taking her position as if it belonged to her by her natural superior right. People who would have resented such an action in an ordinary person fell back to make room for her. And many gazed at her beautiful face, enchanted, and forgot the swimmers.

"Faster!" she was murmuring excitedly to herself. "Faster! Faster! You must gain the advantage in the first of the race if you win! I told you! Have you forgotten?"

Paul heard her, and a strange light shone in his eyes. He was close behind her shoulder. Leaning forward, he spoke in a low tone in her ear: "You have a choice—a preference, Miss Maddox? If so, is it fair to let them believe you impartial?"

She cast a swift, odd look over her shoulder, and then she laughed. "Was I talking aloud, sculptor boy? Have I a choice? Well, I'm a woman, and men were made only to battle for women's smiles. Let them fight it out."

There was something heartless and cruel and cold in the way those last words were spoken; something that made him think for an instant that



she would have looked on with the same emotions and with no more excitement had the swimming men been engaged in mortal combat for her favor.

Suddenly a shout went up, swiftly growing louder. One of the swimmers was beginning to gain—it was plainly perceptible from the pier. With amazingly powerful strokes, he was driving his body through the water and forging ahead of the other man. It was Coburn!

Paul was disturbed. Conflicting emotions raged within him. He had thought that, because of Caroline Maddox, he would rejoice to see his brother defeated. Now he wondered why he should care on her account; and, believing that she also wished for Harond's defeat, resentment and pride seized him. Harond was the son of his father, and Stephen Sabold had taught him to swim and had taken pride in his accomplishment. Could it be that he would permit Coburn to defeat him—Coburn, a man without a record, unknown, perhaps, even as an amateur? Leaning forward to gaze over Caroline Maddox's shoulder, Paul muttered the wish that had blazed into life within his heart: "Beat him, Harond! The stroke—use the Sabold! That will do it!"

Again the beautiful girl turned a look upon him, and this time her eyes were shining with satisfaction. "Oh, no," she said; "he can't do it! The Sabold, of which I've heard so much around here, is a myth, a fake. On my word, I believe it's nothing but another name for the trudgeon, which is the fastest of all swimming strokes. I've never heard of anybody, except your father and your brother, who claimed that it was superior. If it is, let Harond show it now, or keep still about it forever."

Paul opened his lips to retort, but closed them instantly as he heard, a short distance away, a man laughing. He looked round and perceived it was

old Mart, whose gnarled face was twisted in a bitter grimace, his eyes following the progress of the swimmers. Then the fisherman spoke in the voice of all those who live much in solitude upon the sea.

"He hasn't got it in him!" he said. "He's no good! Water don't rise higher'n its source."

The cheering continued. Coburn was rounding the buoy, more than a full length in advance of Harond. In a flash he was headed back for the float. The other man turned and followed a few seconds later.

Having spurted and obtained the lead, Coburn shifted his stroke, and got something like a rest by the change. Still he held the advantage, ready at any moment, should he be pressed, to resort again to the trudgeon. Harond was hanging on bitterly, but many of the witnesses felt sure he must lose still more distance before the finish. They expressed this belief aloud. It revealed to Paul how unpopular his brother must be.

Half the return had been covered. Then something happened that stirred the crowd to amazement. Harond was driving ahead with a sudden dash. Coburn had realized it instantly, and was once more using the trudgeon; but now, though he seemed to be straining every nerve, the other man gained. Bit by bit, steadily and surely, Harond cut down the lead of his rival. He forged even; he forged ahead. It was something to marvel at.

The spectators were breathless; then they began to murmur, and the murmur swelled to a great shouting: "The Sabold—it's the Sabold! Look! Look! The Sabold!"

On tiptoes, straining, staring, they watched. They saw Harond draw away from Coburn, though the speed of the latter would have left many a great swimmer astern.

Paul touched Caroline Maddox on



the shoulder. "You can judge now," he said quietly, "whether or not it is a myth and a fake."

Harond reached the float many yards in advance, and drew himself lightly out of the water to rise and stand, dripping and splendid, a smile of triumph on his lips. His eyes sought Caroline Maddox; he lifted his hand to her and bowed. Instantly she tore the rose from her hair and flung it to him. He caught it deftly and touched it to his lips, while the crowd still cheered and a cannon boomed on the lawn in front of the hotel.

Behind him they were dragging Ranford Coburn, exhausted and limp, up on the float.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE SIREN AND THE SWIMMER.

ON the evening of the race, Paul came down from the room in which he had left his mother resting quietly, and apparently much improved. He met Harond in the big hall, and was amazed to see him in swimming trunks. The clock on the stairs chimed the half hour.

"A romantic woman," said Harond, "is a fool! I may be a fool myself! But whether I am or not, I do the Leander stunt to-night."

"What do you mean?" Paul asked.

"Miss Maddox is not satisfied. To-night she will be waiting for me at nine. Leander swam the Hellespont. I shall swim to the mainland."

"Never! The tide will be at its strongest ebb. The Raceway would get you! The Fang Rocks would tear you to pieces!"

"I shall swim to the mainland," said Harond grimly, "to please the whim of a woman who does not understand. But I'll make her understand! When she is mine——"

"You're crazy! If she knows the danger, she's not worth the risk. As

you say, it's a whim. Don't be an idiot, Harond."

"Romance is what she feeds upon now, but a few years will make a change. I'd go to her to-night if she asked me to swim a lake of living fire!"

Paul knew words would be wasted. The woman had bewitched his brother. Reasoning, argument, common sense Harond would thrust aside. After hesitating an instant, Paul turned and swiftly reascended the stairs.

Through the purple twilight the lights of the Algonquin House were gleaming like a thousand golden stars when Harond descended the path to the cove. The evening was soft and balmy. The tide, running strong on the ebb, lapped at the float, upon which the little cockleshell tender had been drawn up and overturned. A dark figure that had been sitting on the boat stood up as Harond approached.

"I've been waiting five minutes or more," said Paul.

"Waiting!" cried the older brother, peering sharply at him. "Waiting for what? On my word, you're wearing swimming togs! What's it mean?"

"If you attempt to swim to the mainland to-night, I go with you."

For a moment or two Harond was dumb with amazement and incredulity. "You called me crazy a short time ago," he said presently; "now it's you who are crazy—or joking!"

"I'm neither. I told you I had learned to swim. I'll show you I did not lie."

"But why? Oh, yes, you, too, are bewitched by that woman. But don't be an idiot."

"It is not on her account that I shall swim across. Who knows what might happen to you alone?"

Harond laughed his silent laugh, but he did not snap his fingers, and for this Paul was grateful.

"As if you would care so very much,



no matter what might happen!" scoffed the elder brother. "Oh, no, you can't fool me, Paul; it's the woman that lures you. Be careful; she may lure you to destruction. You warned me of the Raceway and the Fang Rocks; think of them yourself. Don't fancy because you have learned a little swimming that you are equal to this performance. I forbid you to attempt it."

"When you are ready," said Paul, "we'll start."

Like a flash Harond turned and plunged from the float. Almost as quick, Paul followed, putting even more spring into his legs and coming alongside almost with his first stroke. Side by side the brothers struck out for the distant, glimmering lights of gold. The steady tug of the tide compelled them to breast it diagonally. Both used the powerful underhand stroke of the distance swimmer.

For some time they pushed through the chilly water in silence, but all the while Harond was casting occasional glances toward his brother, and marveling; for this could not be the Paul he had believed he knew so well—the weakling, the coward at whom he had sneered. In his heart something new and strange had birth.

"Listen, Paul," he said; "I want you to go back—I command it. If any one is to be drowned, let it be me; not both of us. Think of our mother——"

"Shut up, Harond!" Paul returned. "Save your breath for your work; we'll both need all our strength, I'm thinking. I can hear the Fang Rocks hissing."

Behind them the moon was rising. There was no breeze, no ripple on the placid surface of the bay; like a blue sheet of glass the water lay smooth between them and the distant land. But beneath the surface a mighty power was dragging at their arms and legs.

Suddenly Harond uttered a cry. "Cramp!" he gasped. "My legs!"

Like a flash Paul swerved toward him; in a twinkling he was close at hand. "Put your hands on my shoulders," he directed. "Cling fast. I'll turn back and try to make the shore."

Harond clutched him around the neck and drove him under. He came up with two strokes, but again the older brother dragged him down. Three times this happened. After the third, Paul came up strong, got his breath, and said: "Steady! Just hold fast and let me turn back."

"Turn back," urged Harond. "Leave me. You can make it alone, but if you try to save me, we'll both drown. Go, now!"

"Hold fast, I tell you!" Paul almost snarled. "I'll never go back alone. It's both or neither! If I should desert you, I could never face mother again."

Immediately Harond released him, striking out as strongly as ever. "I'm all right," he announced, to Paul's astonishment.

"But—the cramp?"

"There was no cramp. I tested you. I shall never call you a coward again. I thought I could frighten you into a panic—into quitting; but you're a true Sabold, after all."

Again they swam on together, fighting the running tide, the swirl and hiss of which they could faintly hear coming from the distant Fang Rocks. Wrath filled Paul's heart to overflowing, but it did not cause him to alter his purpose. He thought of Caroline Maddox as a siren who had maddened his brother even as the fabled sea nymphs maddened the unwary mariners with their songs in the days of Ulysses, and contempt for her pulsed in every vein.

In time the Raceway was passed, the Fang Rocks lay behind them. Steadily and silently they pushed on toward the lights of the Algonquin, glowing like Hero's torch. Paul showed no sign of weakening, and in that hour the frayed strands of the bond between



the brothers were picked up one by one and reknit until they became like a rope of steel.

They drew near the shore at last, with the tide, now on the turn, beginning to bear them in. To their ears floated the faint, soft strains of an orchestra. Up there in the hotel people were dancing. "But," said Harond, unconsciously speaking aloud, "she will be waiting for me, alone, on the veranda."

At the float they drew themselves out and rested. Only for a few minutes; Harond's eagerness would not permit him to linger after he had gained a little strength. Paul followed him to the pier, and thence toward the hotel.

The clean, white moonlight was strong; it was strong enough for the woman to see and recognize one of the pair as the man who had risked his life to please her foolish whim. Harond expected she would come hurrying to meet him. She did not.

There was no one on the eastern veranda as they approached. Even the beauty of the night could not avail against the dance madness of these city people. Mounting the broad steps, they were able to look in through the open windows and see the throng gliding and whirling over the floor of the spacious room. Paul grasped his brother's arm, pointing with his other hand. "There she is! That is how she waits and watches for you!"

On the arm of Ranford Coburn, Caroline Maddox glided past, beautiful as the fairest dream, smiling up into his eyes.

For a moment Harond's powerful shoulders drooped; then he threw them back, taking a deep, whistling breath. Then he snapped his fingers.

"And here ends my idiocy!" he exclaimed, turning away. "Come, brother, we'll find some one to take us back to Sounding Island."

## CHAPTER VIII.

### FROM THE TOP OF THE CLIFF.

HAROND stood before the Swimmer. He was alone, for Paul had gone to bed. Putting out his hand, he took the tiny bronze figure from the mantel. "If your heart holds a secret," he said whimsically, "I think it is Paul who has fathomed it. It must be courage, loftiness of soul, loyalty. I've thought of him as a boy, but he is a man to the core. Henceforth——"

The image slipped from his fingers and fell to the floor. Stooping to recover it, he was amazed to find the lower part of the base, which he had always thought one solid piece, had swung back on an invisible hinge. Startled and touched by sudden chill apprehension, he gazed at the metal leaf which had opened before him like a page of the Book of Doom. And there beneath his eyes lay recorded the secret of the Swimmer.

In the early morning old Mart rowed round the island to the vicinity of Deep-water Cliffs, at the base of which, it was said, no sounding had ever touched bottom. What the depth could be close to the sheer bluffs was yet a mystery unsolved. Old Mart himself claimed there was no bottom to be found there. But the fisherman was an ignorant man who had never learned to read or write, despite the fact that the woman he won and married had been a school-teacher of good family.

The newly risen sun was tinting the rippled surface of the sea with pinkish light. Above Mart's head the gulls wheeled and called. On his leathery, bearded face there was a singular expression of mingled reluctance and determination. He did not pull away to his traps and trawls; instead, coming round the southern end of the island, he drew in close under the cliffs and rested on his oars.



From his bosom he took something carefully wrapped in a handkerchief. When the handkerchief was removed, he held the Swimmer in his calloused, oar-crooked hand, the lower part of the base swinging loose on its hidden hinge; for the secret catch that had held it in place was broken.

Old Mart's eyes narrowed as he peered at that portion of the base which had been revealed to view by the accident which broke the catch. There were tiny tracings upon it like engraved writing, but so minute that, had he been able to read, the fisherman would have needed a magnifying glass to decipher it.

"But I kin guess," the old man muttered. "Doctor Sabold writ the secret here. He died without tellin' nobody. Now the one that found it out, he comes to me and asks is it true. And when I tell him 'yes,' when I fling it in his face what he is, he gits humble for the first time in his life, and he begs me to take this thing out to sea and sink it where it'll never come to light. For that there ain't no place like this here spot. Anything sunk here'll never come up till Judgment Day.

"But I ain't a-doin' it on his account," he growled. "It's my promise to the doctor. Mebbe he was cracked, as folks said, but I made him a promise that night twenty-eight year gone—a promise to keep the secret faithful to death. Wull, this thing'll never give it away." He started to fling the image far from him.

Before it had struck the blue water a human figure, cleaving the air head-foremost, with arms extended straight and hands pressed palm to palm, shot down from the very top of the cliff above. The fisherman gasped as he caught a glimpse of Vesta, his adopted daughter, flashing like a meteor toward the surface of the sea, beneath which she disappeared. Struck dumb, he sat, waiting.

The seconds that passed seemed like hours. Then the head of the girl burst into view, and he breathed a prayer of relief. Gasping, she floated, treading water a bit, until she could rest a little. Then she swam slowly toward the boat.

The fisherman backed water with the oars, and the moment she was near enough she grasped the stern of the boat and lifted herself over into it, tumbling like one exhausted upon a tattered strip of folded tarpaulin. She lay there, breathing heavily. She was wearing the gay bathing suit old Mart had bought for her at her entreaty.

"Vesta," said the fisherman, "be ye crazy? How'd ye ever come to do a daft thing like that?"

She smiled at him, and she was very pretty in the rosy light of the morning sun. "I've always said I'd dive from the top of Deepwater Cliffs some day, daddy. Now I've done it!" The triumph of successful accomplishment was in her voice.

"Crazy!" he declared. "That's what 'twas! Didn't ye see me down here?"

"Of course I saw you, daddy. I thought I'd give you a little surprise."

"Wull, ye done it, all right." Then suspicion gleamed in his eyes. "Was that all ye done it for, jest 'cause ye wanted to dive off the cliff?"

"What other reason should I have? It's really something of a feat to dive from up there."

"That's so. But didn't ye go after something? Didn't ye bring nothin' up with ye? Put up yer hands, girl; lemme see." She held up her empty hands. "By golly!" he said, with a sigh of relief. "You was down so long I thought mebbe ye'd gone clean through to t'other side. I've gotter go back to the house for suthin' I fergot. Set still and take it easy; I'll land ye there. No more swimmin' tricks this mornin', and I ferbid ye ever divin' off them cliffs ag'in. Hear me?"



"I hear you, daddy," she returned demurely. "Once is enough for me. I don't think I'll ever have a desire to do it again."

## CHAPTER IX.

### SOMETHING BETTER.

NEVER a late sleeper, Paul had risen earlier than usual and set forth for a stroll upon the island. Unconsciously his feet carried him toward the home of old Mart. In a little glade some distance from the fisherman's cabin he came upon two graves, one a tiny mound that marked the resting place of a child.

"Oh, yes!" he murmured. "It's here old Mart's wife is buried. She died that same night of the storm when Harond was born, and her baby did not survive her many hours."

He turned hastily away, for somehow his thoughts had been somber enough before; and over him, in spite of the bright morning sunshine, there seemed to hover an unseen shadow. A few minutes later he was standing just within the edge of a little grove of pines, looking down on old Mart, rowing in to his landing, and wondering that Vesta, wearing a bathing suit, should be in the boat.

When they were ashore, and the fisherman had started to climb the path to the cottage, Paul saw the girl turn back swiftly, after casting a glance toward her father. From the stern of the boat Vesta took something that had been hidden beneath the tattered tarpaulin, hastily concealing it in a fold of her water-soaked short skirt. Then she likewise began to ascend the path.

Mart had reached the cottage and entered it when Paul stepped forth, and Vesta saw him. She looked startled, and her face grew white; but the moment she could do so she hurried toward him, making a gesture for caution.

"What is it, little sister?" he asked.

She clutched his arm and drew him hastily into the cover of the pines. Then she took the Swimmer from the fold of her wet skirt.

"I saved it for you—the record of the secret," she said, panting and trembling. "Look, it is here, engraved on this leaf of the base which has always been closed. Your father meant you to have it in this secret place to produce if there was any dispute about the property—but he died before he could show it to you. Somehow Harond broke it open and read what is there. This morning, before it was light, he brought the statue to my daddy and urged him to take it out and throw it into the sea. They talked, and I learned the secret that has been hidden all these years, for I was awake and could hear what they said. When Harond left, daddy muttered to himself, as he always does. I heard him say he'd throw it into the water off Deepwater Cliffs. So when he started out I put on my bathing suit and ran the length of the island, and I was waiting on the top of the cliffs when he came round in the boat. When he started to throw the image into the water I leaped from the cliffs, and, by making a headlong dive, I caught it before it could sink forever beyond the reach of human hands."

Admiration for her resourcefulness and courage mingled with amazement in his eyes. "Vesta," he said, "you're a most astounding girl. But what is this secret?"

A laugh startled them. Crazy Moll came pushing through the pines. "I'll tell ye!" cried the deranged woman. "I'd forgot, but I remember now. Yesterday I talked with the doctor again, and he told me. You're the only livin' son of Stephen Sabold. Harond isn't your brother!"

"The ravings of a lunatic!" exclaimed Paul. "Such a thing is utterly impossible!"

"It's true, I tell ye!" shrilled the old



woman. "I know, for I cared for your mother when the other baby was born—the one that died. The doctor didn't dare let his wife know the baby was dead for fear it'd kill her, too. A few hours before, Mart's wife died, leavin' a baby boy. The doctor went to Mart and proposed to swap the dead baby for the living one, saying Mart could not bring the little fellow up as he should be, while he would bring him up like a gentleman, same as if he was really his own son. And he paid Mart well. And he paid me. And we both made oath to keep the secret. Your brother, the baby that died, was buried beside Mart's wife over yonder; and Mart's son was put in your mother's arms when she was strong enough, and she always thought him her own flesh and blood."

Paul mopped cold beads of perspiration from his gray face. "It's madness!" he muttered huskily.

"It must be true," said Vesta, "for I heard Harond questioning daddy, and daddy said that it was true. It is graven there in script on the base of the image, but you need a magnifying glass to read it."

"Then," said Paul, "I understand why my father wished me to bring him the Swimmer when he was dying. He had lost his speech, but with a pencil he managed to write on a pad that the Swimmer was to be brought. I think he meant to show me the secret. When I returned to him he was unconscious, and he did not live many minutes."

Two persons, who had been drawn to the grove by the loud voice of Crazy Moll, stepped forth into view. They were Harond and Mart. The fisherman stopped, but Harond came on until he was only a few feet from Paul. They looked straight at each other, and the elder was as pale as the younger.

"It is true, Paul," said Harond, speaking with an effort in a low tone. "Now you know why, by the doctor's

will, the property is to descend to you, while I am to have an annuity. I am not your brother, and you can proclaim it to the world. I urged my own father to throw that thing into the sea, so that the truth would never become known; for who would pay attention to the ravings of Crazy Moll, even if she babbled about it? But a little while ago something like remorse got me by the throat when I remembered how ready you were to die with me, if necessary, on the Fang Rocks. I'm a villain, Paul! I am the coward, not you! This thing, remorse, clinging to my throat, dragged me here in haste to prevent my father from throwing the Swimmer into the sea. He told me I was too late. Then we heard old Moll shouting and jabbering here. I see the Swimmer in your hand; by some miracle it has been saved. But you'll not need it as evidence. Both my father and I will speak the truth."

"Harond!" cried Paul, leaping to his side and flinging an arm about his shoulders. "The secret that has been a secret so long must remain one. Together we will throw the Swimmer into the sea from the top of Deepwater Cliffs. When the time comes, which I pray may not be soon, we will share equally in everything that is left to us."

The deranged woman was peering into Harond's face. "What is it?" she mumbled with exasperation. "What is it I want to tell you? I remembered a little while ago, but now it is gone again."

"You see," said Paul, "she has forgotten. It was merely a flash of memory. Mart will keep silent—and Vesta, too." He took her hand, drew her nearer, and put his other arm about her shoulders. "I have always called her my little sister of Sounding Island. Henceforth she can be your sister, Harond; but to me, if she will consent, she shall be something nearer and dearer—my wife!"





# With Untried Sword by Halliwell Sutcliffe

## PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

Summary of what has gone before, for those who missed it.

AFTER many adventures, Maurice Anstruther, a young Englishman, joins the forces of Prince Charles Stuart at camp, and the prince's army proceeds to Perth, on the march to Edinburgh. To Anstruther's surprise, his betrothed joins him in camp, disguised as a lieutenant. She is Helen Strange, only daughter of Lord Strange, whom Anstruther had defended from a highwayman near an inn at Dunblane.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### WELCOME ADVICE.

**W**E stayed a week or so in camp at Perth, and left it with an army which, though small, was palpably increased since that first night when I had joined it as a lady. Not only had Lord Murray and the Duke of Perth with many followers come in, but Dugald's six hundred Camerons also and many of the smaller lairds.

It seemed but a fitting comedy that, just as I had entered Perth in woman's garb, so my lady had entered it in man's apparel. Yet I had the easier part to play in this same comedy, for while she was compelled to maintain her unwonted gear I was privileged—and a mighty pleasant privilege it was—to

doff my skirt. Nor have I since that day found heart to be truly angry with a woman, when I remember that fate has condemned her to the hardship of a petticoat.

Yet, for all that, I was troubled in my mind. The prince knew of Nell's disguise, and the more I pondered on the sacrifice that she had made for me, the more clearly I saw that some means must be found to rob scandal of its sting. I approached my friend MacGregor, therefore. And in calling him my friend I use the word in no loose sense, for comedy and peril joined hand in hand I have always found to be a quick and certain road to comradeship; and since the night when I had fooled the doughty Scot into bowing his heart out in my service he had shown a grim, unswerving partiality toward myself.

"MacGregor," I said suddenly, as we walked beneath the starshine and chatted of Lord Lovat's policy toward the prince, "MacGregor, I'm in a difficulty."

"Hoot awa'!" cried he, with an alarming drop into the broadest Scotch. "Hoot awa', laddie. Ye're meaning there's a woman i' the case. Na, na! It's a safe guide through life to ken that a man wi' a long face an' a deeficulty is just getting wrapped up i' some saft lassie's petticoat."

"Well, there is a lady in the case," I



said, a trifle angered by his tone. "I want help, MacGregor. You see, a lady has come into the camp, and—and she has enlisted under the white cockade."

"What's this? Enlisted? Well, it's all of a piece wi' Jennie Cameron—Colonel Cameron, as Charlie likes to call her—who brought the whole clan out to meet us on the road."

"Yes, but—but she is dressed as a man, you see, and—and I love her."

He laid a hand upon my shoulder, and his voice grew softer.

"Ye say that as if ye kenned the meaning of a heartsome word, laddie. Ye love her. An' she lo'es ye, I'm thinking, or she'd not doff her kirtle for the breeches."

"She loves me, and I fear lest——"

I did not finish, and MacGregor lost his new-found tenderness of voice.

"What do ye fear, ye witless callant? If she lo'es ye, an' ye lo'e her, an' ye're together, what power on earth can frichten ye? Gin I were—aweeel, that's no muckle matter. Ye want advice? Well, ye can do ain o' two things—ye can marry her, or——"

"MacGregor," I interrupted, "you're wrong to doubt me. Haven't you such a word as 'lady' up in Scotland here?"

He understood me perfectly, as I had understood what he had left unsaid. But he seemed unruffled—pleased, even—by my temper, and again he patted me on the shoulder.

"Look, laddie, I'm in love mysel'—an' yet I didna think to mention it; an' I ken weel how it maks a man long sairly to fecht without just provocation. So we'll just say nae mair about your wrath, an' I'll gi'e ye a bit o' guid advice. Powder an' sparks are not just neighborly, an' ye'd be wise, for both your sakes, to wed her now. It's easy, laddie, as falling out of a birchen tree to wed a lassie up in Scotland here, an' she'll march wi' a livelier step if her callant's her ain."

"The prince knows of her disguise,

MacGregor, and so do you. I look to you to keep our secret."

"I keep what I get, laddie, i' this hard life, an' your secret's safe wi' me. Anshtruther," he broke off, his voice softening again, "I wad gi'e the world to be i' your place. There's a lassie now i' Edinburgh toun; an' first she thocht she'd ha'e me, an' then she thocht she wadna, an' last of a' I just ran awa' to Chairlie, to see if I could drive the madness oot by fechtin'. An' my heart is sair the nicht, for her face is printed plain on all yon wheen o' winking stars."

"You'll win her yet," I said, assured of my own happiness, and ready to be sure of all the world's.

"Aye, when there's summer heat i' winter. Now, rin awa' hame to your bed, laddie, for I've told ye mair than ever I meant to tell."

One thing was clear, however: the prince had been a true friend to us both—to Nell and to myself—and I could not marry without his leave and sanction. When I presented myself on the morrow, accordingly, I took occasion to speak of what was in my mind; and, so far from presenting any obstacles, he smiled—the quiet, warm-hearted smile which afterward led men to live brave lives and die brave deaths for love of him.

"To be sure, my lad," he said, with a whiff of the black pipe, which already, with its cracks and seams and odd deformities, was familiar to me as my own face. "To be sure it would be better so. The minister here shall marry you, and I will give the bride away."

He seemed determined to load me with honors greater than my desert, and I could only answer diffidently, foolishly, because the sense of his great kindness was strong on me.

"Tut! tut!" he put in lightly. "You have both done me services, and it is a pleasure to repay them in any coin, however light. Women are full of



whimsies, Anstruther. Can you persuade her, think you, to return with you to my quarters in one hour's time? I must see Lord Murray for a half hour or so, and then I shall be entirely at your service. I will send for the minister meanwhile, and you shall find all in order."

I thanked him warmly, and set off in quest of Nell. I found her down by the brook which watered the low meadows, and learned, when I preferred my reasonable request, that the prince had spoken truly of a maid's whimsies. She did not wish to marry yet, she said; indeed, I had not proved myself a fit man to wed within a twelvemonth's time. There was the tiring-maid at Dunblane, too, who might be made unhappy; and so on, till I was in despair.

"But the prince has pledged himself to lay your hand in mine. We dare not show discourtesy to him," I cried.

"Indeed not? Well, the discourtesy is yours, not mine. You should never take a lady's wish for granted, sir, nor make rash promises in her name."

"Then I'll be gone," I said, in vexation, "for I'll never marry one who does not love me well enough to——"

I stopped, for the plain reason that I could find no finish to my sentence. It is well, at times, to vault to the back of a high horse, but it is also well to be sure beforehand that you can keep the saddle.

"You may be gone," she answered calmly. "I am very sure that I can win my way to fortune now that the prince has made me one of his own soldiers."

"Yet I fancied that you loved me," I said reproachfully.

She shrugged her shoulders in a fashion that the Scotch have learned from their French neighbors.

"Love you? Oh, yes; as much as I love many folk who bring me trouble."

"When did I bring you trouble?" I muttered.

I think—for since those days I have

learned much—I think she saw that my patience was like to break its tether, for on the sudden she came to me, and stroked my face, and finally laid her cool cheek to mine.

"Maurice," she said, "you cannot quell me. It is I who should rebuke you. And yet—and yet—you may take me to the prince."

## CHAPTER XX.

### THE WEDDING MORN.

MY anger seemed a year away, and she was crying softly in my arms, and I knew myself the happiest man from London to the Ness of Sutherland.

"The prince warned me that you might be whimsical," I said at last, minded to be teasing in my turn.

"Warned you?" she repeated, with a little gesture of disdain. "What does he know of women?"

"That is a delicate question, and one I cannot answer readily. Only, it is time we went to the prince's quarters, for he has made all arrangements there."

"So you counted on my coming with you? 'Whistle, an' I'll come to ye, my lad,' as they say in this *warm-hearted* country."

"No; I counted on nothing, for I knew you could not change your sex's failings with your raiment."

"Your wits grow sharper, sir," she cried. Then, with a laughable fall from her manner of high dignity, "Maurice," whispered she, "I cannot be married in these clothes."

"I care not what your clothes are, Nell, so only it is you I marry."

"But 'tis unheard of; and the minister—he will be shocked!"

"Scotch ministers are not by way of being shocked, I fancy. They know their flocks too well."

"Oh, Maurice, I am ashamed! At what time does the prince expect us?"



"Why, at once, since a certain willful maid has wasted a good hour in argument."

"She must waste more time, then, Maurice—just a little more, for marry in this garb I will not."

I did not press the question, for I was growing wise before my time where women were concerned, and I saw that argument would but deepen her resolve.

"Then we must keep his highness waiting," I said. "But where will you find change of gear?"

"At my own lodging. There's a dear Scotch goodwife there, with a daughter nearly my own height. You'll laugh, Maurice, but anything is better than these."

She was gone before I knew it, and by and by she returned in a brave homespun dress that suited her to admiration. But then my lady—and I have lived with her through many springs since then—has that queer quality of looking at her best in any garb. It may be that is why I think so little of a lady's dress, and so much of her face.

"You are sweeter that way, Nell," I said, when she came back in the bravery of her landlady's daughter.

"I feel so," she murmured, with a happy laugh. And then I knew that she no longer feared the ceremony that awaited us.

We reached the prince's quarters, contrary to expectation, within the hour appointed; but he was ready for us, as was the minister.

"You will present Mistress Strange to me afresh?" said his highness, smiling on us both.

I did so in due form, and he bowed in courtly fashion. As for Nell, she curtsied bewitchingly—as bewitchingly as my friend MacGregor had bowed upon a certain evening in Dunblane—and kissed his hand, and flushed as red as any peony in May.

"Oh, your highness, will you forgive me?" she whispered.

"For anything, I promise you. But what is your offense?"

"I—I could get nothing to wear within the time—the clothes were borrowed from my landlady."

Again the prince smiled—an enigmatic smile this time. "Mistress Strange," he said, "you forget your mirror when you think about your wearing gear."

"So I thought just now," I blurted out. "When she came tripping to the waterside and asked my pardon for her wearing gear, I thought——"

"Aye, you thought a sweet lass and a lovesome had given you more than you deserved," put in the prince. "I can well believe it. Anstruther, this is Mr. Cameron, the minister, and the sooner he performs his duty by you, the happier you will be."

The minister proved deft at the business, and before we well knew what was going forward, Nell and I were pledged to a life journey that afterward, we confessed, neither of us would have missed for sake of the crown for which Prince Charlie fought.

When all was over, and we had shaken hands with the gray-headed, courteous Mr. Cameron—I believe he kissed Nell, but my eyes were quite elsewhere—the prince claimed also a kiss upon the cheek.

"Madam," he said, "I am glad that you two are joined in happiness, and all that superstition means by 'luck'—and I am superstitious—I wish to you. And now, Anstruther, it is hard to give a man work upon his wedding morning, but there's a long day's ride before you."

He took me aside, with an apology to Nell, and gave me instructions for the day. They were such as promised weariness, but I welcomed them because by cheerfully performing them I



could show my sense of the prince's kindness.

"Tut! tut!" he answered, when I said as much. "You're a good lad, and a willing, and your wife shall be proud of you when we come into action."

*When we come into action.* The words were characteristic. That itch for battle was ever with the prince; it seemed his faith was absolute in an appeal to arms, and when from time to time news came of the enemy's movements, I could see his eyes light up, and he would throw back his head as if he scented powder from afar.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### READY FOR THE JOURNEY.

AFTER Nell had taken her leave, and I also, we went out together into the crisp sunlight of the street. The first person that we saw was no other than Captain MacGregor, who came up the street with the jaunty swing that would have suited a kilt to perfection, but which looked something odd in legs which were breeched and booted after our English fashion. But then this jauntiness was part of MacGregor. He always walked a road as if he owned the adjacent countryside; and the same manner when he met a lady was apt to carry all before it, as a two-handed sword would, or a ball from out a cannon. He lifted his hat to us, and bowed.

"MacGregor," I said, stopping him as he would have passed by, "allow me to present you to my wife."

Again the bow, which tickled my memory of a certain recent comedy.

"This, Nell, is a dear friend of mine," I went on, in a sober voice; "so dear that a few nights ago he offered to take up my quarrel and fight for me. I told you of that escapade, if you remember."

MacGregor eyed me sideways, as if to say I owed my safety only to a lady's presence; and Nell laughed outright, for

she, too, I fancy, had noted the elaboration of the bow, and was seeing in imagination the scene in the Dunblane tavern.

"Aweel, ye'll never rest, I see, till the whole world kens the tale," said he, with a near approach to a smile. "I wish ye joy o' the chiel, madam; for, gin he can fool Archie MacGregor, what chance at a' wi' him has a slip of a lassie like yoursel'?"

"I must trust to fortune, sir," said she demurely.

"Ye'll find her tricky; she's a woman," he answered, with sobriety. He left us then, and we strolled on toward the meadows where I had found her earlier in the morning.

"Only an hour ago," she whispered, seating herself on the stone bridge, "only an hour ago, and now we're man and wife, Maurice."

"And now we're man and wife," I echoed, catching her hands and holding them.

She nestled to me as a child might.

"Maurice, I must not keep you here, for you have much to do. Tell me, this business of the prince's that you go on, will it lead you into danger?"

"Why, no, sweet. It will lead me into danger of great weariness, but nothing else."

"Ah, that is good to hear, Maurice. Already I begin—to be afraid, dear."

Yes, she had begun to be afraid; and so had I. For the first time in my life I knew that sickening depth of fear which is not for one's own safety, but for the separation which would come through death. I was to know more of that fear by and by, and was to learn that, if a man would enjoy the lust of battle to the full, he must remain unwedded or fail to love his mistress as a lover should.

To-day, however, I put my fears aside, and answered lightly, and left her, tearful and smiling both, at the bridge that spanned the stream. And



when at last I reached the camp, long after dusk had fallen, I was too weary to have room for fear of any sort, except that I might miss my bed.

At least, I thought I was too weary, until I rode past the comfortable lodging which his highness had allotted to a certain private soldier in his army. For the private soldier was my wife, and she was pacing up and down the roadway as if she waited for some friend. She turned quickly at the sound of my horse's hoofs, and ran to meet me; and in a moment I was out of the saddle and had her in my arms.

"I waited for you, dear; and you were so long in coming," she said.

"Nell, it is good—good to have you here and to know that you're my wife. Think of it, Nell—*my wife*."

Already she had crossed that threshold which lies between girlhood and womanhood, for her lips were warm on mine, and she seemed to creep closer to my arms than she had known the way of once. And a great longing seized me—a great longing, and with it a great fear of parting, even for the few hours that lay 'twixt now and morning.

"Nell!" I cried. She looked up, with fear and wonder and a sort of gladness in her eyes, and I could feel her tremble in my grasp.

"Ah, no, my dear," she said at last. "Be kind to me, Maurice, for I feel—how shall I tell you? It has been so hurried and so strange. See, dear, I do not like this masquerading. I know that it is needful now, that a woman would only hamper you, and so I am dressed like this for sake of being near you. But—but——"

My sudden longing was crushed out of sight. I only knew that what Nell wished I wished, because her happiness was mine; and, much as I have thought about it since, with experience to guide me, I cannot find a better test of love.

"Dear lass, I understand," I said; "and we shall be in Edinburgh soon, and

that will mean a change of gear for you."

"Maurice, will it?" she cried eagerly. "I have a kinswoman there, a Mrs. Cameron, and—and I shall be glad to find womenfolk again. Is it true, Maurice? It seems too good."

"I've been thinking about it all the day, for I cannot bear to see you sharing all our hardships."

"'Tis for you, dear. I do not find them hardships."

"Yet I cannot bear them—for you. When Edinburgh is reached, all will be different. The roads are better that lead south, and you can travel in a chaise from place to place——"

"And leave you?" she interrupted.

"Why, no," I laughed. "I shall ride up every now and then and laugh your fears to scorn."

"It will be good to get to Edinburgh," she said, with the curious, sweet air of frankness that was her own.

And so we parted on the starlit road, and I regretted nothing—not even our few hours of separation—after she had whispered in my ear that I was good to her.

On the morrow—it was late when I got abroad—the whole army was astir, and word was going round from mouth to mouth that our route was to be taken without delay.

The prince, when I presented myself, confirmed the report.

"You are late, sir," he cried in his merriest voice; "but then the work I gave you yesterday was two men's work, and you performed it well. And then a new-made wife is troublesome, I take it—and, on the top of all, I have fresh work for you. Our route is to be taken in an hour's time, as doubtless you have heard. You will ride beside me, Mr. Anstruther, if you can consent to part so soon from a wife and a well-earned holiday."

"She is but a private in your army, sire. I have no choice."



He laughed, and so dismissed me. And first I went to find out Nell at her own lodging, and when I told her of the march her face lit up.

"Dear, we shall be in Edinburgh soon," she cried, and I was glad that she felt so eager toward the journey, which might entail some hardships on her.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### ON THE MARCH.

I NEED not tell all the details of our march on Edinburgh, although it was studded thick with adventure and surprises. Enough that we passed through Dunblane, where I had to encounter once again the pretty serving maid, and to hear some irony from Nell; across the Fords of Frew, so narrowed now by extreme drought that we could cross with ease where, thirty years before, the ill-starred Earl of Mar had failed to make a passage; through Stirling, Gardiner's dragoons still falling two steps back for every forward stride we took; on to the camping ground at Duddingstone, which was to prove the last halt before our prince secured command of his own capital.

As aid-de-camp in personal attendance on his highness, I was to witness many tragic, many pathetic, sights in the course of this most strange and picturesque campaign; but there were scenes as well, as I have said, that had in them more pure comedy than either tragedy or pathos. Indeed, the one characteristic of our hot march into England which stands out to me the most clearly, as I look back upon the Forty-Five with the spectacles of age, is the mixture of high purpose and broadest merriment that ruled our enterprises. One of us kissed a woman lightly, say, when sun and autumn warmth were on the braeside, and the issue of a battle was decided by it, as at Prestonpans. Or a laird's wife upset a kettle of boiling water over her good-

man's knees—a tale I may have to tell before I finish these light memoirs—and thereby saved the prince from certain death, as when we rode together, he and I, to Kirtlebrae. It was these laughable small incidents of war, I think, that added to the wild campaign the last touch of carelessness; and it was these, I am sure, that helped to keep my own spirits from despair when the dark days of Derby and the backward march came on us all.

The incident, however, which more than any other moved my laughter—which makes me smile even now as I put quill to paper—was the manner of our taking the good city of Edinburgh. I had looked, with all the fine expectation of two and twenty, for danger in the assault, for the cries of stricken men, for flare of gunpowder and fall of shattered masonry; and these things I found, it may be, at another date, but not at Edinburgh.

I am glad that it falls to me just now to tell the story of the capture of Edinburgh by the Jacobite laddies, for it is heartsome weather as I write—although the season is late autumn, as on the day we played the pipes in Edinburgh—and the mind turns with kindness to that side of warfare on which love and laughter intermingle.

The love interest, as not infrequently occurred, was supplied by Archie MacGregor, now a trusted officer of the prince and a firm friend of my own. MacGregor, who commanded a company of Highlanders as devil-may-care as himself, had chosen to cement his intimacy with me, though in all respects he was as different from myself as well could be. Frolic or fight he took with a queer Scot's dourness of demeanor that was for ever clashing with my own telltale spirits, and fifty times a day we rubbed angles with each other. But it was these very differences of temper, I fancy, that drew us close together. At any rate, our friendship had already



grown so strong that he had confided to me the secret of his love affair at which he had hinted on the eve of my own wedding day. The lady, it seemed, was one Flora MacIvor, and her wit, to judge from my friend's account of it, was as little comforting as the edge of a skean dhu. She would say neither "No" nor "Yes," moreover, to his dogged love-making, but kept him, as women have a pretty knack of doing, swinging like a pendulum between extreme hope and equally extreme despair. She had played a trifle too long with him at last, and it was her willy-nilly mood, no less than his own love of adventure, that had sent him from Edinburgh—where Mistress MacIvor chanced to be staying for a while when the Rebellion broke out—to seek distraction in the wake of the white cockade.

This had all happened in the early summer, and now, as our southward march brought us nearer Edinburgh, I could see Archie's restlessness grow with each mile we traveled, until, indeed, I began to fancy he would run amuck among us all, unless a battle came to draw his thoughts from the lady who to him was Edinburgh town and Edinburgh castle both in one. His face was like a fiddle out of tune when we finished the last stage but one of our march, and went into camp at a spot some twelve miles from the city; and I watched him as he stood and glowered upon the murky haze, touched here and there with a stormy sunset, which showed him the dwelling place of a disdainful lady.

"Are you gauging to-morrow's weather, Archie?" I said, linking an arm through his.

"Aye, gauging the weather, lad," he muttered. "An' what's that to ye, I'm wondering? Canna an honest man tak' a peep at the sky, but raw laddies maun come smirking, an'——"

"You are too careful to excuse your-

self." I laughed. "Well, we shall see the streets of Edinburgh before the next two days are out; and they're pleasant streets to walk along, they tell me, Archie."

I spoke a true word, as it fell out; but I did not guess, while I stood there and bantered our MacGregor, that our entry was to be largely due to himself—and to Flora MacIvor, too, in a remote degree.

We struck camp at an early hour on the morrow, and started in the best of spirits for the capital; and now, after a couple of leagues or so had been covered, I was riding by the prince's side, in advance of the main body, while he gave me his instructions for the day.

"Look yonder! They mean to check us in good time!" he cried, drawing rein upon the sudden and pointing to the low roofs of the village of Corstorphine, which showed just ahead of us.

I followed the direction of his finger, and saw a band of dragoons—some fifty, more or less, there seemed to be—drawn up across the road at the corner where it turned round to the village.

"Ride forward, Anstruther," said his highness, preparing to return to the main body of his army, with the intention, as I guessed, of leading them promptly forward. "Ride forward and reconnoiter these fellows who grudge me admittance to my capital."

Some members of his staff, with Archie MacGregor among them, joined us at this moment, and he motioned them to ride forward with me toward Corstorphine.

"Anstruther," whispered MacGregor, as we drew near the dragoons, "they have a mighty saft look about them, as if they feared the de'il was somewhere near and they didna ken just where to look for him."

I, too, had been observing the city soldiers narrowly, and so ready they seemed to break that I for one could not resist the temptation. I just yelled,



"Let's ride at them," and set spurs to my horse. MacGregor, not to be outdone in folly, followed me, and after us our little company of eight came galloping.

We were within ten paces of them now, and I could see them look at one another with very doubtful faces. Then Archie raised a Gaelic howl, than which there is no more strident nor more fearsome thing on earth. We fired our pistols point-blank at the enemy, swung our swords free to the accompaniment of a second howl from MacGregor, and galloped forward for the charge. But there are two sides to a charge, as to a bargain, and we found ourselves, when we had gained the corner, riding only at an empty stretch of road. For the dragoons had wavered, had made a half attempt to rally, and had broken, without so much as a gunshot fired.

We struck our spurs well home and off we set, each trying to outstrip the other in the race; and with what little breath was left us we laughed, and laughed again, to see the dragoons gallop, down over their horses' manes, across the meadows and away. They rode finely, I admit, so far as speed went, and we were still behind them after a hard run had brought us to the fields that flank Colt Bridge. Here, to our surprise, we found a larger body, of which the dragoons had been only an outpost, drawn up in battle array and evidently waiting for the prince's army. A curious figure stood in the foreground of the crescent formed by the troops—a thin, tall figure, wrapped in a great surcoat, his hat tied underneath his chin by a white kerchief. This, as we learned afterward, was Colonel Gardiner, the one brave man among them.

The ride and the excitement of the chase had gone to our heads by this time, and, had the usurper's entire army stood across our path, I think that we should still have gone forward with the

same unconcern. There were eight of us against two regiments of dragoons, the city guard, and all the volunteers that Edinburgh could muster; and they must have thought, hearing our yell of "Claymore!" and seeing us advance so hotly, either that we were mad or that we had a strong reserve of force following close behind us. The latter supposition seemed to find more favor with them; and the fifty troopers whom we had first dislodged, as they galloped between the lines of their own comrades and on toward the city, increased yet further the growing panic and confusion. In vain the man with the strange headgear strove to rally them; in vain he struck right and left with the flat of his sword, and upbraided the runaways with fierce invective. Our clan cries were too much for them, and for the second time that morning we found ourselves pursuing, with bared blades, as silly a flock of sheep as ever cropped green herbage. We stopped at last for lack of breath, and because the fugitives soon would be under shelter of the castle guns; and when we got back to the prince, who had brought up the army in time to see us go galloping down the distant road in hot pursuit, we found big tears of laughter rolling down his cheeks.

"My thanks, gentlemen, my thanks!" he cried. "You have gained me the first victory of the campaign."

It was seldom that Prince Charlie laughed whole-heartedly; but when he did, there was a strange infection in his mirth. Even Archie MacGregor joined in our laughter, as we lifted hats and bonnets to the sky in token of our victory.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### AT THE CITY GATE.

**Y**ET this first attempt to check our entry into Edinburgh, absurd as was its climax, was serious enough in one respect, for it showed us there was



great opposition to our cause within the city walls. Until now we had had no certainty on this head, one way or the other; and the more sanguine of us—of whom the prince himself was one—had good hopes that our supporters would outnumber the disaffected, and that we should be welcomed rather than resisted.

Our meeting with the dragoons disposed of that hope effectually, and the prince and his officers in council decided to halt for the remainder of the day at Corstorphine, until we had gleaned further knowledge of the strength of our opponents. With this object in view, his highness despatched me after dinner with orders to ride out as far from camp as was politic, to reconnoiter the walls, if possible, and to learn from chance acquaintances on the road all that was to be known for the asking.

I had just finished saddling when Nell, looking mighty slim and fair in her boy's gear, came up and rested one hand on my horse's neck.

"You'll break my heart, Maurice," was her astonishing prelude to what promised to be tearful talk.

"Indeed!" I ventured laughingly. "Then 'tis brittle, if a puff of wind will shatter it." Then I saw that the tears were really in her eyes, and I laid a hand upon her own. "Dear girl," I said, "the march is trying you too much, and you are fanciful."

"But I saw you ride against the dragoons—I *saw* you, Maurice. And I said to myself that you must be very tired of life to risk it wantonly. And—and I was sorry I had wearied you in these few days."

I was amazed. Marriage had scarcely shown itself in such a serious light before. I had been ready to fight for Nell, to love her, to know her sweeter than all other women; but I had never thought to be put on my defense with subtleties of this kind.

"You do not answer. Ah! I knew

that it was true," she murmured with a sob.

"It is true that you are wearied out, Nell. See, we shall be in Edinburgh soon, and we shall halt there a while, and these discomforts will be over. 'Tis just that you long for a gown again, and a home that we can share."

Luckily we were out of sight of any passing busybody, for Nell came to me with the red of sunset in her face and a wondrous softness in her eyes.

"Dear lad, I am ashamed to say it, but 'tis true," she whispered. "I'm lonely, and—and when I saw you ride against those men, and fancied that I saw you lying dead, I felt a great darkness come over me. I wish I loved you less," she added with a sob.

"Then you'll unwish it, sweet, for no man in the world could love you more than I."

"Say it again, dear. I want to be quite sure."

I made it sure beyond dispute, and she turned a happy, tearful face to me.

"And I'm glad, too, that I saw you ride so foolishly, because— Ah! I like a man to be brave, Maurice."

My laughter was in no way feigned, for I remembered how the enemy had fled.

"Then there are many valiant folk in Scotland," I answered. "Every cowherd who drives his kine to pasture is a hero, and——"

"I saw you, and you cannot make your bravery seem less," she interrupted.

And this was fortunate; an older man would have garnished up his exploits for a wife's ear, knowing how difficult it is for any husband to maintain a reputation at his own fireside. But I was young to the matter yet, and to lift the morning's comedy to the high level of heroism seemed out of reason.

"Well, dear, I'm away to Edinburgh," I said, kissing her before I got to saddle. "Nay, there's no danger," I added,



seeing in her eyes the question I was beginning to learn. "Just a ride about the walls, and home again. Wish me luck, Nell, for I'm fain to see you safe in Edinburgh."

I turned in the saddle as I reached the bending of the road, and she kissed her hand to me; and then I rode in great content, thinking more of Nell and of the happiness to come, I fear, than of the prince's business, until I neared the outskirts of the city.

I met with no opposition of any sort upon the road, and after taking a leisurely survey of the Netherbow Port I was about to pass on, when the gates opened and three riders came out—two ladies and a manservant. The younger lady arrested my attention, for the scornful face, with the brown hair piled above it, under a three-cornered hat set rakishly afloat, seemed in some way familiar to me. They took the Corstorphine road, no little to my surprise, and I heard the younger say to her companion as they passed me:

"Do us harm? Is it likely that Highlanders would do a Highland lassie harm?"

"But to ride into the midst of a whole army?" put in the other timidly. "Besides, they are rough and wild, they say."

"They say, they say!" echoed the first speaker sharply. "What do they know of my countrymen down here in the Lowlands? I tell you it's a twelvemonth and a day since last I saw a Highland face, and I sicken for the sight of one."

Now, Mistress Flora MacIvor was Highland born, and I put two and two together, and guessed why I had found the girl's face so familiar. It was not for nothing that MacGregor had dinned his lady's praises into my ears o' nights. This scornful beauty, then, with the temper that promised merry times for Archie in the days to come, was riding to Corstorphine with

the express purpose of seeing our camp; and I had a shrewd suspicion that the Highland face which she had expressed such strong desire to see was owned by one of the clan MacGregor. I wished him joy of her, and so went forward with the reconnoitering of the walls. They were frail beyond belief—scarce an embrasure or a bastion worth the name, and all the walls from the Netherbow Port to the Cowgate Port huddled thick with houses, big and little.

"This will be good news for the prince," I thought, as I set off for the camp again. "A little powder and a few of us to scale the breach, and Edinburgh is ours."

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### A WAGER IN JEST.

I WAS halfway to Corstorphine when I heard the same voice that had attracted my attention not long ago. Then a deep, stolid bass, no less familiar to me, came round the sharp bend of the road, and presently my disdainful lady appeared in sight, with Archie walking by her stirrup; and following them were the other riders whom I had lately seen come out of the Netherbow Port. If I had needed any proof that my guess as to the identity of Miss MacIvor had been correct, Archie himself would have supplied it, for his dour face had grown both tender and embarrassed, and the shadow of a blush passed over it as he made acknowledgment of my sweeping bow.

MacGregor came home to camp that evening, in consequence, with something near to jollity in his voice and gait. He found me in the tent which we shared in common, soon after my return from carrying news of the city's fortifications to Prince Charlie, and from a half hour spent in lover's talk with Nell; and the first thing Archie did, after filling himself a measure of



whisky, was to take out his dirk and finger the edge of it—a favorite trick of his, as I have said, when a good humor held him.

"Anstruther," said he, "we are going to take Edinburgh before the next few days are out."

"Indeed?" I said.

"Aye, indeed, and indeed again. An' wha's to do it, think ye, lad?"

"A lady, maybe, who came out by the Netherbow Port to-day," I answered. "She seemed to have business in the camp."

Archie, after threatening me with his dirk—he was always a little ponderous when gay of mood—began to walk up and down, and to eye me meaningly from under his shaggy brows.

"The lady is Highland born, at any rate, and a wellwisher to his highness," he retorted at length. "For a raw lad, Anstruther, ye've no aimed so wide o' the mark, I'm jalousing."

"But is that to the point, think you? If, now, you had said she was a well-wisher to one of the prince's captains——"

Archie, however, was making for me in grim earnest this time, and I thought it unwise to play further upon that delicate stringed instrument, a Hieland-man's temper.

"Tell me all about it," I said, after a pause; "for, you know, Archie, she was fairer than all your tales of her."

"Well, there's naething but my tongue to blame for that," said MacGregor, relenting once again toward me. "What said she, think ye, when I wanted her to wed?"

"She said 'Yes' and No,' I fancy, and you sighed like the fir trees on Ben Alder——"

"Then, lad, ye're wrang! For she said she wad—but wi' an if thereby. She'll wed me if I'm the first into Edinburgh when the toun is ta'en."

"It was a hard sort of bargain on her side, Archie." I laughed. "First,

we have to take the town; next, you are to be the first of us who enters——"

"Well, an' who shall keep us oot o' the toun?" cried Archie sturdily.

"Is it a general offer, then?" I asked gently. "Suppose, now, I were to steal a march on you, and be the first into the town, the lady's hand would be transferred to me?"

"Aye, if I had not dirked ye before ye dragged in the second foot ahint the first," growled Archie.

"Here's a wager for you," I cried. "My sword against your lady's glove that you do not enter Edinburgh first."

"I ha'e sma' use for your sword, lad-die, for I've a muckle better o' my ain."

"Think well, Archie! It is Andrew Ferrara's make, and the prince himself it was who gave it to me."

"Hoots! Ferrara's well eneuich, but mak' it a keg o' whisky, lad, and MacGregor'll hold ye to the wager."

"Done," I said. "And the lady's hand, Archie? That goes to the winner?" I added, pretending to forget that ladies' hands and ladies' lips—other than Nell's—had ceased to play a great part in my life.

He smiled sourly at me, in a way that piqued me.

"Aye, to the winner," he growled, "and that's as good as saying mysel'."

So then I made the bet a serious matter, and told myself that, come what would, an Englishman should be the first inside the town of Edinburgh; but I said no more to Archie on the point.

"A wager's no wager at a', at a', if ye dinna wet its whistle," he murmured, going to the brown keg that stood in a corner of the tent.

I was nothing loath to accept his toast, for I was acquiring a very tolerable head for liquor under MacGregor's tuition; and we were just setting the measure to our lips when a rumble of wheels sounded from without. Curious



to learn what sort of visitors should come in a wheeled vehicle, we went out into the roadway and saw a cumbersome hackney coach drawn up at the door of Gray's Mill, which was the prince's lodging for the night. The coach disgorged three portly figures by and by, who proved to be Baillie Hamilton and two other members of the city council, and all of them, after parleying a while on the threshold of the mill, disappeared within its precincts.

It was about eight of the evening now, and Archie and I were pushed about in mind to guess what had brought these gentry to his highness at so late an hour. Nor was our curiosity satisfied until a half hour later, when we learned, from certain friends of ours who had been in the prince's company at the time, how there was so great a fear of us among the townsfolk that they had sent a deputation to treat with us for capitulation. The prince, very properly, had declined to treat with his father's subjects, and the deputation had retired chapfallen to Edinburgh, protesting that they would but be sent back again in search of a more favorable answer, and entreating the prince to reconsider his decision.

This visit, following on the absurd retreat of the dragoons and volunteers, naturally raised our spirits, for it was plain that the city could not long hold out against us; and the prince lost no time in dispatching to Edinburgh eight hundred of our army, carrying gunpowder and scaling tools, with orders to examine the fortifications under cover of the darkness and secure an entry if opportunity offered. Archie MacGregor and myself were bidden to stay in camp and to hold ourselves in readiness to fulfill any command his highness might lay upon us; and I never saw a man so nonplused as Archie when he knew that the town might very well be taken before dawn, and that he had

no chance in that case of being first within the walls. He railed at the hard ways of predestination at first, and then he fell into a sort of brooding quiet; and for my life I could not help rallying him afresh, asking if our wager were likely to be settled now, and suggesting that the lady might haply offer to accompany the next deputation.

"They'll no tak' the toun the nicht," said Archie at last, more cheerfully, and fell into a quieter mood than ever. Then, still with the same deep silence on him, he took me by the arm and led me into the fields, and walked me up and down for at least a score of weary minutes before condescending to enlighten me as to the meaning of his odd behavior.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### A PRETTY PLOT.

ARCHIE," I said at last, "the stars are well enough, and a night walk is well enough; but what ails you, man?"

He still gripped my arm as in a vise. "Whisht, laddie!" he muttered. "I ha'e a braw plan in my head, and my brain gangs a wee thing slow, and I would like ye to speak saft, for the brain is a deeficult jade to play wi'."

I held my laughter, at some inconvenience to myself, and soon felt Archie's hold upon my arm relax. It was not his way to show gayety, so that I knew there must be something out of the ordinary afoot when I saw him begin to step it featly over the starlit sward.

"Man, Anstruther, I have it!" he cried, coming to a breathless halt. "Hark ye, now! the folk of Edinburgh are scared, an' the prince's answer will no just tend to soothe them. Baillie Hamilton was richt, I'm thinking, when he said we'll see this very nicht anither deputation come to speak wi' the prince; and the prince, I'm thinking,



will send them back again, wi' a flea i' their lug this time. And Archie MacGregor, wha's speaking 'til ye the noo, will meet the city folk as they are getting, glumpy and frichtened, into their coach."

"It will be pleasant for them to see so sweet a face as yours, Archie," I murmured. "Well, and what after you have met them?"

"Laddie, ye've nae imageenation—nae turn of fancy at a'. *What then?* say the chiel! Man, I'll look twice as honest as the honestest man they've ever been acquaint wi'; and I'll speak smooth and grave, and tell them that the prince will not hearken to them because he is no just sure of the good faith o' Edinburgh. And then I'll look ahint me, as if feared that some chiel was hearkening, and whisper that Edinburgh is my ain toun—a toun I love richt dearly. And they'll gi'e me a look oot o' the sides o' their een, and say they dinna doot I ha'e some power to move the prince. And at that I'll tak' Baillie Hamilton by the buttonhole, and look about me with rare caution, and say that his highness counts me his most cherished counselor. Does it no gang bonnily?" he broke off.

"Bonnily," I assured him, and waited for more.

"Well, then, I'll ask them to tak' me back privately to the toun wi' them, so I may judge for mysel' o' the look o' things in Edinburgh, and talk wi' the folk aboot the streets, and bring back a fair report to the prince. And the deputation—at their wits' end a'ready, Anstruther, and gey weary o' driving up and doon the road to Corstorphine—will just drink down all I say to them as if 'twere whisky."

"And they'll take you back with them to-night. Yes, I see so far, Archie; but of what use will the drive be to you?"

"A puir imageenation ye have, laddie; but some men are afflicted in that gait

fro' their cradles," said Archie sorrowfully. "And yet it's as plain as my own face, Anstruther, that I'll go in and about, wearing yon air of honesty I mentioned, and then I'll wish Baillie Hamilton and his friends a varra tender guid nicht, and I'll bid the coachman drive me back again to Corstorphine. And what will I do, think ye, when I reach the Netherbow Port and the porter opens to let us through?"

"Archie," said I, holding his meaning at last, "it is a pretty plot. What will you do at the Netherbow Port? Knock the porter down and give the 'Claymore' cry, and bring our friends in from without!"

"Ye show discreemination whiles," commented MacGregor. "There's eight hundred of us somewhere under the walls, wi' their gunpowder and their scaling irons and what not; but they'll find sma' use for them, I'm thinking, once I've talked wi' Baillie Hamilton. And now, laddie," he broke off, as our walk brought us to the tent again, "I've a mind to lay me doon and sleep a wee before yon hackney coach comes rumbling back."

He lay down on the straw of the tent, and I followed his example, for by this time each of us had learned to sleep with both ears open. MacGregor was asleep at once, and the music of his slumber filled the tent, for Archie snored in Scotch, and the sound of it was like nothing else that I had heard before I shared a couch with him. To-night, indeed, he kept me waking for two mortal hours; and so, as I could not find my way to sleep, I went over all the doings of the day, and thought of Baillie Hamilton, and wondered if MacGregor's specious plan would come to anything. Then, remembering our wager, I began to ask myself, by way of passing time, if there were no way by which I could outwit MacGregor himself, just as he proposed to outwit the baillie; and then



I saw my way clear on the sudden, and I think an exclamation must have slipped from me, for Archie leaped to his feet and reached out one hand for his dirk.

"Wha gangs there?" he cried.

"It is only I, MacGregor. I was thinking of the keg of whisky we had waged, and the thought somehow made me laugh."

"They're lang on the way, these chieftains fro' Edinburgh," said MacGregor, yawning. "Have we o'erslepit their coming?"

I cocked my ears toward the road.

"We have waked just in time, if I know the sound of a hackney coach," I answered.

And so it proved, for when Archie and I got out on to the highway we saw Baillie Hamilton and his brethren of the city council going in at the door of Gray's Mill for the second time that night. Archie's surmise, after all, had proved correct, and he could not lose the opportunity now of playing the part he had set himself.

"Do you wait for them at the mill door," I said, "and leave me to wet the driver's throat in here. I may learn something from him of the way the world wags in Edinburgh."

Archie glanced at me, for he was always a man of suspicions. But my face, I fancy, showed guileless as his own, and he could see little harm in my offering whisky to a hackney coachman on so chilly a night as this. He went and lurked in the darkness that lay between the coach and the prince's door, while I enticed the driver from his seat—a matter of small difficulty, indeed—and led him to our tent and poured him out a liberal quantity of whisky.

"The night is fine, driver," I said.

"Fine and bricht, sir, but a wee thing could the noo," said he, as he drank my health.

"The sort of night when it is pleasant

to ride in search of gallantry," I went on, helping him afresh.

"Oh, aye, when ye are in that time o' life."

I leaned toward him confidentially.

"There's discord in the city, so I hear, and they do not welcome visitors from our camp. And that is awkward for me, driver, if the truth must out, for I want to visit a lady in the town, and I see no chance at all of getting through the gates. Will you take me up beside you, and never a man the wiser?"

He finished the measure before answering, and I filled up the pause by thrusting a guinea into his palm.

"Aweel," he said gravely, "if ye choose to climb up while I'm no just looking—aye, the thing might varra weel be done, I'm thinking. I wadna go agen reelegion, ye ken. I'm a member o' the kirk, an' pledged to honesty; but gin I dinna see ye mount, the blame will no be mine."

Bright as the stars were overhead, the coach lay deep in shadow of the trees that overhung Gray's Mill, so that once I was on the box there was little risk of Archie seeing me. I waited till the door of the mill opened, and the three members of the deputation were bowed out into the night.

"I wish you a pleasant journey, gentlemen, and your townsfolk more level minds," I heard Prince Charlie say.

Then the mill door was closed, and I saw Archie come out of the shadows and follow the deputation into the middle of the road. Word for word, almost gesture for gesture, the scene was played out as MacGregor had rehearsed it earlier in the evening; and his slow, broad speech as he confided to them his love of Edinburgh and his desire for its security, had in it something persuasive to the last degree. The delegates, good folk, were so perplexed by all this to-and-froing between Corstorphine and the town that they were ready to snatch at any offer of assist-



ance; and in a few minutes Baillie Hamilton was bowing my friend into the hackney coach.

"Ye ken weel, maybe, that an honest man is putting his life in your hands for sake o' the auld toun?" said Archie, adding a last deft touch to his play acting as he halted on the step of the coach.

"Ye'll no regret it, Captain MacGregor; ye'll no regret it," the baillie answered.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### INTO THE TOWN.

THE four of them got up into the coach, and, judging that it was time for me to join the game, I slid up by the left fore wheel to my place beside the driver—the driver who was a member of the kirk. The horses were whipped into a show of spirit, the coach started forward, and there was no halt until we stood outside the Netherbow Port and clamored for admission. The gates were flung open and shut behind us again, and I wondered what our eight hundred comrades were doing outside the walls, and how we should fare if they chose just this moment for blowing up the gate. All was quiet, however, except for the folk who thronged the streets, talking in loud tones together. Here and there a knot of them would recognize Baillie Hamilton as we rode through the town, and it was plain from their eager glances at us that the object of his journey to Corstorphine was known to every one. We stopped at last in front of the baillie's house, and I sheltered myself behind the coachman's burly figure as Archie and his new companions stepped out into the road.

"Ye'll ha'e to bide for me, for I maun get hame again to Corstorphine," said Archie to the driver, who, not relishing this third journey, asked if he were to spend the remainder of his days

in driving between Corstorphine and Auld Reekie.

"I dinna ken aboot your days, man, but an hour or two mair o' this same nicht ye'll ha'e to gi'e me," cried MacGregor, in a tone which admitted no dispute.

While the driver muttered his complaints, and while Archie followed Baillie Hamilton indoors, I slipped down unnoticed from the box, opened the coach door noiselessly, and took my seat inside, there to await my friend's return. Stray items from the crowds that hugged the Canongate, the Cowgate, and the Lawnmarket, passed by me, saying this and that of the prince according to the complexion of their loyalty. Then Archie came out again from Baillie Hamilton's house, and walked up the street with him—to carry through the farce, so I judged, by seeming to convince himself of the good faith of the town. The minutes dragged along; I yawned and fidgeted; but at last I heard Archie's step once more, as he stopped in the roadway just outside the coach and gave a soft good night to the baillie.

"Ye'll persuade the prince, then, think ye?" said the baillie, for the seventh time, as MacGregor opened the coach door.

"Oh, aye, I'll persuade his highness. Guid nicht, baillie, and guid luck to the auld toun." There was a pause, and then: "Wake up, ye daft auld wife! Corstorphine!" I heard him cry to the member of the kirk who sat upon the box.

The coachman roused himself with a start, and whipped up his cattle, and soon we were retraversing the crowded thoroughfare that led us to the gate.

I shrank into the corner of the coach, nigh split with laughter to hear Archie mutter, with grave complacency:

"Bonnily done! Hech! It's bonnily done. And Miss Flora MacIvor——"

"Is to wed the first man into Edin-



burgh," I broke in; "and the first man in was myself, friend MacGregor."

MacGregor ripped out his dirk at the first shock of surprise, then upbraided me in his sweet mother tongue as soon as he learned who shared the coach with him; and he only stormed the more when I told him that by riding on the box I had come well first into the town.

"I wadna so muckle mind your laughter, laddie," he groaned, "but it's the whisky I grudge—for, man, the price of a keg of whisky will leave me with a lean purse."

"Not to mention the lady," I put in, as we pulled up at the Netherbow Port, and heard our driver shouting for the guard.

"On whose orders?" said the guard gruffly.

"Baillie Hamilton's. We're for Corstorphine," answered the coachman.

The gates were unlocked, and the guard stood back to let us pass. It was the moment we had schemed for. Archie gave a yell like the crack of doom as he leaped from the bowels of the coach, and two quick "strakes" of his skean dhu brought the guards to ground before I had time to follow him. His shout of "Claymore!" went ringing up and down the street. There was an answering call from without and a rush of feet, and Archie and I fell into line together, presenting bare blades and a front of surpassing gravity to our comrades, who, eight hundred strong, were lurking on the far side of the gate. Cameron of Lochiel was the first of them to enter. He stopped, amazed to see us standing there so quietly. Then he began to laugh, and:

"Captain MacGregor," said he, "how comes it that you and Mr. Anstruther must needs have the cream of every jest? We were but just setting fire to a fuse when you called us to the gate."

"Come in, ye braw Scots laddies," said Archie suavely, "for the toun is all agog to see ye."

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### BOOTS AND SADDLES.

**L**ORD HARRY, what a night it was! Up we marched through the town in the gaining dawn, and the knots of idlers, wrangling as to whether old Edinburgh could or could not hold out against the prince, were scattered right and left by the prince's soldiery. The news spread. Casements were flung open; men with nightcapped heads and lassies all in disarray peeped forth to learn the cause of the tumult; the pipes struck up "The king shall enjoy his own again," and eight hundred Scottish bonnets went roof high toward the clouds.

Two of us rode to Corstorphine to tell the prince of our success, and found him seated at the supper board.

"Well, gentlemen," he said, glancing quickly up as we entered, "these deputations make a man hungry, as you see, and I am supping for the second time to-night. Do you bring any news?"

"We do, your highness. Edinburgh is ours."

And then I told him all the way of it, and he would have us pledge the bloodless victory in a glass of the strongest whisky it had ever been my lot to taste.

"It is boot and saddle now!" he cried. "Anstruther, do you give my orders that we must march as soon as the men can breakfast and strike camp. Yes, they must breakfast first, poor fellows," he added, as if to himself. "They have been sorely tried of late."

As soon as I had passed on the orders I went in search of Nell, and I had long to stand beneath her window before my calls could rouse her. Poor child! The constant bustle was sadly wearying to her, and she slept, I fancy,



with the same dreamless soundness that I enjoyed myself when worn out by hard riding. She came at last, however, and the sun shone full upon her face, dreamy and half surprised, as she flung the casement wide.

"I seemed to be dreaming, Maurice," she said, "and to hear you calling, calling to me. And I thought you were in danger, and then I woke, and—Are you really safe, dear?"

"Not only safe," I laughed, "but I have conquered Edinburgh. Put on your boy's gear for the last time, Nell. We are on the point of marching now."

She did not stay to question me, for the uproar in the camp was witness to the fact that we were just about to march, and sooner than I had hoped for she was at my side.

"Tell me what has chanced," she said.

"Nay, there's not time enough. I'll tell you when—when you don a kirtle, lassie, and come to me in Edinburgh as my own true wife."

And then, of course, I kissed her—as who would not, seeing the glamour and the softness of her face when that word "wife" was spoken? And all seemed very well with the prince's cause and with my own.

The army took some hours to get finally into marching order; but after that it was a quick march and a joyous to Edinburgh, and when the sun got up toward the noonward sky it found us massed in arms about the Market Cross. Foremost of all was Lochiel, the handsomest figure in all our army; behind him were his own picked cavalry, and behind the cavalry again as wild and picturesque a crowd of infantry as Edinburgh, surely, ever saw—lean, sinewy fellows, with faces chiselled out of oak, and tattered tartans blowing loosely in the wind of morn.

The townsfolk would never get done with their gazing at us, so it seemed, and by their looks I fancied that they liked us better in the flesh than they

had done in imagination. Among the crowd I saw a horsewoman come riding through the press; she had brown hair, breeze-blown into disarray, and a three-cornered hat set rakishly above a scornful face, and a figure not to be mistaken.

I was not the only one, indeed, who recognized Mistress MacIvor, for I stole a glance at Archie, and saw that he was edging his horse out of the press. He drew rein beside her, and raised his bonnet as if Flora were a second Queen of Scots.

"Good morrow, Captain MacGregor," said she. "It is a fair day that brings——"

"Aye, that brings?" he queried eagerly, as she paused.

"That brings Prince Charlie into Edinburgh," she finished, with great demureness.

"Flora MacIvor," said Archie, after a disconcerting silence, "who first set foot in the auld toun this morning, think ye?"

She looked about her at the merry throng of horsemen.

"Indeed, Captain MacGregor, I couldn't guess. So many of you have set foot within the town."

"Aye, but there's a bargain, if ye call to mind."

"A bargain?" she echoed, lifting the tip of her dainty nose and the curve of two dainty brows.

"Aye, a bargain," he repeated stolidly. "Mistress Flora MacIvor weds the first wha steppit through the Netherbow Port."

"But, sir, I cannot wed a whole company of horse," she cried, glancing about her once again.

"Nae, nae, I wadna ask it of ye," said he very seriously. "Just wed the ane of us, Flora, an' I'll no press ye further."

I had in mind, hearing Archie so shamefully claim credit for being first into the city, to ride to Mistress Mac-



Ivor's other hand and tell her it was I who had earned the distinction; but I forbore. What followed I could not catch, owing to a fresh outbreak of cheering and a fresh throwing up of Highland bonnets as the prince rode down the lines; but Archie seemed to have made the most of his opportunities, for when Prince Charlie passed him he stepped forward and begged that his highness would allow him to present Mistress Flora MacIvor, whom he hoped soon to make his wife.

The prince glanced at her with the keen and kindly glance which he gave to all new acquaintances, and then he bowed in a fashion I would give three years of my life to learn.

"I value Captain MacGregor as much as any officer in my army," said he, "but I doubt if he merits the fairest lady I have seen since setting foot in Scotland."

Flora laughed a little, and flushed, and looked so soft and womanly that I wondered where all her scorn was gone.

"Are we so little well favored as that, your highness?" she murmured. "Or is your experience of our country less intimate as yet than we would have it be?" she added, with a pretty exchange for his own compliment.

MacGregor was delighted, I could see; and he was just turning, after the prince had passed on, to whisper some folly into Mistress MacIvor's ear, when Baillie Hamilton came shouldering through the press. The baillie's keen gray eyes sought Archie, and found him.

"Captain MacGregor, I tak' it this is no just kind o' ye," said he reproachfully.

"Man, a's fair in love and war; and I've won a wife as weel," cried Archie.

"Hoots!" said the baillie, and his face was sour as whey. "A wife's easy come by; but what of a man's self-respect, an' a' that?"

"Easy come by?" laughed MacGregor. "Aweel, I wadna just say that." And then he glanced at Flora MacIvor. But I heard him murmur, in a subdued and passionate aside: "I've won a wife—oh, aye, I've won a wife; but I'm fashed to ha'e lost the full price of a keg of whisky!"

TO BE CONTINUED.

In the issue for August 20th, on sale July 20th, you will find the next chapters of this novel. TOP-NOTCH is published three times a month, so your patience will not be taxed waiting for the continuation of a story. If you have failed to obtain previous numbers, apply to news dealers or to the publishers.

### Divided Blame

LITTLE Ethel had been caught pulling her little friend's hair, but her mother was anxious to overlook it. Fishing for an excuse, she said:

"Now, Ethel, don't you think, dear, that it was wicked Satan who made you pull Mary's hair?"

"I don't know," answered the little girl. Then, brightening up, she added: "But kicking her shins was my own idea."

### Consider the "E."

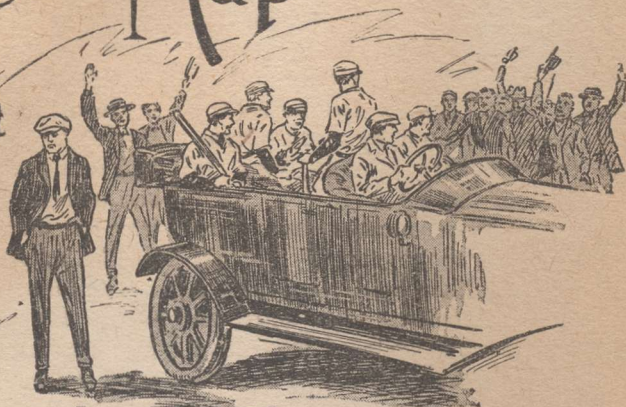
SOME one has advanced the opinion that the letter "e" is the most unfortunate letter in the English alphabet, because it is always out of cash, forever in debt, never out of danger, and in Hades all the time.

For some reason, he overlooked the fortunates of the letter, as we call his attention to the fact "e" is never in war and always in peace. It is the beginning of existence, the commencement of ease, and the end of trouble. Without it there would be no meat, no life, and no heaven. It is the center of honesty, makes love perfect, and without it there could be no editors, devils, nor news.



# Putting Petersville on the Map

By  
W. E. Schutt



(COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE)

## CHAPTER I.

STRAIGHT FROM THE SHOULDER.

**Y**OUNG Roger Cameron read the letter through a second time, his forehead wrinkled in perplexity. First and foremost, before the summer was over, he expected to make Miss Madge Peters his wife. Furthermore, Judge Jefferson Peters was his friend and invaluable sponsor in the little village; and only the week before this he had tactfully sounded Cameron as to his willingness to accept the nomination for district attorney, hoping thereby to bring to Petersville the honor which the neighboring village of Caldwell had held undisputed for many years. He smiled a little ruefully at the memory of it. On that occasion the judge had exclaimed emphatically: "You are just the man, Cameron, to put Petersville on the map!"

The disturbing epistle read as follows:

*Roger Cameron, Esquire, Attorney at Law,  
Bank Building, Petersville.*

SIR: By a fortunate chance, before it is too late, I have just learned of your past life. You are a debased scoundrel, sir! Not only have you ingratiated yourself schemefully into our family circles by posing as an honorable gentleman, when you are a depraved being who have earned your inglorious living by play; but you have been on the point of accepting one of the highest honors within the power of the people to bestow, and would thereby have brought sempiternal disgrace on this fair village.

I forbid you ever to darken my doors again, to speak to me in the streets, to communicate in any way with me or with my daughter. And I warn you that if you do not leave this town within a month, and give up your scheming practices here, you will be deported in the true Kentucky style. Yours,

JEFFERSON PETERS.

"The judge is a hot-headed old codger," reflected Cameron soberly, "but I didn't think he'd be so rabid about it. I wonder how the deuce he found it out. I certainly haven't let anything slip."

Fifteen months before, Roger Cameron had arrived, totally unknown, in



the country village, and had hung out his shingle beside the entrance to the red brick bank building. He had studied law in the moments of inactivity in his former profession. And when his fingers lost their strength and their cunning on account of a broken wrist, he put his past life behind him and trekked for strange fields. Petersville was the first place of five thousand or more on page 319 of the post-office guide; hence Cameron, by a sort of previous contract with himself, went to Petersville.

The first three months had been tough going. People generally did not care to intrust their legal worries to a man whose antecedents were unknown and unconfessed in spite of inquisitive hints. True, he had ingratiated himself socially by his manners and his wholesome personality; but professionally he was a pariah.

Then one day Judge Peters, the social and financial czar of the place, came to him with a minor matter for which his regular attorney had no time. Cameron put it through in slap-bang style that made sleeping Petersville sit up and gasp. The judge himself woke up first, and led the chorus of approval.

"By Jupiter, sir!" he had exclaimed in Cameron's office after the business was finished, "you are the very man Petersville needs. For fifty years we have been the sleeping hare, while Caldwell and Hackettsburg and half a dozen other upstart tortoise towns have spun past us. You have come just in time, sir! You are the new blood we must have to put Petersville on the map again!"

"You expect me to paint the town red, eh, judge?" Cameron had laughed, amused at this first outburst of interopidan jealousy, which later he came to know as the judge's chief obsession.

"Ha, ha! Excellent!" shouted the judge hilariously. "Very good, Mr. Cameron, upon my word! By the way,

you must come out to dinner to-night, and meet Mrs. Peters and my daughter Madge."

"I'd be delighted, judge," returned young Cameron sincerely. For on the second day of his arrival he had looked out of his window to see the radiant vision of Miss Madge Peters coming down the street, in dimity and a flowered leghorn hat, attended by a young negress, like a picture out of pre-rebellion days; and every day thereafter he had seen her in his mind's eye, whether she appeared in person or not. This was his first opportunity to meet her, and he snapped at it eagerly.

The dinner was a revelation to Cameron. He came away in high fettle. He felt that he had made a distinctly good impression. Moreover, he was convinced that Miss Madge, of whose charm he had realized only one-tenth from that first fleeting glance from his office window, would not be averse to his further attentions. The result of it was that he dined there regularly once a week and made a prolonged duty call every Sunday afternoon. And Petersville, from the judge himself down to the hotel porter, was not long in arriving at the inevitable tacit understanding, having perceived their mutual attraction, and that with hearty and unconcealed approval—at least, all but one man.

The exception to the above generality was one Ephraim Blodgett, a young fellow who had inherited from his father a thriving tobacco business, and was fast running it into the ground through lack of attention and frequent trips to Louisville. He had the fastest horse and the shiniest buggy in Petersville, and before Cameron came into his own, the remarkable horse and buggy graced the Peters' yard at least twice a week. Madge had accepted his visits in a spirit of sufferance, but had rigidly refrained from partaking actively of the glory he offered her. And



with the advent of Cameron, Blodgett's calls showed a marked decrease in frequency. Wherefore, it may be surmised with reasonable certainty that Blodgett had but small love for Cameron. Yet Blodgett, being the man that he was, made no public show of his discomfiture.

But to return to Cameron. From the public agora, to wit, the wide-columned porch of the rambling hotel, Judge Peters conducted an active propaganda in favor of Cameron as the man who "is going to put Petersville on the map, sir," until the young attorney was fairly swamped under the avalanche of business. In spite of his past life, Cameron was an able and astute practitioner, and was scrupulous in all his dealings; so that, on the whole, Cameron was getting along better than he had ever dreamed.

At this point, enter the letter. It was unexpected, to say the least. That Blodgett had had any part in it did not occur to him; for Blodgett had shown him every evidence of sincere friendship. He knew the judge had lately been to Louisville, and concluded that he had met some one there who read the outside papers, and knew the name of Cameron as well as he did that of the president.

"It's unjust and far-fetched," mused Cameron over the letter. "I didn't think these rubes would take it so hard. I suppose I should have told them when I first came here, but I didn't know how they'd take it. Let's see. Of course, it's up to me to disregard this letter and fight it out. If Madge will only stick by me, it won't be so hard. He says I mustn't write to her, eh? Well, I won't, then. She'll understand."

With this decision, Cameron tucked the letter away in a pigeonhole and set himself to work, drawing up a deed of gift for old Charley Miner. Hardly had he begun when the door was pushed open rudely, and Miner himself entered.

"Good morning, Mr. Miner." Cam-

eron smiled, twisting about in his chair. "What's the news with you?"

"You needn't take any more trouble about my deed," replied the planter unceremoniously, stamping across the room to the desk. "I reckon I'll get a man down to Caldwell to do it for me."

Cameron looked at him a moment, uncomprehending; then he gathered together the sheaf of papers and gave them to the old man.

"Just as you like, Mr. Miner," he said. "Here is the memorandum you gave me."

The old man took the papers rather hesitatingly, as if he had been disappointed at not meeting more resistance, and stamped out of the room without a word. Cameron understood. The fight was on.

## CHAPTER II.

### A RAY OF HOPE.

ALL that week similar episodes took place in the little office, until Cameron had but two clients left, two young farmers who had been in the place but a short time, and refused to take Judge Peters' dictation. Cameron's face became grave and his jaw set until the cords stood out like a wrestler's muscles. It was a fight to the death, he realized now, and, so far as he could see, there could be but one result—his ultimate ruin.

There was but one thing that gave Cameron a ray of hope. About a week after the receipt of the judge's ultimatum, a little negro boy delivered at the office a note, which Cameron, recognizing the handwriting, tore open feverishly. It read:

Don't despair! Everything will be all right if you do as I say. For the present it is better for you not to try to see me or communicate with me. I shall write you later.  
With love,  
MADGE.

"She's a brick!" Cameron exclaimed fervently. "But what in the world has she got up her sleeve now, I wonder?"



He folded the letter up, tucked it away in his pocketbook, and waited.

Throughout the long sweltering days of late June he sat in his office, waiting for clients who never came. The month's grace which the judge had accorded him was fast drawing to a close; yet no further word came from Madge. From his office window he saw her nearly every day, but she never so much as lifted her eyes to the second story. Yet his faith in her did not diminish. Once he more than half decided to slip out of town quietly some night, and send for her from some place where he could make himself more welcome. But his innate fighting spirit forbade that evasive strategy.

"I'm a fox in the open, with a fresh pack after me," he soliloquized one day, when even his faith in Madge's capabilities began to weaken. "But they'll have to ride me out of town on a rail before I'll give in."

And on that very night, July 2d, to be exact, a secret meeting was held at the hotel, to consider ways and means of supplying the town with tar and feathers and a splintery rail, against the event but two days off. The older generation of Petersville men was rabid and incensed, the younger men were disposed to be lenient, even conciliatory, but the judge's dictates were habitually authoritative in Petersville.

"Excuse me, judge," spoke up Luther Fuller, a young man of twenty-five, "but it seems to me that we needn't be so hasty, or so—so obstreperous about it. Cameron has always been a decent enough man here, and I don't want to see him treated like a chicken thief on the word of Eph Blodgett. Eph is all right to him to his face, but we all know that Cameron is just naturally walking away with the prize in certain quarters, and Eph can't help feeling sore about it."

"The name of Mr. Blodgett need not enter into the discussion," snapped the

judge. "You have my word for it, and that ought to be enough."

"And whose word did you take, if not Eph Blodgett's?" Fuller shot back at him.

"I have the evidence of the press, the public press of this great commonwealth," cried the judge, pulling a newspaper clipping from his pocket and shoving it testily into young Fuller's hands.

Fuller examined it. There was an unmistakable picture of Cameron in a natty suit and broad-brimmed straw hat, smiling broadly and holding up his right hand. Underneath the cut were the words: "The late injury to this wizard hand costs its owner a princely income." Appended permanently to the picture from a lower corner was the decapitated head of what had once been a column. "Bungling Fingers Show Gambler Up." The clipping had been made from the Boston *Bugler* of a date almost a month previous to the arrival of Cameron in Petersville.

Fuller handed the clipping back to the judge, who received it with a gesture of outraged dignity.

"Satisfied?" demanded the czar of Petersville angrily.

"Might be some one else," returned Fuller, "and, anyway, Cameron has been very decent ever since he's been here."

"That makes him out all the more a scoundrel," spluttered the judge. "He's not only a gambler, but a confounded hypocrite into the bargain. We can't harbor a man like that in this village, and if he won't see it himself, we'll have to make him see it."

A chorus of ominous approval greeted the judge's indictment, and Fuller, though unconvinced, realized the futility of arguing further. Petersville's dire arrangements for redeeming its honor were quickly completed, and a committee was appointed to bring a barrel of tar and an old feather bed to



the school yard at midnight of the Fourth of July. Ephraim Blodgett offered to furnish the tar.

### CHAPTER III.

#### PUT TO THE TEST.

NOW Petersville had a ball team, likewise Caldwell. The clash of the two teams on the Fourth of July was as important an event as the horse show or the opening of the opera season or the county fair. The previous year, Petersville as a whole had journeyed to Caldwell to see their team swamped nine to one. This year Caldwell to the last man was due in Petersville.

Caldwell had won every game for fourteen years, and this year they had a better team than ever. Simmons, their shortstop, had been signed up by the L. & M. League, and was daily awaiting a call to arms—or to bat. A scout from the Two States League had an eagle eye on Borden, their star southpaw, who had come from Des Moines early in the season to settle in Caldwell. Petersville wondered why he had come thither, of all places; the Caldwell chamber of boosters could probably have explained the mystery. But no eligibility rules existed, hence no explanation was forthcoming. At any rate, Petersville, i. e. Judge Peters, scorned such methods.

Judge Peters, chairman of the joint committee on arrangements, was a loyal and ardent rooter—not so much because he loved baseball as because he hated Caldwell. The only game he remembered even for an hour was that memorable one of fourteen years before, when Petersville put the winning run across in the eighth, and brought home their last victory. Cameron had heard all about it on three separate occasions.

By noon of this Fourth, which was, according to the program tactfully dictated by the judge, to be Cameron's last

day in Petersville, Caldwell began to pour into Petersville in a triumphal entry that would have made a Roman general green. Even the judge had to admit that Caldwell was no piker town.

The procession was headed by the Caldwellian members of the joint committee in Colonel Parker's lumbering landau. Next came the ball team itself, which, smirked and looked self-conscious in a large touring car decked out with bunting. Behind the team came a long and heterogeneous string of nondescript vehicles, which swept up over the hill and down, no one knew how far, into the valley beyond. All Caldwell was in Petersville, or on its way thither, with every last rattle, bugle, cow bell, tin pan, giant cracker, or other racket-raising instrument that could be dug up, advertising the fact long in advance. And Petersville met the cyclone of din, blast for blast.

Judge Peters stood on the hotel steps to welcome his fellow committeemen and the ball team, on behalf of the citizens of Petersville. To a stirring martial air by Caldwell's band, the members of the team marched up the steps and ranged themselves along the rail of the hotel veranda to be admired. Then, his address finished and properly applauded, the judge led a stately way for the committee and the team into the darkened coolness of the hotel.

Cameron had watched these proceedings from the window of his deserted office. When Uncle Zeb's oxcart, which brought up the rear of the Caldwell procession, had disappeared behind the schoolhouse, on the way out to the ball grounds, he closed up his desk to go to lunch. Then came a timid knock at the door. He opened it to a panting negro boy, who held out to him a note.

"Miss Madge done send it," he announced breathlessly, edging away as if in haste to usurp a commanding branch overlooking the ball park.



Cameron ripped open the note with hands that trembled, and read: "You must play to-day.—Madge."

"What the deuce——?" he gasped, staring at the note incredulously. "She wants me to make a holy show of myself! Well, I'll be hanged!"

But after the first moment's rather painful reflection, his face lighted with a smile. "So that's her game, eh? Maybe it'll work out all right, too, at that. It's worth a try, anyway."

Thereupon Cameron betook himself to the hotel, sought a secluded corner, and enjoyed his lunch as he had not done for many a day.

He arrived at the ball park early, for the express purpose of seeing the judge's party file into his private box, and to avail himself of the all too rare privilege of seeing Madge. To this latter end, he chose a vantage point not far removed from the judge's box, but partly hidden from it by the dense, cheering mob. The players trotted out on the field to warm up, and to them Cameron devoted a few moments of careful attention.

A ripple of comment caused him to turn his head. The judge and his select party were entering the box, but Madge was not of them. Cameron was non-plused, but not for long. For shortly afterward Madge appeared in the box, and with her was Ephraim Blodgett. It was a bitter pill for Cameron to swallow, this evidence that she had openly accepted the escort of Blodgett. Petersville caught its breath at the sight, for never before had she been willing to ride in the shiniest buggy in the village.

To add to Cameron's poignant bitterness, Madge was unwontedly buoyant and more than usually radiant. She stepped forward to the rail of the box and scanned the players with a searching glance. Cameron, watching closely, hoped to see in her face disappointment that he was not among them; but she turned back, dropped into a seat beside

her father, and began gayly to banter with Blodgett just behind her. It was clear to Cameron that Blodgett's company pleased her, and that, after all, she did not care much whether he played or not. This piqued him to the quick, and decided him definitely to play, if he had had any uncertainty about it before.

By an effort of will he kept his eyes averted from her and the animated cavalier who hovered about her, and watched the game. Through the first four innings the Petersville team held the visitors to two runs and got one over themselves on an error by the mighty Simmons. But the Petersville pitcher was evidently weakening.

"He'll blow up like a balloon in another inning," mused Cameron. "I wonder if I can do as well? I'd better get busy, anyway."

A quick glance convinced him that the judge was already in the throes of distress over Petersville's chances. His hearty camaraderie with the committeemen from Caldwell had given way to a silence almost churlish, aggravated by the patent and oft-expressed satisfaction of the Caldwellian members. Madge, herself a rabid fan, showed plainly that she took the prospective defeat of the home team no less to heart than did her father.

Cameron beckoned to Luther Fuller, the captain of the home team, and had a short but spirited conversation with him.

## CHAPTER IV.

### A LOCAL HERO.

**I** DIDN'T know you could play ball, Mr. Cameron!" exclaimed Fuller, when Cameron had made the proposition that he might replace the home pitcher.

Cameron regarded Fuller a moment in surprise, and then smiled enigmatically.

"I used to pitch for my high school team," Cameron informed him. But



the expression of surprise did not leave the lawyer's face.

"Yes, but——" began Fuller dubiously.

Cameron interrupted him, and there ensued a conversation in which he made it plain to Fuller that he might be expected to do as well, at least, as the pitcher who was then in the box. The result of it was that a substitute catcher was sent out to help Cameron warm up. They went away behind the spectators so that no one from the judge's box could see them. The substitute's report to Fuller was sufficiently flattering to Cameron's skill.

In the first of the sixth, the Petersville man exploded. The first three men up got to him for a single, a double, and a triple. The last man was out trying to stretch his hit into a home run. The score stood four to one with only one man out and the home pitcher rattled. Then the pitcher lost his nerve completely and walked the bases full.

After a powwow with the umpire and the visiting captain, Fuller took out his regular pitcher and beckoned to Cameron, who walked to the box amid the hoots and jeers of the Caldwell contingent and a dead but wondering silence on the part of Petersville.

As he arranged some simple signals with his catcher, Cameron's eye followed across home plate into the judge's box. The judge was looking dour and disappointed; their eyes met without the light of recognition. The judge seemed about to rise, palpably to make a public expostulation against the appearance of Cameron for Petersville, but his daughter seized him by the arm and pulled him back into his seat with a caution to noninterference. Blodgett grinned at him, but did not seem particularly at ease.

But Madge had changed; she was inspiration itself. Her little hands were beating a lusty tattoo that came to Cameron above the din of the band and

the jeers of Caldwell. She was smiling confidently, and when their eyes met she nodded her head in a signal that all was well. Cameron felt the muscles of his throat contract suddenly as he caught sight of her, and realized suddenly how much more depended on this simple game than on any he had ever played before. He walked to the box with trepidation and confidence struggling for the mastery, but as soon as he faced the batter, the crowd faded from his cognizance, and doubt no longer existed.

He sized up his batter—the mighty Simmons—signaled his infield close to gather in a sacrifice, and let the ball fly without a wind-up. The great shortstop swung after the ball had ping-g-ed into the catcher's mitt; whereupon, he looked around in utter astonishment. Cameron smiled. He took a look at the men on base; they were hugging the bags close and looking troubled.

"Lots of time to fool him," figured Cameron, taking a long wind-up and shooting the ball with what appeared to be prodigious force. Simmons the Great was already spinning with the momentum of his wasted stroke when the ball crossed the plate.

"Wait for the ball!" shouted the captain from the players' bench, aghast at the failure of his star hitter.

"Wait for nothing! The first one smoked!" yelled the disgruntled Simmons, pulling down the visor of cap and gripping his bat viciously.

Simmons passed up the third one. It cut the corner of the plate right enough, but the tyro umpire couldn't see it, and called a ball.

"He's blowin' up! He's crackin' already! Wait for him!" urged the Caldwell fans frantically.

"They've got to be straight over for this bush-league umpire," thought Cameron. "I won't take any chances."

And Simmons fanned at another slow one. The next man up raised a



fly just back of second and the side was out. The Caldwell band struck up a lively air as their team trotted out to the field. But it did not arouse much enthusiasm on the Caldwell side, which had not yet recovered from the shock of seeing their idol fan feebly on a straight ball, and three sure runs die on base.

Cameron, glancing hastily into the judge's box as he walked to the bench, caught sight of the stately judge hilariously digging his thumbs into the short ribs of Colonel Parker, who sat next him. Colonel Parker, with uplifted hands, was soberly protesting that the judge should wait until the game was over. And Madge, beaming with pleasure, slyly pointed her fan at her father when she caught Cameron's eye. Cameron understood.

The Petersville men went out one, two, three, before Cameron got a chance at bat. Seven pitched balls retired the Caldwell side. When Cameron came up to bat in the last of the seventh, there were two men on base. The judge, who, even yet, had granted Cameron no sign of recognition, was looking grave again; Madge's expression had nothing but supreme confidence. Cameron found the first ball for a triple. Then Borden, their southpaw, got the next three men and Cameron died on third. But the score stood three to four, and Cameron had one more chance at bat.

But the tumult of Petersville cheers that thanked Cameron for his long drive as he walked across the field to the bench was hardly audible to him. For wonder of wonders, the judge, who, with his white lawn tie under one ear, his hat awry, and his face purple from cheering, could no longer be called stately, actually nodded and smiled at Cameron as he passed before the committee box. Ineffable content was shadowed forth in Madge's face as she saw the greeting. Blodgett seemed to

be interested in another part of the field.

Petersville took the field while Cameron pitched nine balls, and trotted back to the bench. Borden fanned three in a row. Caldwell came to bat in the last with desperation writ large in their faces; for Cameron would bat this inning. An ominous silence settled over their camp. Even the Petersville rooters, who had cheered Cameron to the echo, held their breath in anxious suspense.

Now Cameron began to feel the strain of his unwonted exertions. His broken wrist began to ache dully, with now and then a sharp twinge that made him grit his teeth. The first man up found his slow ball for a single through short. The next man got in the way of the ball and the umpire walked him. Petersville groaned. To Cameron's ears came the sound of clapping of a pair of dainty gloved hands, the only encouragement he had from all the throng. Cameron caught a fleeting glimpse of the judge, leaning far forward, his hands gripping the rail of the box in breathless suspense.

The third man hit a sizzling grounder toward short. Cameron scooped it in by a running dive, touched third, and snapped the ball to second before the runner was halfway there. Every one cheered, Caldwell included, for it was the neatest double play ever seen on Petersville field. After that the third man was easy.

"Hold 'em! Hold 'em!" came a frantic swelling cry from the Caldwell contingent as their side took the field for the last inning, with the score three to four in their favor. Cameron dared not look at the judge's box. Only by luck could he hope to tie the score, for Borden was puzzling the Petersville hitters more every inning.

His heart sank when the first Petersville man fanned, but his spirits rose buoyantly when Fuller, the captain,



landed safe on first, after a scratch hit. He stepped to bat with the grim determination to line out a home run and win the game. A grateful tingle ran through his arms as the ball cracked off the bat on a line drive to deep center. First base was behind him; second base—great heavens, but that center fielder flew! Even as Cameron dug his toe into second the fielder was in position, waiting for the ball.

"Stay there! Stay there!" shouted Petersville. But Cameron would not listen. He sped toward third like a whirlwind, and dived into the bag just as Simmons caught the ball on the throw-in. The score was tied, with one man out. The Petersville fans went nearly crazy, but Cameron knew their confidence was untimely. The next man up was thrown out at first, and the weakest batter of the side came to the box, trembling under the burden of his responsibility.

Cameron sized him up at a glance, and decided on desperate measures. Borden, too, read his man and made up his mind to end it as soon as possible. Cameron knew this and relied on it. He tried the pitcher by taking a longish lead, but Borden was too intent on retiring the side to notice it. If the umpire was any good, Cameron knew he could turn the trick he contemplated. And anyway, there was nothing much to lose if he failed, and a great deal to be gained if he succeeded. For his broken wrist was weakening fast, and he doubted his ability to stay another inning.

Crouching at the end of his long lead, he waited for the beginning of Borden's wind-up. At the pitcher's first movement, he sped for home. He heard the ball shoot into the catcher's mitt when he was ten feet away. Throwing his body backward, he dived feet foremost for the plate, slipping neatly underneath the man who was waiting with the ball outstretched to tag him, and found the

plate with his toe before the catcher knew where he was. Petersville had seen the fall-away slide.

"Safe!" roared the umpire. The game was won.

## CHAPTER V.

### VICTORY VINDICATES.

**B**EFORE Cameron could find his feet, he was seized upon by two husky members of the Petersville team, set upon their shoulders, and started on a triumphal march around the field. Did the Petersvillians cheer? Why, a man three miles the other side of Hackettstown swore he heard it as plainly as if it had been in the next lot. And the judge! Cameron gasped. For the stout, purple-faced, apoplectic old judge, who breathed hard if he walked up half a dozen steps, vaulted over the rail of his box as if he had been an athlete, and tore his way into the center of the crowd that surrounded Cameron.

"Let me through, boys! Let me through!" he panted, tearing at the men who blocked his way, and throwing them aside like a full back on the third down with four yards to go.

"Give me your place, Fuller!" he shouted at the captain, who was bearing one side of Cameron on his mighty shoulders. Before Cameron realized it, he was sitting on the judge's shoulder, leading a cheering, huzzaing, bacchanalian rout around the ball grounds.

And the Arabs, who are renowned for folding their tents and stealing away in silence, had nothing on the contingent from Caldwell—players, rooters, brass band, and all. They simply disappeared, faded away like wraiths; so that when the procession reached the committee box again, there was never a Caldwellian to be seen, not even Colonel Parker.

Madge, looking very rosy and demure underneath her bewitching broadbrimmed hat, stood at the rail of the



box to greet the hero. Behind her, ill at ease, but still cocksure, stood Ephraim Blodgett. Cameron scrambled into the box. The crowd picked the judge up bodily and threw him into the box. Whereupon the Petersvillians gave three cheers and a tiger for Madge, her father, and Cameron in turn.

During this interlude, Cameron, all unconscious of the presence of others in the box, had been talking delightedly with Madge. Hence he did not see Ephraim Blodgett bend over close to the judge's ear and whisper something that checked the judge's joviality and made him instantly aggressive.

"Come, Madge, we must be going!" he said peremptorily, throwing at Cameron a scathing glance of outraged honor.

"But why, papa?" she objected, turning toward him, but not moving from Cameron's side. "I thought you had made up with him."

Cameron eyed him coolly and almost smiled at the judge's wrathful stare.

"With him—a common gambler!" exclaimed the judge, pointing a sternly accusing forefinger at Cameron. "Get out of this box, sir, at once!" he commanded, his face empurpled with anger. "Come, Madge!"

"But, Judge Peters," began Cameron, smiling.

"But nothing, sir," the judge interrupted him. "I may have forgotten myself for a moment, as any man might on an occasion like the present. That cannot change my opinion of you, nor can my rather erratic and impulsive conduct be construed as a change in my attitude toward you. You are a hypocrite, sir, and a common gambler. Get out of my sight!"

Cameron started to speak, but Madge checked him. She stepped resolutely to her father, drawing from her pocket-book a clipping from a newspaper—the whole page of a newspaper. Her eyes

shot blazing sparks at Ephraim Blodgett.

"Mr. Blodgett," she said, in a tense tone that was hardly audible, even to Cameron, "I have tried everything to bring about a reconciliation between Mr. Cameron and my father, without ruining your name in Petersville. I thought that father would be so pleased at winning the game from Caldwell that he would overlook your—lies about Mr. Cameron. He might have, too, but for your reminding him of it. There, father, is the *whole* page of the paper of which Mr. Blodgett showed you only so much as he wanted you to see."

The irate judge, looking quizzically from Madge to Blodgett, groped for the paper and unfolded it. It was the Boston *Bugler*, of the same date as the one he had seen before. There was the picture of Cameron, with the same words underneath it. There was the column headed "Bungling Fingers Show Gambler Up." The judge gave a gasp as he read that the name of the gambler was Houston and not Cameron.

"What's this?" he demanded. "I don't understand, Eph." He turned slowly to look at Blodgett, who, though pale to the lips, met his stare composedly and started to speak.

"Read the first column, father," bade Madge.

The judge's eyes fell obediently on the designated heading. He read: "Butch Cameron Retires. Broken Wrist Forces Greatest Pitcher in Big Leagues Out of Game. His Pitching Brought Two Pennants to Behemoths."

"But honestly, judge, I didn't know," broke in Blodgett. "That clipping was given to me, and I didn't know anything else about it."

"About what?" inquired the judge menacingly.

"That—that the article about the gambler did not refer to Cameron."

The judge was lost a moment in deep



thought. Finally he turned again to Madge.

"Have you told Mr. Blodgett about this?" he asked. "Has he seen this paper?"

"No, never," she asserted emphatically.

"Mr. Blodgett," began the judge, after another brief pause, "you have never seen this paper, you could not look over my shoulder while I was reading it; none of us has said anything to you about its contents. How, then, did you know that your gambler was not Cameron?"

Blodgett shifted his weight from one foot to the other, opened his mouth to speak, but closed it again without a word. The judge had him dead to rights. He looked appealingly at Madge, who seemed to have difficulty in suppressing the evidence of her delight at his discomfiture.

The judge walked slowly to the door of the box, opened it, and stood back, holding it open. "Good afternoon, Mr. Blodgett," he said, his voice vibrant with his efforts to hold himself in check.

"Madge——" began Blodgett desperately.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Blodgett," repeated the judge, more emphatically, his hand trembling on the little door. Blodgett left. Then to Madge:

"How did you get that paper, Madge?" he inquired kindly.

"When I saw the clipping Eph Blodgett gave you," she explained, "I thought there was something crooked about it. So I sent for another copy of the paper, and after a lot of trouble I got it at last."

"Why didn't you tell me of it before?" continued the judge.

"I didn't get the paper till all the harm was done to—to Roger. Then I hoped you might be reconciled to him without giving Eph Blodgett away, though he didn't deserve it, and——"

"And what?" prompted the judge as she hesitated.

"And I wanted Petersville to win," she added, blushing. "I thought it would be a good way to make Roger play."

This statement entirely restored the judge to his pristine good temper. "You little schemer!" he exclaimed. "I see now. You did perfectly right." Thereupon he extended his hand to Cameron.

Cameron gripped his hand. "No apology necessary, judge," he said, with a smile. "From your point of view you were justified, of course. I didn't realize there had been a mistake. I thought you were sore on me only because I was a professional ball player, until I had to argue with Fuller to be allowed to pitch. Of course, when Fuller found out who I was, he explained the—the mistaken impression you had of my past career. If I had known that at first, I would have taken it upon myself to set matters straight. But I couldn't deny that I had played professional ball."

"If I had known that you were Butch Cameron, I would have welcomed you to my heart as soon as you arrived," asserted the judge. "Why didn't you let us know?"

"Just for that reason. I wanted to avoid that. I was no longer a big-league pitcher, but a lawyer."

For a silent moment the keen gray eyes of the judge met Cameron's and seemed perceptibly to soften. "Mr. Cameron," he said at last, "I'm proud to know you. Will you do us the honor of coming home with us now to dinner?"

Cameron's reply may be imagined, for Madge caught his arm with an impulsive little gesture and led him toward the door of the box.

"To-day, Mr. Cameron," remarked the judge as they passed out, "to-day you did put Petersville on the map!"





# Mystery of the Silver Box



By  
J.S. Fletcher

## CHAPTER I.

### THINGS CAN HAPPEN.



WHEN I set out for Leycaster that morning, I had no idea in my mind as to the reason which had made my old friend, Danthorpe, send for me so suddenly and hurriedly, conveying his message in four simple words: "Come here at once!" But Danthorpe was not only town clerk and a solicitor of standing at Leycaster, but a sharp man of the world, who never wasted time or money of his own, and was certainly not likely to waste mine.

I obeyed his summons, and thought no more of it until I reached the quaint old town by the sea, where I had sometimes visited him on pleasure. And as soon as I caught sight of his face on the station, I knew that Danthorpe had something in hand to which he thought it worth while to draw my professional attention.

"Come straight to the Castle Hotel, Campenhaye," he said, taking my arm. "I've ordered lunch in a private room. There is a mystery waiting for you

here which seems to me about as queer a one as I ever encountered. I say 'seems'; it may be that you will think little of it! Anyway, it will give the people of this place plenty to talk of for at least the proverbial nine days—perhaps longer."

I thought as I looked around me at the familiar sights and scenes of Leycaster that it could never require much to stir the folk of so quiet a town. As all people know who have visited it, it is one of the most ancient, as it is also one of the most picturesque, boroughs in the country. It is old and worn and gray—as gray as the waters of the North Sea which beat against its cliffs and headlands. It is built on a bold promontory; the Norman tower of its ruined castle may be seen for a wide stretch over land and sea; it has an ancient church and queer streets and alleys; the houses in its market place are of bygone centuries; there is scarcely anything modern in it.

Leycaster has a small sea trade; it has a herring fishery; but the tourist and tripper leave it alone. Every year a few artists set up their easels in its



nooks and corners, a few people who love quiet and the smell of the sea visit it—but for all other purposes it is still out of the world. Leycaster is, in short, what the old topographers call a decayed town. But even in such places things can happen.

Danthorpe is a wise man. He refused to say a word of business until we had lunched. But as soon as we had come to the coffee and the cigars, he drew his chair closer to mine.

"Now, then, Campenhaye," he said, "we'll start out on this affair. You are sufficiently acquainted with the geography of Leycaster to remember our castle? Very well. Last night about dusk, a woman, who lives in one of the cottages in Outer Ward, was passing through the castle grounds and came across the body of a man which lay at the foot of Siward's Tower. She immediately fetched assistance from the lodge. The body was warm, but the man was dead. There was no mystery as to how he met his death.

"You have been up Siward's Tower with me more than once," he reminded me, "and you will no doubt remember that here and there, all the way to the top, there are ancient embrasures, or openings, fenced in by low railings. According to our castle committee, these railings are constantly tested, and should be absolutely safe; but it is impossible to deny the fact that the dead man evidently leaned on one of the upper ones, that it gave way with his weight, and that he was precipitated some sixty or seventy feet to the path below."

"You are sure the railing gave way? You are sure he did not throw himself over?" I asked.

"There is no doubt that the railing gave way. The upper rail was broken completely out of its socket, and the wood was rotten," replied Danthorpe. "If the man was leaning heavily upon it, as he no doubt was, looking at the

view over the bay and the harbor, he would have no chance at all. Our castle committee, or their subordinates, will get into hot water over this, I assure you. However, that is another matter. Let us go on.

"The man was removed to the mortuary," he continued. "I myself saw him a few minutes later. The doctor said he had been killed instantaneously. He was a presentable, gentlemanly looking man of, say, forty-five, well but quietly dressed, with good linen, good boots, clean-shaven, slightly gray of hair. He would have passed for a professional man—doctor, lawyer, anything of that sort. But on examining his clothing there was nothing whatever upon him to show who he was."

Danthorpe paused, and looked at me in a fashion which was significant of his astonishment. I only nodded, and bade him to continue.

"Nothing whatever upon him!" he repeated. "Not a—but I'll tell you exactly what there was on him. There was a pocket handkerchief, unmarked. There was a cigar case, containing six or seven cigars of very good quality. There was a silver match box. There was a pocketknife. There was a gold watch, with a gold chain attached. In one pocket of the trousers there was a leather purse containing twenty-three pounds in gold; in the other, some loose silver. There was not a mark upon linen or clothing to show to whom they belonged or where they had been bought or made. The only other thing upon the body was—this."

Here Danthorpe produced something wrapped in tissue paper, and, laying it on the table, placed his hand on it.

"I'll tell you about it later," he said; "for it's what I've really brought you down to see, Campenhaye. But first let me finish about the dead man. Of course, we wanted to find out who he was. In a little place like this that



was easily done. We soon learned that he arrived here—from London; remember that, though it seems of no importance—at half past five yesterday afternoon. He carried a small suit case and walked straight to his hotel and took a room in the name of John Robinson. He had dinner prepared for him at once, and as soon as he had eaten it, he strolled out. The lodge keeper admitted him to the castle, and saw him wandering about. After that he was never seen until the woman found him dead.

"Now, upon finding this out," said Danthorpe, "we examined the suit case and an overcoat which had been taken up to his room. This search was as unproductive of result as the first. We found no papers, letters, or visiting card. None of the linen was marked; there was absolutely nothing to reveal the man's identity. Who he is, why he came here, is a mystery. But there is something here, Campenhaye, which I want you to look at."

He slowly tore away the wrappings of tissue paper from the object which he had produced, and at last revealed an old silver tobacco box, rounded to fit comfortably into a pocket and evidently of considerable age, for it was worn very smooth all over its surface.

"You see what this is?" said Danthorpe. "An old tobacco box of solid silver. Now open it, and look inside the lid."

The lid of the box opened by the pressure of a spring. The interior was as brightly polished as the exterior; and on the lid, scratched into the silver by some sharp instrument, was a sort of drawing or diagram, the meaning of which it was at first sight impossible to understand. It was nothing but a series or collection of tiny lines, mere scratches; but they were deeply indented in the silver, and they appeared to have some sequence or order, and therefore possibly some significance.

Without remark, I took out my notebook and made an accurate reproduction of them.

## CHAPTER II.

### A MERE CHANCE.

NOW, what on earth do you make these scratches out to be?" said Danthorpe. "Are they signs, symbols, hieroglyphics, or what? Are they accidental? Are they a mere whim? Or are they there of set purpose? Does a man make marks in a good silver tobacco box like that for nothing? And there's another thing. Does a man——"

"My dear fellow!" I exclaimed, interrupting him; "don't tax my brains too much. Although I have some fame as a specialist in crime investigation, I am not able to answer more than one question at a time. Now, I have attempted to solve only one question, so far, about these mysterious marks, which may be signs, symbols, or hieroglyphics; but I have solved it to my own satisfaction, and I don't think I am wrong."

"Well, and what's that?" asked Danthorpe.

"Merely that these were scratched or cut into the inside of this tobacco box lid a good many years ago," I said. "I can see that with the naked eye. Perhaps you can't. Now you will see what I mean. The edge, the lip, of every scratch is quite smooth."

"Yes, I see that," he said, having examined the inside of the lid. "But—what do you think they mean?"

"Ah, that's a big question. Perhaps nothing, perhaps a great deal," said I. "However, leave that matter for a moment. Tell me, what are the police doing toward getting this man identified?"

"The usual thing," answered Danthorpe. "A complete description, of course, and a photograph. We had him



photographed this morning, and we are sending copies out to the principal papers and police headquarters."

"Very good. Now, let us take this box to the photographer and have copies made of the markings," I said. "These copies shall be sent out in the same way, with a note in which we will ask any person who can explain them or throw any light upon them to communicate with you, Danthorpe. And after that you can take me to see the dead man, on the mere chance of my recognizing him—a very, very mere chance, I'm afraid."

"I suppose somebody will recognize him," said Danthorpe. "It seems a most extraordinary thing that a man should come to a strange town without so much as a letter in his pocket."

That was precisely why I thought there might be the veriest off-chance of my knowing the man. He might be one of the better sort of the criminal class, who, bent on some enterprise or other, had taken care that in the event of arrest no immediate means of identification should be found upon him. It was certainly unusual that a well-dressed man, with money in his pockets, should be devoid of even a visiting card; it looked as if everything of that sort had been purposely got rid of. And as I, in my professional capacity, had come across a vast number of strange characters, there was the possibility that I might be acquainted with this mysterious stranger.

But when I came to see the dead man I did not know him at all—I had never seen him. And so there was nothing to be done until the circulation of the description and the photographs produced some result. It was impossible that they should produce none—the man was sure to be known to somebody. When that somebody came forward, we should, no doubt, learn the object of his visit to Leycaster.

### CHAPTER III.

#### A CHANCE IN A MILLION.

DANTHORPE and I were sitting in his study that night, smoking a final cigar before going to bed, when his parlor maid came in to say that a Mr. Pentiman particularly desired a few minutes' conversation with him. He bade the girl show Mr. Pentiman in at once.

"An old and much respected tradesman of the town—a jeweler," said Danthorpe, turning to me as he rose and moved toward the door. "I wonder what he wants at this hour? Ah, come in, Mr. Pentiman! Glad to see you," he continued, meeting and welcoming an old-fashioned-looking, elderly man, who entered, bowing and smiling. "This is my friend, Mr. Campenhaye, of London, Mr. Pentiman. Mr. Campenhaye, one of our most honored townsmen."

The old gentleman bowed and smiled again, and dropped into the easy-chair which Danthorpe pushed forward.

"You'll think it strange that I should call at this hour, Mr. Danthorpe," he said, "but the fact is I have had my curiosity aroused. I've been talking to the police superintendent at the club, sir, and he has been telling me about the silver tobacco box which was found on the poor man who fell out of Siward's Tower yesterday."

Danthorpe glanced sharply at me. "Oh," he said, "what about it, Mr. Pentiman?"

"Well, little, except that he described it, Mr. Danthorpe, and said that it was in your possession," replied the old gentleman. "And—the fact is, sir, I dropped in on my way home to ask if you would allow me to look at that tobacco box."

Danthorpe turned to a locked drawer in the desk by which he was standing. "Why, certainly, Mr. Pentiman," he replied. "Here it is."



He handed the small parcel over to the old man, and we both watched him curiously as he took off the tissue-paper wrappings. His wrinkled old face lighted up, and his eyes twinkled as he examined the silver box, and finally pressed the spring which released the inset lid, and looked inside.

"Aye, aye!" he said, more to himself than to us. "Aye, I thought it might be so—I thought it might!"

"What is it that you thought might be so, Mr. Pentiman?" asked Danthorpe. "You are referring to that box, aren't you?"

"Yes, sir, I am," replied the old gentleman. "When the superintendent described it to me, I began to wonder if it might be a silver tobacco box of which I know something. It seemed to be a thousand to one—a million to one!—against its being so. But—it is."

"You mean to say that you know that box?" exclaimed Danthorpe half incredulously.

"I know it, sir. It was once mine. The truth is, Mr. Danthorpe," continued Mr. Pentiman, looking at the town clerk with a smile—"the truth is, I gave this box, as a little acknowledgment of a service rendered, to James Meadows."

Danthorpe's face showed his astonishment. "Great Scott!" he exclaimed. "Are—are you certain?"

"I'm as absolutely certain as I am of my own existence, sir," replied the old man. "I've no doubt of it. See, there's my private mark and number, just inside the curved rim. Oh, yes, that's the box. But——" He paused and looked critically at the markings within the lid, and he shook his head. "When I gave this box to James Meadows," he went on, "those queer marks were not there. I wonder what they mean?"

"When did you give that box to Meadows?" asked Danthorpe, who was evidently much impressed.

"About a year, sir, before the—the

unfortunate affair," answered Mr. Pentiman.

"Did you ever see it afterward?"

"No, sir, I can't say that I did. As I say, I wanted to give Meadows a little acknowledgment, and I had this box in hand—it's an old eighteenth-century box, Mr. Danthorpe."

"I wonder how it came into this unknown man's possession!" exclaimed Danthorpe.

"That seems strange, sir," said the old man. "But I've known many strange things. We don't know who this man is. Meadows may have given it to him. Meadows may have sold it, and the man picked it up in some secondhand shop. But there's one thing certain, Mr. Danthorpe—that's the box I gave James Meadows ten years ago."

Then Mr. Pentiman went away, and Danthorpe saw him out, and came back to me with a greatly puzzled face. "Campenhaye," he said, pulling his chair toward mine, "that's one of the most extraordinary things I have ever known. The mystery of this affair is in this box! You heard the old gentleman speak of James Meadows?"

"I did. Who is, or was, James Meadows?"

"A man who made history in this town before you knew it. He was manager of the Leycaster Bank, and just about ten years ago—not quite so much—he got ten years' penal servitude for embezzlement. That's who James Meadows was!"

"Then, in that case," I said, "James Meadows is at large again."

Danthorpe considered matters. "Yes, that's so," he replied. "I can't remember the exact dates offhand, but, of course, I have the full details at the office. But Meadows certainly must have been released some little time ago."

"Is there no one in the town who knows anything of him?" I asked. "Has he no friends, or relations, here?"



"No," replied Danthorpe; "he wasn't a Leycaster man. He came here from somewhere in the Midlands. He was then about thirty, and he had been here fifteen years when what old Pentiman calls the 'unfortunate affair' took place. Meadows was one of those men who steadily build up a character for probity and then suddenly rob the very people who trust them. There wasn't a man in the town who had a higher reputation; yet he robbed the bank of over fifty thousand pounds. And, what's more, the bank recovered nothing, and Meadows obstinately refused to give any information as to what he had done with the missing funds.

"It was commonly believed at the time that he had been hard hit on the Stock Exchange, but it was impossible to get a word out of him. It was by mere chance that he was detected, and if that mere chance hadn't happened, Meadows would probably have got clean away with more of the bank's property. And the bank was not the only loser."

"Townspeople, eh?" I suggested.

"Only to a slight extent; he realized on some securities which had been intrusted to him," answered Danthorpe. "No—a very queer matter happened, Campenhaye; I think I've shown you the Earl of Lowthorpe's place, haven't I?"

"Oh, yes; I remember it very well," I answered.

"Seven or eight miles out. Yes; but I'm sure I never told you about the affair of the diamonds," said Danthorpe. "It was this: Some little time before Meadows was found out, there was the annual county ball held here, and Lord and Lady Lowthorpe were to be present. Now, the Lowthorpes belong to the poorer order of the peerage, but there are some very fine heirlooms in the family, including diamonds which are worth at least twenty thousand pounds. These diamonds were usually kept at a London bank. Lady Low-

thorpe wanted to wear them at our ball. Lord Lowthorpe, who was then getting old and fidgety, had them brought down from London, but he was so nervous about them, that on their arrival he deposited them with Meadows, at the bank, here, and insisted on Lady Lowthorpe's putting them on before the ball, and taking them off, after the ball, at the Castle Hotel. He said it was not safe to drive to and from Lowthorpe on a winter night with such valuable property.

"When Lady Lowthorpe divested herself of the diamonds at the hotel when the ball was over," he continued, "the old earl carried them off himself, to hand over to Meadows at the bank, Meadows having specially arranged to sit up for his lordship. And, very unfortunately, the earl was allowed to go alone."

"Why unfortunately?"

"As events turned out, it was very unfortunate. The countess got into her furs, and waited his return. He had only to go across the market place and round the corner, but he was so long away that at last she sent the footman to find him. He was found lying in the street, unconscious."

"Violence?"

"There was no violence. It was a seizure—a fit of some sort. He was carried back to the Castle Hotel, and doctors were sent for. While they were busied with the patient, nobody, of course, thought of anything else. Before morning the earl died, never having recovered consciousness.

"The news of his death quickly spread about the town, and Meadows came hurrying to the Castle Hotel to ask for the countess. He wanted to know if the diamonds were safe—because, said he, although he had sat up until four o'clock for him, the earl had never come, and he had formed the conclusion that the earl and countess were spending the night at the hotel, and had



the diamonds in their own keeping. On rising, said Meadows, he had been informed of the events of the night, and so he had hastened to her ladyship."

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### A QUESTION OF CHRONOLOGY.

DANTHORPE paused for a moment, and looked at me as if he wondered what I thought. But I said nothing.

"Well, of course, there was fine to-do," he told me. "Meadows did no vowing, swearing, nor protesting; he merely said quietly and positively that the old earl most certainly had not brought the diamonds back to him; if he had done so, he said, he would have given a receipt for them. And there was no receipt upon the earl's body. And as nobody at that time doubted the probity of Meadows, the theory gained ground that somebody had seen the earl fall, and had robbed him.

"This theory was strengthened by the fact that, a day or two later, the case in which the diamonds had been kept was found—empty, and with the patent lock forced—on the side of the railway, about a mile out of the town. From that day to this, Campenhaye, those diamonds have never been heard of!"

"Just so," I said. "Now, what about the people who suspected Meadows? Some people must have suspected him!"

Danthorpe shook his head. "I don't think a soul suspected him at the time," he answered. "You see, he hadn't been found out. But when the embezzlement came to light, people began to talk. It suddenly struck some of us that it was a strange thing that Meadows didn't step across to the hotel when the earl was so late in calling. Then it came out that before Meadows saw the countess he had heard all about the events of the night from one of the doctors, and knew that the earl had

never recovered consciousness from the moment of his seizure. How does the thing strike you, Campenhaye?"

"The thing strikes me as being very simple," I said. "The earl gave the diamonds to Meadows. He took no receipt for them. When Meadows heard the news from the doctor he saw that nothing could prove that the diamonds had been handed to him. He had nothing to do but to appropriate them. He threw the case away. That's how it strikes me, Danthorpe."

"Well, and I dare say that's correct. But," continued Danthorpe, as we both rose, "those diamonds have never been heard of since. Meadows got this ten years for the other affair, and wherever he may be now——"

He finished with an expressive shrug of the shoulders, implying that Meadows had probably taken himself off to the Antipodes, or to some inaccessible island in the Pacific.

"Nobody'll ever hear of Jim Meadows again," he added, as we lighted our candles.

"But we'll find out to-morrow when he was discharged from Portland, at any rate," I said.

That, of course, was easily done. After looking over certain records at Danthorpe's office, I wired to Portland, and within two hours received the news I wanted: James Meadows had earned the full amount of time off for good conduct. He had been discharged from Portland just five weeks since. Of course, the convict-prison authorities knew nothing as to his whereabouts; all they knew was that he had left for London.

We progressed no farther in the elucidation of the mystery of the dead man on that, the second day after my summons to Leycaster. The inquest was opened at the coroner's court that day, and was adjourned after all the available evidence had been taken.

That evening, photographs of the de-



ceased began to appear in some of the London and provincial evening newspapers; next morning they appeared all over England, and side by side with these were printed reproductions of the extraordinary marks which had been discovered within the lid of the tobacco box. By breakfast time that day, Danthorpe received a wire from Portland saying that a warder was just setting off for Leycaster, and would see the body of the unknown man, requesting that it should not be interred until he had seen it. The telegram added that the photograph printed in the papers was believed at Portland to be that of a man recently discharged from there.

The warder arrived at Leycaster at five o'clock that afternoon. Danthorpe and I were present, together with the police superintendent and an inspector, when he was shown the body. Not a little to our surprise, he identified it at once.

"Yes," he said, "this is the man we thought of. And if you have examined him carefully, you will know that he has a brown birthmark just above his right elbow and has lost the first and second joints of the third finger of his left hand."

That was correct. And when we had left the mortuary the warder told us who the man was, or, at any rate, all they knew of him at Portland: Charles Lewes, forty-five; sentenced at the central criminal court to five years' penal servitude for some offense in connection with a forged check; had been released from Portland a month ago.

"Which means," observed Danthorpe, "that he got his liberty just about the same time that Meadows got his?"

"Yes, that must be so," said the warder; "there would not be a week's difference between the release of one and of the other, anyway."

Could he tell us whether Meadows—whom he knew quite well—and Lewes

were acquainted while at Portland? Well, he had no particular recollection that they were, but it was more than likely. It was also quite likely that they knew they were to be released about the same time, and could make arrangements to meet in London or elsewhere.

Danthorpe and I left the warder to be entertained by the police, and went home. In the hall we were met by the parlor maid, who presented him with a card. "The gentleman is in the library, sir," she said.

Danthorpe passed the card to me. I gave one glance at it: "Professor Craig-Johnstone, St. Fridelin's College, Cambridge."

## CHAPTER V.

### ENTER A SPECIALIST.

THE same thought instantly occurred to Danthorpe and myself—the visit of Craig-Johnstone had to do with the queer marks on the lid of the tobacco box. I, in fact, was sure of it, for though I had never met him, I knew the professor by name and reputation. I drew Danthorpe aside as we walked toward the door of the library.

"I know who this man is," I said. "He's the greatest living authority on palæography and epigraph. And he's come to tell you what those marks mean."

Danthorpe looked his astonishment. "By George!" he exclaimed. "Well, come along, let's hear what he's got to say."

Professor Craig-Johnstone sat in an easy-chair in a thoughtful attitude. In appearance he was not exactly what one would expect a very learned man to be—that is to say, he was neither old, nor eccentric, nor careless of his dress. On the contrary, he was a good-looking person, with a clean-shaven face, clad in an irreproachably cut suit of gray tweed; he looked, in short, a country gentleman, or a well-to-do tourist, and



his manners were pleasant and easy. And when the preliminary introduction had been gone through, he sat down and chatted to us in a friendly and informal fashion.

"I came down to see you, Mr. Danthorpe," he said, "because of the diagram which you caused to be published in this morning's newspapers. Now, before I say anything further, will you let me see the tobacco box on which these marks are cut, or scratched?" Danthorpe at once produced the box, and Professor Craig-Johnstone examined it with evident interest. "Yes," he said. "Now, you gentlemen do not know what this marking is?"

We shook our heads. "Very well," he went on. "I am here to tell you. It is a rude, but, I should say, an accurate drawing of an inscription written on some stone or slab in Ogham. If you do not know what Ogham is, I must explain. It is one of the earliest known forms of writing upon stone. Without troubling you with details, I may point out that it has as its basis a main, or medial line; the characters you see, branch off from, or transect, that line. Now, this Ogham writing was practiced in these islands more than two thousand years ago—there are many examples of it in Ireland; there are a few—very few—in England, and they are on this coast. Without doubt, gentlemen, this diagram, incised roughly on the lid of this silver box, is a drawing of an Ogham inscription on some stone. I will stake my professional reputation upon it."

Danthorpe and I glanced at each other. I think the same notion, or ghost of a notion, rose up within our minds at that moment. And Danthorpe turned to his visitor. "You say, professor, that the known stones on which this writing is found in England are all on this East Coast?" he said.

"Yes. And they are very, very few in number; and of these that are known,

some are questionable," replied Professor Craig-Johnstone. "But there may be others. Wherever there were many ancient settlements previous to, say, the first Roman occupation, there may be others. Now, this district is a very ancient one. It is one which I have long desired to inspect, but up to now I have never had a chance of coming here. And this writing—I may tell you, gentlemen, that I have read all the facts relating to the death of the man upon whose body this box was found, and I have formed a theory. Shall I tell you what it is? Remember, I am neither lawyer nor expert in crime. Mine is a layman's theory."

"Tell it, by all means," said Danthorpe. "I can assure you we shall only be too glad to hear it."

"Well, it is this. The unknown man came here to find something which is concealed. The key to the place of concealment is in this rude drawing. The place of concealment is in all likelihood beneath, or close to, some stone or slab on which the original of the drawing is sculptured. All he had to do was to find that stone or slab. The probability is that it is one of several stones bearing similar marks. He would know the one he wanted by comparing it with this diagram. And," continued the professor with enthusiasm, "it seems to me that, if you know of any ancient place hereabouts—the ruins of an old religious house, old churchyard, or similar remnant of antiquity, you had better search thoroughly, and see if you cannot find a stone which bears marks corresponding to these."

Again Danthorpe and I glanced at each other. We were beginning to see. And from glancing at each other we glanced at the door. "If you will excuse Mr. Campenhaye and myself for a moment, professor," said Danthorpe, "we will just consult on a matter which seems, to my mind, to bear on your the-



ory, and on which I am inclined to ask your advice."

The professor bowed, and Danthorpe and I went out and into the next room. "Campenhay," said my friend, "what do you think of that? It seems to me that this chap has hit the right nail on the head. That diagram shows where Meadows hid the Lowthorpe diamonds."

"It seems very like it," I replied; "uncommonly like it."

"Very well. The thing is—shall I tell our visitor the story of the diamonds?"

"Why?"

"Because it seems to me that you and I, not being experts, nor archæologists, nor antiquarians, might search these parts for a year and a day without coming across that stone. He is an expert; he knows what he is talking about, and he would be of the greatest help. Come, shall we take him into our confidence?"

I reflected for a moment, weighing the possibilities. Then I made up my mind. "Yes," I said. "I think we may."

We returned to the library, and found Professor Craig-Johnstone inspecting a map of the town and neighborhood, which hung on the wall. Danthorpe produced cigars, and some of his famous brown sherry, and, sitting down again, we put the visitor in possession of the whole story of Meadows, the Lowthorpe diamonds, and of Charles Lewes.

The professor was a model listener. He never interrupted with question or remark, but his keen eyes showed that he took in every point. And at the end of the story he nodded his head with an expressive gesture.

"Oh, of course, the affair is plain!" he said. "Meadows, when he appropriated the diamonds, was running the chance of detection in the other matter of embezzlement every day. He accordingly 'planted' the diamonds as quickly

as he could, and, without a doubt, under a stone bearing these marks, and one of many stones similarly marked. Foreseeing that it might be some time before he could recover them, he hastily scratched a rough copy of the markings of that particular stone on the inside of his silver tobacco box. Soon afterward, as you say, he was sent to prison. In prison he made the acquaintance of Lewes. They were released about the same time. Meadows dared not come down here, where he would have been recognized. He sent Lewes. Or Meadows may be dead, and have left the secret to Lewes. What is sure, is that Lewes had the tobacco box in his possession, and that here he came. The matter, gentlemen, is clear. And there is now only one thing to be done."

"What is that?" asked Danthorpe eagerly.

"Why, to think of the place in this neighborhood where such stones as these are likely to be found," replied the professor with an indulgent smile. "As I said, I am a stranger, and know nothing of the district. But you——"

"I am not much versed in antiquities," said Danthorpe; "but while you have been talking, I have been thinking of the place called Old Leycaster."

"And what is that?"

Danthorpe took down the map, and pointed to a point of land which runs out into the sea, about a mile and a half south of the town.

"The most forlorn and desolate spot in existence," he said, "You see these marks on this triangular bit of coast? Well, that is Old Leycaster. What it is, is a collection of heaps of ruinous masonry, and that sort of thing. Once there was an old church, or a monk's cell, or something of that sort there. Now I come to think of it—I have been there only once, for no townfolk ever go—there are stones within and without the ruins which are very ancient. The whole place is so desolate, so overgrown



with bramble and bush and weed that——"

The professor held up a forefinger. "My dear sir," he said in a hushed whisper, "this is probably the very place. It was most likely the first landing place of the folk from overseas who subsequently founded your ancient borough. It should be examined. Now, as I am on the long vacation, I am master of my time. Can I be of any use to you? Say, to-morrow?"

"The greatest!" responded Danthorpe. "And I am infinitely obliged to you. Let's arrange matters."

So we agreed that the three of us should go out to Old Leycaster next morning, to make an examination of the ruins. Nothing was to be said to the police; we were to keep the matter to ourselves until we had made a thorough investigation, which it was best to conduct privately.

Danthorpe begged his visitor to stay to dinner, but the professor declined. He had ordered his dinner at the Castle Hotel; afterward he was going to drive out to a village a few miles off, where he wished to renew acquaintance with an old college friend whom he had not seen for some years. But he would be ready to meet us for breakfast, and prepared for an early start, at the hotel at precisely seven o'clock the next morning. And on that understanding we parted for the night.

## CHAPTER VI.

### A MAN OF BRAINS.

WE were both at the Castle Hotel at the appointed hour; Professor Craig-Johnstone, however, was not there. In fact, said Mrs. Cooke, the landlady, he had not been there since dinner time the previous evening. He had taken a room, it was true, but he had mentioned to her that he was going out to see a friend at the village of which he had spoken to us, and might

possibly spend the night there. We concluded that he might easily be a little late, and we waited; when an hour went by and he had not returned, Danthorpe began to pull a long face. Eventually, having swallowed a glass of sherry and a sandwich, we left and walked off to Old Leycaster.

Danthorpe was very silent. I myself was silent. Old Leycaster proved to be one of the most desolate spots I have ever seen—a mere collection of gray, time-worn walls and stones, on a patch of forlorn marshland, over which the seabirds were calling in their most mournful fashion. But amid the desolation of what was certainly the ruined shell of some old building of the most hoary antiquity, we found several stones and slabs on which were just traceable the outlines of the Ogham writing. Beneath one of them was a small excavation which had been made recently. And in it was a letter addressed to Messrs. Danthorpe and Campenhaye.

It was a letter of the most consummate impertinence; its audacity was colossal. But here it is:

GENTLEMEN: I have found what, after our conversation of last night, I felt sure I should find. Accordingly, I am off! I am obliged to you for your help. When I saw the diagram in the papers I immediately formed the theory of which I told you, and I set out for Leycaster. But I was wise enough to know that, unaided, I might spend days in searching for a place where Ogham writing was likely to be found, or in getting information as to valuable missing property. So I called upon you at once, and you did me an inestimable benefit by telling me all you knew. Your information about the diamonds, and your suggestion about Old Leycaster, supplied the missing links in my chain. I always was a good hand at theorizing. This theory was—an inspiration!

I am not Professor Craig-Johnstone, though I am interested in his subjects. Never mind who I am. I was once an honest man. And I am still, as I have shown to you, a scholar, and

A MAN OF BRAINS.

Danthorpe looked at me long and sadly. "It strikes me, Campenhaye," he



said at last, "that our visitor of last night was, in his way, a genius. And the question is—what is to be done now?"

"Now," I replied with a cheerfulness which seemed to irritate my companion, "let's go to the telegraph office and find out whether they have a message for me."

"Shut the door of the stable after the horses are out!" grumbled my companion.

But I put the impertinent letter in my pocket and refused to be downcast. Arrived at our destination, I made my inquiry, and a telegram from London was handed to me. It read as follows:

Person under suspicion shadowed as per your suggestion, and apprehended when boarding the early train. Held for examination at your command Bow Street police station.

"You see," I observed, handing the message to Danthorpe, "the earl will recover his buried jewels—and we got a Man of Brains to do the digging for us!"

### Fortunes from Feathers

THE development of the ostrich-rearing industry in South Africa is being regarded with the greatest satisfaction by people in other countries interested in the business. There is scarcely a homestead in South Africa where one will not hear people talking of the profits of ostrich farming, and there is no doubt that judicious investment in this business is productive of sound profit. In twelve months 547,709 pounds of ostrich feathers, valued at \$7,500,000 was exported from South Africa, and these figures are steadily rising.

As a matter of fact, this really wonderful export industry has been the cause of the distribution of upward of two million pounds among the population of the Cape. And even though the

output is still increasing, and promises to increase at an even greater rate later, this marvelous market still bears up, says the *East African Standard*.

The ostrich-rearing industry has established hundreds, even thousands, of persons on the land who could never have succeeded without its aid, for ostriches can be reared on pasturage and naturalized veldt which would be quite insufficient for cattle. And the difference between driving live stock to markets, across mountains and plains, is vast when compared with the fact that a year's crop of feathers from an ordinary holding can be taken out in a Cape cart drawn by a pair of horses.

According to the latest results which have been obtained, it appears that a good plucking bird fed on lucern can generally be depended upon for three crops of feathers in two years, and as an acre of lucern will easily carry three birds, the profits, say, at \$25 to \$35 per plucking, are quite sound, taking one season with another.

And ostrich farmers in South Africa have now acquired such a knowledge of the birds that by judicious selection and mating they are able to send feathers to market which command very high prices. It is found that birds thrive best, are freest from diseases, and give the strongest and richest feathers when subjected to varied food and conditions—which is one of the secrets of successful ostrich farming.

### Conflicting Elements

WHERE are you going?" inquired Mrs. B., as Mr. B. left his seat as soon as the curtain fell.

"I think I hear an alarm of fire," he replied solicitously, "and I must go and see about it."

Ten minutes later he returned. "It was not a fire," he said briefly.

"And it was not water," she replied, with a significant sniff.





# An Inside Scoop

By  
Albert Payson Terhune

**T**HE city editor puffed away at his cigar in silence. He seldom wasted words.

"The story's all up," called the copy reader. Then he went out to look at the "Parliament of Roughriders" in the hall, who had come to be photographed for the Sunday *Planet*.

Meanwhile the youthful reporter whom the Sunday editor had detailed to show the Roughriders over the building had piloted the entire half hundred to the composing room. There the copy reader found them.

Amid the forest of trucks, linotype machines, typesetting apparatus, and sweating compositors stood the conglomerate mass of visitors. In one group were ten Cossacks—thin, supple, wiry little bronzed men with long beards and beady eyes, clad in saffron tunics and gray caps. In another alley of machines was a galaxy of German Uhlans, cuirassiers, Irish lancers, collarless and unkempt cowboys, a stray alleged Arab or so, and Orapezo, the great Mexican lasso expert. Compositors, office boys, and loungers paid the passing tribute of a glance to this kaleidoscope of nations, but kept their widest stares and weird-

est comments for a larger, more fantastic throng that stood, distrustfully, near the elevator shaft. This last group consisted of some twenty Indians boasting various degrees of ugliness. Their high feather war bonnets loomed up above the composing-room machinery, their profusely illustrated faces peered from behind valve and bar. Coldly incurious, their eyes swept the unfamiliar scene; with a mask of profound indifference, they listened to the half-breed interpreter's translated explanation of the way a paper was printed.

Robbie Kennedy and his fellow office boys, regardless of the fact that howls of "Copy!" were wafted up from the city room, stood gazing in open-mouthed awe at the savages.

"I bet that big feller—the one next to the Dutch soldier with the tin bonnet—is a Terror of the Plains," commented Robbie.

"He ain't, either," contradicted an associate runner of copy. "See? He's only got half as many feathers as the Injun behind him."

"What's that got to do with it?" sneered Robbie. "A lot you know about it!"

"I do so know," retorted the other,



who had a splendid fund of ignorance on the subject of Indians; "they grow ten new feathers for every man they kill—slay, I mean."

"Get onto the kid that biggest one's got with him," interposed Robbie, unable to combat this point in natural history.

The "kid" in question was an amber-colored papoose, perhaps two feet high. She was Utsayantha, only daughter of the Sioux war chief, Howling Wolf. This baby, alone of all the troupe of Indians, gazed with keen delight at the sea of strange faces and the funny black machines. From time to time a fear lest these machines were of the biting variety would take possession of her, and she grasped with both arms her warlike sire's beaded buckskin knee.

"Oh, how pretty! Look! She's the first Indian child I ever saw!" A slender, girlish figure appeared among the crowd, who cheerfully made way for her as she knelt beside the little yellow savage. The girl was Kate Westervelt, youngest and prettiest of the women reporters. "Won't you come to me?" she asked pleadingly of the solemn-eyed Utsayantha.

The baby did not, of course, understand a word, but with outstretched hands and a gleeful little squeal she ran into Miss Westervelt's arms.

"Are you her father?" asked the girl of the lordly chief.

Howling Wolf deigned no reply, principally because he could not understand; but he strongly disapproved of any white squaw handling his beloved first-born.

"Can't I take her down to my desk?" went on Miss Westervelt. "I've some candy down there that she can have, and I want to show her to the managing editor. Maybe there's a special story in it."

The half-breed interpreter overheard the girl's words, and, thinking to conciliate a paper that owned so many

inexplicable machines, he interposed: "Sure, miss. He's ignorant, old Howlin' Wolf is. He don't understand. Take the papoose down with you, if you like. I'll explain to its father."

With a word of thanks, Miss Westervelt, carrying the baby in her arms, made for the winding stairs that led down to the city room. But Howling Wolf, with a throaty sound like the growl of an angry dog, took a step to stop her. The interpreter checked him, and in a few words explained that the child was safe and that Howling Wolf must not interfere. The father, a pathetic look of doubting misery on his stolid face, stood still, gazing into the crowd at the spot where he had seen Utsayantha disappear.

Downstairs in the city room Miss Westervelt was proudly exhibiting her capture to a ring of office friends. The baby, enthroned on the girl's roll-top desk, sat delightedly sucking away at a bonbon and sturdily refusing to speak a language she had never before heard. Miss Westervelt, in her anxiety for the special story, naturally forgot there might be a time limit to her little guest's visit.

In the composing room a scarlet-haired "make-up editor" was fuming at the "gang of freaks that blew in there at the busiest time of the day and distracted everybody's attention." A few remarks of this sort led the reporter escort to hint to his charges that they would better clear out. Accordingly, they filed into the great elevator, the Cossacks going on the first down trip, the Indians last.

As the elevator came up for the noble red men, the interpreter gave an order, and the feathered, beaded, hand-painted savages filed timidly into the car. No one noticed that they were one man short, none heeded a single tall, stalwart, forbidding figure that stood statue-like against a stereotyping machine, waiting in vain for his missing child.



## II.

WHAT was in Howling Wolf's heart as the last of his fellow countrymen entered the car and sank out of sight, leaving him alone among a swarm of wretched palefaces, no one can tell. What he looked was another matter. His usually wooden face was an open book. The first word expressed on it was trouble; then grief; and, last of all, fury.

"What's the old jay waitin' for?" asked a compositor.

No one knew. Such as remembered the papoose's abduction fancied the child was with the rest of the troupe, and had no idea she belonged to this increasingly angry chief.

"Now, then," said the make-up editor briskly, "run along with your tribe. We're busy up here, and you're only in the way."

Howling Wolf looked stolidly down on the man and remarked: "Utsayantha!"

"I don't understand your lingo," retorted the irate editor, "and I want you to get out."

"Utsayantha!" repeated the chief, this time in a deeper voice.

"Yes, yes, I dare say it's all true, only I don't understand. Clear out, or I'll send for a policeman."

It began to dawn on Howling Wolf that perhaps he had not made the case sufficiently clear to this excitable person. So he began to explain the situation, speaking with studied self-control and in excellent Sioux dialect.

"Talks like a dinner bell, don't he?" commented Robbie Kennedy in admiration.

"He's givin' us an oration. Maybe tellin' how many men he's slain," added the office boy, who had advanced the theory concerning feathers.

A grin from the compositors and loungers followed this speculation.

This was too much for Howling

Wolf. Not content with stealing his precious child, perhaps roasting her alive, they were actually laughing at her stricken father! Striding forward, and thrusting the crowd contemptuously from his path, the chief passed through the alleys of machinery, tables, and cases, his keen eye looking everywhere for the hiding place of his daughter. Coming at length to an open space, he halted beside an oddly shaped table, topped by carved metal. There was that in his look and manner which made two men who were busy at the table move quickly out of reach.

The make-up editor set up a yell and rushed toward the post they deserted. This structure—probably an altar to the demons who inhabited the great black machines—was evidently a sacred spot among the palefaces, and here Howling Wolf made his stand. In an instant he was surrounded by a mob of excited, shirt-sleeved men.

The "table" against which he was leaning happened to be a "truck," and on that truck lay a page form just locked. The two men scared away by the Indian had been about to remove the form to the stereotyper's heating table, whence it was to go downstairs to the pressroom, there to serve for the printing of a page of the waiting edition. The paper was due on the street in fifteen minutes, and that particular page form chanced to bear in double-leaded type under a "scare" double-column head the story which, according to the managing editor's prophecy, was to "beat the town." Hence the horror of all concerned when this decidedly belligerent savage took up his stand before the truck bearing that form.

"What are you men waiting for?" shouted the make-up editor. "Hustle that form over to the heating table, or we'll delay the edition. That Indian can't hurt you."

Now the *Planet* boasts the best lot



of composers in New York, yet just then none of them seemed anxious to obey orders.

Howling Wolf glanced rapidly about him. He saw the consternation caused by his presence at that truck and resolved to stay there. He even had a lingering idea of carrying it away as hostage for his lost child. A plan occurred to him: Why not offer to give up possession of this mysterious table on condition that the palefaces restore his child? He made the offer in his most persuasive Sioux dialect.

"Rush him, boys!" ordered the foreman; and the men gathered for the onslaught.

### III.

NOW, though Howling Wolf's knowledge of English was less than limited, his knowledge of fighting left little to be desired. He had crouched in the rank grass at Sitting Bull's side, twenty years before, when a certain general had ridden to his death beyond the woods of Little Big Horn. It was Howling Wolf who had counseled Sitting Bull to the strategic trick which emptied so many government saddles that summer day in 1876; and he had, with his own hand, struck down the foremost United States cavalryman. After such a record, why should he fear a gang of unarmed men of peace?

His quick eye noted the gathering rush, and a second later the advancing composers found themselves looking into the muzzles of two revolvers, the weapons which Howling Wolf and his fellow Indians discharged daily at the old-fashioned stagecoach in the "Attack on the Overland Stage." This attack was a "star" feature of the Roughriders' Show. For the purpose each Indian wore at his belt two revolvers. They were, of course, loaded with blank cartridges, and Howling Wolf knew it. He had the best reason in the world

for this knowledge; for had he not, when first engaged by the show, attempted one day, in a drink-inspired moment of playfulness, to murder Red Cloud, a brother chief, with these same weapons? Had he not fired fourteen shots at that worthy savage before finding that the cartridges were harmless? Had he not been the laughingstock of the whole tribe in consequence of his silly failure? But he doubted whether these new paleface foes had the same knowledge concerning the revolvers.

When a man is looking into one end of a pistol and an enraged Indian is manipulating the other end, he seldom stops to conjecture whether the weapon is loaded with blanks or ball. Hence the composers recoiled in a heap. The make-up editor did a war dance before them, to the chief's open contempt.

"The paper ought to be on the street in five minutes!" declared the editor. "The *Meteor*'ll beat us out of our boots. It was the biggest story we've had this year, too; and the *Meteor*'ll have it all in this edition. Here!"—hauling out of his pocket a wad of bills—"here! you dissolute old heathen, help yourself to these and let us get at that form!"

As he spoke, he advanced on the chief.

One of Howling Wolf's forty-four caliber pistols spoke, and the echoes reverberated through the great, low-ceiled room. The pistol was fired point-blank. It sent the make-up editor reeling back, his red beard and eyebrows singed, and his lungs choked with powder smoke.

"I'm hit," moaned the editor, and collapsed.

This was the signal for a general break. One man started for the police, but decided to climb up behind a linotype machine instead. The rest sought any shelter that came to hand and held a council of war. Lurid messages and queries as to the cause of delay floated up through the tube from the press-



room, where all was at a standstill pending the arrival of the missing page.

"Rush him from behind!"

"Get a policeman!"

"Throw a lead cut at him!"

Thus advised a score of voices, whose owners were modestly concealed behind trucks or machines.

Robbie Kennedy had a strong impulse to step forward and harangue the chief, like the hero of Wild West dime novels. He had even framed a speech beginning, "Hail to our wigwam, dusky brother," when a glance from the chief again sent his canary-colored head ducking behind the truck.

A new figure appeared on the scene. It was the managing editor. In one hand he clutched a copy of the *Meteor*. Its first page bore the great story with which the *Planet* had hoped to beat the town.

"Mr. Halpin!" thundered the managing editor to his make-up associate. "Why have we not gone to press? We should have had the paper on the street twenty minutes ago. We're beaten again by the *Meteor*, and beaten through the fault of the composing room. What was the matter? and—good Lord, man! what are you doing behind that truck?"

"I'm shot," muttered the make-up man incoherently.

"Half shot, you mean," sneered his superior. Then, as his eye swept the room, he howled: "What is the row? Are you all crazy, or are you playing hide and seek?"

And, indeed, the spectacle of all the composing room's staid habitués crouching behind various shelters was unusual enough to excite any newcomer.

Robbie Kennedy's treble floated across from behind a truck, mingled with a horde of half-uttered explanations from the other Indian hunters: "Please, Mr. Frothingham, there's an Indian chief, and he won't let us work."

The managing editor stepped forward. The cases that had shut off Howling Wolf from his view were passed, and the two chiefs, white and red, stood face to face.

#### IV.

HOWLING WOLF fired a salute with both revolvers, and the managing editor, never stopping to ask questions, joined Robbie behind the truck. But Howling Wolf had acted on the defensive long enough. These men were cowards. It would be pleasant to frighten them further. With a yell, the Indian began firing at every one in general, accompanying the volleys with some ghost-dance steps and snatches of a Sioux war song.

"Say!" yelled the embattled managing editor, "there's an Indian kid downstairs. Miss Westervelt's getting her sketched. Maybe the kid can act as interpreter and find out what the old chap wants. Where's the regular interpreter?"

"All the Indians went down in the elevator except this one, and the interpreter went with them. They drove away long ago," replied a compositor.

"Some one go down and get the papoose from the city room," ordered the managing editor.

A reporter who chanced to be nearest the stairs and farthest from Howling Wolf made a break for the former, hopping wildly in air as he heard a pistol shot behind him. On the way downstairs, a thought struck him. He remembered now that he had seen Miss Westervelt take the papoose with her. He recalled, too, that the baby had been standing beside this very chief; and the situation was clear to him before he reached the desk where Miss Westervelt, an artist, a reporter, and two office boys were standing admiringly about the edition-delaying Utsayantha.



"Miss Westervelt!" shouted the reporter, "hurry, please! Old Mr. Afraid of his Squaw, or whatever he calls himself, is running amuck upstairs because he can't find his kid. He's delayed the edition nearly an hour and let the *Meteor* beat us on that big story. He's shooting people now."

Snatching up the baby, who wept lustily at this sudden removal from a sphere of admiration and candy, the reporter galloped upstairs with her. As he reached the composing room he was sent reeling back to the stairway by a mighty blow. When he had found his balance, he beheld Howling Wolf, with the recovered Utsayantha in his arms, shouldering his way back to the elevator shaft.

Among supposedly civilized nations, when a lost child is returned, the first act of the heart-racked parent is to spank it. In the present instance, the noble red man displayed that touch of nature which makes the whole world kin. Savages are human, after all. As Howling Wolf passed along the alleys of machinery, bearing Utsayantha, a sound as of violent applause arose, mingled with the bitter wails of the recovered baby.

As father and child reached the shaft, the elevator door was flung back and the half-breed interpreter, pale under his brown skin, appeared in company with the manager of the "Rocky Mountain Show and Parliament of Roughriders."

"Here's your lost sheep," remarked the managing editor, indicating the bellicose Howling Wolf, "and, incidentally, your show's going to have the biggest suit on its hands that ever happened."

From far below came a faint "thud! thud! thud!" The paper was going to press—an hour and ten minutes late!

Sometimes a trader smuggles a supply of fire water into the Indian

reservation; not enough to inspire the braves to the noble art of cutting settlers' throats, but just sufficient to set boastful tongues a-wagging. At such times a venerable man—a war chief of the Sioux nation, by the way—arises from his seat at the camp fire and holds his credulous hearers breathless by a certain oft-repeated tale. He tells of a strange house in a land toward the rising sun, where, amid a host of black iron demons, he, Howling Wolf, the Terrible, once held a paleface army at bay, and saved his first-born from being burned at the stake and fed to those strange-smelling iron monsters.

In the "land toward the rising sun" there is an irritable make-up editor who one day knocked down a new reporter. The reporter had innocently asked the make-up editor how he supposed it felt to be shot.

### Judging By Appearances

THIS," said the guide, who was piloting a party of tourists through a museum, as he pointed to the mummy, "was a high priest, the wisest man of his day. He lived to a great age."

"Was his last illness fatal?" queried the wag of the bunch.

"Of course it was," answered the guide, with a look of pity at the other.

"That's queer," rejoined the tourist. "His appearance would seem to indicate that he was permanently cured."

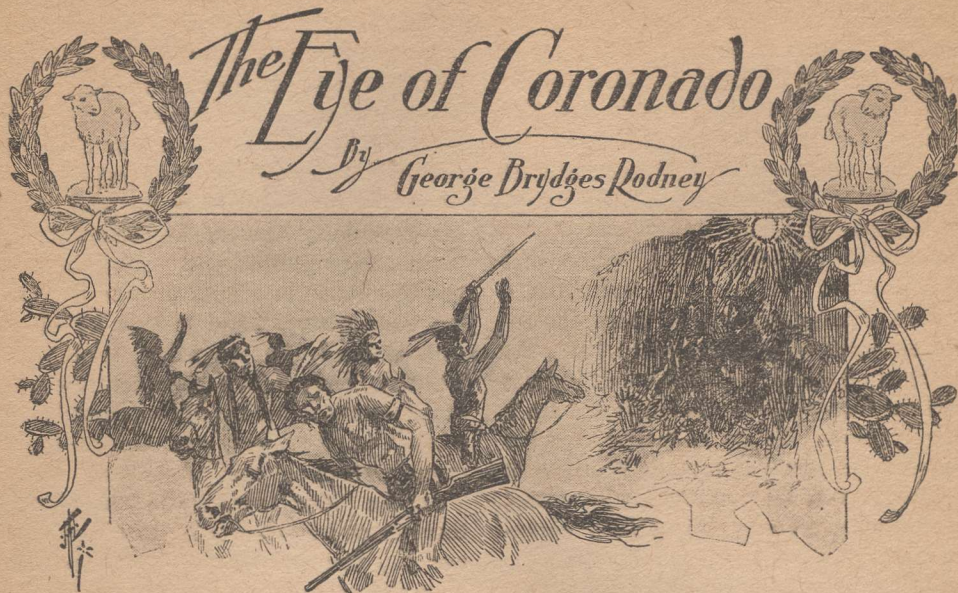
### A Corking Time

AT a farewell dinner to Dean John Gregg, when he was made Bishop of Cork, a bottle of rich old Waterlooport, instead of making a rapid circuit, rested before the guest of the evening.

"Come," cried the Bishop of Dublin, from the head of the table, "though you are John Cork, you mustn't stop the bottle."

The Bishop of Cork replied: "I see your grace is disposed to draw me out."





## WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE.

A brief account of previous events for the benefit of new readers.

**J**IM LEAVITT has accepted the offer of his Uncle Benjamin of the position of chief engineer in an Arizona irrigation company. As he leaves the old man's house a man wearing a black bandage over his eyes goes in. Returning later, he finds his uncle dead, the room in disorder, and a little brass sheep missing from the desk.

In the construction of the dam, Leavitt is opposed by the Sunburst Mining Company, which will be cut off from its water supply in consequence of this work. Moran, the manager of the company, wears a black bandage over his eyes; and his stenographer is the girl with whom Leavitt is in love—Helen Warne.

Just as his work is nearing completion, Leavitt is kidnaped and left in the bad lands to die; but by following a stray goat he reaches a fertile box cañon inhabited by Indians, among whom is a Spanish priest, who takes him in. The padre had known Benjamin Leavitt, and tells the nephew of his uncle's search for the Eye of Coronado—a diamond of incredible size set in the face of a cliff, directions for reaching which are concealed in the brass sheep, of which the priest owns a duplicate. After a rest, the two start out on a camel, descendant of those brought to this continent by ancient settlers, to reach civilization.

Meantime the people back on the works

have forced Moran to show his hand. He, too, owns a small brass sheep, and starts off with a party including Helen Warne to find the Eye of Coronado, secretly followed by Sheriff Wilkes, a friend of Jim, and Wilson, his English servant, who have hopes of tracing the missing engineer.

## CHAPTER XX.

FROM A CHRISTMAS STOCKING.



**N**EVER much of a talker, Mr. Wilkes said less than usual during that ride. "Keep the pack mule up!" was his constant iteration to the perspiring Wilson, who, armed with the long-thonged blinds that form the most formidable part of a packer's equipment, flogged the mule along at a pace that was utterly without precedent in the life of that astonished and somewhat pampered animal.

"We can't go by the direct trail that they'll take," said Mr. Wilkes, "because I don't want to set no pony tracks ahead of 'em to show that we're here; so we'll have to travel snake fashion, an' that's crooked."

A Western pony can do almost any-



thing at a pinch, and now the pinch had come. Mr. Wilkes knew that, with women along, Moran's party would travel slowly, and he guessed that they would make at least one camp before reaching the foothills so that they could arrive at the valley the next day. Just where that valley was, he was not quite sure, and he wanted time to assure himself that he was upon the right trail. Dawn found the two men pushing up the long, bare slopes of the hills dotted with Spanish bayonet and soap weed—to the great wonderment of the prairie dogs and the little white owls that sat on top of the burrows and contemplated them wisely with their heads on one side. Noon found them pushing down across the brown flats with the long slopes of the foothills showing in hazy dun waves and ripples; and the afternoon sun raised the *Cimas de Riesgo* like a dark-blue barrier across their path. Very dark and forbidding was that wall, and very dark and forbidding was the look upon the face of the old deputy sheriff; and very somber were his thoughts as he led the way up the narrow valley, every rise of which opened up new vistas to right and left, sheer-walled barrancas, rocky defiles, piñon-crowned, and boulder-strewn hillsides. He was confident now that in saying that he knew nothing of the whereabouts of Jim Leavitt, Moran had lied. There was the note; there was the known and expressed intention on the part of the Sunburst people to prevent the completion of the dam; and, last, he had never been able to get the idea out of his head that Sunburst, and only Sunburst, people had perpetrated the outrage at the dam. Of course, any devilment that had been done would be so well covered up that it would look like accident.

"Yonder is the valley. That's the walled cañon that they spoke of, but it's nothin' but a boxed cañon, after all! See where the trail forks! We'll go

up on the 'hog back' for a change. Bein' a greaser, Moran'll naturally take the low ground. It's easier travelin'—an' you're easier seen from the ridges. That's why we'll take the ridge; the far side of it, too. Beside that, when we reach the mimosa tree, we've got to climb the ridge, anyway. Hup! You darned old jackass you!"

The pack mule scuttered up the steep slope, sending a sheet of loose shale in their faces, and the two men flung themselves panting up the hillside.

"Yonder it is——" This was an hour later. "Blamed if he wasn't tellin' the truth this far! There's the mimosa tree growin' in three parts! I wonder if it's possible that there's any truth in the rest of it? What do you think, England?"

But Wilson shook his head.

"Now we've reached the mimosa tree," continued the old man, "up we go to the top o' the ridge. They can't reach here to-night, but all the same we've got to keep a watch. It'd never do to be caught nappin' at this stage of the game. We'll take our ponies an' the pet jackass a mile or so farther up the cañon, an' hide 'em out, an' then get supper an' come back an' watch that tree. We can hide ourselves among the rocks, but you can't hide a horse; an' that fool jackass'll bray if he smells man."

They pushed along a mile or so, and unsaddled in a clump of trees on the far side of the ridge. After a hasty meal of cold bacon and bread, with a can of "air-tights"—tomatoes this time—in lieu of drink, they left their ponies and went slowly back on foot to the top of the ridge, from which place they had a clear view of the great tree in the valley below them.

The point of observation that they had selected was one from which both sides of the ridge could plainly be seen. From the mimosa tree almost at their feet the slopes ran steeply up to the



summit and fell away on the farther side in fold on fold of oak-covered hillocks to the bank of the stream that clucked and sang on its way to join the Santa Clara.

They made their camp that night among the rocks, and slept uneasily upon their saddle blankets to the lullaby of the wind among the trees and the nameless voices of the night. It is never entirely dark in the open, and the stars winked down at them in a kindly way. Dawn found them sleeping. They woke a little later, stiff and sore with the unwonted exercise of the day before, to resume their vigil of the past night. Their breakfast was scanty, and cold at that, for they made no fire lest the smoke of it should betray them; and, having eaten it, and fed the horses, they settled down again to a day of watching.

Hour by hour they sat there scanning the narrow horizon; and hour by hour Mr. Wilkes smoked and thought, stolid as an Indian, while Wilson, tired by the ride of the day before, finally dropped to sleep. The sun finally dropped toward the summit of the western hills, and still Mr. Wilkes gave no sign. At last, his eyes grown tired with the glare and with the strain of the watching, he turned at a quick gasp from the Englishman, who had waked suddenly and was sitting up on his blanket pointing with a shaking hand down into the valley, where the long slope below them ran into the creek bottom.

"Look!" he said. "Look! Look! Have I got 'em, an' am I seein' things?"

Mr. Wilkes stared hard in the direction he pointed, and then rose little by little, his gray beard outthrust, his eyes and mouth both open. Wonder and disbelief were written on his face, for there at the bottom of the slope four hundred yards away, moving slowly up the creek bottom at a swinging walk, his head jerking forward and

back with the restless motion of an engine with a broken eccentric, was a great, shaggy camel with two men upon his back.

Mr. Wilkes kept on staring. He passed his tongue over his dry lips and leaned forward in his desire to assure himself that he was not dreaming. Finally he turned to Wilson. "Do you see that 'ere?" he asked doubtingly, stabbing with an uncertain finger in the direction of the animal.

"Hi do, sir."

"What is it?"

"A camel."

"Yes, yes! I know all about that. 'See that hump,' an' the rest of it. But what is it reelly?"

"A camel," said Wilson, his eyes popping.

"A camel! There ain't no such animal in Arizona! It looks to me like a cross between a boa constrictor and a hair mattress. You must be dreamin' of a circus. Well, what do you know about that?"

For the camel had suddenly slumped down upon his knees, and he saw the two men dismount and tie the animal to a tree. Then and not till then did Mr. Wilkes, leaning forward till he almost fell downhill, scan critically the lean and tattered figures that stood now by the kneeling animal; and as a result of that scrutiny he broke into a screeching whoop and tore down the slope like one demented. "Leavitt!" he called. "Leavitt! Jim Leavitt, by all that's crazy!"

The white man in the valley turned at the shout, and, after a long look at the gray-bearded figure running rapidly toward him, he, too, broke into a run.

Mr. Wilkes fairly threw himself upon the engineer. "Where've you been? What happened to you? Who's that with ye? Where'd you buy the circus? Where's the band an' the wagonful of clowns?"

"Wait—wait—wait!" cried Jim



laughingly, though his eyes belied his levity, for he was more stirred by the sheriff's evident feeling than he cared to admit.

"I've got a whole lot to tell you, Mr. Wilkes. Come up here. I want you to meet a friend of mine whom you knew a good many years ago—a friend of my uncle, too—Padre Felipe Santano."

Mr. Wilkes gasped, strode forward, and shook the old priest heartily by the hand. The padre's eyes twinkled as he warmly returned the greeting. "Ah, Señor Weelkes, is it not? You were younger by more than thirty years when last I saw you. And your health?"

"Well, padre, generally speakin', I'm eatin' reg'lar, an' that's somethin'. And you?"

"I, too, am older," quoth the padre, smiling. "But it has made me younger, señor, to meet this muchacho." He patted affectionately the shoulder of the engineer, who was standing by him. "He has much to tell, señor."

"Where'd you git that 'ere animal, Jim?" asked Mr. Wilkes, whose eyes had never left the camel.

"It belongs to Padre Felipe——"

"Well, I don't reckon nobody left it in his Christmas stockin'! Where'd it come from?"

Jim told him at some length.

"Hm!" Mr. Wilkes walked round it yet again, still staring. "What does it live on?"

"Dates," said Jim, grinning.

"Dates? Off a calendar?"

"Well, this one doesn't. We're just out of dates, but we've got some prime bacon rind of our own makin' that'll do just as well. What did you feed him on, padre?"

"Señor, he eats many things. First of all, he eat my shirt, and thereby hangs a tale——"

Mr. Wilkes and Jim burst into laughter, and Padre Felipe gazed innocently

from one to the other. Then he went on: "You have a right to hear his tale. The youngster thinks it is a miracle. He is young yet, but we who have seen the hand of God in the waste places of the earth know better. Is it not so, Señor Wilkes?"

"Ye-es, I reckon you ain't clean off the target with that shot, padre. Hit the trail, Mr. Leavitt. Darn the mister! The old man was Ben to me an' you shall be Jim! No offense, I reckon. Go ahead with your yarn."

So Jim sat and talked, and when he had told all that he knew, the gaps in his tale were filled in by Padre Felipe, who, like another Ulysses, told the story of a modern Odyssey while the others sat listening open-mouthed to the narrative of his wanderings. And when he had done, Mr. Wilkes took up the thread.

"I fixed Fordyce at the dam with enough cash to make his next payments. He said he could git along all right till you git back, but he was some worried about you. From what you tell me, an' from puttin' two an' two together, I'm sure that my first idees was right. It must ha' been the Sunburst people that carried you off. They wouldn't have dared to do it less'n Moran engineered the job. Couldn't you reco'nize any of the voices?"

"There was not a word spoken for five days—that I heard."

"Hm! There must have been some greaser at the head of it then. No Northerner could keep his trap shet fer five days. What ails Wilson? That camel been too much for him? Looks to me like he's thrown' a fit."

For Wilson had crawled to the top of the ridge and was gazing down into the cañon in which the great mimosa tree stood. Presently they saw him signal wildly with his hand, and back he came, fairly racing down the slope. "Git that camel out o' sight," he said. "Move him upstream in them thick



bushes an' tie 'im up good. They're comin' up the cañon now!"

In five minutes the astonished camel was hustled to his feet and rushed upstream for a good half mile, where he was tied and double tied, and the four men crept slowly back along the top of the ridge to watch the party that was making camp under the shadow of the giant mimosa tree.

## CHAPTER XXI.

BY THE FIRE'S TWINKLE.

A TENT went up as if by magic, and presently the twinkle of a fire shone in the shadow of the tree like a star new born, showing that the new arrivals were intent on getting supper. For an hour the four men lay prone upon the hillside, watching the bottom of the cañon; and when darkness had fairly settled down, Mr. Wilkes motioned to Jim.

"I want to find out what's doin' over there," he said. "We're three men here—good men—not countin' the padre, 'cause it's agin' his trade to fight. Let's rush their camp. What say?"

"There's women there. Let's watch 'em for a bit and see what they're up to."

"They're after that Eye of Coronado, of course. Why else would they have come? It might be a good scheme to stampede their live stock. Look at the way they've turned out their herd! You might know they was minin' men an' that they believe Providence feeds an' waters stock for lazy folk. Give me a blanket."

He took the blanket that Jim handed him, and, without listening to the protest from the others, rolled it up and thrust it under his arm, and faded away into the shadows of the hillside. For a half hour Jim lay there, watching eagerly the twinkle of the fire below him, where he knew that Helen was sitting; then there came to his ears a

snort, the rush of a startled horse, and then the mad, blundering rush of the whole herd in full stampede among the loose rocks of the gorge.

Mr. Wilkes came sauntering back in the most casual way in the world. "I reckon that'll teach 'em a lesson to side line or hobble when they turn 'em loose in a strange place. Them horses are a mile downstream by now, an' if they keep up the clip they hit they ought to be in Arizona by sunup. They're gettin' ready to go across, Jim."

"Across where?"

"Across the ridge to the far cañon, what his map told about. Moran's got that paper out, an' Oates was readin' it to him. There they come now."

As the group walked slowly up the steep slope with Oates in front carrying a lantern, Jim and Mr. Wilkes slowly withdrew, keeping always in the shadow till, in the bottom of the valley, they met Wilson and Padre Felipe. A word to them explained matters, and the four men stole quietly to one side and let the group pass them in the night. Jim's heart gave a great leap when he saw the two women, and recognized in the nervous laugh the voice of the girl who was in his thoughts so constantly. Once he saw her place her hand on Moran's arm. It was the most natural thing in the world for her to do, for the blind man had stumbled—there was no reason for the sudden blaze of fierce anger that swept over him.

Down they went between the rocks and down the slope into the tall timber along the creek. "Do you remember——" It was Padre Felipe gripping Jim's arm. "Do you remember, my son, what the parchment said? 'In the cañon at the base of the ridge lies a flat rock, red in color, of perhaps two *varas* measure. Let the seeker stand on this rock and face due north——' Ah! They have stopped! Listen! And look!"



Oates, with his lantern, was standing erect upon a great flat rock, and he gave a loud shout. "Eureka! Here's the place!" he shouted. "Here's your red rock, Mr. Moran! Here's the place!"

"My son," said Padre Felipe solemnly, but with considerable excitement, "the man who knows how to find that place has learned of it from the only other copy of the map that you have. That copy was in the brass sheep that I gave to your uncle, Benjamin Leavitt."

"And the man who has that map stole that sheep," said Jim. "And the man who stole that sheep is the only man in the world who was present when Benjamin Leavitt died. What is it, Wilson?" The Englishman was clawing at his arm.

"Look, sir! Look! The man with the black bandage! Look yonder, where the light from the lantern swings in his face! That's the man as—land sakes, Mr. Leavitt, sir, what are you goin' to do?"

For Jim had suddenly drawn his revolver and was pushing forward beyond the shelter of the circle of rocks in which they stood.

"Set still, you blamed fool!" said Mr. Wilkes, seizing him in a firm grip that was not to be loosed. "I sabe it all now. Wait a bit! 'Second in hand play low' is a pretty good rule when you ain't quite sure of your cards, an' a settin' hen makes no noise. Keep still a bit, Jim. When the time comes, I'm a deputy sheriff an' I know my work. Shut up! Let 'em locate the thing for us. Then it'll be time to drap in on 'em!"

From the place where they stood they looked down upon the group that was gathered about the flat rock where Oates was standing, and they were close enough to hear occasional bits of the talk as they floated on the light wind. The flat red rock that was mentioned in the parchment lay a little to one side of

the true channel of the creek, which at that point flowed nearly due north; and in the half twilight Jim could see that a great black mass closed the mouth of the cañon. He pointed this out to Mr. Wilkes.

"It's a shoulder of the hill that sticks out there into the bottom," said that gentleman. "The creek makes a sharp turn. Listen!"

Oates had resumed his position on the flat rock and was gazing steadily downstream and was listening to careful instructions from Moran standing near him. "Lend me your compass, Moran, and hold the lantern up here a minute, Curran, so I can set the course all right. Oh, here we are! Now get the lantern back so I won't have the glare of it in my eyes. So! Due north it said, didn't it? Hold that lantern squarely behind me—now wait a bit—there it is—no it ain't, either! There's nothin' there at all that I can see—Wait! Wait!"

There was a sharp tone in his voice. "Back with that light an' hold it down. There it is! By Jove, Mr. Moran, you were right. There is something there; a kind of a glow on the cliff face that looks like a splotch of phosphorus. Aye, there it is," he repeated slowly, a pause after each word. "There's the Eye of Coronado, Mr. Moran. The glow's as big as my fist."

"Which fist?" asked Curran excitedly.

"What difference does it make, which fist! Look there!"

And there, sure enough, far down the valley, about thirty feet from the ground, high up on the sheer face of the granite cliff that walled the waters of the creek, there was a dull yellow gleam that shone at first as fitfully as any will-of-the-wisp—faint, flickering, shimmering, elusive.

Jim and Mr. Wilkes drew their breath hard, Padre Felipe crossed himself, and Wilson stared imperturbably



at the newcomers. "Rock crystal," said Curran shortly.

A long silence followed. "Sheriff," said Jim presently in a low, tense whisper: "I accuse that man Moran of complicity in the death of Benjamin Leavitt and with the theft of personal property from his house on the night of his death; and I charge you to do your duty."

"Come on, then," said Mr. Wilkes in a low whisper. "You keep well behind us, Padre Felipe. There may be bullets flyin'. Don't either of you two shoot till I do."

For twenty yards they stole quietly through the gloom of the rocks, silent as wolves in the sagebrush, and it was not till they got within a short ten feet of the rock on which Oates was standing that Mr. Wilkes stepped quietly into the open and with his cocked revolver in his hand, said sharply: "Throw up your hands, Oates! Jim, you take Moran! Wilson, watch the others!"

There was a startled shriek from one of the women, and Oates turned with a cry, dropping the lantern, which Mr. Wilkes promptly seized. Moran turned as if to run. "If you run a yard, Moran, I'll shoot you in the back," said Jim quietly. Moran sat down.

Oates' hands went up and stayed there as the deputy sheriff thrust the muzzle of his heavy revolver within two feet of his face. "Now unbuckle your belts an' lay 'em in a pile," he commanded. "Quick! I ain't got no time to fool with you."

Very slowly the three men obeyed the order. "Take that buckskin thong offen Oates, Jim, an' tie up Moran's hands with it; an' tie 'em good."

Moran protested at the indignity. "Why do you select me to be tied up, Mr. Wilkes? You have no right on earth to do this. It is true that you are a deputy sheriff in your own county, but your county line runs away back there, ten miles down the cañon.

You've got neither right nor warrant to arrest me, and there is no possible charge to be made against me. What am I arrested for, and on what warrant?"

"Well, you needn't run about cryin' an' sobbin' about your rights," said Mr. Wilkes grimly. "You're arrested on the best warrant in the world: I've got a gun an' you haven't. An' you're bein' arrested for aidin' in the murder of Benjamin Leavitt."

The face above the heavy black beard went white. Jim heard Helen draw her breath hard as she came closer to Mrs. Curran, who placed an arm about her. Her eyes were on Jim. Padre Felipe came up, stumbling in the darkness, and Mr. Wilkes spoke in a softer tone than any in which he had yet spoken:

"I say, son, it looks to me like there ain't no use in holdin' up this entire crowd for the fault of one man. I ain't a-goin' to hurt a hair of his head. If he ain't guilty, he'll be turned loose by the law all right. Oates, if you an' Curran'll give me your words not to interfere in any way with me an' what I'm doin', an' not to make any attempt to release Moran, I'll turn you loose. I ain't accusin' any of you all of bein' mixed up in this."

Oates and Curran debated for a little. "All right," said Oates finally: "We'll give you our word. We're not mixed up in any of Moran's plans. We just came up here to see somethin'. I suppose you know what it is? Your bein' here shows that. How did you know about it, Mr. Leavitt?"

Jim told him, and, while he talked, Wilson, who had been gathering wood, piled it in a great heap and started a fire. For a few minutes the greasewood with which he had started the blaze smoked and smoldered, but presently the whole pile caught and burst into a roaring, crackling blaze from which the entire party backed away.



"Wilson, take charge of this man for a minute, will you?" Jim sprang upon the flat red rock on which Oates had been standing, turned his back to the fire, and stared off down the valley into the blackness exactly as Oates had done. For a few seconds he saw nothing, and then the yellow blur again appeared on the face of the cliff. He walked slowly down toward it, but it disappeared before he had gone twenty paces.

"It's in some kind of a pocket," he reasoned; "so that whenever I go toward it an obstruction comes up and shuts off my view. It can only be seen from this one point."

While the others stood and watched, he cut two short poles with his heavy knife, and sharpened both ends of them. He then planted one of the poles firmly in the ground, and wedged it in place with loose rocks so that the upper end was about level with his eyes.

"Now, Padre Felipe, please stand right here where I have placed these two flat stones. I have put them here so that in the morning I can tell exactly where you were standing. Now I want you to look steadily over the top of this pole that I have set and direct me when I move this other pole till I get it placed in such a way that the end of the pole cuts off your view of that yellow gleam on the rock face."

He moved a few yards away in the direction of the stream, and called out to Padre Felipe that he was ready. Then, in answer to repetitions of "*A la izquierda*"—to the left—and "*A la derecha*"—to the right—from the excited padre, he at last got the rod planted.

"There," he said as he came back to the fire. "We can find the thing now in the morning. Look out!"

He seized Mrs. Curran suddenly by the arm and whirled her aside. She shrieked and almost fell prostrate as Jim raised a huge rock and smashed it down upon a dark mass that was writh-

ing sinuously from side to side near the spot where she had been seated.

"A rock rattler," he said tersely. "He was coiled to strike, too. Look!"

The snake was twisting and writhing in his death agony, tying himself in almost impossible knots, and Mrs. Curran and Helen clung to each other in sudden fright. The heat of the fire on the rocks had brought the rattler out to enjoy it, and but for Jim's sudden action the results might have been far from pleasant.

"I owe you one for that, Leavitt," said Curran soberly, thrusting out a great red hand which Jim took and shook. "What ails you, man?" For Jim was poking at the dead snake with a stick. "Haven't you ever seen a dead rattler before?"

"It isn't that," said Jim. "It's the smell! It's the smell! Where did you ever notice it before, Wilson?"

Wilson sniffed thoughtfully for a moment. "It was in the hoffice, sir, on the night that Mr. Leavitt di—was killed."

It was the sharp acrid odor that Jim had noticed on that eventful night in the library.

"I don't understand," put in Mr. Wilkes, frankly puzzled. "I don't see—How in the name of all the holy cats in Egypt could snake p'ison git in Ben Leavitt's house?"

Wilson jumped up excitedly, the light of a great discovery upon his face. "Get the brass sheep," he said. "Get the brass sheep. Go through Moran an' see if 'e hain't got it. Get the brass sheep, hi say!"

Moran had slumped upon a rock, trembling. He lacked the power, if he had had the will, to resent the offense of the careful search through his pockets. It was Mr. Wilkes who pulled out a dirty bandanna handkerchief and, laying it upon the flat red rock, unwrapped it, disclosing to view the little brazen image that was the center of attraction.

"Now take it by the 'ead an' pull it



out," said Wilson, but this time it was Padre Felipe who leaped forward and snatched the figure from the rock.

"*Poco á poco*—wait a little! There is yet something which you do not know. You said that the sheep was stolen by this man. It may also be that he has learned the secret. I, too, know it, and no man opens it till I have tried."

Carefully he twisted the head of the sheep, then shook his head. "Look, señores!" was all he said; then by the shimmering light of the fire they saw a tiny steel point shoot out from the neck of the image that the little priest held so carefully: shoot out and then draw back, just as a serpent shoots out its tiny tongue laden with living death. Again and again it twinkled in the fire-light as he turned and twisted the glowing metal till suddenly he pulled the head clear and sniffed suspiciously at the neck, holding out the head to Jim.

"The smell is the same," he said gravely. "It is the smell of the green poison. I never thought of any man doing a thing like this! Señores, this is the real secret of the sheep: it is this that made the images valuable as works of art—of the early art of the Medicis, when poisoning was raised to a fine accomplishment——"

"And I accuse Moran there of having killed Benjamin Leavitt by means of that very sheep that he first stole from him, and then returned with the poison in it. He died from the effects of some strange poison that no one knew. I know that now. Here, it—grab him some one!"

For Moran, sitting quietly upon the rock, had been sawing his hands across the jagged edge of the stone till the rawhide thong about his wrists cut through. It dropped at his feet, and he sprang up, tore the bandage from his eyes, and leaped upon the engineer. So quick was his movement that they were not prepared for it. They saw his hand thrust quickly into his coat pocket and

quickly withdrawn. Then Mr. Wilkes, whose hand still held his pistol, caught the quick flash and glitter of a knife.

There was a sudden move from Mr. Wilkes, and a sharp report rang out as his weapon spat a mouthful of flame. Moran pitched forward on his face. The flash and roar of the heavy revolver seemed to clear away what was left of the night, and Mr. Wilkes soberly drew the body back from the ashes of the fire and, serious enough now, laid his coat over it.

"I'm mortal sorry that this had to happen," he said. "I'd ruther have never knowed anything about the matter than have had it end like this. And to think of him killin' old Ben Leavitt! Moran, of all men!"

"Why not?" asked Jim. "Why not? Who was he?"

Mr. Wilkes answered very solemnly: "He was his son."

## CHAPTER XXII.

### THE EYE OF CORONADO.

JIM gazed long and incredulously at the deputy sheriff. "How could that be?" he asked. "How could that possibly be? That's rank foolishness."

"It ain't no foolishness neither; it's a fact," said Mr. Wilkes stubbornly.

"But his name was Moran."

"His name was Moreno, as every peon in the valley knows. He took his mother's name," said Mr. Wilkes. "Padre Felipe knows all about it. He knowed his mother——"

"Did you, padre?" asked Jim.

"I baptized him," replied the priest. "It is all very sad, señor." The old padre's eyes filled with unbidden tears. "Let us not talk of it. For long I did my best to have your uncle do one of two things; but he would not, and so a great wrong was done. It is always so. I have never yet seen the man who sits quiet, refusing to do anything, who did



end by doing something wrong. The boy was educated by his mother's people, and when he knew his birth he sought out, first of all, his father, to compel him to acknowledge him. This was denied—and mind you, he was not as other men, for he had been denied the gift of sight. Then from his mother, who was one of the people, he learned the story of the Eye of Coronado. I have told you that she was a Mexican woman, so she knew, of course, the traditions of her people."

"But if he was blind, padre, how could he do all this work at the Sunburst and trace out all these stories?"

As if to answer his own question, Jim stepped forward and, with all reverence, drew the coat from the dead face, gazing long at the features of the dead man. He came back at last to where, in spite of the fire, they sat shivering in the gray light of the breaking day.

"Well?" said Curran sharply.

"I have an idea," said Leavitt thoughtfully. "Did you ever hear of a condition of the eyes which makes them so sensitive to the light that they are practically blind in the full light of day, but can see fairly well in the dusk? That seems to me the solution—he wore that black bandage in the daytime because the sun was unendurable. If that is the case, it explains the fight I had in the dark—he was much better able to see than I, in my uncle's study, because his eyes were accustomed to constant obscurity. Hand me that sheep again, please?"

He took it and with a little stick patiently explored the hollow of the neck till he finally dislodged some tiny fragments of a curious-looking tissue that were green-stained and dirty and were caked with dried glue that made them as hard as iron.

"Them," said Mr. Wilkes, who had strolled up and taken them from Jim, "are pieces outen the poison sack of a rattler. He was a proper man, that

greaser half cousin o' yourn, Jim. Well, what's on the cards now, son?"

"First of all we'll take the ladies back to camp an' fix them so that they can get some rest. They need it after all this excitement. And then a little later we can get that stone out of the cliff and see what it is. Look here, Oates! You were the prime mover in all the row that the Sunburst had with me. Are all bets off or do you want a fight to a finish?"

Jim's tone was aggressive and his manner truculent, and Oates flushed under his tan. "I ain't got nothin' against you, Leavitt," he replied. "When Moran was livin' I got my pay from him for doin' my work an' tendin' to what I was told to do. Now that he's gone I'm off the pay roll, and as far as I can see all bets are off. I did what I was ordered to do."

The unnecessary reiteration of that last phrase struck Jim forcibly and with unusual significance. He remembered that that very phrase had been used more than once during his enforced habitation in the desert. "Who'd you have with me the time you carried me off?" he demanded suddenly.

"I never——" Oates paused, passing his tongue once or twice across his dry lips.

Jim laughed. "It's lucky for you, Oates, that I'm white, an' that I've got reason to forget certain things to-night. As you say, all bets are off. You people go ahead, I'll take care of Miss Warne."

They heaped a fresh supply of wood upon the fire. "I will remain here," said Padre Felipe quietly. "I will not be denied. It is my duty. I knew his father and his mother, and it is for me to ask forgiveness for a soul gone wrong. Go with the others, my son. Is this the lady of whom you spoke?"

Helen flushed warmly under his gaze, though she could not have given any reason for the blush that mantled cheek and brow as the gray-haired little



man, taking her hand in his right hand and Jim's in his left, held them for a moment, and then with a kindly smile joined them, saying softly with all the grace of the Spaniard in his speech: "Señorita, he is very dear to me, and I hope to you also. Deal with him as is just and right." And he stood and watched them walk slowly up the trail.

When they were out of sight, Leavitt took her hand. Twice she tried to pull it away, and twice he held it fast in spite of her endeavors.

"Oh, don't," she said presently. "Are we children?"

"I hope not," he said gravely. "But don't try to pull your hand away."

Just then Mrs. Curran called to them from the ridge. Helen looked very pale and tired, and very worn was Mrs. Curran; so that when their coffee was drunk and their bacon eaten, Jim, who had assumed the direction of all their plans, spoke to Curran about it.

"I think it would be a good plan for the ladies to get some sleep," he suggested, "if they can do so; and while they are sleeping we can see what that stone is. It ought not to take us very long. Tell Mrs. Curran to keep Miss Warne out of the sun all she can, will you? There's a good fellow."

Curran grinned appreciatively. "An' she says to me a bit ago: 'Mr. Curran, will you please see that Mr. Leavitt doesn't do too much?'" He grinned again, apparently at the back of his hand. Jim flushed.

So the blankets were piled under the great mimosa tree for the two women, and while they were disposing themselves for a much-needed rest, the five men hastened back to join Padre Felipe in the gorge across the ridge. The old man was very solemn as he greeted them, and he partook very sparingly of the pot of coffee that Jim had thoughtfully carried over for him.

"I have prepared a shallow grave," he said when he had eaten.

Quietly, and with all due reverence, they laid the long body to rest in the narrow trench and piled great stones upon it.

"And now," said Curran, wiping his face; "let's talk about things."

Examination of the two rods that he had placed overnight showed Jim that they had not been disturbed; so, with Padre Felipe standing on the two stones, Leavitt and Mr. Wilkes moved down the creek bed till they came to the foot of the cliff, on which the blur of yellow light had been visible the night before. There were several ledges of rock along the base that gave footholds to him as he climbed, and one or two narrow fissures afforded holding ground, so that before many minutes he found himself clinging like a bat to the well-nigh sheer rock face.

"Lower and more to the right, my son," came the hail. Again and again the cry rang out with a cuckoo-like inconsistency that was peculiarly exasperating till, at last, just as Jim, drenched with perspiration, tired and exhausted, was about to give up the quest from sheer exhaustion, the cheering cry reached his ears:

"*Alli, alli!* There! Beneath your hand!"

It was after all only a little knob of yellowish color that was almost buried in the rock, but its peculiar greasy look and the soapy feeling of it made Jim's mouth water: for the knob on which he laid his hand was about the size of a Maltese orange. He laid his hand upon it and called out a question, and when Padre Felipe replied, he took a small piece of soft rock and marked the face of the rock with a great white "V"; then clambered slowly back to earth, where Curran and Mr. Wilkes awaited him.

"There's a bit of a crack below it and to the right," he said in answer to their inquiries; "but the rest of the rock looks solid enough. I've pried at it with



my knife and revolver, and I've worn most of the skin off my hands trying to see if I couldn't get it loose; but nothin' short of powder'll do it. Give me all your cartridges."

It was not a great store, but they got enough powder from them to make a blast of respectable proportions; and with great care Jim placed the heavy charge in the fissure below the knob and tamped it gently. He lighted the fuse at last, and slipped down the rock seeking shelter. Breathlessly they waited and watched the face of the cliff. They saw the trail of white smoke as the spark ate slowly into the heart of the fuse—there was a momentary hush and pause in the glow of the early morning, and suddenly, just as Mr. Wilkes was about to speak, came a flat, smacking report. A ball of white smoke shot out from the face of the cliff, and the five watchers sprang eagerly forward to pick up the big fragment that they saw pitch forward to the ground.

Mr. Wilkes was the first to reach the spot. He picked it up and poked and pried at it for a few minutes and presently held it up—a rock as big as his head. "Here it is," he said. "Here it is, Jim; here's your Eye of Coronado."

He pointed to the rock that he held. Across the face of it ran a rainbow-hued mark such as a snail leaves in crossing a stone, and showed a tiny handful of impalpable, shimmering dust that lay in the palm of his hand, glittering like diamond dust in the growing light of the rising sun.

Jim said not a word, but silently gathered up some of the dust that lay where the stone had fallen, and tested it upon the crystal of his watch. "It's diamond all right," he said. "Where's the rest? Where's the stone itself?"

"That's it," said Mr. Wilkes. "That's all that there is left! That's what your blast done. There must have been a

flaw in the stone, or it wouldn't have busted up like that!"

Jim sat down upon a boulder, sick at heart. Until this moment he had not realized just how much faith he had put from the very beginning in the truth of this old-time Indian tradition; and now that the tale was proved true, he had utterly destroyed the stone! If he had only taken a little more care, it might have paved his way to fortune. At this point in his reflections, Helen's face rose before his eyes, and he felt very sick as he sat there. The diamond was lost; irretrievably lost; his hopes for winning Helen were lost; his dam was——

A light hand fell on his shoulder, and he found Padre Felipe looking down upon him with a look that was a curious mixture of curiosity and affection.

"Do not give way to disappointment, my son. It was but a trifle, as I have said before and as I tried more than once to impress upon your uncle. True, the Eye of Coronado is gone; but when we consider the real value of things what does that really matter? All wealth is purely relative. As the old Romans used to say: '*Facit gratum fortuna quem nemo videt.*' It is the fortune no one sees that makes a man happy and unenvied. It is done, and my errand, too, is done; though indeed I had hoped that the finding of this stone would make your lot easier in the years to come. What will you do about the debt?"

"I'll have to work a little harder and wait a little longer, padre. What do you mean by saying that your errand is done? You will go home with us, will you not?"

"Your work lies at the dam, my son, and mine is in the far Southwest. We have each of us his appointed task which must be done by the time that we are called home to answer for our labors. Your happiness is over yonder——" He pointed vaguely to the gorge, where Jim could see the smoke



of the fire where Helen rested; and far beyond that to the dark-blue peaks of the highest summits of the Peaks at Peril.

He would not even cross the range to bid farewell to the others. "I came in the darkness," he said whimsically; "in the darkness let me return. I will take my camel and leave for the foothills, and then when night comes I will be well out on the desert on my way to my pueblo."

Argument proved vain, and it was with genuine regret that they led out the wondering camel and girthed him carefully, and helped the old priest to the crotch of the rough saddle.

He clucked to his camel and passed slowly down the valley, and they never saw him again.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### THE SCHEME REMODELED.

WHEN the little group of men reached the mimosa tree, they found Mrs. Curran and Helen already rested from their fatigue and eagerly awaiting the news of the result of the search.

"What was it, Mr. Leavitt?" asked Helen as she heard them coming down the bank.

He laughed half-heartedly. "A mare's-nest, I'm sorry to say. We found the stone all right and we put in a blast that we made from the powder in a lot of loose cartridges. When we fired the blast, the stone went to pieces."

"What was it? A rock crystal as you believed at first?"

"No. I am confident that it was a diamond—very probably not of the first water, for it looked singularly yellow, but still a diamond. It must have been immensely valuable, for it was as big as a hen's egg."

"O-o-h!" She drew her breath hard, and then she saw the pain and the dis-

appointment written in his face. "Did it mean so much to you?" she asked quickly.

"It meant so much to me that I can never tell you," he replied with a catch in his voice. "And there was much that I wanted to tell you, too. Ah, well! It can't be helped, I suppose. All right, Mr. Wilkes, let's saddle up and get out of this place."

They broke camp almost in silence.

During the two days' ride back to the valley of the Santa Clara, Jim was never very far from Helen's side. Inch by inch as it were she got him to talk of himself; of his plans; of his hopes, and of his ambitions. He told her of the mysterious death of Benjamin Leavitt, and of how he had worked for years before his chance of a really big piece of work had come to him. He spoke of what the completed plans would mean to the entire territory, and of the optimistic views of Mr. Wilkes.

Helen was not ignorant of the history of reclaimed land, nor of the tremendous issues involved. She had read about the wonderful results of the Salt River irrigation and of the early Mormon work in Utah that really gave the key to the future of the land; and hour by hour, as Jim talked on, the girl grew more and more interested. More than once Curran would have joined them, but his wife, wiser than he, restrained him. "There's nothin' to it," he replied scornfully to her objections. "When a man's makin' love, does he talk of wastage, an' spillways an' barrage, an' concrete mudsills an'——"

"Not if he knows he's makin' love," said Mrs. Curran sapiently. "Don't you see that she's makin' him tell her about himself an' his work? There's no way of holdin' a man that is more certain 'n that."

Curran glanced queerly at his wife and plodded on beside her along the trail; and it was Mr. Wilkes who rode up at last to the two young people.



He twitched his pony to the near side of Helen's horse, and rode by her for a while, listening silently to the talk. Then, after gazing keenly at the girl's flushed face and sparkling eyes, he smote his saddle pommel a mighty blow till the startled pony jumped.

"It's you for the West, sis," he said emphatically. "It's you for the West! I see the handwritin' on the wall plain enough."

"What do you mean?" she asked, laughing and flushing. "What makes you think that I am for the West?"

"Because you believe in it," he said keenly. "I kin see that you believe in it; an' it's the men an' women that believe in a land that makes it. Makin' money an' carryin' it away from a country don't help it none. A man generally puts in a dollar's worth of work for every dollar that he gits, out here. It's what he puts into the soil that counts. You've got it all right! If you want to hear somethin' that'll mix the tears an' the laughter, make Jim tell you all about old Padre Felipe an' his life among his Tlascalans. Dog-gone them pack mules! Why can't Oates keep 'em behind? Does he think that we want a pillar o' dust in our front by day like them Jewites in the Bible?"

So Jim took up the tale of the Eye of Coronado, and found an interested listener as he told how Padre Felipe had refused the knowledge to Benjamin Leavitt that he afterward had given to his nephew. He told of his handicap now with his self-assumed debt upon his shoulders, and of his fear that he might not be able, after all, to complete his dam. When he paused, to his utter and complete astonishment, he saw tears in the girl's eyes.

"You see I counted on that stone," he said; "and until this day I never realized how much I had counted on it. It meant a lot to me. It meant relief from a clinging debt. It meant ease,

and a little luxury, perhaps; it meant a lot more than that to me!"

"For what?" she asked quickly. "Mr. Wilkes says—and you have no better friend than he is—that your men are still at work on the dam, and that your work will be completed in time. He says that you are making a record for yourself, in a country that breeds big men to start with. Why, then, do you need luxury and comforts? Oh, Mr. Leavitt, it is true that I know you very slightly; but if I had known you for years I would feel the same. If I could have had my way—if I could have had my wish—it would have turned out just as it has! Just exactly as it has happened! Don't you see? Surely a good angel has stood guard over you to keep you from the crying weakness of the age—money and the love of it; for, after all, it is work that counts; work that is done for the pure joy of working. Oh, I'm glad the stone broke—I'm glad! I'm glad! It's just as Omar Khayyam said:

"—Could you and I with Him conspire  
To wreck the sorry Scheme of Things entire—

Would we not shatter it to bits, and then  
Remold it nearer to the Heart's Desire!"

"H'm. Well, I must say that I am not quite sure that I feel that way about it," said Jim, the practical: "but it's all in the day's work, I suppose. There is something else that I wanted to speak to you——" He hesitated and was lost; Helen suddenly joined the Currans, and a little later Santa Clara came in sight; so he had no more talk with her that day.

That night a messenger brought For-dyce to Santa Clara. He came with his bootlegs stuffed with blue prints and his pockets bulging with notebooks, and he and Jim sat late in consultation over the long table in the dining room of the tiny boarding house. Mr. Wilkes stamped in and out.

"We can shut down the gates now,



Jim, whenever you give the word. The men have worked like beavers, and the work has gone along at a rate that the best contractor in the East has never beaten. When you give the word, the gates'll drop and let the water back up. Have you seen the valley below the work?"

"No. Why?"

"There's been a rush for claims that was never equaled even in the palmiest days of Sill and Reno. Oh, it's a bully work, and if you've got any more like it in view I want to go with you. Hello, Curran! Come in."

Curran came in and sat smoking stolidly. "My wife an' Miss Warne have gone to bed, so I've come to you for company," he said.

Early the next morning Curran and Oates saddled the ponies, and with Mrs. Curran and Helen left for the Sunburst. "I reckon I'll have a sweet time straightenin' out Moran's affairs," said Curran gloomily. "It's sure to be the end of my job. It's a new trail for us, old lady," he said, turning to his wife.

"Come over here to me if you want a good job," said Jim cheerily, turning as he held the stirrup for Helen to mount. She rewarded him with a bright smile and a "Come over to-morrow to see me," and he stood looking after her, his heart and eyes alight as she disappeared in a whirl of golden dust.

"I will go over to-morrow," he promised himself; but the morrow found him knee-deep in the mud of the creek remedying a slight defect in the fitting of the sluice gate while Mr. Wilkes, leaning over the "cap," spoke cheering words to him from above.

"Just a minute now," Leavitt called as he scrambled up the slope of the bank. "Get the men up, Fordyce. It's near noon now, and we'll lower away at twelve sharp. Thank goodness it's done, and well done, if I do say it myself. All right! There the men are,

coming out of the excavation. Now watch, my sons!"

The men were gathered in little groups along the crest of the work, and the engineer in his little tower by the sluice-gateways craned an eager head out of the narrow window watching for his signal. Jim's hand shot up thrice and lowered gently; a lever moved slowly up in the tower by the gate-house, and inch by inch the great gates moved slowly down till at last their grooves took the glimmering steel guides, and the solid mass of steel and wood crashed solidly down upon its base. There was a cheer from the men that echoed and reëchoed from rock and hillside, and the brown waters of the creek swirled and eddied against the barrier, lapping wildly at its edges and spreading out in swirling eddies to both flanks, throwing their yellow spume far up the hill.

The dam was built!

It was three days later that a tired and dirty horse bore a tired and dirty man through the loose piles in the diggings of the Sunburst, now abandoned, and plodded toward the Curran house on the hill. The rider dismounted at the foot of the slope and, leaving his horse to pick a few stunted beans from a brown mesquite bush, scrambled hastily over the irrigation ditch and walked toward the house. Him Mrs. Curran eyed scornfully from the vantage point of the open door.

"Miss Warne? Oh, yes; she's gone. It's high time you was coming, but it just happens, Mr. James Leavitt, that you've come too late. Oh, yes! You didn't care if she did go East so your old dam thing was done——"

"East? Gone East?" Jim's heart sank.

"Yes, gone East, an' gone to stay. She got a telephone message from Texel that a telegram had come for her to come East right away. It seems an aunt of hers is goin' to Europe an'



wanted her to go along, so she went. Curran he rode down with her. The buckboard was smashed, so they packed her clothes in a couple of bags an' slung 'em on a pack mule——"

"When did they leave? Oh, Mrs. Curran, be my friend now if you never do again! Have you got a fresh horse that I can have?"

Her look softened a little. "Go down to the stable an' take the roan," she said. "He'll carry your weight better than the gray."

She nodded wisely as she saw the roan take the trail a few minutes later at a pace that that astonished horse had never surpassed. To this day men talk in the valley of the Santa Clara of the time that Jim Leavitt rode to Texel. It was in many ways a record ride; but he never caught up to the man and girl who at each ranch were grinningly reported five hours ahead, or two hours, followed by the question: "Is it an elopement?"

At last the adobe houses and the brown, unpainted station came in sight, and he hit his pony playfully over the ears with his heavy sombrero as he saw that the railroad tracks were clear. The Eastbound train was late, obviously.

He saw them first at the station, and he greeted them with a wild shout that brought two bartenders out from their "shops" across the tracks to look at him. Curran yelled in answer, and Helen, a great light of comprehension dawning in her eyes, held out a cool little hand to him.

"I didn't expect to see you again, Mr. Leavitt," she said demurely. "Is the dam done?"

"Yes, it's done. Never mind about that. I wanted to see you. Why are you going East?"

"I had a telegram from my aunt. She has never approved of my living out here—she wants me to come——"

"When are you coming back?"

She flushed under his gaze. "I am

not at all sure that I will ever come back. What is it?"

The operator, messenger of the gods like Hermes, but on unwinged sandals, crept slowly scross the platform: "Say you, miss. There's been a wreck, an' if you want to git East you kin ketch Number Seven. She's been lyin' on the Four Mile Sidin' east o' here sence noon waitin' for Ten to pass her. There's no tellin' when Ten'll come, an' if you're set on goin' you'd better ketch Seven."

"Can I get a buckboard to carry my things out to the train?" she asked.

"Sure. I'll git it. You goin' to drive out?"

"No. She'll ride out with me," put in Jim. "Give me your horse, Curran."

He swung her deftly into saddle, and Curran stood and watched them as they plodded east along the dusty tracks to the siding four miles out upon the desert where the Eastbound train lay surrounded by groups of tourists buying "Arizona rubies" and "horned toads" from little Indian boys.

During that ride, neither said a word. Twice Jim tried to speak, but the words would not come; and once she looked at him—and understood. The glare of the sun on the desert was blinding, and the loose handkerchief about his neck was full of red dust that blew up into his eyes and throat, choking him. They reached the observation car, and a little later the buckboard with the canvas bags in which she had packed her clothes came rattling past them. As it passed them, Jim saw a man run hurriedly along the car and hand slips of "flimsy" to the conductor, and to the engineer, who climbed slowly into his cab.

There was no chance for privacy with all that crowd of gaping tourists standing near the panting horses. He must take his chance now. Breathlessly he swung out of saddle.

"I can't say much," he began slowly. His voice was low and sounded dusty,



with a hint in it of hundreds of miles of alkali deserts and of sunlit mesas. "There is so much to say and so little time to say it—yet I have known it since that first day on the train when we came over the Glorietta Pass together. You have done so much for me without even knowing it that I cannot let you go. You won't spoil it all now, will you? I had to do my work first of all—you taught me that——"

He laid his gauntleted hand upon her saddle pommel. "Will you come?" he asked. "Do you dare to come? Do you dare to stay with me in the West—in the land of hills and peaks and rains and drouths; in the great open spaces of the earth where we can work out our own destiny? Do you dare stay? It will not be a life of ease nor luxury, but you are not one who would count that. I cannot offer you anything but love—and the golden promise of the West."

There was no smile in his eyes now, but a deep, steady light that showed the nature of him; and a high purpose was in every line of the set face, and in the brown hand that trembled a little in its very strength as it gripped the saddle pommel.

"Will you come with me and let me be your guide?" he said again.

She smiled down at him as she sat, and her smile was very tender. The restive horse moved uneasily, and the clank of the stirrup iron broke the silence. The people on the train stood watching them as the three long whistles from the engine brought in the flagman. He came in at a run and swung aboard the car; and still Jim's eyes were on her face.

Presently she gathered up her reins and her hand dropped for a second upon Leavitt's. "Do you remember the old poem that every schoolboy knows? You must have recited it a hundred times when you were a boy at school." She quoted softly:

"Toward the golden sunset's play  
Beyond the utmost purple rim,  
Deep into the dying day,  
The happy princess followed him.

"I'm not a princess, Jim, but—I will—follow."

The jerk and grind of the slowly moving train came to them. There was a shout and a whirl of wildly waving handkerchiefs from a group upon the rear platform of the observation car.

"Aren't you coming?" they heard some one say to a friend left behind. "Come back with us to God's country. Don't you hear the East a-callin'?"

Jim looked at the girl beside him and waved a comprehensive gesture at the pink-flushed slopes of the great main range under the never-melting snows of uncounted ages; but he spoke no word.

"Better come in a hurry if you intend to come at all. In a minute it'll be too late. You're not going to stay here in this God-forsaken place, are you?"

"God-forsaken!" said Jim under his breath. "Just listen to them, will you? Why, they don't even know that:

"When the half gods go;  
The gods arrive——"

"We stay," he shouted merrily. "We stay!"

The train clanged on down the siding to the main track, then vanished into the hot mirage at the desert's edge. The two left behind turned their horses westward and rode together toward the sunset.

THE END.

### To the Letter

THERE was a new parlor maid in the house, and Mrs. Bleecker was in some doubt as to her intelligence. So she asked at dusk:

"Bridget, have you turned on the gas in the parlor, as I told you?"

"Yes, mum—ivery burner. Can't yez smell it?"





# His Lone Hand

Walter Archer Frost.

**J**IM HARPER emerged from the post office a happier man than when he had entered it. His eyes were no longer anxious, his big-boned, brown face no longer tense.

"Thanks," he said, with some embarrassment, to the men who pressed up to congratulate him. "Of course I'm glad. And you can all be sure I'll serve with all there is in me. No," with a gesture of his big hand to the crowd, who would have led him to the local saloon, "I've got an errand I must do first. I'll be back in half an hour. Wait here for me."

Then he sprang to the door, down the steps, and to the back of his horse. In another moment he was dashing to the Sniveley Ranch, where he knew Mary would be waiting for him. As he leaped from his saddle and gave the reins to a boy, Jim saw her face at the window. Then he told her the good news, holding her in his arms: "The returns are all in, and I've beaten old Dan by a good hundred votes. I'm sheriff of Rawhide!"

"Jim!"

The one word spoke how little she had dared to hope for it, showed as well her joy in her lover's success. "I'm so glad!"

"Glad?" He held her off and looked at her. "Know what it means?" he asked triumphantly. "We'll be married now in two months—just as soon as the men can fix the old house up enough. Married, Mary! Think of it!"

After a few minutes she released herself and stepped toward the door. "Come and tell father. He'll be willing now." By "willing," she meant that her father would withdraw his opposition to their marriage. "He can't say you're only a cow-puncher now."

"You tell him," Jim replied. "And I'll be over in a little while. I've got to go back to the boys now; they're waiting for me at the post office. Going to lug me down to Mike's place, to drink my health. Mighty nice of them, seeing I've been in this town only a little over six months." He kissed her again. "Back soon!" he cried. Then



he was on his horse again, flying down the dust-laden road to the men who had showed their faith in him so significantly.

As Jim had said, it was mighty nice of the men of Rawhide to back him as they had after so short an acquaintance. It was more than that; their preference for him, over the old sheriff, who had served them so long and so well, was remarkable. Only Jim's frank, big-souled generosity and directness had accounted for his popularity, for he had been but one of a hundred good cowboys; a straight shot and a hard hitter, it is true, but no more so than the rest. Then, too, he had had no money with which to buy his companions' favor. And it might have been expected to operate against him, that he drank little, and gambled not at all. Perhaps his election was best accounted for by the fact that Jim Harper had something in his make-up which made women trust and men respect him.

But Jim himself did not try to analyze his victory over old Dan Holton, the former sheriff. As his horse flew along, the newly elected sheriff thought only of the responsibility of the work he must now do for the county, and of his now possible marriage with Mary Snively.

"Here!" he yelled, as the crowd on the post-office steps welcomed him. "Now we'll go down to Mike's, and they'll be on me."

It was a happy crowd at the little saloon. Mike himself presided; and the big proprietor's good will toward the new enforcer of law and order was showed by his allowing no money to cross his bar for the toasts drunk so enthusiastically.

"Anybody that ain't provided?" he asked. Then, as he glanced toward the door: "You're just in time, old Dan. Have a drink for the new sheriff's prosperity!" He filled a glass and shoved it toward the man who had entered.

For a moment a hush fell on the room. They had forgotten old Dan Holton, and, now that he'd come, they wondered what he would do, how he would take defeat.

But they were not keen in doubt. Old Dan raised his glass toward the young sheriff. "Here's luck, Jim Harper. You beat me fair and square!"

"Thanks, Dan," said young Jim. Then, simply because it would have choked him to drink to his own success in the face of the other's failure, the young sheriff stopped, hesitated, gulped, and laid his glass untasted on the bar, hunting for words in which to express his thoughts.

He was a newcomer, and knew not the ways of Rawhide on such an occasion. That was why he marveled when old Dan, after one glance at the untouched glass on the bar, nodded his grizzled head once, put his own glass on the bar without touching it, and, turning away mutely, left the room.

In an instant the men were pressing close around the young sheriff. "What'd you do it for?" they demanded. "Why did you refuse to drink with him?"

"Refuse!" cried young Jim. "Why, I was only trying to think of something right to say to him. I wanted his job, but I am sorry for him, now I've beaten him. I wanted to put that into words, and was just trying to get 'em out."

"Just the same," said one of the men, "it didn't seem that way to old Dan, and he'll never forgive you as long as he lives! If you'd just drunk with him he'd have——"

Jim was through the door on the instant, and had overtaken old Dan in another. "Come back," he called; "I didn't mean——" He was stumbling again, and caught at a sudden thought. "Dan, I'm sheriff, but I'm new at the game you know from top to bottom. Will you help me? I mean I want you for my deputy."

It might have served at another mo-



ment, but not now. Dan Holton wrenched his arm from Jim's hand, and faced him with blazing eyes: "Deputy? Me? Not much! Learn yourself how to handle the crowd you're up against now! I won't run no school for you!" He laughed grimly. "You're sheriff now. Try your hand at it, and see how you do. Your work's cut out for you!" And old Dan turned away.

"Your work's cut out for you!" The words burned themselves into the young sheriff's brain. New though he was to Rawhide and the county, he knew enough to believe what old Dan said. He felt no fear. But he was honest with himself as with others, and he realized his inexperience. He knew that, whereas Holton's name had grown to be a warning in itself to the desperate men who, from time to time, swept down from the hills, the name of Jim Harper was at present only an invitation to lawlessness.

"Your work's cut out for you!" Yes, it was, and he knew it. The old, peaceful, almost monotonously uneventful days when he had ridden the range as a cowboy were over. Now, Jim Harper was a salaried man hunter, without training for his trade. These thoughts soon came to possess him almost to the exclusion of his coming marriage with Mary Snively. And perhaps it was but another evidence of his untried youth that young Jim blamed his nervousness on old Dan's resentful, malevolent warning. "I'd have been glad of the first chance to show 'em," said young Jim to himself over and over, "if he hadn't shot that threat into me." Then, as he studied his position: "But I'll cut out this nervous stuff, and when the chance comes——"

## II.

THREE weeks after young Jim's election, two masked bandits held up the stage, five miles outside of the town, and got clear with twenty thousand dol-

lars in money belonging to the express company.

"I'll show 'em!" young Jim said between his teeth, when he told Mary the news. "The boys say the two rode off toward the hills. They've got ten hours' start, but they'll know we'll have wired ahead to all the railroad stops, so they won't try to vamoose that way. They'll rely on hiding in the hills for a spell, then get clear with the money. I'll be back with 'em in a day or two. Good-bye!"

It was said in his frank, confident way, and the girl believed him. But her father, who now was won over to Harper, showed less confidence. "I wish," he said, "that Jim had old Dan Holton along with him as his deputy."

"But Jim says he'll be back in two days at longest," returned Mary.

"I know," said Snively, as he filled his pipe. "I hope he will. All the same, I wish he hadn't tried to play a lone hand with them two. He'd ought to sworn in old Dan, and got together a posse!"

"Two days." That had been Jim's promise, the fruit of his inexperience.

At the end of the first day, Mary stood long in the door of the ranch house, and had her father ride into the town, that evening, for word of Jim. At the end of the second day, she dogged her father's steps like a frightened child. No word. The third day found her white-faced. The night found her wild-eyed. The fourth day came and went, and still no word of Jim.

And, with the failure of any news, there set in, in the little frontier town, one of those strange revulsions of feeling which come from nothing visible and pervade the very atmosphere. Mary knew nothing of it; but her father read it in the eyes of every man he met: Young Jim had failed them. Young Jim had fallen down as sheriff. He hadn't got the men who had held up



the stage. He had disgraced the office he promised to fill. He had disgraced Rawhide. The very men who had been most enthusiastic over Jim's victory at the election were now the most bitter in denouncing him. They said they'd been fools.

Equally abrupt in change of heart was old Dan himself. He said nothing to any one. Since the day when Jim had unwittingly insulted him, he had not once joined the crowd which assembled nightly at Mike's. Always taciturn, now he was grimly silent, stood aloof from every one. But in his heart had come a change of feeling toward young Jim.

On the evening of the fifth day, the old man sat in his cabin door smoking his pipe. It was eight o'clock. In another hour he would turn in. As he bent for a stick to replenish his fire, a slender figure stepped into the circle of light, and, looking alertly up, old Dan recognized Mary Snively.

"Evenin'," he said awkwardly. "Fine night."

But the girl was past such trifles as exchange of banalities. She crossed the distance between them. "Have you heard anything of Jim?" she asked, in a husky whisper, unlike her usual soft, sweet voice.

Old Dan met her eyes searchingly. "Me hear of him? No." He stared at her first in amazement, then comprehendingly. "Now, jest sit down," he urged, putting his hand on her trembling shoulder. "Set down and—res' yourself!"

"Rest!" she cried bitterly. "As if I could! When Jim——" She quivered with emotion. "You know what they're saying in the town—that he's fallen down, that the men have got him? They say now all the old days'll come back—every bad man in the State come down on the county because they know there isn't a real sheriff here. Yes," as he tried to contradict her, "I know

what the talk is—all about their own disgrace. Not a word for Jim! If— if only you'd gone along as his deputy!"

At this, old Dan stepped back from her. "How'd you know he asked me and I wouldn't?"

"He asked you, and you wouldn't? Do you really mean that? You did *that*? You coward!" She flung the words at him, and left abruptly. He called to her, but no answer returned to him from the black shadows into which she had gone.

"Coward?" old Dan asked himself.

### III.

THE crowd had talked themselves out at Mike's that evening. They had exhausted the one possible subject of conversation, and now had returned to their usual verdict, that Harper had deserved what he had got. They meant only one thing. There would be another election, and old Dan Holton would be unanimously elected to fill the vacancy. Not one man in the room expressed a word of regret for Jim's exit. He had failed. They had been mistaken in him. He deserved what he had got.

"Don't be so sure what he's got!" The voice came from the doorway; and, turning as one man, they saw old Dan, more grim than ever, his long, heavy-shouldered body straighter than usual, his gray eyes hard with anger.

"You're a plucky outfit, you aire," old Dan went on, "an' I belong here with you. Buryin' young Jim Harper a'ready, aire you? Don't move so energetic; he didn't treat me right, an' I know it, but, fer one, I don't believe he's dead just yet."

"Then why don't he show up with the prisoners?" asked Mike. "You know, 's well as we do——"

"I know a heap better. Give 'im time!"

"Time!" The crowd laughed.



Mike spoke again: "He'll need time, fer they say now that 'Fresnoy' Steve's back in the county, come back three nights ago. Half a dozen o' the boys saw 'im; and you know what that means: another holdup. It's just as we've said: the old gang you broke up, when you went in as sheriff, has come to life again!"

"Fresnoy back!" Old Dan was doing some fast thinking. "Yes, he's as bad as they come. Wisht I'd killed him fer good, that last time we come together. Thought I had, but he crawled off and got patched up, fer more deviltry. But, say"—hitching his chair closer to the group round the table—"don't you get the reason he's come back? Fresnoy's not after the stage, he's after the gang that held up the stage; he's after that same bunch of bills and gold the first gang got."

Mike swung round. "You mean Fresnoy's going to rob the robbers? That what you mean?"

"What else? They happened to beat him to it, an' now he's trailing 'em to git it away from 'em," reiterated old Dan.

"Well, I'll be——"

"Mebby," old Dan interrupted the speaker. "But don't it seem to you it's time we got into this?" His old eyes were gleaming. He seemed to have lost ten years of his age since Mike had told the news of the return of Fresnoy Steve. "Lemme have five of you boys, and we'll——"

"Not me!"

"Nor me, with Fresnoy around!"

"I'm out!"

"Me, too!"

"Same here. Two bad men was enough, but with Fresnoy fer a third——" The last speaker jerked his head in a vehement negative.

"An' why should we stick our heads in it?" more than one replied to old Dan's revilings. "We elected a sheriff, and put 'im on a salary. If he'd ast

us, if he'd swore us in as 'is deputies——"

And they wondered why old Dan rose to his feet and went silently from the room. They would have wondered more, if they had seen him walk dejectedly to where his horse waited, then ride slowly back to his cabin.

#### IV.

**N**INETY miles back in the foothills. The afternoon sun was still high enough to be blazing hot. No cloud blurred its cruel glare from the sapphire sky. No breeze blew. No bird chirped. The only living thing in sight was a masked rider, who advanced warily along a barely decipherable trail. Long of body he was, long, lithe, and sinister in aspect, even without the black mask, which covered his face from his wide-sweeping, soft felt hat to his upper lip. Mile after mile he rode, as silent as the hoofbeats of his horse on the deep sand of the trail which a less vigilant eye would have lost.

Vigilant the rider was. His eyes looked before him no more piercingly than they glanced, now and again, behind, as if the man felt the presence of pursuers even while he himself pursued.

When the sun had slid down the sky and at last had rolled back behind the hills toward which the masked rider was directing his jaded mount, he leaned forward, spoke a word of cheer in his broncho's ear, and forced him to greater speed; then abruptly halted him, for a spiral of smoke rose from a hidden camp down a defile to the right.

The man spoke again: "I was right, and in time; they're there." He threw himself from his horse, putting his arm through the bridle, examined the heavy pistols, which hung one at each hip, satisfied himself that they were in readiness—then edged closer and closer to the fire around which, in the darkness of the cañon, men's forms and the sil-



houettes of several horses were just visible.

The masked stalker's vigilance had been richly rewarded, for, of the three men about that crackling fire, not one suspected that he was watching them.

Then the silence was shattered by two significant words, harshly uttered, and the still more significant aspect of two revolvers. "That twenty thousand," said the masked man ominously. "You don't need to put any o' those hands down. I'll get your guns first, then find it on you or in yer saddlebags." No word was said, and the masked man went on: "Thought you was slick, didn't you, 'cause you got away with the express messenger? Well, you wasn't slick enough. You lose!" From the two men, who still stood rigid, hands to the sky, the masked man turned half round to the third man, who had not moved. "You can take them hands down, now," as he stuck the guns he had taken into his own belt. "What you got this man tied up for?"

The two other men spoke together: "We don't know who you are, but you've got the pull on us, and when we tell you about this man, you'll know something good to remember. He's the sheriff," the larger of the two began. "We run into him by accident, just after he'd finished a fight with a friend o' ours, an' likely of yours, Fresnoy Steve. Steve stuck up th' stage, an' we helped 'im. After that, Fresnoy give us th' slip. This fool didn't know 'im or hadn't no sense or sompin, fer he rode in on 'im in broad daylight."

"Where's Fresnoy?" asked the masked man.

The other of the two bandits took up the story: "Well, stranger, we do know jest how it all happened, but this feller an' Fresnoy both fired, an', when th' smoke lifted, Fresnoy was lying down on th' trail, not movin' none."

"An' you?"

"We dropped the man who'd done fer 'im. I broke his shootin' arm before he seen us. Ike, here, tried fer 'im, but missed—only got his bronc'. Then we hogtied 'im, to give 'im his later. I said we was friends o' Fresnoy Steve, jest as you likely are."

The masked man turned to young Jim. "Wait a minute," he said. Then, stepping closer and bending: "Mind turnin' over yer sheriff's star?"

A grim laugh rose from the two bandits, a laugh of relief, and of restored enjoyment of their revenge on the prisoner, who stood for order and for law. They waited.

"Yer star," repeated the masked man. "Gimme it!"

"Not—while—I—live!" came from between Harper's white lips.

The laugh rose again. But an angry roar drowned it. The masked man was on them. He tore the mask from his face. "You know me. I'm old Dan!" He went to young Jim's side, slashed his bonds loose, raised him gently. "Once I was sheriff," he said; "but now he's sheriff—sheriff enough to get a man like Fresnoy Steve—and I swear to you that I'm proud to be this sheriff's deputy!"

### What Next?

TWO naturalists were one day collecting insects, and for some time a woman had been watching their antics from the window of a near-by farmhouse. After a time, as it approached the noon hour, they approached the door of the farmhouse to see if they could buy some lunch.

The farmer's wife asked to see their catch. "What do you do with 'em?" she inquired. "Are they any good?"

"We preserve them, madam," was the reply.

"You do!" she ejaculated. "Land sakes! What will folks eat next?"



# Over the Rio Grande

by Lieutenant Nathan, U.S.A.



**T**HE light breeze was worse than a calm. It smote the cheeks like a blast from a smelting furnace, and would have parched any vegetation but cactus and mesquite. Only those inured to the privations of the South-western wastes would have found life worth its hardships on this temporary maneuver ground of the Third Squadron, United States Cavalry. From winter service on the Canadian border, through the sun-blistered inferno of the Philippine Islands, these troops had come to the part of Texas that is unblest with inspiring cold or dense shade.

Under command of the "Kid," recently from West Point, Troop M had been at advance guard, rear guard, outpost, and scouting duty since the sleepy hours of earliest dawn. It had been torment, each trooper feeling the presence of a guardian demon. The same work over the same ground had ceased to be a monotony; it had become a pluperfect torture. The limit of endurance was approached dangerously near when the Kid attempted to amplify the colonel's instructions. Twice the

"Old Man," an Indian fighter, whose reputation was the boast of his subalterns, had assembled the noncoms on a hilltop and there explained to them the Indian method of attack—defense, ambuscade, and scouting. In turn, the noncoms instructed the privates; so why need the kid presume to improve upon such thorough teaching?

It was to the prejudice of discipline, certainly, but nature will sometimes burst through the walls of trained restraint. So Corporal Doogan punched a rookie's head for not grooming his horse at stables properly, Private O'Toole, ten years' service man, reviled his mount from one end of the picket line to the other for spilling the oats from his nose bag—his vocabulary was at all times at the service of recruits, but things were strained indeed when he used it on his horse—and Sergeant Kinnaud left camp in search of a pool of water in which to divest himself of his personal interest in Texas range estate.

Moving one stiff, cavalry-bent leg after the other, much in action as a boy on stilts, the sergeant increased his gait to a sort of broken-down canter as he



heard a spluttering wail followed by coarse, malicious laughter. At a nearby pool, he found three youths in the full bloom of boisterous exuberance, releasing their bound-up hatred for the negro race by attempting to drown a boy, black by right of birth.

The sergeant was not an Apollo in form, nor were his features the even, masterful kind favored in fiction, which never betray emotion, with eyes whose light changes from soft, dreamy radiance to piercing points of steel. His jaws and chin did impress one with their masculinity, but his eyes were simply wide-open, hazel eyes, and in his heart there was charity.

Whether or not the lanky nomads of the Lone Star cattle trails started in search of the place suggested by the sergeant matters not; with rough tenderness the boy was resuscitated and taken to camp. Once draped in cast-off soldier togs, his spirits revived, and his whole soul seemed to come forth in the question: "Is I a regular, now? Mah ole man was." That is all that was ever known of his genealogy.

## II.

THE Kid from West Point did not object to his presence; so Buttons—named thus because of his fondness for the brass trinkets—became a fixture. For a few days he was a plaything for the troop, kindly treated by some, roughly by others—but not for many nights was he to sleep in the suffocating confines of an escort wagon, nor for many days did he have to depend on the generosity of some trooper for what he ate. His keen desire to help at any sort of work won him the respect of the men, and the boy ceased to live on charity. Whistling always, he would be at some kind of work the day through, busy around the cook shack, helping the stable orderly on the picket line, or maybe taking some tired messenger's horse to water.

The squadron was about to start on its homeward march of three hundred miles, when it was ordered to the border, and on the morning following the first camp on the Rio Grande, Buttons went to awaken Sergeant Kinnaud a few minutes before reveille. He found a rattlesnake coiled close to the sleeping man. The boy grabbed the reptile, and was struck.

The wound was cauterized with a red-hot horseshoe, and long drafts of black coffee to stimulate the heart finally overcame the poison. Tried out in camp, on the march, and in the presence of an enemy, the boy's service had been honest and faithful. Hasty to ostracize a quitter, quick to appreciate real mettle, the troop gave Buttons the extra bugle brought by the quartermaster sergeant, and, perched on the top of an escort wagon, Buttons would travel all day, passing the weary hours in learning the trumpet calls. Any one who has listened to a beginner blasting great holes in the peace of pleasant revelry will know with perfect understanding how the drivers felt about the inventor of the bugle.

Ten days of marching up the Rio Grande brought M Troop to its permanent camp, and then the humdrum work of patrolling the border commenced. The horses had been out on herd every day for a week, and were quite rested after the march; so, one day after satisfying their appetites on the rich grass, they stampeded.

Racing in the dust of Satan, the demon of the herd, all the horses had started for the open range. The consequences, as anybody knows, might have been serious; but a well-taught horse obeys the trumpet like a man in his fifth enlistment. Suddenly the sweet notes of water call sounded across the plain, again and again. Gradually, hesitatingly, the herd swerved in its course, and its wild pace slowed down. Soon the mad gallop had be-



come a trot, and before long they halted at the picket line. And it was mostly because a certain shavetail, demon of the herd, loved a little negro.

### III.

ONE day, on his pony—they were cheap as cactus in those days—Buttons rode the free range, following the desire of all who wander to find out what lies behind just one more hill. Soon he came upon the ruins of an old hacienda. There was nothing unusual about this; but the sight of hoof-prints leading up to it roused some instinct in the boy that made him leave his pony in the chaparral and slip nearer on foot. Scouting cautiously, he approached the old corral, and there his suspicions were justified, for within it stood several ponies.

Buttons waited until the last rays of a blazing sunset had faded; then he crept flat on his stomach to the very wall of the ruin, and crouched beneath a crumbling window.

Voices sounded inside. Five minutes—ten minutes he listened, and what he heard brought his heart into his throat. Surely those who spoke could hear its telltale throbbing!

When he had heard enough, he wriggled back through the brush to his horse and raced across the miles that seemed so formidable ahead of him, and stretched so slowly behind the pounding hoofs.

The sergeant, looking up from his card game, saw the real agony in the negro boy's face, and threw down the hand that he held to hear his faltered warning: "The greasers—they'll attack us—at dawn to-morrow!"

### IV.

AT sunrise, scouts had reported the advance; but the greasers had, without hindrance, been allowed the

right of way until within five hundred yards of camp. There the fight began.

It is needless to tell how Corporal Casey, with two sets of fours, charged them, or how the top sergeant hit them in the flank, or many other details which might interest a student of tactics. The fight was won, but at what cost! The border greasers still cross themselves at mention of that day.

The sergeant with six men was holding the opening between the encircling flanks of the enemy on the side opposite the river. Buttons was not far away, and when their fire ceased to be continuous, he reasoned that there must be something wrong. Could they be running short of ammunition?

Taking all the ammunition that he and the pony could carry, they made a run for the group. About fifty yards from camp, the little rider reeled, straightened up, and then collapsed; his arms hung limp, pounding the pony in the flanks; his head hung on one side of the croup. Game to the finish, the little animal kept on until he was stopped by the sergeant.

Gently, Buttons was taken from the saddle and tenderly laid upon the ground. As the men bent over him, he opened two great eyes filled with love and determination, and whispered: "Sergeant, I've brought you—" but before he finished, taps had sounded for the boy. Some soldier angel was escorting down an honored path to the crossing of the final color line the spirit of a true soul—a child in years, black in outward color, but to those who knew him purest white clear through.

For the next few shots there was poor shooting, but later relentless wrath paid the score. Perhaps the ammunition saved the day—and perhaps it did not. But there is more than one tough-skinned, bent-legged old M trooper who will say that it did.

Yearly, on the anniversary of a certain fight, M Troop fills a battered but



burnished trumpet and each trooper drinks to the same memory. Between these days the trumpet, hung with a string of buttons, may be seen in the orderly room, hanging over First Sergeant Kinnaud's desk.

### Marking British Swans.

THE annual marking of the young swans hatched on the Thames River during the year is an interesting occurrence. Every year uniformed swan markers and their assistants go upriver in boats to search for the young birds among the islands and backwaters. The custom is of ancient origin, there having been swans on the Thames ever since the days of Richard I.

Formerly the mark denoting birds belonging to the king was in the form of a diamond scratched on the beak. This method of marking has been discontinued, however, the rule now being that, besides all those birds already marked with the diamond, all unmarked birds belong to his majesty. It is only the nonroyal owners of swans nowadays who are obliged to mark their birds.

### Not Out of Kilts

THE wife of a Gordon Highlander received an invitation to visit him at the barracks in Scotland, and took with her their six-year-old daughter. When they arrived the husband was on sentry duty, so he could not be approached.

The child eyed her daddy with a rather sorrowful but amazed expression as he passed up and down the square, shouldering his rifle and wearing a kilt. She had never before seen him thus arrayed. Presently, with a solemn look on her face, the child loudly exclaimed:

"Mamma, when daddy finds the man who stole his breeks, will he give me that little frock?"

### Famous Canes

THE recent announcement that Andrew Jackson's heavy hickory stick has been presented to President Wilson reminds one that King George of England inherited the two thousand walking sticks which belonged to his father, King Edward. The collecting of walking sticks was his late majesty's favorite hobby, his most treasured stick being one which was regularly carried by Queen Victoria. This remarkable stick was fashioned from a branch of the Boscobel oak which once concealed Charles II. when fleeing from Cromwell's soldiers. Queen Victoria had it altered somewhat, and a little idol from Seringapatam was inserted as a knob.

King Edward's collection of walking sticks, of course, included all sorts of designs. It was a fact, however, that he preferred as a rule an ordinary crook shape. Indeed, his fondness for this particular design gave not a little impetus to its popularity.

Talking of famous walking sticks and their owners, Messrs. Henry Howell & Co., who are probably the largest stick makers in the world, recall a curious story of the ominous trick which Charles I.'s walking stick played on that unhappy monarch, for during the famous trial at Westminster Hall the head of the stick fell off.

Bygone monarchs were very fond of walking sticks, and Queen Elizabeth put hers to an unpleasant use, for the merry Queen Bess employed them for beating her maids of honor.

In the clubroom of the Royal College of Physicians there is preserved the gold-headed cane, once the symbol of the doctors' profession, which was used by the celebrated Doctor John Radcliffe, who attended Queen Mary, and afterward by four other eminent physicians.



# At the Look-In Corner



## PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

Summary of what has gone before, for those who failed to read it.

**S**HORTLY after his arrival in the town of Hillsboro, John Keeper, in search of employment, is drawn into a baseball game between Hillsboro and New Lisbon, to take the place of the Hillsboro third baseman, who has been disabled. He distinguishes himself by his remarkable playing, and is offered a position on the team, which he accepts.

Murphy, the Hillsboro manager, is suspected of crooked dealing. After a row with Keeper, he resigns—to the satisfaction of every director of the team except Bryce Farthing. Harvey Ingalls, another director, invites Keeper to dine at his father's house, and gives the new third baseman an advance on his salary, in order to make himself presentable.

## CHAPTER XVII.

WHEN BLADES ARE BARED.

**K**EOPER did not enjoy the dinner as much as he had fancied he might. He sat on the right of Mrs. Ingalls, with her daughter Phyllis on his right. Harvey was across the board, with his older sister at his left, Farthing having a place between Mary and the judge. During the greater part of the time Jack devoted his attention to the pleasant, gray-haired hostess, who found him an agreeable and entertain-

ing conversationalist upon topics which interested her most. Yet he was not one to do all the talking, and he could listen quite as well—and as entertainingly. Mrs. Ingalls began to like him right away, and her liking increased. She had never supposed baseball players were quite like this; she imagined she was almost beginning to understand her son's interest in them, and in the game they played.

Phyllis chattered lightly. At times, when courtesy demanded, Keeper turned to her, nearly always with a remark in tune with her own mood. Indeed, for all of a mental disturbance he could not shake off, a feeling that there was something in the atmosphere which boded him ill, not once did he strike a discord. His tact was perfect, his self-command complete.

And all the while he was missing nothing that passed on the opposite side of the table; scarcely a word spoken by any one escaped him. He was aware that Farthing, while flattering the judge with a show of deference and high esteem, was striving at times to be highly agreeable to Mary, to whom he talked now and then of her mission work among the poor and needy of Hillsboro. She was disposed to be quiet, but she spoke of the little boy who had hurt his back playing base-



ball, and of his mother who took in washing and was ill and in want. To Keeper's ears her voice was like the softened notes of a flute, mellowed additionally by distance. He looked at her occasionally, but not often, for he found that the sight of her distracted him and made his pulses beat unevenly. Already he was dreaming wild dreams of impossible things, desperate resolves were assailing him, unjustified hope had taken hold upon him.

Somehow he got the impression that she did not like Farthing, and he was glad of that. Once he detected the man covertly looking askant at her, in his eyes an expression that made wrath and detestation flare in Keeper's heart. He knew, also, that Farthing watched him a great deal of the time across the board, and he believed, with gratification, that the enmity between them would soon be a case of daggers drawn.

Harvey would have talked baseball, but his mother begged him to abandon the subject during dinner, and he somewhat reluctantly did so.

"There'll be plenty of time afterward, my son," she said. "You men and Phyllis can smoke, and discuss that subject as much as you like."

"But, mother," cried Phyllis, "I haven't taken up smoking—yet!"

"You know what I meant," said Mrs. Ingalls, smiling.

Dinner over, they returned to the living room, where coffee was served. The judge provided cigars. Farthing drew his chair close to Mary's, and engaged her in subdued conversation. Keeper would have relished taking him by the neck and kicking him out of the house. He told himself it was not jealousy that inspired the desire; it was simply the wish to protect Mary Ingalls from a man he fully believed to be unworthy and unscrupulous.

Mary did not prolong the guest's stay. Half across the room she bade Keeper good night, giving him a final

look which added to the perplexity that troubled him, a look in which he knew there lay no favor, no promise that tomorrow or some time later she might regard him with less distaste. It seemed to say that, pretend as much as he might to be a person worthy to associate with others of breeding, she knew him to be something quite different. It cut like the thrust of keen steel.

His eyes followed her as she turned back to the hearth, his ears strained vainly for the sound of her footsteps. Later, he closed the front door behind him, and somehow it seemed that the shutting of that door had placed a barrier between them that his utmost efforts might assail in vain. Discovering that he had dropped one of his cuff links, he returned to the house, with an explanation.

"Now, mother," Phyllis was saying, "We've just got to get this baseball confab out of our systems. I know it bores you when Harvey and I get to chinning over the games, and we—well, we don't want to be——"

"In other words, my dear child, you think Mary has set me a good example. I'm going——"

"Oh, you don't have to go, mother! Only when I use baseball terms—about swiping sacks, handing out goose eggs, fanning the baton swinger, and so forth—you say you don't like to hear me talking slang. Now, no real fan ever talks baseball in anything but the vernacular, and they say I'm a fan, all right."

"Whatever that is, I think you must be," agreed Mrs. Ingalls, rising. "And as long as you must talk that way, doubtless my absence will clear the air and remove restraint. I will admit, also, that your talk probably wouldn't be at all interesting to me, though perhaps your father is enough of a—a fan to stay." As Keeper reëntered the room she turned to him with a most hospitable and kindly smile. "Really," she added,



resuming her remarks, after the cuff link had been found, "since meeting you, Mr. Keeper, I think I may be somewhat more tolerant toward baseball and people who follow it as a profession. Perhaps my impression has been somewhat wrong and narrow. I am very glad you came home with Harvey for dinner, and I hope you will come to see us often." She gave him her hand again.

She was truly an old-fashioned mother—a fine old-fashioned mother of the highest type. He had warmed toward her at first sight, and now his admiration and regard were so deep that, in spite of the brief acquaintance, he entertained for her something that bordered on genuine affection. Again he assured her of his appreciation of her kindness and hospitality, and thanked her for the invitation. And all the while, Farthing, cognizant of the favorable impression Jack was making, hated him inwardly.

When Mrs. Ingalls had departed, Harvey said:

"Keeper and I had a heart-to-heart coming home on the train to-day. We decided that what the team needs—and must have—is pitchers."

Farthing laughed. "Doubtless that's true enough, having lost the only first-class pitcher we had; but how do you expect to get hold of good pitchers this late in the season?"

"We don't expect to secure twirlers who have made reputations. We'll have to try out fellows who may be good without knowing how good they are."

"Hen's teeth are thicker. That blow-up with Murphy was the worst thing that could have happened; it crippled the team and left it without a head. You know you're not fitted to handle a bunch of that sort, Harvey, and get anything out of them. Even the Johnnies can put it over us now, and if we don't drop to the foot of the list in a couple of weeks, I'll be surprised."

"If we go clean out through the bottom I shan't regret the loss of that scoundrel Murphy, or any of his associates in crime," flung back Harvey. "We're going to get Perkins, of the Underfalls Mill, out to the field in the morning and look him over. Keeper can tell whether the man shows any promise. There are others, too, who can be tried out. I know I'd be a shine as a baseball manager, and I'm going to chuck my hand into the discard; I'm going to propose Keeper for the position, and back him up."

Phyllis gave a little exclamation, and clapped her hands. Farthing started, leaned forward on his chair, then rose to his feet. "You're going to do what?" he said, as if unable to believe he had understood. "Keeper for manager? You're joking!"

"Not at all."

"Then you need to have your head examined. Keeper may be a very fair ball player, but it doesn't follow from that that he has a single qualification that would fit him to be the manager of a team. What do you know about him, anyway? Who is he? Where did he come from? What is his record? I am speaking plainly, regardless of the fact that he is here, because I regard this as a serious matter that should be handled in a businesslike way. Nobody engages a man for a responsible position, a position of trust and one requiring peculiar executive ability, without digging up his record and learning if he is fitted for the place. I know that the judge will back me up in this statement." He had spoken rapidly and boldly, with a determination to have his say without being interrupted; with the final words he turned to Judge Ingalls in a manner which bespoke positive confidence that he would have his backing.

"What Farthing says is quite true," the judge agreed, "but he seems to assume that Keeper cannot furnish satisfactory evidence that he is qualified to



handle the team, and also that he is disposed to conceal the facts concerning himself and his past record. This may not be the case; we should give him a chance." He gazed questioningly at the young man, who sat staring hard at Farthing, a cloud on his face.

There was a minute or two of silence. Beneath his clipped mustache, Farthing's lips curled in a slight sneer, but he did not return Jack's steady look. Suddenly Harvey Ingalls began speaking:

"The man who can deliver the goods is the man we want, and Keeper has satisfied me that, as a player, he can make full delivery. I think I can judge human nature a bit myself, and I believe he can come through as manager. We've simply got to have a manager, and he's the only available man I know that I'd have any confidence in. He has stated to me that he's never handled a ball team, but other managers had to begin some time; they weren't all born managers. As for his private affairs, it's up to him to tell as much of them, or as little, as he pleases. I presume there are plenty of ball players—and managers—who couldn't furnish a certificate of character that would admit them to tea parties and sewing circles. We can't afford to be too finicky and exacting."

Keeper thanked him, never once taking his eyes from Farthing, who, having begun to fidget uneasily, produced a cigarette case and prepared to smoke.

"An odd notion has entered my head," said Jack quietly. "In case Mr. Farthing's past—I understand he has resided in Hillsboro only a few months—is not an open book to the citizens of this town, I have no doubt that he has made statements concerning that past which have been accepted as veracious. It would be an easy matter, of course, for him to furnish corroborative evidence that all he has told about himself is true. He can, perhaps, with-

out much trouble and in a very few days, produce the sworn affidavits of honest people who have known him many years, and are fully cognizant of his career, that he has lived a blameless life and is a man who may be trusted in business and social intercourse without hesitation and without a qualm."

The sneer had vanished from Farthing's face, and he no longer avoided Keeper's eyes. With his own eyes filled with the hate he could not continue to mask he glared at the young man balefully.

"Your insolence is only equaled by your colossal nerve," he said hoarsely. "I don't propose to be slurred and insulted by——"

"One moment more," interrupted the young man, who was now on his feet. "If you choose to construe as an insult the proposition I am about to make, I shall leave it to the others present to place their own estimate upon your attitude—and your character. If you will promise to produce such sworn affidavits concerning yourself and your past, I'll pledge myself to do likewise on my own account. Together, at the same time, we will place our credentials in the hands of Judge Ingalls, with permission for him to go as far as he pleases in the way of investigating their reliability. Can you ask anything fairer than that?"

Farthing barely succeeded in smothering an imprecation, remembering, as it was almost slipping from his lips, that Phyllis was present. He also became aware that, apparently tense with excitement, she was alternately searching his face and that of the bold young man who had challenged him to the test. Many a time he had told himself that she was a shallow, superficial little thing who judged wholly by surface appearances, yet at this moment he was suddenly afraid of her—and for himself. Something warned him that, with her woman's intuition, she had glimpsed the



sinuous depths of his soul, unguarded for a flashing second, unguarded by his mingled wrath and consternation. Instantly his manner changed; he got a grip on himself, banishing the dark scowl from his face; he laughed softly, pleasantly, with every outward show of genuine amusement.

"Mr. Keeper's unique proposition is interesting, to say the least," he said, shrugging his shoulders. "Soon we'll have office boys offering, when applying for positions, to match certificates of character with their employers. His effrontery is a trifle staggering. The circumstances under which we came to Hillsboro were quite dissimilar. Only yesterday he would have invited ridicule—or worse—had he proposed such a show-down with an ordinary street laborer. Having been enabled, through the kindness of Harvey, to alter his outward appearance somewhat, he is ready to beard a prince. However, such a long period has not elapsed since yesterday as to cause any one to forget."

Keeper merely smiled. "I didn't apply for the position of manager. I was not even an applicant for a position on the team. I merely offered to fill a vacancy, without a thought of playing in another game."

"I was the one who put it up to him," stated Harvey promptly. "I proposed that he should accept the management of the team. He was inclined to refuse——"

"At first," put in Jack. "I've changed my mind since then. I'm now quite willing—even eager—to try my hand. If I am engaged, I shall do my utmost to make good both as a player and a manager." He smiled again, looking straight at Farthing. "In the meantime, should Mr. Farthing decide to meet me on level ground, I'll supply certificates of character whenever he does the same."

He stepped forward and shook hands with the judge again, bidding him good

night and expressing an appreciation of his hospitality. Phyllis gave him her hand, and, looking into his eyes, she said with unusual seriousness:

"I believe in you; I believe you could meet the test. I'm glad Harvey asked you to manage the team, and I shall use my influence for you. You'll get it," she added positively.

He thanked her, knowing that Farthing doubtless had drunk in her words to his own bitter distaste. Now that steel was unsheathed, he rejoiced in his enemy's every wound; and he felt full sure that the engagement was on until one or the other fell. The belief gave him deep satisfaction.

"You must come to see us again, Keeper," said the judge, as Jack, accompanied by Harvey, was turning toward the door.

"I will, thank you," he promised.

Another wound! Though slight, he knew it must sting. Farthing's face was white and set as Keeper bowed to him just the least bit mockingly, and passed out of the room.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE LINGERING SPARK.

**I**N a state of great excitement Phyllis came, nearly an hour later, to her sister's room. Mary was almost ready for bed. Her luxurious hair, with its tints of red gold, haloed her, flowing over her rounded shoulders and falling below her waist like a magic cloak. She made such a picture as Daphne, with her hair unbound, must have presented to Apollo, and involuntarily Phyllis paused and stared. But there were shadows in Mary's eyes, and her face was grave.

"Has that man gone?" she asked in a low voice.

"That man?" said Phyllis, catching her breath. "You mean—Jack Keeper?"

"If that is what he calls himself!"



"Yes, he's gone—some time ago. Look here, Mary, what do you know about him? You acted queer, to say the least, when you met him. Who is he?"

"I don't know," confessed Mary, tying back her hair; "but I'm positive that Keeper is not his name."

"Just what Bryce Farthing said. Farthing made all sorts of insinuations about him; even said he might be a fugitive from justice, an escaped criminal, and all that sort of stuff. I told him what I thought about *that*!" added Phyllis resentfully. "I told him a man with such manners, such a smile, and such honest eyes couldn't be a criminal."

"Have you ever seen this Jack Keeper when he was enraged?" asked Mary, coming around and seating herself cross-legged upon the snowy bed.

"No, have you?" asked Phyllis, placing a chair and seating herself close by the bed so that she could look straight into her sister's face.

Mary shivered. "I can imagine," she replied evasively, "that he might look rather terrible and repellent if aroused to rage."

"Oh, Harve says Keeper has a fighting face when he's mad. Harve saw him that way, you know. It was when Keeper had to whip Pat Murphy after the game yesterday. That happened in the clubhouse out at the park. Harvey and Farthing came in right in the middle of the fight. Murphy hit Keeper just once, and Harve said Jack—that is, Keeper's—eyes got red and his face became just awful, and he knocked Murphy down."

Again a slight spasm seemed to move the girl on the bed. "I know," she murmured huskily.

Phyllis eyed her with lively inquisitiveness. "How do you know, Mary? What do you know? You've seen that man before somewhere. Tell me about it."

"I'm tired, and I don't wish to talk

about it to-night, Phil. Perhaps I'll tell you—some time."

"Perhaps!" cried the other girl petulantly. "Now that's mean of you—just mean! I'm crazy with curiosity! Anything that's a mystery gets me going, and Keeper is a mystery. He came to Hillsboro like a tramp, and he won't tell anything about himself, though he did offer to tell everything and furnish proof that what he told was true if Farthing would do the same concerning himself. Farthing doesn't like him, and I could see Keeper hadn't a bit of use for Farthing. They hate each other. Well, I never was much taken with Bryce Farthing, and I have an idea that, between the two, Keeper is far more the gentleman."

"He is not a gentleman; he can't be!"

"What right have you to say that? It's up to you to tell."

Again Mary declined. "I'm going to bed, and I want to sleep. I didn't sleep well last night. Let's talk of something else—something pleasant, please, Phil."

"I never saw anybody as vexing as you can be sometimes!" declared the younger girl. "And I didn't think you'd insinuate anything about anybody that you couldn't back up. Perhaps you think Bryce Farthing more of a gentleman than Keeper? Well, you're welcome to think so; I don't. And you're welcome to Farthing! He's been making a dead set for you lately. I think he's a snake in the grass, and associating with him hasn't done Harvey any good, either. He's got some smooth ways, and he can pull the wool over some people's eyes, but he doesn't fool me much."

"You're getting in one of your tantrums, Phil. Mr. Farthing is nothing to me, but I should advise you and Harvey both to listen to any warning he may make regarding the other man."

Phyllis sprang up. "I won't listen, for one," she declared. "It'll be necessary to show me. Harvey's backing Keeper,



and I'm going to stick by him." Her cheeks were flushed, and there was an expression in her eyes that disturbed Mary not a little.

"Phil," said the latter accusingly, "you're too interested in that man, and I know what that means. You're making a mistake. It wasn't right for Harvey to bring him here to-night."

The younger girl tossed her head and laughed. "Oh, yes, I'm interested in him, I confess it. He saved me yesterday from being hurt, perhaps killed, when I lost control of the car. He can play baseball like a wizard. He can fight—like a man. He has the finest eyes I ever saw in all my life."

"Terrible eyes!" whispered Mary to herself.

"And when he smiles," Phyllis ran on without catching the whisper, "he gets you. That smile of his is wonderful. And he can talk, too; look how interested in him mamma was at dinner. If you could only see him play baseball, Mary! Nothing gets by him at third. And hit—he certainly can hammer the pill! I'm sure he'll make a good manager for the club; I believe he's a natural master of men."

"No man who is not a master of himself can succeed as master of others," said Mary. Suddenly she sprang up from the bed, placed her hands on her sister's shoulders, and turned her to the light. Long and earnestly she searched Phyllis' flushed face.

"Phil," she said at length with seriousness and feeling, "don't be foolish. Your head is full of romantic nonsense. You've been gorging on love stories. You're looking for a dashing hero to come along, and literally standing ready to fall madly in love with any good-looking stranger who may chance to cross your path. You refuse to be interested in Chandler Judkins because you have known him a long time and he doesn't come up to your romantic ideal; yet you are aware that he

is an exceptionally clean and capable young man, with rather unusual prospects and opportunities before him. He can play baseball, also, as you have acknowledged yourself; he was a member of his varsity nine. I believe he is playing this summer because he knows you follow the games up whenever you can; in that way he gets a chance to see you frequently. When you turned him down——"

The younger girl's impatience had been growing, and now she interrupted abruptly: "Oh, don't talk to me about Chan Judkins! I acknowledge that, in a humdrum way, he's all right himself; but he's got a coarse, common father, and he—he belongs in New Lisbon. I haven't any use for anything or anybody hailing from that place. Of course, it was decent of him to put me wise to the dishonest arrangement to steal the game from Hillsboro yesterday——" She stopped suddenly, her eyes widening.

"Did Chandler Judkins do that? Why, I thought you said some one telephoned you after the game started. He couldn't——"

"He did it by proxy; got a friend to hustle out to the nearest phone and call me. I didn't mean to give him away, even to you. You see, he—he trusted me, and I've blabbed. Oh, you're right, Mary; I talk too much sometimes! But I know you won't tell. You can see what it would mean to him if they ever found out in New Lisbon. You'll keep mum, won't you?"

Mary readily gave her promise of silence, reminding Phyllis that the friendly action of Judkins was an assurance of his continued regard for her.

"Oh, it was the only decent thing for him to do," declared the latter. "Chan's one New Lisbonite who's on the square, I'll say that much for him. He wasn't taken in on that deal, but he got wise to it by accident through hearing



some of the others talking. I suppose he felt it his duty, being honest, to tip it to somebody in Hillsboro, and I was the only one he dared trust. I didn't mean ever to tell a living soul."

Mary gave her an embrace. "You should be careful, for you do rattle on frightfully sometimes, Phil. And don't get your little head turned by a stranger with a smile and a hidden past of which he must be ashamed."

Somehow this warning seemed merely still further to arouse the younger girl's natural obstinacy. Her eyes filled with a look of reckless defiance; she laughed, shrugging her shoulders.

"Oh, you're so circumspect and conventional, Mary! Nothing in the world could tempt you to do anything daring or risky. But what fun do you really get out of life? Now I'm different; I simply love to shock people who are too strait-laced. If you ever marry, it will all come about in a formal and prescribed manner. The man will be safe and conservative and well known; he'll propose like a parrot, and you'll accept him like an iceberg; he'll get the consent of mother and father, and the engagement will be announced in the regular way; you'll be married in church, take the usual wedding trip, and settle down to a humdrum existence. There won't be any romance or excitement about it. You'll be perfectly satisfied, but you'll have missed something. With me it will probably be different. I'd take real pleasure in giving the old gossips of this town a chance to exercise their tongues. If I don't elope, it won't be my fault! A runaway match for mine, with all the trimmings—moonlight, the man under my window, me swinging down a rope of sheets and blankets, a fast automobile waiting—we're off, pursuit, a wild race for the parson's, the knot tied in a hurry—and then father arriving just too late to stop it and just in time to give his blessing!" Her

cheeks were flushed, her eyes dancing. "Who knows?" she added mischievously, noting the look of reproof and alarm on her sister's face. "Jack Keeper may be the man!"

Mary caught her breath sharply, her apprehension redoubled.

"It certainly is the wretched stuff you've been reading!" she exclaimed. "Your head is filled with foolishness; you're worse than Cousin Helen, and all my argument was wasted on her. I'm afraid, Phil—I'm afraid you might do that very thing. And this Keeper is—I must tell you! I will!"

She forced her sister to sit down again on the chair, and she seated herself upon the edge of the bed. Her head was bent, and she seemed troubled about the manner of beginning. And at that moment Phyllis was exultantly thinking: "I found a way to make her own up; I knew I could. Now for her secret."

"As long as I must," said Mary, in a low tone, her white fingers clapping and unclapping nervously, "let me tell it as quickly and as briefly as I can. It happened last month when I was visiting Cousin Helen in Wayburn. She's much like you, impulsive, daring, romantic, heedless of advice. She's in love with George Hartford, a young man of whom Uncle Jared bitterly disapproves, principally, I presume, because he has chosen another man for her with better prospects. Although poor, Hartford seems to be respectable, at least. I met him the day he was ordered from the house by Uncle Jared. He and Helen had been meeting clandestinely, for he was camping with three friends at Lake Cherbogue, four miles away. They were on a two weeks' fishing trip, and had taken a cottage on a little island. I knew Helen was seeing him now and then in town, and slipping out to meet him for a few minutes at other times. She confided in me, and I did my best to dis-



suade her; but she declared that George was the only one she cared for or ever would—that the whole world couldn't make her give him up."

"Splendid!" cried Phyllis, clapping her hands gleefully. "Go on! Go on!"

"I persuaded her to induce him to come to the house and declare himself openly. Uncle Jared had seen him and forbidden him to speak to Helen even, and I knew how furious he would be if he found out they were still meeting in secret. Hartford came. His intentions were honest enough, and he seemed rather manly about it, but Helen's father showed him the door before he got very far in his declaration. I never saw Uncle Jared so angry; he threatened dreadful things; he scolded Helen, and he even threatened to lock her up if she saw the man again. She cried, but that night she told me she'd run away with George if she got the chance."

Again Phyllis expressed her delight. The story thrilled her fiery soul. Her cousin's experience was such an adventure as she had many times longed to experience herself. "But," she said regretfully, "she hasn't run away with him—yet."

"Not yet, but I'm afraid she will if he ever comes after her."

"But," questioned the younger girl suddenly, "what has this to do with Jack Keeper?"

"I'm coming to that part of it now. Helen knew Hartford was going away in a few days, for the fishing vacation was almost ended. He lives in Canton, a hundred and thirty miles from Wayburn. She was determined to see him again, but she was guarded so closely that she could not get out to meet him, even for a few minutes in the evening. Both uncle and aunt trusted me, for they knew I did not approve of anything that could not be done openly; secrecy and deception are not part of my nature. And Helen used

me to help her. It was three days later, the last day before the fishermen would leave for their homes. We went out for a drive in the afternoon. Uncle Jared was not home, and Helen managed to allay her mother's suspicions. Besides, I was to go with her. I'm not very familiar with the country roads around Wayburn, but when I caught a glimpse of a lake at a distance, after we had driven nearly an hour, I was sure she was hoping to meet George somehow, somewhere. We had driven halfway round the lake. On the eastern side we entered a long strip of woods. I became disturbed and tried to get Helen to turn back, but she declared that the shortest way home, then, was to keep on. In the midst of the timber she suddenly turned from the highway into a blind and overgrown wood road, where the branches whipped our faces and the passage was almost choked by undergrowth. I was startled. 'Keep still, cousin!' replied Helen in answer to my questions. 'I'm determined to see George before he goes away, and you may as well be nice and act as chaperon.'

"I could do nothing with her," Mary pursued, observing with what eagerness her sister was drinking in the story. "She declared she would go ahead alone if I deserted her. I simply had to stand by."

"If you hadn't I'd never speak to you again!" cried Phyllis.

"We had to leave the horse and trap, for the road became too bad to drive far along it. We hitched the horse, and went on afoot. Helen explained that the road came down to the lake shore in full view of the island, and she hoped to attract George's attention by signaling. But we never reached the lake. Suddenly, in the midst of those lonely woods, the path brought us into a little opening, and we almost stumbled over five men—tramps—who were sprawled around on the ground. The embers of



an almost dead fire smoldered in the middle of the glade. There were feathers scattered all about the place, which seemed to indicate that the tramps had been feasting, probably on chickens stolen from some farmhouse. There was a big jug, empty and lying on its side; probably it had contained hard cider, likewise stolen. For those men were drunk! Such wretched, repulsive, terrible creatures they were! One big, dirty, red-whiskered brute reared himself up almost beneath my feet and looked at me, blinking with his bloodshot eyes. I screamed." Shuddering, she covered her pale face with her hands.

"And you never told me—you never told me a word of it!" breathed Phyllis wonderingly.

"In a moment," Mary resumed, "four of those drunken ruffians had leaped up and surrounded us. Such faces! Such wicked, horrible eyes! And the way they grinned at us! Never in my life did I come so near fainting. We tried to turn back and run, but they stopped us, calling us 'pretties' and 'dearies' and 'little wild birdies.' I nearly died of terror, and when the red-whiskered beast put his hands on me—I tried to break away, but he held me. I saw Helen struggling with another. I struck that brutal face with my clenched fist, but he laughed, and his laugh was like the snarl of a wild animal. 'You'll pay for that!' he muttered in my ear.

"Then I saw the fifth man rise up at the far side of the glade, evidently just awakened to what was happening. He sat up and stared dumbly as if he did not comprehend at first. He was younger than the others, and cleaner; but it was evident that he had been eating and drinking with them; that he was one of them. Suddenly he leaped to his feet. With a single spring, almost, he seemed to cross the glade. I saw him come, and his eyes were blaz-

ing, his face was terrible to look on. He struck the red-whiskered ruffian just one blow, and the sound of it was like the crack of a pistol. The man went down as if hit by lightning. Instantly the young man whirled, seized the creature with whom Helen had been struggling, tore him from her, and sent him spinning into the bushes. He went at the remaining two. He smashed them down. Whining, they scrambled away into the underbrush. The creature he had struck first lay still, like a dead man. That man—the one who saved us from his beastly associates—was the same who calls himself Jack Keeper."

Phyllis took a long breath. "Well," she cried, "I said he could fight! And is this what you have against him—nothing more?"

"Nothing more! He was one of them, a comrade of outcasts and ruffians, degraded and drunken, but with a spark of manhood and honor still alive in his breast. He conducted us back to the trap, backed it into the road, held the horse while we got in. We owed him much, but yet—but yet he was one of them. We tried to thank him before we drove away; he stopped us almost brutally, and ordered us to go. I looked back after we had driven only a short distance, but he was gone—he had vanished into the woods. I suppose he returned to his wretched associates; such a man as he might do that, for they would fear him, not he them.

"I have never told you, Phil, because I promised Helen that I would not breathe a word of it to any one. She made me promise. And I was ashamed, also, when I realized how much I had been to blame. I should have prevented her from entering those woods. Uncle Jared trusted me, and I betrayed that trust. You, Phil—you must never repeat it to a soul."

But Phyllis did not seem to hear.



There was a strange, far-away look in her eyes, a strange, incomprehensible expression on her face. Her lips moved.

"The spark of manhood and honor was there," she murmured. "It is burning brighter now; it is a living flame!"

"Oh, Phyllis!" cried Mary. "I should not have told you! It has done no good, I see. You are foolish! You're quite mad!"

## CHAPTER XIX.

### A SURFACE SHIFT.

EARLY on Saturday, Bryce Farthing became a very busy man. Herman Berger, his rolled-up shirt sleeves exposing his huge red arms to the elbows, was puffing at the task of aiding two clerks to wait on customers when he observed Farthing standing at the end of one of the counters, a frown on his face, pulling hard at a black cigar. It was the first time the real-estate man had ever appeared in the grocer's place of business, and, with his face expressive of dull surprise, Berger improved the first opportunity to give the unexpected visitor his attention. At once Farthing drew him aside and began talking in low, earnest tones, the grocer listening without comment until it became necessary to make a reply.

"But it's a fine ball player he is. Maybe a good manager he could be."

The real-estate dealer uttered a suppressed execration, and poured another brimming measure of argument into Berger's ear, striving to mold the man's dull, unpliant mind with the hammer of conviction, but growing resentfully aware of failure as he progressed. Presently, having exhausted his ammunition, he ceased.

"Why not give him a try-out, I say," returned the stolid German. "It is a manager we have to get, Mr. Farthing; if he can play ball and manage, too, we

save money. What he has before done no difference makes, as I can see it."

Farthing viciously flung down his half-smoked cigar and crushed it beneath his heel, his manner indicating great disgust and vexation. "All right," he growled, turning disappointedly toward the door. "I know where you stand." Reaching the street, he muttered, with curling lips: "Stupid old dolt!"

David Mink looked up from the complicated internal regions of a watch into which he had been squinting through a glass gripped by one eye. Removing the glass, he greeted Farthing, who had entered and paused at the opposite side of the show case near the repair bench. In reply to Farthing's question he stated that, although very busy, he could spare a little time to listen to a matter of importance. Then he stood up and listened. In a few minutes, without comment, he sat down and prepared to resume his task upon the watch. Farthing glared at the mild little man in astonishment.

"Well, what have you got to say about it, Mink?" he asked, almost savagely.

"Nothing at present, Mr. Farthing," was the soft-spoken reply. "I don't wish to be hasty, you understand. I think I'll wait until I learn what the other directors think about it."

"By heavens!" said Farthing. "I like to see a man with a mind of his own!" He slammed the door, to the peril of the glass in the front of the little shop as he departed.

Benjamin Pratt, coming from one of his tenement houses, whither he had gone to see about some needed repairs, spoke to Farthing, who appeared to be passing by chance. As if the sight of the landlord had recalled the matter to his mind, Farthing stopped and engaged him in conversation regarding Harvey Ingalls' proposed plan of mak-



ing Keeper manager of the baseball team. In this case he was at first very clever; in fact, rather crafty, in his method of seeking to convince Pratt that the project was wild, unbusiness-like, even foolish; for he considered the big man the strongest and most forceful member of the board, who, having made up his mind, would stand by his guns to the end. Then, as he was finishing, to drive the final nail Farthing made a false stroke. Pratt listened noncommittally until Keeper's detractor referred to him as a person with an unknown and hidden past who would, therefore, not be received with open arms by the better class of people in Hillsboro. Instantly the landlord's bushy eyebrows came down in a heavy frown and his hard face was corrugated by wrinkles.

"I thought you were talking about hirin' him as a baseball manager, not as a society leader," he said. "I never knew it was necessary for the manager of a team to qualify as a pink-tea performer. Fact is, I got an idea the two things don't jibe, and the less a manager or player mixes with swells, the bigger his pull will be with the payin' crowds that follow the games. Soft stuff doesn't go in baseball, and the less of it a man has in him, the better he'll come through on the field. If that's all you got against Keeper, it doesn't cut ice with me, and I shall be for giving him a shot at it, anyhow."

Farthing had failed again; he realized the uselessness of wasting further words on Benjamin Pratt. He returned to his office in a highly disgruntled frame of mind, although the unexpected opposition he had encountered left him the more determined to find some method of carrying his point. For an hour or more, after his usual custom, he sat at his desk in full view of people passing upon the street, and made a pretense of being tremendously

busy dictating letters to his stenographer and attending to other important affairs of the Middle River Realty Company. Presently he produced a bill fold from his pocket and investigated the contents of one of its compartments, from which he fished forth three or four slips of paper, which, when spread out before him, proved to be I O U's for various sums. A moment of figuring showed him that the total amount of these sums was nearly five hundred dollars.

"He can't settle, even with his winnings of Thursday," he muttered, his voiced drowned by the furious clicking of the typewriter at which the blond stenographer was hammering feverishly. "It's a poor weapon, but it's all I have left. Perhaps he'll hold his horses rather than have the judge put wise."

A few minutes later he took a public automobile just outside his office, requesting to be driven to the ball park. The team would be out for morning practice, and he felt sure of finding Harvey Ingalls there. Entering the park, he perceived Ingalls smoking a cigar as he watched the performance of a rawboned, sandy, freckled young man who was working up a little smoke with Catcher Ganton while the remainder of the team fielded fungo batting. The sandy individual was "Hobe" Perkins, the tramp weaver of the Underfalls Mill, whom Murphy had pronounced unable to come up to the pitching standard of the Freebooters. A few yards behind Perkins, and slightly to one side, Jack Keeper stood, his hands on his hips, silently inspecting the weaver's samples as he displayed them. Keeper was not in uniform, and Farthing felt that the injury he had received would keep him out of the game until Monday at least.

Harvey Ingalls looked a trifle surprised as the real-estate man arrived at his side and spoke to him. "Business must be slack when you can leave it



to come over here in the forenoon, Farthing," said Harvey.

"I wanted to see you about an important matter," returned Farthing. "I have to meet a sight draft before the bank closes at noon, and——" He checked himself abruptly as Keeper, having stopped Perkins from throwing any more, turned and approached Ingalls. Perceiving his enemy, Jack gave him a challenging look and a cold nod.

"Mr. Ingalls," he said, "I think we'll have to try that man this afternoon. He has some curves, a fast one with a little break in it, and fair control. We want to save Stallings for the Jawcrackers Monday. Bromley's arm might as well be in a sling, and Wade never would last nine innings. We've got to take a chance. If Ganton handles this man right, there's a possibility that he can get away with it, providing he can stand fire in a real game. Of course, I can't tell anything about that until I see him go up against it."

Harvey looked worried and disappointed. "I was in hopes he'd show up better. The Clippers are a tougher bunch than the Johnnies. They're only two games behind us and itching to step into second position. After what happened to us yesterday, they'll come over here cocked and primed and full of confidence. When it comes to legitimate baseball, they're as hard to beat as the Jawcrackers—sometimes we've found them harder. I had a wild dream that you might size Perkins up as an undiscovered wonder."

"Hardly. He'd much rather play baseball than work in a mill, and if he was a wonder he'd have been discovered before this. You'll pick up diamond tiaras just about as often as you will pitchers who are undiscovered wonders. Any ivory hunter will tell you that. All the same, even if the chance is small, this man might pull the fat out of the fire. It's unfortunate the doctor won't let me go into the game,

for we're going to be wabbly at third, too. We can only do our best—and pray."

As he listened a new idea crept into Farthing's mind. Unpalatable experience had made the baseball public of Hillsboro both critical and exacting, and the loss of Murphy as manager was sure to create a condition of suspense and uneasiness. The man who attempted to fill the former manager's place would need to make good without delay in order to satisfy the local patrons of the game. A bad beginning would be likely to set the rabble against him, and, although Keeper had made a hit as a player, the situation was such that he was quite unlikely to have the same fortune as a manager. At once Farthing, all smoothness and suavity, took part in the conversation.

"We're decidedly up against it, Harvey," he said, "and we'll have to trust to Keeper's judgment. If he says there's a chance to win with this Perkins in the box, Perkins is the man to pitch. You have acknowledged that you are not qualified to handle the team, so why fret over it at all? Pending the action of the directors regarding a new manager, I am in favor of giving Keeper full control and a free hand. That's the principal thing that brought me out here this forenoon. I knew you would be butting in and trying to hand out advice that, doubtless, would do more harm than good. You'd better inform the players that Keeper is their manager for the time being, at least, and then come back to town with me."

Ingalls stared at Farthing, somewhat flabbergasted. Keeper, his eyes narrowing a trifle, stared also, a faint, slow, comprehending smile flickering for a moment at the corners of his lips.

"By Jove!" cried Harvey. "I'm glad you feel that way, Bryce. It is the thing to do, but I didn't want the directors to get the idea that I was taking



the bit in my teeth. Keeper, old man, it's up to you to do your best. I'll inform the players at once that you are in full authority."

While Ingalls was doing this, Farthing had something to say to Keeper: "I hope you'll forget our little unpleasantness of last night. I admit that I may have appeared a trifle offensive by being so outspoken, but Harvey gave me a jolt by the suddenness with which he proposed you for manager, without consulting any one else. I was annoyed, for I felt that he should have talked with the rest of the directors first. Calmer consideration has led me to modify the stand I took on the impulse of the moment."

"I wonder if that was it?" said Keeper quietly.

Farthing flushed. "Why, certainly," he maintained, smiling down the wrath that threatened to boil again to the surface. "I really have no feeling against you. Why should I have? No one can be more anxious than I to have a manager who will make our team a winner, and if you can do that you'll find me among the first to give you all due credit."

"You are more than kind," returned Jack, with significance that was not wholly veiled.

Ingalls came hurrying back in a highly satisfied frame of mind. "I've told them," he stated. "They understand that you're in full control, Keeper, and that what you say goes. Now go to it and do your best. You can fix up your signal system with them and do anything else that's necessary. I'm going to accept Bryce's invitation to go back to town with him."

There was an odd expression in Keeper's eyes as he watched two men leave the field together. "I think I'm on to your curves, Farthing," he muttered, "but perhaps, if I keep my wits about me and have a little luck, you won't be able to fan me out, after

all. I have outguessed more than one pitcher who was handing me his most elusive slants."

The automobile, with Farthing and Ingalls in the tonneau, had reached the brow of the hill and brought them within full view of Hillsboro when Harvey suddenly remembered. "What was that you were saying about having to meet a sight draft to-day, Bryce?" he asked.

The other man glanced at his watch. "It's all right," he returned. "I have time to burn. I was thinking that perhaps I'd have to ask you to let me have a hundred or two on your I O U's, but I don't believe it's necessary. I have enough on deposit to pay the draft, and there's money due me from Chicago the first of the week. I won't trouble you."

## CHAPTER XX.

### SWIFT WORK.

AS the mills gave a half holiday on Saturday, the crowd that turned out for the game that afternoon was even larger than the one assembled at the park on the date of Keeper's advent in Hillsboro. Every available seat was filled, and the heavy ropes running from the termination of the bleachers on either side all the way to the distant fence were needed to keep the standees from encroaching on the field. Even then several constables were kept busy driving back those who were disposed to slip under the ropes and push out into the open space.

And it seemed that all the gathering who had not seen Jack Keeper before had heard of him, at least, and were eager to watch him in action. When he appeared in uniform with the local players, limping a trifle, some one with a lusty voice bellowed:

"There he is—there's the bird that cracked the Jawcrackers! Hooray for Ty Keeper!"



The crowd responded with a rousing cheer, and Jack actually blushed, losing no time in starting the Freebooters at their warming up. The Clippers were practicing, but Keeper did not permit any of his players to loaf around the bench while waiting for the field. The bat bags were opened, and every one was given a chance to take a turn at light hitting, with the exception of Bromley, whose finger needed a rest more than anything. The pitchers were put to the job of limbering their arms. Perkins was the only one, however, who had a catcher detailed to him exclusively, and it was Perkins who received the most attention and advice from the young manager.

Keeper found time to look the Clippers over. They were younger and rather more cleanly cut than the Jawcrackers; it seemed likely that several of them had been college players. All appeared to have plenty of "pep," and doubtless they would rely far more than the New Lisbon team on their ability to win by playing straight, legitimate baseball, with bulldozing cut out. Their practice was swift and snappy; occasionally they made sensational stops or catches; the throwing of their infielders was bullet accurate, and the trio in the outfield seemed to be the possessors of powerful whips. Jack decided that, should they work as well in the game as in practice, they would be more formidable than the Jawcrackers, who frequently bluffed their way to victory.

When the local players came to practice, although Keeper made an effort to spur them up, the contrast should have been apparent to any one. There were several old-timers on the team, and these men seemed disinclined to exert themselves beyond a certain limit with nothing depending; and in this their example affected all the others. Nevertheless, Jack's experience with them had taught him that nearly all were really anxious to win when they

got into a game, and he was aware that many a team that practices well fails to keep up to the same excellent standard in a hard-fought contest.

Keeper's failure to take third in practice brought remonstrances from various quarters. Beholding a local man by the name of Prouty occupying that corner of the diamond, individual fans, as well as bunches of them, began calling for the man who had spiked the frame-up through which it had been arranged to deliver the previous game on the home grounds to the detested Jawcrackers; and in a short time it seemed that at least three-fourths of the assembled spectators were chanting in unison:

"Ty Keeper! We want Keeper!"

Harvey Ingalls came out from the stand and consulted with Jack. Then he borrowed the megaphone used by the umpire in announcing the batteries, and, having presently succeeded in silencing the uproar, explained that on account of the injury he had received in the game with New Lisbon, Keeper had been forbidden to play before Monday by his doctor. Immediately a mighty, lugubrious groan went up from the crowd. When this sound died down to a disappointed grumble, the same leather-throated individual who had called attention to Jack as he appeared on the field rose and howled:

"Put him in if he has to play on crutches! With one leg in a sling, he's the best third sacker in this league."

This produced a great laugh, and thenceforth only a few insistent persons continued to demand the man who had become such a sudden favorite with the "bugs."

Tommy Hapgood had brought Phyllis Ingalls to the game, and, watching for the girl, Bryce Farthing joined them in the stand. Phyllis could not let pass such an opportunity as this to give him a jab. "Our new third baseman—and manager—seems to be held in greater



esteem by the crowd than by you, Mr. Farthing," she said.

"Which I fear may be unfortunate—for him," was the calm retort. "No ball player is perfect, and when people expect a man to be superhuman they are bound to condemn him for mistakes which would be pardoned in others. However, he may be another Lobert that the big-league scouts have overlooked."

When the umpire announced the batteries, the mill crowd gave Perkins a cheer. Keeper spoke a few final encouraging words in the weaver's ear before he ascended the hill. "Keep cool," said Jack, "and follow Ganton's signals without question; he knows these batters better than you do. Forget the crowd, and remember you have eight men with you who are going to back you up for all they are worth. And don't hurry; take your time all the time. Now go to it and show them that you've got something in your head as well as up your sleeve."

Perkins' freckled face was rather pale, but he seemed to have himself well in hand. As he placed his foot on the slab he heard the Freebooters burst into a chattering volume of encouraging coaching, and the sound of their voices, coming from all sides, heartened him. Snook Chetwind, leading off for the Clippers, tapped the dish with the end of his bat and squared away, with a confident grin. Fumbling a moment longer with his mask, Ganton crouched and signaled. Perkins wound up and let fly his fast high one on the inside corner. Chetwind, noted as a batter who worked pitchers for passes oftener than any man in the Middle River League, did the unexpected, smashing that first one on the seam and driving it on a line over the infield toward left garden. The pitcher's heart gave a leap like a frog prodded by a stick, and he jerked himself round to follow the ball with his eyes.

Out in deep left, Con Lassing was on the jump, and he scarcely seemed to touch the grass tips as he ran. If the ball got past him it would go to the fence for a certain two-sacker, and the fleet Chetwind might even succeed in stretching it into a triple. In his heart, which still choked him, Perkins knew Lassing could not come within yards of catching the ball. Then Lassing caught it.

The crowd came up with a roar as the outfielder shot through the air in a final amazing leap, speared the humming horsehide with his gloved hand, turned a complete flipflap on the ground, regained his feet like a circus acrobat, and held the captured sphere aloft. It was such a catch as might be made once in a thousand attempts, and Lassing had fully earned the applause given him.

Perkins' heart settled back to its normal position; he breathed once more, the blood flowed again in his body, and the sickly pallor passed from his face. Keeper had told him that there were eight other players who were going to back him up for all they were worth, but now, for the first time, the weaver twirler was stiffened and steadied by that assurance, the actual words of which he suddenly seemed to hear echoing in his brain. He laughed as the ball was relayed to him by way of the shortstop. Of course he would be hit, but what of that? He was pitching for the best team that ever had supported him, every man of whom desired to win this game as much—or nearly as much—as he did. They would do their part; it was up to him to do his as far as possible, without worry or fear. If he lost, he would be no worse off than before; if he won—well, he was going to win if it lay in him.

Mask in hand, Ganton grinned at Chetwind, who was disappointedly returning from his fruitless dash to first.



Chetwind grinned back. "Horseshoes," he said. "If I'd known Lassing was toting a rabbit's foot, I'd hit in another direction. One circus play don't win a game. We know you haven't got any pitcher to-day, and it's going to be a cinch for us."

Perkins' jaws came together. Chetwind had flung him a pitying, disdainful glance with those final words. No pitcher, eh? He'd show them! It happened that Perkins really believed that he was a pitcher of considerable ability who never had found a good opportunity to demonstrate just what he could do when he did his best. Something whispered in his ear that this was the opportunity he must seize or remain forever outside the pale.

Ganton snapped the mask strap over the back of his head, pulled the wired protector into place with one hand, and settled, crouching, to signal. His instructions were to warp one over, low and close, for the next batter, Klobitz. Perkins nodded and obeyed, and, like Chetwind, Klobitz banded it fair and hard. It was a zipping grounder to the right of Tonk Turner, the shortstop. Turner leaped, and, when his feet touched the ground again, he dived forward on his stomach; with his bare hand outstretched, he stopped the ball—stopped it, held it. Like a flash, he sat up; he did not have time to rise to his feet. And, sitting thus on the ground, Tonk made a beautiful throw to Huggins, at first, getting Klobitz by a yard.

Two such plays, coming so promptly at the opening of the struggle, gave the crowd a legitimate excuse to howl their heads off, and if a man of them had a head on his shoulders when he ceased shouting from sheer lack of breath, it was not his fault.

In the midst of that uproar, without attracting attention, Keeper hastily slipped out from the bench and reached Ganton, whom he grasped by the shoul-

der. "Look here," he said rapidly, in a low tone, "those fellows think they can drive Perkins from the slab in a hurry. They have orders to go after him hard from the start, and wait for nothing. Keep that in your noddle till they change their style." Then, as quietly and unobtrusively, he returned to the bench.

"He's right," thought Ganton. "I never knew Chetwind to hit at the first ball pitched before, and Klobitz usually takes one. Oh, all right; we'll play 'em for that line of stuff." He called Perkins, and spoke a few guarded words for his ear alone.

"Go at him, Hack," called a Clipper, waiting on the coaching line. "He's fruit, and we'll have 'em breaking their necks with them high-divin' stunts."

Perkins, on the mound again, followed instructions, using an outdrop that would have been declared a ball had not Hackford, reaching for it, fouled down the first-base line. The next one was too wide, and the batter caught himself in the midst of his swing at it. Then he fouled a high one, which also would have been a ball, and found himself in a hole with two strikes against him. The pitcher's courage was good, and Ganton ran the risk of calling for the high hopper. The twirler put everything he had on it, and Hackford missed cleanly. Perkins had struck a man out, and his confidence was redoubled. The applause which he now received in his turn made him almost prance as he jogged beamingly to the bench. Turner and Lassing, coming in, were cheered until they touched their caps.

"Now, that's baseball, boys!" said Keeper. "If you could play that way against Connie Mack's bunch of world beaters, for instance, they'd have to keep awake every minute to trim you. Let's try a little of their own medicine on them. I understand Plinney gets fretful and disturbed if he's harried



hard. Everybody step up to the pan with the idea of hitting anything he puts over."

Like Perkins, however, Plinney could not murmur at his support in the opening inning. Hub Randall hammered a hummer toward third, but the guardian of that corner cuffed it down and nipped Hub with the throw across. Andrews made four fouls and then boosted a fly to right field, praying in vain for the fielder to muff it. With two strikes on him, Dan Grout finally connected, but the pill whistled straight into the greedy hands of Klobitz, the second baseman.

"Hot stuff!" and "Some game!" commented the spectators.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### THE FIGHTING SPIRIT.

**B**RYCE FARTHING had watched the events of the opening inning with calmness. His failure to show emotion of any sort seemed to annoy Phyllis, whose cheeks were glowing and whose eyes were bright. Warmly she took him to task.

"I am waiting," he replied placidly. "And the fact that, to prevent the Clippers from getting off with a flying start, it was necessary for Lassing and Turner to turn off phenomenal plays gives me apprehension. I haven't any faith that this mill-hand pitcher of ours can hold out long, and I don't wish to get all wrought up with enthusiasm that is certain to turn to grief later."

"By Jove!" exclaimed Tommy Hapgood. "I wish I could be so cool and calculating; really I do!"

"I'm glad I'm not!" declared Phyllis. "Cool! I call it cold-blooded. Really, Mr. Farthing, I believe you'd like to see us beaten to-day."

He protested that this was not true. Nevertheless, the beginning of the second inning gave him much satisfaction, which he continued to hide behind the

mask of indifference. Moray stung the third pitched ball for a safety, and was promptly sacrificed to second by Peanut Schmidt. Then, seeking to keep Runyan from hitting, Perkins handed him transportation.

"It looks to me," said Farthing, "as if this pitcher wouldn't last as long as I expected. He's so nervous now that he can't find the pan."

Perkins was nervous, but he had not wholly lost his control, and presently he compelled the next batter to hit at a drop. The ball soggly caromed to the ground, fair, two yards to the left of the plate, and Ganton pounced upon it like a hungry dog snapping up a bone. His throw to third was as certain and as swift as the poniard stab of death, cutting Moray down while he was still a long distance away. Fortunately, Prouty had the sense to whirl and wing the sphere to second, and Runyan was out by a narrow margin as he shot at the sack, feet foremost. The amazed shout of joy that greeted this unexpected double play drowned the exclamation which escaped involuntarily from Farthing.

"Cheer, Mr. Farthing—cheer!" urged Phyllis, in the midst of the tumult.

"Not yet," he returned. "I admire the clever work, but it hasn't given me any confidence in our pitcher."

"Well, at least it should give him confidence in the team," she said. "I'm sure it will, if he has any appreciation."

It had added to the confidence of Perkins. His taut and quivering nerves relaxed suddenly, and he laughingly walked in with Prouty, who felt highly satisfied with himself for the part he had performed. At the bench, Keeper had a word of praise for the catcher and the third baseman. To the pitcher he said:

"You see they're behind you. You're getting support to make any man pitch his arm off."

"Sure!" agreed the weaver. "If I



can't win with that backing, I'm no good."

Again Jack sent the Freebooters after Plinney, and again Plinney disposed of them in one-two-three order. It seemed to be one of the days when he had everything working, and on such days his opponents in the Middle River League had found him practically invulnerable; on such days his air-tight twirling filled the opposing batters with despair; on one such a day, in the first week of the present season, he had let the Johnnies down without a hit or a run.

Perkins came back strong, delighting many an anxious Hillsboro fan by whiffing Foxbrook, the catcher, and Plinney with eight pitched balls; but Chetwind, coming up again, rapped a safety through the infield. As if this hit had got his nerve, Perkins immediately uncorked the wildest sort of a wild pitch that permitted Chetwind to gallop, chortling, to second, from which he shouted:

"Wait a minute, Duck; he'll throw it over the grand stand! He's going after the altitude record directly. Make him find the dish!"

"Aw, he couldn't get it over if the plate was the size of a barn door," said Klobitz, pretending to be careless and unprepared.

Fathoming the batter's purpose, Keeper hastily signaled Perkins to keep the ball wide; but the weaver missed the sign, and, fearful of pitching himself into a hole, cut the middle of the pentagon with a roundhouse bender. Klobitz smashed the pill with violent joy, driving it, curving, into right field.

That curve nearly turned the drive into a hit, for Grout, the poorest ground coverer in the outer gardens, misjudged the sweep of the parabola and was forced at the last moment to stretch himself to the utmost, finally making a leaping one-handed lunge. But he caught the ball.

Klobitz, returning disgusted from

first, met Perkins on his way to the bench. "You won't last much longer," said the second baseman of the Clippers. "We'd put the blanket on you the first inning only for the fool-crazy support you got. It's you for the stable next crack we take at you."

"Don't cry, little boy!" retorted Perkins. "I'll lend ye a handkerchief to wipe your nose."

While Tonk Turner was striking out, Keeper poured a few words into Chuck Ganton's ear. "They're still trying for Perkins' angora by attempting to start a batting streak. Make him keep them reaching as much as possible without pitching himself into too bad holes. And watch the bench closer; I tried to prevent him from putting that last one over."

Turner, growling bitterly over his misfortune, presently reapproached the bench. "Shut up!" said Ganton. "He ain't puttin' a thing on the pill. Watch me hit him safe."

"If you git a hit off him," snarled Tonk, "I'll take poison out of shame! You never could hit, anyhow."

"Is that so?" sneered Chuck wrathfully. "I wouldn't be follerin' you on the order if I wasn't catchin'." Then he jogged into the box, looking as vicious as a Gila monster, and made the first hit for the Freebooters, a zipping grasser into right.

"Go after him," Keeper urged Perkins. "Don't reach for 'em, but hit anything he puts over. Perhaps you can help start this thing going right here."

Perkins tried hard enough, making three fouls, but Plinney got him at last. Nevertheless, on the pitcher's final swing, Ganton stole second, although Foxbrook made an excellent throw.

Watching Plinney, with Randall at bat, Keeper saw, as he had expected he would, that the Clipper pitcher worked far better with the sacks clean of runners. "If we can get men on bases



at the right time we'll push him off his feet," Jack decided.

But this was not the time. Randall hit the ball, to be sure, but he merely popped to Hackford, at first.

Ganton, coming in, met Turner going out. Chuck grinned; Tonk curled his lips in a sneer. "Another double cross," said the latter. "How much did you pay him to let you hit it?"

"I'll buy the poison for you if you'll really take it," returned the catcher. "It would be a good thing for the team; we might git a real shortstop to fill your position." These men were chums off the field.

In the fourth Klobitz's prophecy that the Clippers would send Perkins to the stable nearly came true. With only one down, they got runners on second and third. Then Runyan and Hackford tried the squeeze play; the former hit the first ball pitched, with Hackford dashing for the plate before the sphere fairly left the pitcher's fingers. Turner made a marvelous pick-up of the grounder and shot it home, where Ganton got the runner by a whisker, after which he tried to stop Schmidt, who was legging it for third. Had Prouty done his part it would have been a double play; but, in dodging spikes, he failed to tag the sliding man.

Ganton glared at Turner. "Come to life!" he said. "If you'd do your sleeping nights, instid of on the ball field, we might put some of these plays through."

Turner whooped and flung up his hands. "Hear him!" he shouted. "And he stood round caressin' the ball before he thought to put it to third." At this time neither uttered a word of reproach for Prouty; after the game was over it would be different.

Among the spectators not a few expressed the belief that Ganton had "pulled a bone" by his failure to try for Runyan instead of Schmidt; but Keeper did not feel that way about it.

In waiting for Hackford, the catcher had been placed so that he could make a quick throw to third, and would have got his man had Prouty risen to the occasion. Had he thrown to first he would have been compelled to make a turn after tagging the runner, and Runyan, having hit the ball, was going down the line like a turpentine greyhound. Jack did not believe a criticism of the play was called for.

Drake, the Clipper shortstop, was yearning for a hit that would let Schmidt home with the first run of the game, but Ganton made Perkins work slowly and carefully, and presently the batter put up a high foul close to the stand. In a twinkling Ganton's mask was flung bounding on the ground, and he went after the ball.

"Get it, Chuck—get it!" begged the crowd. "Plenty of room."

There was not plenty of room. The ball was falling perilously close to the edge of the stand, and many thought it would not drop clear. Still, the catcher kept on, although he was aware that the barrier was near at hand, and he could vaguely see a blur of human faces rising tier on tier above him. If he made the catch he could not slow down; he would have to take it at full speed just as if everything was clear before him. To flinch, even, would mean failure. He plunged against the boarded front of the stand with a crash that flung him backward to the ground. But an instant before the collision his fingers had closed on the ball.

The shock stunned him, as if he had been struck by a club, and for a trifling space of time blackness seemed to fall over him like a pall. But his gripping fingers held the ball with the clutch of grim death.

"Out!" shouted the umpire, taking note of that fact as he ran toward the prostrate man.

Ganton looked up dazedly and saw the umpire and several players bending



over him. Above his head rose the roaring cheers of the delighted crowd. Keeper, in spite of his lame leg, was there, on one knee, lifting the nervy catcher. Tonk Turner came tearing through the circle, hurling aside anybody in his path.

"Are you hurt, Chuck?" the shortstop panted. "Are you hurt much?"

Ganton drew a breath, relinquishing the ball to the umpire, who took it from his hand. "Hurt!" he returned scornfully. "How could I be? I guess I must have hit my head."

TO BE CONTINUED.

The August 20th TOP-NOTCH, out July 20th, will bring you the continuation of this story. The magazine is published on the 10th, 20th and 30th of every month, so you have not long to wait for the next chapters. Back numbers can be obtained from news dealers or the publishers.

### The Right Guess

THAT man is a phrenologist, Pat."

"A what?" asked Pat, puzzled.

"A phrenologist, I tell you."

"An' sure what's that, sor?"

"Why, a man that can tell, by feeling the bumps on your head, what kind of a man you are."

"Bumps on my head, is it?" exclaimed Pat. "Begorra, then, I'd av thought it would give him more av an idea what kind av a woman me wife is!"

### Truth in Delirium

WHILE making his rounds one morning, the village doctor met the brother of a patient of his, and inquired how the invalid had passed the night.

"Oh, he's much worse," dejectedly replied the brother.

"Why, when I left him yesterday I thought he was recovering," said the doctor.

"Well, he must have had a relapse,

then. He's been delirious for several hours. At three o'clock he said: 'What an old woman that doctor of mine is!' and he hasn't made a rational remark since."

### To Save His Face

AN old Irish laborer walked into the studio of an artist and asked for money to obtain a meal, as he was too weak to work.

The artist, seeing possibilities for a sketch, said: "I'll give you a dollar if you let me paint you."

"It's an aisy way to make money," said the man, "but I wonder how I'd get it off?"

### Eggs and Stones

A CLERGYMAN'S little boy was spending the day with the bishop's children. The talk turned to the country, and the preacher's son, who lived on a farm, was airing his superior knowledge.

"At the rectory," boasted the boy, "we've got a hen that lays an egg every day."

"Oh, that's nothing!" airily replied the bishop's son. "My father lays a foundation stone once a week."

### Two Good Cigars

SENATOR STONE, from Missouri, had a tiresome constituent on his hands one night at a Washington hotel, and was trying to get rid of him. The constituent, noticing the restlessness of the senator, offered to buy a cigar, and Stone, relating the incident, says that he accepted.

Walking to the cigar stand, the constituent, sliding a dime across the show case, said to the clerk:

"Give us two good five-cent cigars."

The clerk shoved the dime back, saying as he did so: "I never sold any."

The constituent faded into smoke.



# Talks With Top-Notch Readers

By BURT L. STANDISH

## IN SUMMERTIME

**T**HE summer has always meant to the person of wholesome tastes a season of lively pleasures in the great open air.

Woods and fields, rivers and seas, invite even the sluggard to bestir himself and take part in the manifold recreations of nature's playtime. We take our sports according to our various tastes—this man is never long apart from his horses and dogs, that one is forever tinkering devotedly about his boats and fishing tackle; but it may be said that all of us—the exception, poor fellow, is out of the running—are firmly bound together in one vast fraternity by The Great American Baseball. In city and town, on the Western ranch, the Southern plantation, and the sand lots of the Eastern metropolis, the crack of bat meeting ball is heard above the music of summer's symphony.

TOP-NOTCH has always left the latching out for devotees of the game that is justly called national, and this season brings to its pages new features to give delight. The pictures of famous teams in the issue of July 20th brought forth a salvo of applause, and in the next issue, that of August 20th, four more teams will be shown to their admirers; and so on, in every mid-month number—they have the red top, you know—there will be four teams selected from the five big leagues of the country.

Ten days after you have reveled in Mr. Fitzgerald's lively interview with Ty Cobb, published in this issue, you will be roaring over his experience with

that prime favorite, Christy Mathewson—the same old "Matty." And in succeeding issues, you will meet, through Mr. Fitzgerald's cheerful efforts, many more of the good fellows for whom you have shouted yourselves hoarse many a time.

The next issue will have its usual quota of baseball fiction. "At the Look-in Corner" will be continued, and Hugh Kahler, a genial humorist, will show one of the funny sides of the game in "All Ribbed Up," a short novelette. Mr. Dorrance contributes to the field of sport a spirited yachting tale under the title: "On the Weather Rail"; and the readers who relish hearty laughter will welcome Ellis Parker Butler's "So Sudden." Altogether it will be a number quite up to the TOP-NOTCH standard, and it will be distinctly notable for one more feature—the beginning of a new serial novel, "Thunder Ridge," by Boyd Cable. It is a stirring story of ranch life and adventure, and its scenes are laid in the wonderful open country of Australia.

The summer months show no ebbing of the tide of friendly letters that pour in upon us to give commendation or kindly criticism. A well-wisher writes from the Badger State:

*Editor of TOP-NOTCH MAGAZINE.*

DEAR SIR: I have seen many condemnations, in "Talks With TOP-NOTCH Readers," against its staff of writers and their work, so I thought I would give my opinion. I think the magazine is chock-full of good stories.

I am fond of all the stories, except those



of the sea and Revolutionary times, for example, "The Voice in the Night." I am particularly fond of Camera Chap stories, Bainbridge, of Bangor, and boxing stories. Why not publish a boxing serial? I think you could coax one of the writers up to it. Of your staff of writers give my regards to Lebhar, Fitzgerald, and Boston. Hoping you will succeed in the publishing of the magazine three times a month, and not forget the Blake stories, I remain, sincerely yours,

Granton, Wis.

E. A. PETERSON.



A READER of TOP-NOTCH since its beginning, Mr. Bert Riverstone, of Buckhannon, West Virginia, says:

I have been intending to write you ever since one of your correspondents criticized a writer for using the correct Roman notation to designate the hour of four o'clock, instead of the erroneous IIII as is used on the dials of all clocks and watches which do not use the Arabic characters. But I kept putting it off writing to you until I read in the issue of May 10th an erroneous explanation given by A. T. Garrett, of Cleveland, Ohio.

The critic's point was well taken. No timepiece has IV for four o'clock, but Mr. Garrett did not give the correct reason. The "IIII" on the dial of a watch or clock is a monument to the ignorance, stupidity, and stubbornness of the most narrow-minded, opinionated, and conceited buffoon that ever sat upon a throne—King James I. of England, the stupid son of the beautiful and brilliant Mary, Queen of Scots.

King James ordered the court clockmaker to make a clock for his private bedroom. When it was completed the clockmaker brought the timepiece to the king and had the hours designated in the Roman characters, and the hour of four was written as it should be—"IV." But this did not suit King James. He said it was wrong, that "IIII" was four, not "IV." The artisan tried to argue the matter as far as an humble workman would be allowed to argue with a king, but to no avail. He was told to get himself and his clock out of the palace, and to change it to IIII or he, the King, would put him in the Tower.

The clockmaker went away and changed the characters on the dial to suit the king, and brought it back, and it was placed in the palace. Toadyism was responsible for every other clock in England being made the same way, and following "The Path the Calf

Made," has perpetuated the error and made it universal.

*Editor of TOP-NOTCH MAGAZINE.*

DEAR SIR: I must say that I never have found a magazine that has got anything on TOP-NOTCH. I like all the stories. And I can stand all that Mr. J. A. Fitzgerald can write about Steve Blake and then some. Have Mr. Fitzgerald keep right on with Blakey; don't give him up. For Steve is the first thing I look for when I open the book. And I am in hopes before long that we shall see TOP-NOTCH out once a week. Yours truly,

JACK B. STARK.

Rochester, Vt.

*Editor of TOP-NOTCH MAGAZINE.*

DEAR SIR: There probably can be no better way in which to express my appreciation of your magazine than by saying that I have not missed a number of it since I first happened to buy a copy some three years ago. Frequently this has entailed more inconvenience and trouble than is usual to the magazine reader. In Alaska, by the time I could get the latest issue, another one would be due on the news stands in the States. On the road, playing one-night stands, and riding at all hours on all kinds of trains, TOP-NOTCH was a very welcome member of the company.

Down here among the sagebrush and cactus, I have to walk four miles to get the TOP-NOTCH, but just the same the day it is due in town sees me "beating it" up the railroad track with a dime clutched firmly in my hand. The extra issue each month is a very welcome announcement to all TOP-NOTCH fans. The Camera Chap stories are great, and Bertram Lebhar is to be congratulated on them.

Being a theatrical man—during the season, of course—the stories of the stage are very interesting, and I am sure that the author of the serial that has just ended must in his time have been a member of some troupe on a "tank-town circuit." All the authors that contribute to TOP-NOTCH are first class, all the stories good. Some are better than others, of course, but even the ones we like least are better than the best in the average magazine.

Thanking you for complying with the popular demand for an extra issue, and trusting that TOP-NOTCH will always continue to be a winner, I am, very truly yours,

Burbank, Wash.

WIRTH RAYMOND.

*Editor of TOP-NOTCH MAGAZINE.*

DEAR SIR: Give us some more serials like "Around the World in Thirty Days," by A.



P. Terhune, and "Breaking Into the Big League," by Gilbert Patten, as they are unbeatable. Give us some more long novels like "Shadowed in Chicago," by Albert M. Treynor, and "The Firing Man," by J. A. Fitzgerald, as they were splendid tales.

The only story that did not appeal to me was "Marine Strategy," by Frank H. Shaw. But no doubt there were many readers who enjoyed that story. "The First Rusher," and "Without Appeal," by yourself, were bully stories.

My favorite writers are yourself, Gilbert Patten, Albert M. Treynor, A. Payson Terhune, Harold de Polo, with his animal stories, Wallace Watson, J. F. Dorrance, Bertram Lebharr, and John Emerson.

Give us some more Bainbridge, of Bangor, tales; also continue the baseball serials by Gilbert Patten. Please give us a larger magazine, add another serial, another long novel, and as many more stories as possible, and charge five cents more.

I agree with Erliny Knudson, of New York, that Burt L. Standish should furnish a story in every issue, and I think that he is the best writer on the staff.

Please give us many more stories like "Diamond Fox," by Harold de Polo. Give us some more long novels by Albert M. Treynor, as he is my favorite long-novel writer. With best wishes, I am, yours truly,  
Osceola, Neb.      RAYMOND G. CORNINE.

*Editor of TOP-NOTCH MAGAZINE.*

DEAR SIR: I for one would like three serials. Have one to begin and one to end in each issue. That comes nearer suiting all than any other way.

Please give us a story of the South, where the cotton grows. Yours respectfully,  
Barksdale, S. C.      GUY P. TODD.



FROM Larium, Michigan, we have this, sent by Mr. James L. Contratto, of that place:

In reading the "Talks" I notice several letters of criticism by different readers. Why should they criticize an author? Are not authors human? Doesn't humankind make mistakes? These critics should try to write stories for publication, and have some one criticize theirs, and see if they like criticism.

I like all your stories, and I think your

stories are fine, but why not have a swimming story now and then? With best wishes, I remain, yours truly,

JAMES L. CONTRATTO.

The man or woman who cannot stand criticism is pretty sure to be inefficient and remain so. It is the touchstone of ability to excel. The chap who resents criticism is soon likely to find himself so unimportant that he is not worth criticizing.

TOP-NOTCH authors, as a rule, are men who can stand criticism. Indeed, the most successful of them welcome it, turn it to profitable account. Now and then one begins to resent justified criticism; then we know that we are seeing a good man go wrong. We try to reason with him, but usually without avail.

Criticism is not always justified. Sometimes it grows out of the ignorance of the critic or his low taste. A writer of fiction, like every other artist, should acquire the knack of knowing when there is anything in criticism worth having, and when it is mistaken and valueless. But never, if he is worth his salt, is he going to resent it.

Not quite to the point is it to tell the criticizing reader to go and write a story himself. It is not the business of the reader to write stories; he doesn't profess to make a business of it; but the author does.

A performer may come on the stage dressed in tights, and try to turn a back handspring and land on his head. The audience may tell the "acrobat" that he is no good. The acrobat may reply: "Try it yourself; see if you can do any better." The spectators reply: "We don't profess to be acrobats; we are only spectators who have paid to see an acrobat perform." The reader does not profess to be an author; he has paid his money to read the work of an author.





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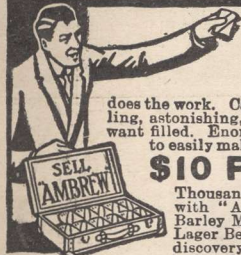


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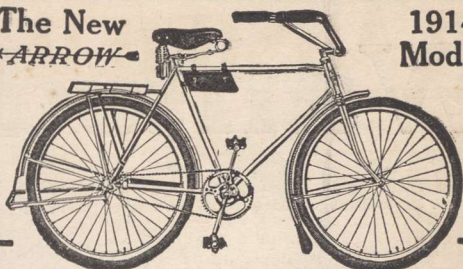
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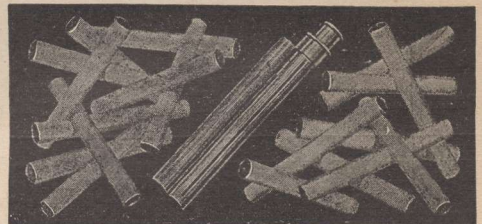
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