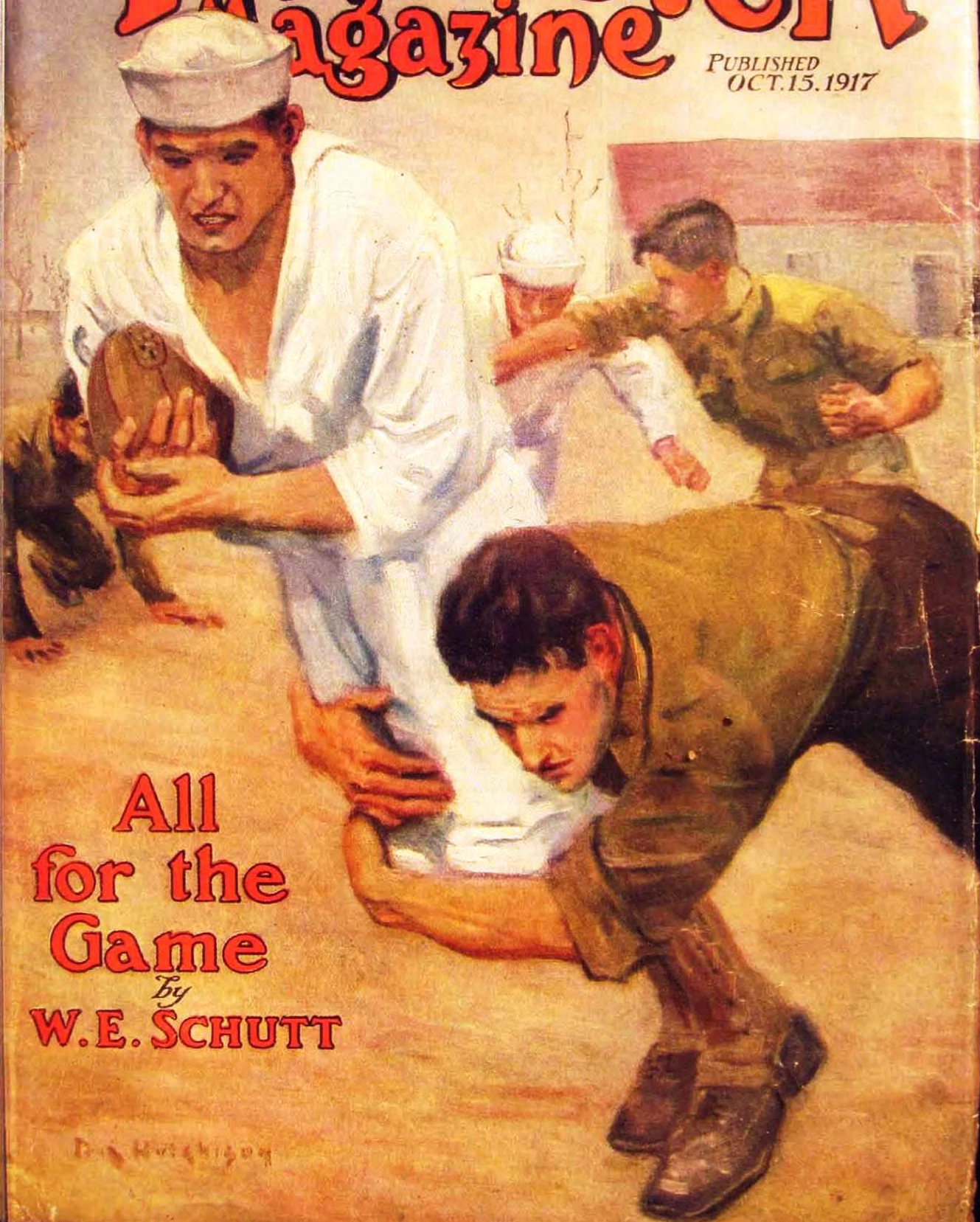


TWICE-A-MONTH

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Top-Notch Magazine

PUBLISHED
OCT. 15, 1917



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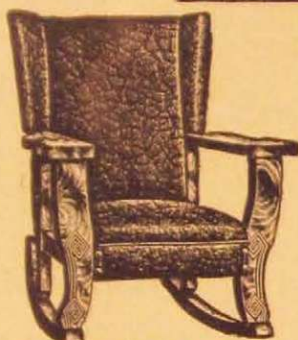
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By W. E. Schutt

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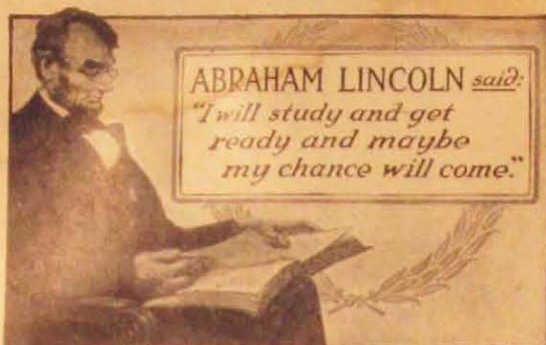
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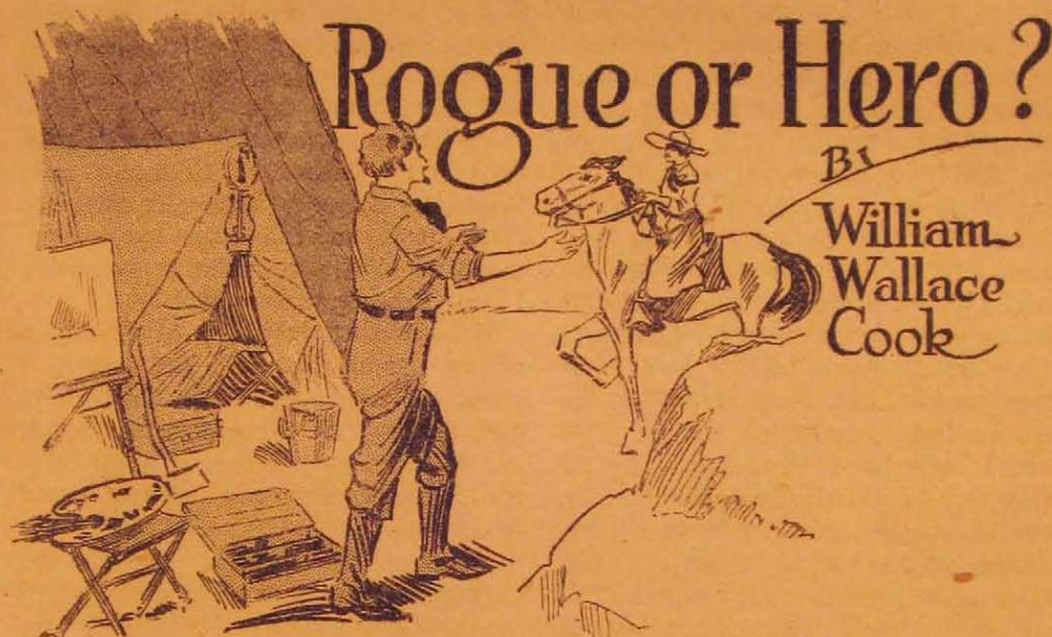
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TOP-NOTCH MAGAZINE

Vol. XXXII

Published October 15, 1917

No. 2



(A COMPLETE NOVEL)

CHAPTER I.

NEAR DUTCHMAN'S HILL.

THERE was nothing lovely about Dutchman's Hill. In that country of bleak, barren uplifts, this particular eminence had not even the distinguishing factor of height. It was squatty and covered with dun-colored rocks and sprawling cactus clumps. Ugly, positively forbidding to the view from any angle, Dutchman's Hill was a minus quantity so far as scenery was concerned. Yet Jack Wilkinson, artist, of Los Angeles, was industriously transferring that hill to canvas—bringing to bear on the work all his cunning

craftsmanship, all his masterful knowledge of the law of natural chiaroscuro in which masses of light and dark are played against each other in delicate contrasts that seem neither harsh nor artificial. Had Wilkinson been doing in oils a bit of his loved California Sierras, he could not have labored more faithfully.

As a matter of fact—and Wilkinson would have admitted it cheerfully—he was out for the "long green." A plutocrat had offered him real money in four figures to paint pictures of a scorched and blighted wilderness. Art for art's sake is all very well, but many an artist is now pocketing his finer sensibilities on account of this H. C. of L. If a

plutocrat wanted a picture of Dutchman's Hill, of the box cañon and caves of the Cattywampus, of the lone cottonwood on Hardly Able Flat, and of the historical spot in which the said plutocrat had sold out his holdings in Ojo Caliente Valley, why it was up to Wilkinson to execute the commission and "pull down the coin."

When a man's pocketbook crowds his heart out of a job, the job is a real one. Wilkinson found it so. Nevertheless, under his big green sketching umbrella he sweated and mixed his colors and laid on the paint with a diligence and skill that threatened to make of that blistered desert barnacle a thing of beauty. So true was Wilkinson's touch and so fine his fancy that he could not put brush to canvas without leaving indelible marks of his own high nature in the work of his hand, even when his inspiration was nothing more than a plutocrat's cash.

He could have wrenched a better effect out of Dutchman's Hill had he done his sketching at sunrise or sunset, but this was not in his contract. The plutocrat insisted that he paint the hill in mid-afternoon; also that he put a buckskin mule by a heap of rocks marked "X" on a penciled diagram, and a man in a blue flannel shirt and an attitude of extreme dejection on top of the rocks—a man with the facial resemblance of the plutocrat at the age of twenty-five. To put a complete hill on a canvas two feet one way by two and a half the other, and then drop in a buckskin mule and a man recognizable as the plutocrat in his younger years, called for ingenuity.

Wilkinson was exercising his ingenuity when a firearm, without the least warning whatever, exploded behind him. The green umbrella went one way, the easel went another, and Wilkinson shot into the air and landed on all fours, scattering paintbrushes. He looked around cautiously.

"Oh, I'm sorry!" exclaimed a soft voice. "Did I frighten you very much?"

A very pretty young woman was just sliding out of a man's saddle on the back of a pinto cayuse. She had a revolver in her hand, and, plainly enough, had done the shooting. Pushing the revolver into a small holster strapped to her waist by a carved leather belt, the girl ran to the overturned easel and solicitously picked up the picture. Fortunately the canvas had fallen paint side up.

Wilkinson arose to his feet. "Frightened?" he echoed. "Certainly not. Whenever a twenty-centimeter shell explodes under my chair, it is my custom to go through a few simple exercises. I hope I didn't annoy you."

He pulled a brushful of Vandyke brown out of his hair and wiped a smear of gamboge off his chin. The girl, holding the picture in her hand, looked laughingly across it at Wilkinson. "You're very good-natured about it, anyhow," she observed. Her eyes dropped to the canvas. "Why," she exclaimed, "this is a picture of Dutchman's Hill!"

"You've guessed it," said Wilkinson.

"And you're an artist!"

"Another guess. I hope it's correct."

He set up the easel and replaced the green umbrella in its proper position. "Now, then," he inquired, "were you shooting at me or at the picture? Please be perfectly frank. I know I ought to be shot for painting Dutchman's Hill, but I was hoping I wouldn't be caught at it."

The girl placed the canvas carefully on the easel, stepped back, and indicated an object in the sand which had escaped Wilkinson's attention until that moment. A rattlesnake, neatly decapitated by the girl's bullet, lay within striking distance of the artist's camp stool.

"The diamond-back was coiled and

ready to strike," the girl explained. "I saw it as I rode up. You were so interested in your work that you didn't hear me or hear the rattler when it buzzed its warning. I had to be quick."

Wilkinson stared at the diamond-back. Then he advanced and bent over it. "Six rattles and a button," he remarked, straightening. "And I had to smash the last bottle of snake medicine yesterday to keep Sam Hooray from wandering among the rocks and coaxing the snakes to bite him. Young lady, what would have happened if you had failed to put that snake out of business?"

Wilkinson seemed to puzzle the girl. She smiled at him and shook her head.

"You give it up?" continued Wilkinson. "Then listen, and I will tell you." He cleared his throat impressively. "I am here to perpetrate a series of six pictures, by way of giving a panoramic view of the scenes of a plutocrat's early beginnings. If that snake had bitten the—er—artist—thank you!—under the green umbrella, this view of Dutchman's Hill and of certain vistas up and down the Cattywampus would never have been perpetuated in oils. On behalf of Napoleon G. Pendexter, of Los Angeles and Hollywood, I thank you." He bowed.

"Napoleon G. Pendexter?" There was awed surprise in the girl's voice as she echoed the name.

"You have heard of Mr. Pendexter, of course. Everybody has heard of him. In this sun-scorched wilderness of rocks and sand, touched with charm for the moment by the presence of a lovely young lady who knows how to shoot, Napoleon G. Pendexter once had what they call his *habitat*. In other words, that great man really lived and did strenuous things in these parts. Is that what surprises you?"

"Why, Mr. Pendexter once was a half owner of the Dolly Varden claim, which now belongs to my mother! And

he hired you to come out here and paint Dutchman's Hill!" She laughed. "I should think he would want to forget this country and not have you paint pictures that will make him remember it."

"That's my idea, Miss Manning, but when a plutocrat is self-made he's apt to be proud of his record."

"I suppose so, Mr. Wilkinson."

Each surprised the other in the knowledge of names. Wilkinson explained that he was the seventh son of a seventh son and had merely grabbed the girl's name out of the air. To prove his occult powers still further, he repeated her full name, "Cherry Manning." Then he wanted to know how his own name had dawned on her. She answered that she had grabbed it off the lid of the battered tin box of paints.

"Rumor tells us," Miss Manning remarked, "that Napoleon G. Pendexter is a hard-hearted, disagreeable person."

"One touch of rumor makes the whole world chin," said Wilkinson. "Don't believe all you hear about Napoleon G. I can tell you that—Ah," he broke off, "here's Sam Hooray, and he comes in a hurry. Now what's to pay?"

From the mouth of a little arroyo, let into a ridge that faced Dutchman's Hill at a distance of several hundred yards, a short, brown man was sprinting. He wore a high-crowned Mexican hat, a cotton shirt, corduroy trousers, and canvas shoes. Close to Wilkinson, he halted, evidently abashed at the sight of Miss Manning.

"Banzai!" exclaimed Wilkinson. "If I had pulled off a hundred-yard dash like that this sizzling afternoon, the sun would have bowled me over. But Sam here seems to be lined inside and out with asbestos. Miss Manning, this is my friend and factotum. He looks after our camp while I'm out spoiling

some perfectly good canvas. The biggest difficulty about him is his name. I can't pronounce it. He comes of the old samurai, however, and so I have rechristened him Sam Hooray. What appears to be the trouble, Sam?"

"Please," the Japanese answered, "man fall from cliff; he go to sleep. I could not remain still for being troubled."

"A man fell from the cliff?" returned Wilkinson, startled. "What cliff?"

"Rattlesnake Cliff, honorable friend. You come to relief of unfortunate person, perhaps?"

Wilkinson whistled. "Any man that takes a clean fall from the top of Rattlesnake Cliff," he remarked, "has mighty little use for a relief party. Better bring a spade, Sam."

"There is heartbeat and pulse movement," said Sam, "and I aspire to hope."

The girl climbed into the saddle on the pinto's back. "Where did this happen?" she inquired.

Sam pointed toward a ridge that flanked the furrowed valley across from Dutchman's Hill. The ridge elbowed from north and south and trended away toward the southeast. The angling face of it lay sheer to, forming what was known as Rattlesnake Cliff.

"Around turn, please," said Sam respectfully.

"I'll go with you, Mr. Wilkinson," remarked the girl.

Wilkinson told the Jap to carry the picture and sketching outfit to the camp and then to join him and the girl on the scene of the accident. Ten minutes later the girl and the artist came to the spot where the stranger had tumbled from the cliff, and, in the expressive words of Sam, had "gone to sleep." He was a man of twenty-four or twenty-five, well built, and wore brown corduroys and the laced knee boots of

a prospector. He lay in a huddle on his back and with his face upturned. The girl slid from her saddle, gave vent to an exclamation of alarm and sympathy, and posted herself at Wilkinson's side while he knelt and made an examination.

"Sam was right about the heartbeat and pulse movement," said he. "The heart action is strong enough for a man in robust health, and it seems queer that this fellow should have stepped out."

The girl turned back to the pinto, lifted a canteen from her saddle, uncapped it, and knelt on the opposite side of the sprawled-out form. "Raise his head," said she.

Wilkinson did so, and the mouth of the canteen was pressed to the man's lips. The water trickled down his throat, but consciousness did not return. There was not a mark or bruise about the man so far as Wilkinson could see. As the artist bent low over him, the ticking of a watch was heard. Wilkinson removed the watch from the trousers' watch pocket. It was an expensive timepiece with a gold case and having a cheap, braided-leather chain. On the front cover was a monogram, consisting of the three letters "H. A. P." Wilkinson returned the watch to the pocket, started to his feet, and walked thoughtfully back and forth at the foot of the cliff. At that point the cliff was fifty feet high. How could a man fall from it without suffering mark or bruise—or stopping his watch? "Something queer about this," thought Wilkinson.

CHAPTER II.

PLANNED WITH CARE.

WHEN Sam came, Wilkinson suggested carrying the injured man to their camp. Miss Manning objected to this, however, and insisted on having him removed to her mother's adobe on the mining claim. There were none

too many comforts at the adobe, the girl explained, but it was far and away better than a tent in an arroyo. So the man in corduroys was lifted by the artist and the Jap, borne around a spur of the ridge, and carried into the mud-walled house of the Mannings.

Mrs. Manning was a woman of fifty. Wilkinson had been camped in the arroyo for only two days, and was seeing her now for the first time. Sam had told him about the mother and daughter who lived at the Dolly Varden, picked up the rich "float" with their own hands, and wrung the gold out of it by means of a wonderful little arrastre. Presumably Sam had acquired his information in Buenas Noches, but he was obliged to come from the arroyo to the Dolly Varden claim for water, and must have seen the two women at work.

Mrs. Manning, her sympathetic heart touched by the misfortune of the stranger, opened her house to him. Home remedies were tried in the hope of restoring him to consciousness, but they did not prove effective. It was a very puzzling case.

"I can't understand this at all," remarked Mrs. Manning. "A fall from the cliff might result in serious internal injuries. I think we ought to have Doctor Wells come out from town."

"We don't know that he fell from the cliff, Mrs. Manning," said Wilkinson. "That is only a guess."

"That makes the matter all the more puzzling, and perhaps all the more serious. We should have the doctor."

"If you really think a doctor is necessary, I can save you a lot of bother by taking the man to Buenas Noches in the automobile Sam and I have in the arroyo."

Wilkinson made the suggestion on impulse. This affair of the unconscious stranger had an involved look to him, and transferring the man to town offered an easy way for getting him off

the Mannings' hands. But the owner of the claim would not have it so. "Heaven forbid," she said, "that I should turn out of my home a man in the sorry condition of this stranger. Cherry will go to Buenas Noches for Doctor Wells."

"No," returned Wilkinson, "we'll send Sam in the flivver. I'll go over to camp with him and get him started. If anything happens that you need me here, fire that gun twice." He nodded toward a rifle that hung from a big pair of antlers over a fireplace at a corner of the room. "I'll hear the reports," Wilkinson added, "and I'll come a-running."

Mrs. Manning looked at her daughter in bewilderment. The girl laughed. "We're not going to stage any wild-West show at the Dolly Varden, Mr. Wilkinson," she said. "Why in the world should mother and I need you or any one except the doctor to help us take care of this ailing stranger? It's kind of you to send your man to town for Doctor Wells. I hope," she added, "that you will drop in on us occasionally to learn how the patient is getting along."

Wilkinson answered that he would do that certainly; then, with a troubled glance at the form on the living-room couch, he marched away with Sam. Presently the two turned in at the mouth of the arroyo. In front of them, no more than a hundred yards away, a small but comfortable wall tent had been pitched, an extra "fly" stretched in front to form a sort of shaded porch. Two canvas chairs stood in the shade, and on a boulder off to one side a folding gasoline stove had been opened out. The usual plunder that accompanies an artist on a sketching expedition was scattered around, mixed with the necessary paraphernalia of comfortable camping. To the right of the tent stood the four-cylinder car, in every way dependable, although dingy and

battered and showing other signs of hard usage. There was one object in the camp, however, which Wilkinson was seeing for the first time. That object was a sorrel horse with one stocking foot, under saddle and hitched to an ironwood tree.

"Looks like we had a visitor, Sam," remarked Wilkinson.

"Please," said Sam, "it is not a visitor, Mr. Wilk. Horse was discovered by me in chaparral of greasewood. All my opinion is that animal belongs to person who fell from cliff. I take liberty to bring horse to camp, Mr. Wilk, and care for him so much as possible. Otherwise, with his master incapacitated from giving care, who is to do so?"

"Ah, I see!" exclaimed Wilkinson. "Give *Togin Sama* a drink out of the five-gallon water bag, then start for town and take the two-gallon bag with you. Get the doctor, Sam. I'm anxious to have his opinion of the man we just left in the Manning adobe."

It was Sam who had dignified the flivver with the name of "Honorable Foreigner." Wilkinson had been in the habit of referring to it affectionately as the *Pop Bottle*, but he had shoved that title aside to accept, with a chuckle, the *Togin Sama* of the Jap.

In ten minutes Sam was humming down the arroyo and out into the desert trail, bound for Buenas Noches. As soon as he had gone, Wilkinson went to the sorrel horse and loosened the saddle cinches. The animal was thirsty, and Wilkinson drew water from the five-gallon bag into a canvas bucket and let him drink.

There was nothing about the riding equipment that would in any way identify the horse's owner. Sam's inference that the mount belonged to the man who had been carried to the adobe was a fair one. While Wilkinson stood surveying the animal, two horsemen en-

tered the arroyo and galloped to the camp.

One of the riders was Reeves, a deputy sheriff. Wilkinson knew him, and had brought a letter of introduction to Reeves from a mutual friend in Los Angeles. The other man was a stranger. Both newcomers had their eyes on the sorrel horse.

"That the cayuse, Newt?" inquired Reeves.

Newt, who was evidently a cowboy, nodded vigorously. "That's my Pete hawse all right, Reeves," he declared. "The Jap steered us plumb right when he sent us here."

The deputy sheriff turned to the artist. "Howdy, Wilkinson?" said he. "We met your Jap hiking for town in the buzz wagon, and he gave us a tip that the sorrel was here. Shake hands with Newt Griffin, Wilkinson. Newt's with the Circle X crowd. The horse belongs to him and was run off last night while Newt was in town. We've put in the day trying to find the brute."

"I can prove an alibi," said Wilkinson, laughing, "and so can Sam. Neither of us was in Buenas Noches last night. We can't be juggled for making off with this Pete horse."

Reeves grinned. "No one's trying to pin that to you, old man. You and your Jap have a clean bill. Where'd you find the sorrel?"

"In the chaparral. Sam did the finding, and it's been less than half an hour since he sprung the sorrel on me."

"That's about what the Jap told us," Reeves commented.

"Did he tell you anything else?"

"No."

"Blame' queer who fetched the cayuse out here," muttered Griffin. "We can't get any line at all on the feller that done it."

"Any stranger been visiting your camp lately, Wilkinson?" Reeves asked.

Wilkinson shook his head. "You're

the first visitors we have had since Sam and I shook out our luggage and pitched the tent. 'Light, won't you?'

"I don't think we'd better," the deputy answered. "It's getting toward sundown, and now that we've found what we're after we'll be hitting the back track."

While Griffin was unhitching the sorrel and linking the animal to his saddle horn with a reata, Reeves chattered with the artist. When ready to leave, the deputy and his companion took long drafts from their water canteens and lighted their pipes.

"I'm in luck, and no mistake," observed Griffin, with every show of satisfaction. "You see, I allowed some greaser had run off the sorrel and scattered into Mexico. If any cimiroon comes lookin' for the cayuse you hold him, will you, Wilkinson?"

"Newt, that won't happen," put in Reeves. "If the thief returns for the horse, I don't reckon he'll inquire around any if he finds the animal gone. So long, Wilkinson. Good luck."

Griffin nodded, and both men rode off with the Pete horse in tow. When they had vanished from the mouth of the arroyo, Wilkinson drew a long breath of relief. But there was a worried look on his face as he made his way to one of the canvas chairs in front of the tent and lowered himself into it.

"Sam didn't breathe a whisper about that fellow at Mrs. Manning's," he mused, "and neither did I. Looks like he was a horse thief, among other things. If I'm on the right track, then chance has gone out of its way to put me wise to something of interest to Napoleon G. Pendexter. What I'm doing isn't in my contract with Napoleon G., but I've a hunch that he'll appreciate my efforts all right. If I——"

Wilkinson broke off his reflections abruptly, and was fairly lifted out of the chair by two reports of a firearm

following each other in quick succession. The reports were from a distance, faint but clear and distinct.

"I guess the wild-West show has started, after all," was Wilkinson's startled thought.

He darted into the tent and emerged with a six-shooter, then started at a run for the mouth of the arroyo. Half-way to the trail that passed the arroyo, he drew to an astounded halt. The man in laced knee boots and corduroys had appeared suddenly from the direction of the Dolly Varden claim, sprinting in a way that suggested robust health and remarkable staying qualities. He flashed, a dark figure against the yellow of the flat desert, across the arroyo's mouth and into a chaparral of greasewood and white thorn, losing himself in the dusty brush.

Wilkinson gave vent to an amazed whistle. The next instant a grim look came to his face, and he gripped the six-shooter and raced on. When the stranger emerged from the chaparral, baffled and swearing, Wilkinson met him face to face.

"Where's that horse?" yelled the stranger.

"Your recovery has been rapid," Wilkinson remarked. "Don't you know that we have sent to Buenas Noches for a doctor for you?"

The other spat out an imprecation. "What have you done with that horse?" he went on.

"The horse happened to belong to Newt Griffin, of the Circle X Ranch. Griffin came after his property and brought the deputy sheriff along with him. If you're claiming a sorrel with a stocking foot, you'll have to go to town and apply to the deputy. But I don't think you'll do that. You——"

A thud of hoofs in the sandy trail reached Wilkinson's ears. Out of the tail of his eye he saw a man on a buckskin cayuse leaving the trail and career-

ing into the arroyo. "Hold that man!" shouted this newcomer. "Hold him!"

The man in corduroys stooped suddenly and pulled a revolver out of the brush. As he straightened with it in his hand, Wilkinson jumped for him, and there followed a struggle in which the artist more than held his own. Wrenching the gun away from the horse thief, the artist leaped back and covered the fugitive with his own weapon. "Steady!" ordered Wilkinson. "Try to run and there will be fireworks."

The man on the buckskin cayuse rode up and dropped out of the saddle.

CHAPTER III.

NOT IN THE CONTRACT.

THE man who had just arrived on the buckskin horse had a clear gray eye and a determined look. He was in his middle twenties, if Wilkinson could judge, and he was a lean, brown, fine-appearing person. It was plain that he had important business with the horse thief.

"I've been meeting people all afternoon," remarked Wilkinson, "and it's a big surprise to me to find so much going on in this part of the desert. What's the idea?" he asked.

"The idea is," answered the man by the buckskin, "that this fellow is a sneak and a scoundrel. He pretended to be hurt and was taken to Mrs. Manning's adobe. But you know all about that. What you don't know is that he wasn't hurt, but that he was shamming. By malingering he succeeded in his purpose of getting inside the house on the Dolly Varden claim. I rode up. While Miss Manning and her mother were telling me about the fellow out in front of the adobe, he was sneaking around inside the house—hunting for something which he found and got away with. He had to get away before the doctor came, you see, for if he hadn't

he would have been found out. He left by the rear door with what he wanted and what he had schemed to get. When I stepped into the adobe to look at him he was gone. Mrs. Manning's suspicions were aroused, and something else was found to be gone, too. Cherry—Miss Manning—fired the rifle twice from the door. She hoped that would arouse you and that you'd do something to head the fellow off. As luck would have it, you were able to do that very thing. My name is Alonzo Condon," the man added; "I'm a friend of Miss Manning and her mother and have known them for a long time."

Wilkinson had been wondering who Alonzo Condon might be. He had not been fully informed on that point, but it was enough to know that Condon was a friend of the two ladies at the Dolly Varden claim.

"He has passed the buck to you," remarked Wilkinson, turning to the horse thief. "You are bad medicine, that's sure, and I doubt whether you can explain this deal in a way that will let you out gracefully. Still, you'd better try. Remember," he added warningly, "what I said about fireworks. I don't think you want to be the central figure in the celebration. First off, who are you?"

"Jim Higgins," said the man in corduroys, scowling.

"Try again," requested Wilkinson. "Jim Higgins doesn't match the monogram on your watch."

"I'm Jim Higgins, of Yuma," insisted the man angrily. "What's more, I didn't steal the sorrel with the stocking foot nor anything out of the adobe. What do you guys take me for?" he added in a blaze of well-assumed indignation.

"I take you for a bad egg, Jim Higgins," Wilkinson answered, "and if you have anything belonging to Mrs. Manning now is the time to give it up."

Higgins insisted that he was innocent of any thieving, and Wilkinson told Condon to search him. The search that followed was very thorough, and there was a disappointed look on Condon's face as he stepped back.

"There's something queer about this," he remarked. "This man didn't fall from the cliff, and I'm satisfied in my own mind that he was not unconscious. What was his game if it were not to get inside Mrs. Manning's adobe and take what has been found to be missing? As I figure it, Higgins planned on being found at the foot of the cliff by Mrs. Manning and her daughter and taken to the house. There was an object back of the scheme."

"Wait a minute," said Wilkinson. "This is his gun, Condon," he went on, handing the weapon to Condon; "you keep him covered while I do a little searching on my own hook."

Wilkinson went to the greasewood bushes, and, at the point where Higgins had stooped to recover his revolver, reached into the dusty foliage, groped about for a moment, and finally withdrew a folded, legal-looking document. An exclamation of satisfaction escaped Condon. Higgins swore under his breath.

"This," observed Wilkinson calmly, "is a quitclaim deed to the Dolly Varden claim, executed in favor of Mary Manning by one Joseph Skeel. Is it what you are looking for, Condon?"

"That's it!" declared Condon. "Higgins ought to be jailed for stealing the deed."

"There is something else he might be jailed for, too." Wilkinson turned to Higgins. "One week from to-day," he went on, "I'll have my camp pitched in the box cañon of the Cattywampus. You report to me there, Jim Higgins, of Yuma, in just seven days from to-day. Don't forget. Between now and the time we meet again you try and behave."

"Why should I report to you?" answered Higgins. "What business is it of yours where I go or what I do? I'll do as I please."

"It's going to please you a heap to keep this date in the box cañon," asserted Wilkinson. "If you're not there according to schedule, my laddybuck, the deputy sheriff of this county will go hunting you for running off that sorrel horse. Now, clear out. Give him the gun," he added to Condon.

Condon "broke" the firearm, emptied the cartridges out of the cylinder, and then tossed the weapon to Higgins. The latter seemed to be in a quandary of some sort. Evidently he could not understand the course of events. Turning on his heel, he slouched away toward the trail and vanished from sight in the direction of Buenas Noches.

"That fellow is no good," remarked Condon. "Why do you want to see him again, Wilkinson? Why are you interested in him?"

"Because of another person with whom I have a contract to paint a few landscapes in this blighted wilderness," Wilkinson answered. "Come on to the tent, Condon, and let's smoke a talk. I'll not keep you long."

Condon hesitated a moment, then led the buckskin into a scrap of shade, and followed Wilkinson to the camp. The artist had cigars. He offered one to Condon, and the two sat in the canvas chairs and smoked.

"I'd better tell you about this deed," remarked Condon. "You haven't expressed any curiosity, but what you have done this afternoon gives you a right to know what is going on."

Sitting in the hot little arroyo, with the sun dropping slowly behind Dutchman's Hill, Condon related to Wilkinson a story of injustice and trickery which involved the Dolly Varden claim and Mrs. Manning. Pendexter's name was brought into the recital, and Wilkinson listened with intense interest.

The recital began with an incident which lay thirty years in the past. "Nap" Pendexter was, at that time, struggling against poverty and dreaming dreams of financial conquest among those arid mountains and mesas. He had a "pard" known as Pecos Pete McGaffney—a one-eyed desert "rat" for whom Pendexter had cherished a whole-hearted affection. Pendexter and McGaffney had discovered the Dolly Varden claim, and, in the upward fling of their fortunes, had disposed of the claim to one Joe Skeel, a prospector, for six hundred dollars in cash. Skeel had had a friend named Tobias Manning. Manning had helped the prospector over many a rough spot in life, and when Manning died Skeel passed his gratitude on to Manning's wife and daughter. Skeel was stricken with illness, and Mrs. Manning and Cherry took care of him. Skeel died, but before his passing he tried to settle his debt to Mrs. Manning by giving her a quitclaim deed to the Dolly Varden property. Mrs. Manning was in needy circumstances, and she had moved out to the claim at once with her daughter and taken possession.

By gathering "float" and chipping out ore from an exposed vein the two women, with Skeel's clever little water-power arrastre, managed to secure enough gold to keep them in comfort. All was going well when Bill Ranley, a mining shark of Buenas Noches, suddenly presented himself before Mrs. Manning and claimed possession of the claim through a quitclaim deed given to him by Skeel before the execution of Skeel's deed to the widow of his old friend.

Ranley was a schemer. No one in that part of the country thought for a moment that old Joe Skeel would trick Mrs. Manning with a useless deed, but Mrs. Manning, for some reason, had not recorded her deed, and Ranley had filed his for record. On

advice of friends, Mrs. Manning held possession of the claim. The sympathy of the mining district was all with her. The law seemed to be on Ranley's side, but he was not popular and feared results if he proceeded to law and ousted Mrs. Manning from the claim by legal process.

It was Condon's idea that Ranley had hired Jim Higgins to secure Mrs. Manning's deed. With that legal instrument out of the way, Ranley might in time secure possession of the Dolly Varden property.

"With your help," Condon finished, "we have recovered the deed for Mrs. Manning. Bill Ranley is a tinhorn and Jim Higgins is a sneak thief. In view of all this, I can't understand why you should want to have anything more to do with a rascal like Higgins."

Wilkinson looked thoughtfully at his half-burned cigar. "Tar and feathers," he remarked, "along with a ride out of Buenas Noches on a rail would be about the right thing for Bill Ranley. I'll furnish the feathers and active co-operation, Condon, if you'll find the tar and round up a crowd of indignant citizens."

"If you're willing to rough things up with Ranley," inquired Condon, "why handle Jim Higgins with gloves?"

Wilkinson grew thoughtful. He continued finally: "Napoleon G. Pendexter is a good old scout. He is a real man in some things, but a weak brother in others. Since he roamed around this benighted region with Pecos Pete, Pendexter has become a financial power. He juggles with millions, and in most ways he is an open-handed, open-minded plutocrat. You'd think, now that he's on the pleasant side of Easy Street and hobnobbing with governors, senators, and captains of finance and industry, that he'd want to forget these deserts and an old hassayamper like Pecos Pete. But no. He looks back on his free, hard life amid this sand

and cactus with reverence and longing, and in his study in his Hollywood palace he has fastened to the wall a plate of gold with this inscription: 'In Memory of Pecos Pete, the Best Friend "Nap" Pendexter Ever Had.' Can you beat it?"

Condon's cigar had gone out. His wits seemed to have gone out, too, for he sat in the canvas chair with his head bowed and his chin on his breast, half dozing, it seemed to Wilkinson, and only half listening.

"Now," Wilkinson went on, "Pendexter has a son named Hugh. Hugh had more money to spend than was good for him, and a lot of it went to buy American Beauties for chorus girls at fifty dollars a throw, and wine suppers with five-dollar tips to the waiters and checks that made even his plutocrat dad sit up and take notice. You see, Hugh's dad had billed Hugh to play the lead in a wedding with a lady of the patrician class named Hortense Llewellyn-Crosby, daughter of a railroad president and ex-senator, and Hugh's stage-door activities rather marred the prospects. Dad stepped on Hugh's behavior with all the determination of his two hundred and twenty-five pounds avoirdupois.

"You might think Hugh was flattened out, Condon, but you have another guess coming," continued Wilkinson. "He said he wouldn't marry any girl who was named Hortense, and if dad didn't like it he could do the other thing. The 'other thing' was this: Hugh was sent to Buenas Noches with instructions to look over the scenes of the elder Pendexter's early beginnings—the idea being to inspire Hugh to better things by intimate association with Dutchman's Hill, the caves of the Cattywampus, and Hardly Able Flat. While drawing inspiration from the desert country Hugh was to receive a regular allowance. When he reached the point where the name Hortense appealed to

him he could come back to Los Angeles and Hollywood, and not before.

"The scheme worked out in unexpected fashion. Hugh got acquainted with some desert girl, the daughter of a prospector, and completely forgot there ever was a lady named Hortense. His father wrote him to give up the desert girl or cease bearing the honored Pendexter name and never darken the Hollywood doors again. As near as I can figure out that is what Hugh did. He quite calling himself Pendexter, and went from bad to worse. I suppose he's married to the desert girl now and has become a hard character. Napoleon G. began an ambitious career in these parts, but it looks as if Hugh is ending a career among these deserts—a career that sheds mighty little luster on the name of Pendexter."

"What makes you think that?" demanded Condon, looking up.

"Why, this," answered Wilkinson. "When I found Higgins lying at the foot of the cliff, shamming unconsciousness in order to court the friendly interest of Mrs. Manning, I found in his pocket a very fine gold watch hooked on to a cheap leather chain. The watch"—Wilkinson's voice grew hard—"bore the monogram 'H. A. P.'"

Condon bounded out of his chair. "What!" he exclaimed. "The watch bore the monogram of Hugh Pendexter?"

"Exactly," said Wilkinson. "Napoleon G. is a friend of mine. I have a contract with him for half a dozen pictures, but if I can do him a good turn not in the contract, I don't see how I can pass it up. Do you?"

"No," returned Condon warmly, and reached out and clasped Wilkinson's hand. "You are a good sort, Wilkinson, and now I understand why you are disposed to look after Jim Higgins. I'm amalgamator in the Seven Stars mill, a few miles from here, but I call at the Manning adobe pretty regularly.

If I can be of any help to you, I wish you would call on me. And if you can be of any help to Mrs. Manning, in her differences with Ranley, I hope I can count on you."

"You can, right from the jump."

"I'll go back to the adobe with the deed," Condon observed, turning to his horse, "but we'll see each other again, Wilkinson."

"It won't be my fault if we don't, Condon."

The buckskin, spurred to a gallop, left the arroyo and headed toward the Dolly Varden claim.

CHAPTER IV.

IN THE BOX CANON.

DOCTOR WELLS, in a dusty roadster, trailed Sam and the flivver out from Buenas Noches. Wilkinson headed off the two machines at the mouth of the arroyo and informed the doctor that the man he had been called to attend had recovered and left for parts unknown.

"Who sent for me?" inquired Doctor Wells.

"I did," said Wilkinson.

"Ten dollars," said Doctor Wells.

Sam Hooray looked horrified. Wilkinson dug down and brought up a bill. The bill changed hands. "If I wasn't Rockybilt or Vandefeller," remarked the artist, "I'd rather be Doctor Wells."

The doctor put away the bill with a chuckle. "You see," he confided pleasantly, "I went to school for this. Good-by."

"Farewell, doc," Wilkinson answered, and watched the roadster melt away in the evening dusk.

"Almost I should call it highway robbery," breathed Sam.

"Cut out the almost, Sam, and we'll be unanimous."

While Sam was cooking supper on the collapsible stove, Wilkinson gave him a résumé of recent events.

"Don't become fooled with this Jim Higgins by all means, Mr. Wilk," begged the Jap. "Exkoos for making suggestion."

In two days Wilkinson finished his work at Dutchman's Hill. Unexpectedly he found his labor taking a pleasant turn. Miss Manning and Alonzo Condon came in the afternoon to watch him paint and to chat with him, and on the evening of the second day he was invited to the Manning adobe for supper. Both women and the amalgamator expressed regret because he was leaving the arroyo so soon for the box cañon.

"Oh, I'll be back," said Wilkinson. "You see, I must paint a picture of Rattlesnake Cliff and this adobe. They're mixed up with the early activities of Napoleon G. Pendexter and he put them in our contract."

A day was consumed by Wilkinson and Sam in packing up, moving to the box cañon, and unpacking again. They pitched camp on Hardly Able Flat, which lay conveniently in an elbow of the gulch. This flat, with its lone cottonwood, was to be the subject of another painting; thus, from that one camp on the Cattywampus, the artist would clean up on one-third of his contract for six pictures.

In the early days there had been placerings in the box cañon. To this gravel "bench" prospectors had been in the habit of coming to pan out grubstakes. Thirty years before, Nap Pendexter and Pecos Pete McGaffney had been in the habit of raiding the bench for the wherewithal to keep them going in the hills. The gravel and black sand had long since been mulcted of the last trace of color, but Pendexter wanted the old bench done in oils so it could be hung on the walls of his study as Exhibit B in the case of Pendexter versus Fortune.

Exhibit A was Dutchman's Hill. On that uplift young Pendexter, double-

crossed by luck and discouraged to the point where he had thought of making away with himself, had slept and dreamed. His dream was that his buckskin mule, tired and fretful, had kicked him two miles into a valley marked with two needle spires of granite and a rocking stone as big as a house. It was certainly a tremendous dream, and would have been humorous had it not had such far-reaching results. In alighting from his flight through the air, Pendexter's dream had landed him in the valley directly below the rocking stone. There he had found riches in the shape of a true fissure vein, so rich in gold that the shock of the discovery awoke Pendexter, and he had opened his eyes to the hard realities of Dutchman's Hill.

Rejoined by his partner, Pecos Pete, Pendexter had related his dream. Pete considered it a good omen, and the two went hunting for the valley of the twin rock spires and the rocking stone. In their search they found the Dolly Varden claim, on which they filed and later sold to Joe Skeel. The money secured from Skeel the partners used up in further useless hunting for the valley that had so long eluded them. Out of grub and money, the two repaired to the box cañon and uncovered a pocket that netted them a bagful of dust and nuggets. They started for Buenas Noches to get their supplies, but were waylaid on Hardly Able Flat by an outlaw named Vanette, with a crowd of roughs at his back, known far and wide as the Tar Heel Gang.

In the fight that followed, Pecos Pete was killed under the lone cottonwood. The bullet which struck Pete down was fired by Cady Vanette himself, and had been intended for Pendexter; but Pete, in thrusting Pendexter out of the bullet's path, himself got in the way of the flying lead, with fatal results. That the sounds of combat had been heard by a party of dry

washers, who rushed to the rescue and saved Pendexter and the bag of gold, did not form the telling climax of the plutocrat's reminiscences. In after years he thought only of the effacement of Pecos Pete, to the end that his loved partner had not lived and gone forward with him in fortune to such splendid results.

Pendexter had told all this to Wilkinson in the luxurious study of the Hollywood palace. "Pete and me was brothers," Pendexter had said, falling into the old colloquial strain which, at times, cropped out in spite of the patient schooling of his wife. "Him and me starved together, thirsted together, and took all the hard knocks together. The hard part of it was, Wilkinson, that poor old Pete was snuffed out just before the finding of the gold in Ojo Caliente Valley. I can't never forgive fate for that. I'd spend all I've got to find Cady Vanette and put him through for what he done to Pete."

Directly after the fight with the Tar Heel crowd, Pendexter, gloomy over the loss of his partner and striving to forget his sorrows in wandering about the hills, looked around him on a certain mid-afternoon and found he was in the valley he had dreamed about. The big strike in Ojo Caliente was the result. Pendexter sold out for a million, which grew into other millions with rapidity at a wave of the wand of speculation.

The scene by the rolling stone, in which Pendexter met the expert sent to examine the Ojo Caliente property and two representatives of the Omaha syndicate who had hired the expert, was to be the subject of the final painting of the series.

Perhaps a great man's weakness was exposed in this set of pictures. But it was a very human weakness, and ennobled by loyalty to a comrade long dead and gone. Pendexter was proud of his desert record. He wished to

have it visualized in landmarks on the walls of his study, and he felt that it should be an inspiration to every young man who experienced difficulty in getting ahead.

In this particular instance there was too much ego in Pendexter's ideas. The plutocrat, as a prospector, had rebelled at his name of Napoleon. In later life he gloried in it, and sought to trace a physical resemblance between himself and the Little Corsican. There was absolutely no physical resemblance, but in Wilkinson's final picture at the rolling stone, Pendexter was to be sketched with his right arm in the breast of his coat, his left hand at his back, and his attitude that of the exile looking seaward from the island of St. Helena.

"Of course," the plutocrat had said, "there's one difference between me and Napoleon. He had his Waterloo, and that is something nobody is ever going to hand to old Nap Pendexter."

The box cañon was the worst place imaginable in which to paint a picture. In the part of it that held the old gravel bench, twilight prevailed during the brightest hours of the day. Wilkinson's nimble fancy was required here if he was to put on canvas a recognizable bit of Pendexter's early experiences. He proceeded to do his best, however, and in a few days Sam Hooray said the result would be perfect if Wilkinson would paint a stork in the lower right-hand corner, standing on one leg and swallowing a fish.

"A stork is all right, Sam," said Wilkinson, "but it would be a long way from home in this Cattywampus cañon. We'll have to spoil the picture by leaving it out. And, anyhow, I don't think I could stand on one leg and paint a stork."

"You are very jolly boy, Mr. Wilk," returned Sam, chuckling softly and respectfully.

The Cattywampus, in past ages, had

gouged the cañon out of the desert; but, to look at the stream, one would never have guessed it had had so much energy. In these latter days the Cattywampus appeared to have stopped running and to be loafing in pools. Between the pools a cloud of dust could be kicked out of the river bed. Appearances are never more deceitful, however, than in the case of these desert watercourses. They flow beneath the surface usually, and appear only where bed rock forces them into view, and there are times when a cloudburst in the mountains will make of a thin trickle of water a raging torrent.

There was a spring by the camp on Hardly Able Flat. It brimmed over the edge of a little basin, rolled away to a pool, and lost its waters in the sands of the cañon.

The week had passed, the picture of the worn-out placerings was finished, and Wilkinson was squaring away to sketch in the flat when Jim Higgins arrived. He was about two days overdue and in a tearing hurry. Afoot, his hat gone, and his brown corduroys showing signs of hard usage, he came down the cañon like a frightened deer. A crack of firearms accompanied his approach, bullets tossing up little geysers of dust around his swiftly moving feet. He collided with Sam, and the force of the impact knocked Sam out of his way. The next moment Higgins had dived headlong into the tent, leaving Wilkinson and Sam to face half a dozen enraged Mexicans.

CHAPTER V.

A MATTER OF TACT.

WILKINSON was armed with nothing more dangerous than a palette and a paintbrush. Sam had his two hands and a working knowledge of jujutsu. The two stepped shoulder to shoulder in front of the tent and confronted the six swarthy and excited

pursuers of Jim Higgins. Meeting this unexpected opposition, the Mexicans halted and held their fire.

"What's the matter with you men?" Wilkinson inquired.

"The gringo is *muy malo!*" barked one of the swarthy crowd. "We get him, you bet. He Ranley's amigo—no good!"

This man tried to duck into the tent between Wilkinson and Sam. Wilkinson dropped the palette and brush and caught the man by the collar of his cotton shirt.

"Not so fast!" he said, and heaved the Mexican backward. "You fellows behave. It won't do for you to make a case of homicide out of this. No sabe homicide? Well, it means bumping off the gringo—a thing that would be pretty serious for all of you. Suppose we talk about this a little? Go over there and sit down in the shade of the cottonwood." Wilkinson turned to the Jap. "Sam," he went on, "get half a dozen packages of smoking tobacco out of our supplies and pass 'em around."

Sam hesitated; no doubt it looked to him like an awful waste of tobacco. Wilkinson repeated the order with firmness, however, and Sam carried it out. This was tact. Rice paper accompanied the tobacco. The Mexicans put away their firearms and began rolling cigarettes. Sam sighed heavily as the six bags went into six shirt pockets and the pursuers began to smoke.

The mellowing influence of the weed became apparent at once. The disturbance took on a more tractable form. Sam remained at the tent to watch Higgins, while Wilkinson led the Mexicans to the cottonwood, where all dropped down comfortably in the shade. Then the cause of the flight and pursuit developed by degrees.

The six men were wood haulers. One of them, Sanchez, had a mining claim. Sanchez had been doing his assessment

work right along. That day he and his friends, on their way into the hills for mesquite and paloverde, had passed close enough to the claim to see Bill Ranley and Jim Higgins taking down the location notice of Sanchez and tacking up one of Ranley's. In other words, the Buenas Noches mining shark was "jumping" the claim.

Sanchez immediately saw red, and his indignant friends were with him to a man. They rushed the pair at the center monument, catching them at a disadvantage. Ranley had been bowled over, quickly lashed with rope, and then left in charge of a Mexican. Sanchez and the remaining five of his companions had taken after Higgins. The chase had led them into the box cañon and to the camp of the landscape painter. After they killed Higgins, Sanchez pleasantly remarked while rolling a second cigarette, they would return to Ranley and put him out of the way.

Wilkinson could see that he was going to need more tact, so he had Sam open a can of marmalade and spread it thick on six slices of bread. This hand-out was passed around. While it was being enjoyed, Wilkinson began his persuasions.

Bill Ranley, judging from what Wilkinson had heard of him, was a scoundrel. No doubt hanging or shooting was too good for him. But Americano law was peculiar. For one man to slay another, even when that other deserved it, was bad form; in fact, the law dealt harshly with men who made themselves instruments of justice to the extent of eliminating rogues like Ranley. Wilkinson declared earnestly that he was explaining this point to the Mexicans for their own good, and he hoped they would understand it. As to the claim jumping, that had been nipped in the bud. Ranley had been halted at the right moment.

Jim Higgins, the man in the tent, was

merely a tool of Ranley's. He had just happened to be with Ranley at the claim. Of course, if a fellow is caught in bad company he usually has to stand the consequences, but if it wasn't wise for the Mexicans to massacre Ranley, it would be less wise for them to proceed to extremities with Higgins. Wasn't that plain?

Just how much of an impression Wilkinson made on the wood haulers with this carefully chosen line of talk he never knew. He finished his argument just as the last of the bread and marmalade disappeared. Sanchez was reaching for the "makings" and thoughtfully considering what he had heard when suddenly the quiet was broken by four shots from down the cañon. The firing was done in a peculiar manner: two reports in quick succession, an interval of silence, then two more reports. All the Mexicans leaped to their feet excitedly and turned wondering eyes on Sanchez.

"Pablo!" Sanchez explained.

The next moment he was off at his best speed, his five companions trailing after him. Wilkinson was surprised and disappointed. He felt that he had had Sanchez and his crowd coming his way, and that his tact would brilliantly have justified itself but for that ill-timed shooting. Curious to learn what was going on down the cañon, he took after the Mexicans.

"Stay here and hang on to Higgins, Sam," he called, as he ran past the tent.

His course carried him beyond the old placerings and around a turn in the cañon walls; there, at a place described to him by Pendexter as the Cattywampus Caves, he overtook Sanchez and his friends. Another Mexican was added to the crowd—a wild-eyed man with his left forearm bound in a bandanna handkerchief. This man was talking rapidly to Sanchez, and evidently explaining something.

When he had made an end, Sanchez turned to Wilkinson. "This Mexican is Pablo," said he. "Ranley get away from Pablo, shoot him in arm, run away to cañon below here, and lose himself in the caves. Pablo come after him, shoot to let us know where he is, and watch to see Ranley not get out." Sanchez swore in a mellifluous and highly expressive manner. "You good amigo," he added, "you talk fine, but I not care for Americano law. *Por Dios*, we wait here, we shoot like a dog this Ranley when he comes out, and then we take what medicine we have to."

There was no use trying further arguments on Sanchez. This last exploit of Ranley's had still further enraged the Mexicans, and they were determined to have their revenge on the mining shark. Wilkinson withdrew to a distance and sat down on a boulder.

The caves had been worn out of the cañon wall by action of the water. They were holes of irregular shape, penetrating the bosom of the cliff in a honeycomb formation. Pendexter knew the caves well, and Wilkinson searched his memory for all he had said about them. One point took clearer and clearer shape in the artist's recollections. Pendexter had said that there was a secret way out of the caves, where the water had seeped through a strata of the rocks and emerged to the river bed a hundred feet below the holes that formed the main entrance. Wilkinson was about to tell Sanchez about this, but on second thought he kept the information to himself.

Getting off the boulder, he strolled on down the cañon, looking sharply for a mass of granite that hid the secret exit. If Ranley knew about that hidden gallery, no doubt he would make his escape through it; perhaps, in fact, he had already used his knowledge to that end. Wilkinson, after a few minutes, found the splinter of rock at the

cliff's foot, just as Pendexter had described it. Between the spur and the cliff, half concealed by trailing vines, was the black maw of the passage. Wilkinson stepped into it. Curiously he groped his way along between the uneven walls, and he kept groping, finally making a turn which brought him to a spot where faint gleams of day entered through the openings guarded by the Mexicans.

"How'd you get in here?" demanded some one in guarded tones.

That was Ranley; no doubt of it. Wilkinson drew back, startled; then he stepped forward again, ready to carry out a program that had occurred to him abruptly, like a happy thought. "You're Bill Ranley?" he asked.

"You've made a bull's-eye, first clatter," was the answer. "You're no greaser, I can see that even in this infernal gloom. Who are you, what's your business with me, and how'd you get here?"

"My name's Wilkinson——"

"Oh," exclaimed the other, "the cimiron Higgins was telling me about! What——"

"Wait a minute. The Mexicans out there are waiting to do you up, Ranley. If you want to save your scalp you'll have to parley with me. I can get you out of here and the Mexicans won't know a thing about it."

"You're a regular friend, Wilkinson. Those greasers have me cornered, but if you can show me how to fool 'em maybe I can make it up to you some time. How'll we work it?"

"There's a condition, Ranley," Wilkinson went on; "two conditions, in fact. The first one is that you've got to promise to leave the man you call Jim Higgins alone. You're making an all-around villain out of that young fellow. I'll not have it. I know more about him than you imagine."

"All right," agreed Ranley promptly. "What's the other condition?"

"You've got to stop trying to beat Mrs. Manning out of the Dolly Varden claim. It belongs to her. If you've got something to write on and to write with, I'll hold matches while you make a written statement to this effect: 'My quitclaim deed to the Dolly Varden property is a forgery. Mrs. Manning is the legal owner, and from now henceforth I will do whatever is demanded of me to restore her to full legal ownership of the property.' Write that, sign it, and I will witness it."

"What do you take me for?" demanded Ranley.

"Not for a fool, Ranley, whatever else I take you for. I'm giving you your chance. Do what I ask of you and I'll let you out by the secret way I came in."

"If there's a secret way, I'll find it," growled Ranley, "and I'll not let you put a crimp into me."

"Try to get out and the Mexicans will put a crimp into you," went on Wilkinson. "It will take me about a minute to tell them where to go to head you off."

Ranley muttered under his breath. "If there were any bullets in this six-shooter of mine," he said venomously, "I'd call your little game right here, Wilkinson. But you've got all the trumps. I've got a location notice in my pocket and a fountain pen. Give me a little light. What was that you wanted me to say?"

Ranley laid the location notice against a smooth section of the wall, blank side up, and while Wilkinson looked over his shoulder and burned matches and dictated, the mining shark did his writing.

"The Dolly Varden prospect is more trouble than it's worth, anyway," said Ranley, giving up the written document; "but I hate like blazes to be euchred out of it in a way like this. Now, I reckon, the people in the min-

ing district will leave me alone. Show me the way out."

"Turn to the right and move straight ahead," said Wilkinson. "I'll trail along."

Stumblingly the two made their way along the gloomy bore, and finally reached daylight. Cautiously Ranley peered around the curtain of granite that masked the secret exit; then, whirling suddenly, he caught Wilkinson by the shoulders and hurled him back against the rocks. The artist was dazed by the suddenness of the attack. Before he could rally his wits and interfere, Ranley had snatched the folded document out of his pocket and bounded off into the cañon.

"Sanchez!" yelled Wilkinson. "Here's your man, Sanchez!"

He raced after Ranley, only to have the surprise of his life flashed before his bewildered eyes. Hoofs pounded the sandy bed of the river, and three riders raced into view, one of them towing a horse with an empty saddle. The man leading the horse was Jim Higgins. The other two were girdled with weapons and of a vicious and threatening aspect.

"Just in the nick, Peabody!" cried Ranley, jumping for the led horse and vaulting into the saddle.

"You shore made a mix of it this time, Bill," growled the old, wrinkle-faced ruffian called Peabody. "Who's the yap over there?" he asked, nodding toward Wilkinson.

"Pendexter's hired man," said Ranley. "I just fooled him."

"I want to know!" exclaimed Peabody, and gave the artist a sizing with his wicked little eyes.

"Let's ride," urged Jim Higgins nervously.

"Ride it is," answered Peabody.

Spurs rattled, hoofs pounded the sand, and the four men vanished at speed down the cañon. Wilkinson dropped heavily on a boulder, removed

his hat, and ran his fingers through his hair. "Tag, J. W.," he mumbled gloomily; "you're it!"

CHAPTER VI.

STRIKING A SNAG.

JACK WILKINSON had experienced a decided shock. The tact on which he was priding himself, as he would have stated it, had suddenly left him. What had become of the Mexicans? How had Jim Higgins succeeded in getting away from Sam? Something must have happened to Sam, Wilkinson reasoned, and he went back up the cañon to find out. In about two minutes the mystery was made plain.

The little Jap was sitting on the ground in front of the tent. A stick had been thrust under his lifted knees, and then his arms had been drawn forward beneath the stick and his hands bound together at the wrists across his shins. He couldn't move, but he had the use of his tongue and was saying things in pure and emphatic Nipponese. Judging from the accent of his whoops, grunts, and falling inflections, his disposition had undergone a strain and his nerves had buckled.

"There are others, Sam," said Wilkinson, busy with the knotted rope. "Don't think for a minute that you're the only one to shake hands with Johnny Hardluck, here on the raging Cattywampus."

"We have been impractical about this business matter," Sam declared, getting on his feet and kicking out his cramped legs. "I am twenty-four of my age, and to be caught so is great calamity of judgment."

Sam explained that two men had come down the cañon, riding two horses and leading two. The strangers were armed and of evil disposition. Jim Higgins had come out of the tent and made for one of the led horses. Sam had interfered, and then the men with

the guns had pointed grim muzzles at him, and had made him sit down while the stick and the rope were adjusted. Then the newcomers with Higgins had ridden down the cañon, and pretty soon Sanchez and the other Mexicans had come running back—in so much of a hurry to get away they had not stopped to release Sam nor give him even a word of greeting or of explanation. Such was the reward for one half dozen bags of tobacco, one half loaf of bread, and one can of marmalade.

Wilkinson figured the affair in this wise: Peabody and the other man had been waiting somewhere with their own mounts and those of Ranley and Higgins while the claim jumping was being carried out. The disaster to Ranley and Higgins, on becoming known to their waiting companions, had resulted in a rescue. They formed a hard crowd, those white men. What was the use in trying to do anything more for Higgins? He was going a desperate course, and sooner or later would come to some bad end. Wilkinson would have liked to do something for Higgins on account of Napoleon G., but fate seemed against it. The artist made up his mind to give undivided attention to carrying out his contract with Pendexter, and for two weeks he was exceedingly busy with paint and canvas.

When the work in the cañon was finished, the camp was moved back to the arroyo by Rattlesnake Cliff, and the Dolly Varden claim filled Wilkinson's perspective. The cliff, no less than the adobe house, was to have a place in that picture. A pipe, like the filament of a black spider web, clung to the cliff's face all the way from top to bottom. At the base of the sheer wall was a bicycle wheel, rigged with buckets. Water, descending through the pipe, jetted into the buckets and flung the bicycle wheel around and around at mad speed.

A little way from this primitive water power was a wagon wheel, mounted horizontally on a post. A beam crossed the wheel and extended for two feet on either side of the rim. To the ends of the beam a couple of stones were attached with chains. The "flutter" wheel, geared down and connected with the wagon wheel, caused the wagon wheel to turn slowly. The dangling stones were dragged in a circle around a groove neatly constructed of smooth boulders.

This was Joe Skeel's homemade arrastre. Mrs. Manning and her daughter carried ore, threw it into the arrastre, and the dragging stones ground the ore to powder. It was toilsome work for women, but yielded a return sufficient for their needs.

While Wilkinson was painting, Condon came often to watch him and talk with him. Cherry Manning accompanied him occasionally. It was not difficult for the artist to detect the trend of affairs. The amalgamator was in love with the girl, and there was no doubt that the girl held him in high favor. But there was something between them in the nature of a barrier. Wilkinson's artistic temperament convinced him of this, and he wondered what it might be that held them apart.

When a favorable moment offered itself, Wilkinson told Condon of his attempt to clear the title of the Dolly Varden claim for Mrs. Manning. The amalgamator's face lighted up with gratitude for the interest the artist had shown.

"Too bad you couldn't have won out on that play, Wilkinson," said Condon. "You had the right idea. I'm positive Ranley forged a deed, thinking it would be easy to dispossess Mrs. Manning. Where he fell down was in failing to foresee how the sympathy of the whole mining district would be with a woman whom he was trying to impose upon. Bill Ranley is a tricky scoundrel.

If he is allowed rope enough, though, he'll hang himself. He has been associating with a desperate crowd headed by old Peabody. Those men are doing things the law won't stand for, and sooner or later Ranley will be brought up with a round turn. What do you hear from Napoleon G. Pendexter?"

"I haven't heard a thing since I reached this part of the country. Napoleon G. has told me what to do, and he will expect me to report to him in Los Angeles with the six pictures. One more after this, and then Sam and I will pull up stakes and mosey back to Los."

"What is the subject of the last picture?"

"The scene is laid over in Ojo Caliente Valley."

"That's where I am—on the night shift in the Seven Stars mill. I'll bother you a good deal while you're there, Wilkinson."

"The more you bother me the better I'll like it," the artist answered. He had taken a genuine liking to Condon and did not hesitate to show it.

But Wilkinson struck a snag in Ojo Caliente Valley. Pendexter had roughly diagramed the scenes he desired reproduced. He had stood by the rocking stone when conferring with the mining expert and the representatives of the Omaha syndicate, and had marked the exact spot. The picture was to have the rocking stone in the foreground. Pendexter was insistent on that point.

Wilkinson, making a preliminary trip to the valley to get his bearings, made the astounding discovery that the rocking stone had disappeared. Condon explained to him that the huge, balanced rock had been considered a menace, and had been blown off its base and smashed to fragments by dynamite. Wilkinson, at a loss what to do in the circumstances, went to Buenas Noches and sent a telegram to Pendexter:

Rocking stone gone. Suggest changing scene to vicinity of twin rock spires. Answer.

The answer was not long in coming:

Rocking stone historic monument. Was there for thousands of years. Somebody must have tampered with it. Insist on having it in picture. Will come personally to help you recreate it and get it in final scene. Meet me Thursday afternoon, Buenas Noches.

Wilkinson was astounded. Pendexter was wrenching himself away from his important business activities just to visit the desert country and make sure that the last picture of the series was correctly sketched. What was there that he could say about the rocking stone that the artist could not learn, and more completely, from men at the Seven Stars Mine? Pendexter's remembrance of the rock was dimmed by a lapse of thirty years, and only two months had passed since the valley miners had blasted the rock to fragments. Pendexter, however, had made up his mind to come, and nothing more was to be said about it.

There was a ripple of excitement at the Seven Stars Mine and the Dolly Varden claim when Wilkinson announced the coming visit of the multimillionaire. Condon looked grave. "If he comes," he remarked, "he'll probably find out about Jim Higgins. Have you written him anything about Higgins, Wilkinson?"

"Not a word," answered Wilkinson. "What was the use? While he's here, I'll try and keep him from finding out anything about Jim Higgins. That will be best, I think."

"I think so, too," agreed Condon.

Mrs. Manning was all in a flutter over the coming of the great man. "He'll not find things here to his liking, I'm sure," she faltered.

"All the while he has been in California he has dreamed about this desert and the scenes of his early struggles and triumphs," said Wilkinson.

"The hard knocks and the ugly realities have faded out of his mental picture, but when he comes back to this blistering heat and the blowing sand and the ragged, lonesome hills, he'll be due for an awakening. You are right, Mrs. Manning; he's not going to find things here to his liking."

Cherry seemed distressed. "Oh, I wish he wouldn't come!" she exclaimed.

"Nonsense!" said Condon, and laughed. "Let him come. Let him see just how much inspiration his son could draw out of Dutchman's Hill and the landmarks up and down the Cattywampus. Maybe all that will prove an eye opener."

Sam tried to groom *Togin Sama* and make the flivver worthy of its task of transporting the plutocrat from Buenas Noches to the arroyo. His efforts were pathetic so far as results were concerned. "Perhaps honorable millionaire will stay in town?" he suggested. "We have not comforts in camp for illustrious person of such magnitude."

"I hope he'll decide to stay in town, Sam," Wilkinson returned, "but if he plants himself on the idea that he wants to be with us in the arroyo, you might as well try to shift Dutchman's Hill as to move him. He's the big boss, and what he says goes."

Sam looked worried, and made out a list of luxuries he would have to get in town in case Pendexter decided to share their camp with them. On Thursday the flivver, its brasswork shining in sorry contrast with its dented and weather-worn sides, pointed toward Buenas Noches. Wilkinson was at the station when the train came in, and met the stout gentleman who was obsequiously ushered out of the Pullman by the porter.

The stout gentleman, to the artist's surprise, wore olive drab khaki and wide-brimmed brown hat. He looked like a general bound for the firing line.

"Hello, Wilkinson!" he called, reaching for the artist's hand. "Here I am, all ready for business. What do you think of the uniform, eh? Mother reckoned I was going it pretty strong, but you can bet I know what's proper for the deserts."

"You'll stay in town, I suppose?" queried Wilkinson.

"Stay in town! Me?" Pendexter laughed. "Not on your life, my boy. I'm going to get right out in the middle of the sun, sand, and solitude. If you haven't room for me in your wikiup, then I'll spread my blankets in the open. It won't be the first time."

CHAPTER VII.

A NIGHT WARNING.

PENDEXTER was sixty years old.

It was his proud boast that no matter how fate dealt with him he was "game." Calm-eyed, steady-nerved, he had played his first million in a stock gamble to double or lose. He had won, and financially he had continued winning ever since. He had had his first stern lesson on Dutchman's Hill, where he had once thought of self-destruction, had dreamed of fortune, and had lived to see his dream come true. But it was not his adventures in money matters that proved him "game" so much as the manner in which he bore the sorrow and disappointment that had come to him through his only son.

He had built his hopes on the boy, and they had been high and splendid. All his plans had been leveled like a house of cards. Too little restraint and too much money had proved the undoing of Hugh, and he had been sent into the Southwest to commune with the deserts and to find himself. There he had still further defied his father's plans for his career, and had been cast off and forced to "go it alone." Pendexter had charted the course he was to follow with Hugh, and held to it

with Spartan determination. His wife's health was almost broken by the blow, and his own heart was scarred and embittered, but Pendexter did not waver. He felt that he was doing his duty. He prided himself on being "game."

On his first night in camp, Pendexter stood in the mouth of the arroyo and looked across the level desert toward Dutchman's Hill. There was a moon, and the ugliness of the hill under the sun glare had given way to the dim loveliness of a landscape under a night sky, powdered with stars and glowing with a silver radiance. Wilkinson stood at Pendexter's side, and for the first time Dutchman's Hill made a distinct appeal to him.

The spell of the moment was upon Pendexter. He talked of Hugh as he had never talked to Wilkinson before. What he said let in the side lights upon his character, laying bare the wound which at other times he kept carefully hidden. Wilkinson inferred, from what was said, that part of Pendexter's purpose in coming to Buenas Noches was to learn whatever he could about his son. A wave of dread rolled over the artist. What if Pendexter was to succeed in getting the truth concerning Hugh! No doubt realizing that he was saying more than he should, Pendexter turned abruptly and made his way back to the camp.

In something else, too, Pendexter was "game." All the inconveniences and hardships of camp life he bore with a cheerful and uncomplaining spirit. He laughed that first night, as he shook a scorpion out of his blankets. "By Jiminy, but that was like the old times!" He washed in the tin basin, ate out of tin dishes held on his knees, and drank coffee with condensed milk and brown sugar trimmings out of a tin cup. His appetite was good, and he seemed to enjoy the meal.

Sam Hooray thawed toward him. "I have not had the collegial life, illus-

trious sir," said Sam, "but I observe closely with what simple education I possess. Exkoos if I say you are remarkably fine sport for one of exalted rank. Allow me if I admire."

This was the sort of talk from Sam that Pendexter enjoyed. The Jap's twist of speech and elaborate politeness were refreshing. Following breakfast, that first morning, Pendexter suggested a call at the Dolly Varden claim. Wilkinson accompanied him. When they came within sight of the arrastre, they saw Mrs. Manning and her daughter carrying baskets of ore and emptying them under the dragging stones.

"Why don't they hire some man to do that?" inquired Pendexter. "Pretty hard work for a couple of women."

Wilkinson explained that not enough gold was recovered to warrant the expense of hiring a man. While he and Pendexter stood in the shade and watched, Wilkinson told about Ranley and his designs on the claim. Pendexter waxed wrathful and indignant.

"Joe Skeel was square as a die!" he declared. "If he gave the claim to Mrs. Manning, you can gamble there was no deed given to Ranley. It's a plain case of steal, and the woman should be protected."

They went on to the arrastre, and the artist introduced the rich man to Mrs. Manning and her daughter. The ladies were evidently embarrassed. They had been surprised at the rough work which their hard fate made necessary. Cherry, in particular, seemed taken aback. A flush of color ran through her brown face, but she carried herself with dignity. Wilkinson had never seen her more charming than at that moment.

Pendexter was all politeness and consideration. "A pard of mine and myself discovered this Dolly Varden claim, ma'am," said he to Mrs. Manning. "We even figured out the possibilities of the spring on top of the cliff and the limited amount of water power for this

sort of work." He nodded toward the arrastre. "We sold out to Joe Skeel," he went on, "and left it to him to develop the power. I'd like to look at the adobe. May I?"

Mrs. Manning led the way to the house. Looking back, Wilkinson saw Cherry staring after Pendexter, a strange, wondering expression on her face.

The adobe had been built by Pendexter and Pecos Pete McGaffney. The structure had been added to by Joe Skeel, but the original mud walls held a powerful appeal to Pendexter. "The last time I stood in this adobe I was pretty low in fortune," the nabob remarked. "Thirty years! Pete and I did a lot of planning here—and Pete never lived to see the end of it. Good old Pete McGaffney! No better man or truer friend ever lived."

There was a rasping note in Pendexter's voice. He changed the subject abruptly. "You never can develop this claim properly working it as you are," he said. "I'd be glad to help you get some machinery in here—if you'd let me. Just for old times' sake," he added.

"That is good of you," returned Mrs. Manning, "but there is only one way I can be helped. My title to the claim is disputed. I want the property clear. You see, a man named Bill Ranley——"

"Wilkinson has been telling me about Ranley," the other broke in. "I know the circumstances. Joe Skeel was square, and Ranley is trying to put one over. I'll see that man, and maybe I can do something. It will be a pleasure," he finished, and stopped Mrs. Manning's protestations of gratitude.

On the way back to the arroyo, Pendexter apparently had two ideas in mind. One dealt with Mrs. Manning and her daughter. "There's something fine about that girl," he said, "and it's a pity she must be held down to a hard life like this. Maybe I can persuade

her mother to let me do something to help develop the claim and make life easier for both of them. Before I leave Buenas Noches, you can bank on it that I'll give Ranley a bad half hour."

His other idea had to do with Pete McGaffney. "Cady Vanette never answered to the law for the shooting of Pete," he said. "Vanette, if living, must be pretty well along in years by now. If I could get track of that scoundrel, and have him brought to book, I'd consider that I had done something for Pete. Years ago I tried to get track of Vanette, and sent a detective out here from Los Angeles. The detective reported that the fellow had disappeared. Maybe Vanette has gone the long trail; I don't know."

In the afternoon, Wilkinson and Pendexter were to take the car and ride to Ojo Caliente Valley. While they were waiting for Sam to get the noon meal ready, the artist showed his pictures one by one. Pendexter sat back and studied the pictures as they were placed before him. He said nothing until the last canvas was exhibited, and then he leaned over and patted Wilkinson on the shoulder. "I had to pay you a good price to come out here and do these for me," he said, "but I wanted the best man I could get for the job and did not mind the expense. You have certainly filled the bill, Wilkinson. Now, if we can fix up that rocking stone, we will——"

He halted abruptly. A portfolio of charcoal sketches lay open on a bowl-der where Wilkinson had left it in getting out Pendexter's penciled diagrams of what he wanted in the half dozen pictures. Pendexter's eyes had dropped to the charcoal sketches and had been caught and held by the study of a head—a man's head, with snaky eyes, a lean, leathery, wrinkled face, and a startling expression of viciousness and abandon. He turned from Wilkinson, walked over to the portfolio, and picked up the

sketch. "When did you do this?" he demanded.

"A week ago," Wilkinson answered.

"A fancy sketch?"

"No, from the life."

"Tell me about it," said Pendexter, smothering his eagerness.

The artist told about the incident in the box cañon, carefully shielding his speculations regarding Jim Higgins. His finding of Ranley in the river caves was gone into in detail, and he strove to put a little humor into his unsuccessful attempt to corner the mining shark and help Mrs. Manning. The rescue of Ranley by the old ruffian finished the recital.

"That's the old ruffian's phiz, Mr. Pendexter," explained Wilkinson. "It sort of haunted me, so I got it down in a rough sketch."

"It—it reminds me of Cady Vanette," averred Pendexter; "of Cady Vanette as he might be thirty years after he killed Pete McGaffney. Here's another man I want to see, and to learn something about. Instead of going to Ojo Caliente Valley this afternoon, suppose we go to Buenas Noches and talk with an officer?"

Wilkinson felt that Pendexter must be mistaken. In his eagerness to find Vanette, his judgment was playing him false. But the trip to the valley was postponed and an excursion was made to town. Reeves, the deputy sheriff, was found, and Pendexter was introduced to him. Reeves declared that Wilkinson's charcoal sketch was a dead ringer for a troublesome old rawhide called Peabody. The deputy didn't know much about Peabody except that he appeared and disappeared, apparently had no visible means of support nor fixed place to stay, and was believed to be a hard character and the author of several deeds of lawlessness. Bill Ranley had been seen with Peabody on several occasions, and possibly Ranley could give some information

about him—if he would. The three of them called at Ranley's office, only to find a card on the door bearing the words, "Out of town."

"I'm going to be in this part of the country for a few days, Reeves," said Pendexter in parting from the deputy, "and I'll give you a thousand dollars if you'll find this Peabody and bring him to me. I think I know the fellow, but I can't be dead certain of it until I meet him and talk with him."

"I'll do my best to corral that thousand, Mr. Pendexter," Reeves declared.

All the way back to the arroyo, Pendexter was preoccupied with his thoughts. He broke the silence once to observe that it would be a remarkable thing if Peabody turned out to be Cady Vanette. In his own mind Wilkinson agreed with him; as a coincidence, it would be so remarkable as to be impossible. Pendexter's judgment, the artist thought, was being warped by his overwhelming desire to avenge the taking off of Pecos Pete McGaffney. Justice, after thirty years, is apt to miss the blind trails.

Pendexter retired to his blankets early that night. Sam, about the same time, curled up in the tonneau of the flivver, and his snores filled the quiet air. Wilkinson, with his pipe, sat in one of the canvas chairs. He was beginning to realize that he had a job on his hands in looking after Napoleon G. The plutocrat had already started to make things warm for Peabody on the strength of a crayon sketch and the idea that the subject of it was Vanette, and he had scheduled for himself a warm session with Ranley in behalf of Mrs. Manning.

Stirring up the bad men of the desert in such a way was sure to lead to unpleasant results all around. Pendexter, in the middle of a blighted wilderness and miles from the protection of the law, might catch more calamity on the rebound than would be good for him.

This was the prospect that worried Wilkinson, and it was more than a prospect; it was a real foreboding.

The reflections of the artist were broken in upon by a figure that appeared suddenly and silently around the side of the tent. It was a shadowy figure, not carrying itself in a threatening manner, but startling Wilkinson nevertheless.

"I want to talk with you a moment, Wilkinson," came in a familiar voice. "Come this way, will you? Don't arouse anybody; you're the one I want to see, and only you."

It was Condon, blowing in on the arroyo camp at a time when he was supposed to be on duty in the Seven Stars mill. The artist smothered his surprise and accompanied the visitor to a little distance, where they could talk without disturbing Pendexter or Sam. "What's on your mind, Condon?" Wilkinson inquired.

The amalgamator appeared to be very much wrought up. "Pendexter is in danger," he said. "Reeves is out with a posse, combing the hills for Peabody. It has come straight to Ojo Caliente Valley that Peabody has sworn he'll not be taken alive, and also that he'll do his best to 'get' Pendexter for starting this trouble." Condon drew a long, rasping breath. "What's the meaning of it all?" he demanded.

Wilkinson explained that Pendexter thought Peabody was none other than Vanette, long wanted for the taking off of McGaffney. "There's not one chance in a million that the old boy has got his bean down on the right number," the artist added, "but he's loaded to the muzzle on this fool proposition and has got to explode. I was just thinking about this, Condon, when you showed up."

"Pendexter doesn't realize what it means to make an enemy out of Peabody," Condon went on. "You've got to tell him, Wilkinson. Urge him to

stop fooling with that desert gunman and have him take the next train back to Los Angeles. He isn't safe here a minute now. Pass my warning along to him, but don't tell him where it came from. In fact," and here Condon's voice grew intensely earnest, "don't say a word to Pendexter about me, one way or the other."

"Reeves didn't lose any time getting busy," remarked Wilkinson.

"The offer of a thousand dollars hooked him."

"Pendexter didn't tell Reeves to arrest Peabody, but just to bring him in for a talk."

"Peabody looks at that as a distinction without much of a difference. No doubt there's something in his past that he thinks Pendexter has uncovered. Peabody is a desperate old rascal, Wilkinson, and he is not making empty threats. Persuade Pendexter to go back home."

"You might as well ask me to persuade Pikes Peak to move down into New Mexico," said Wilkinson. "When Napoleon G. takes the bit in his teeth, he's going straight ahead and you couldn't make him gee-haw with dynamite. I'm going to do what I can, but I tell you now it will be a mistake. You're putting yourself to a lot of trouble on his account," Wilkinson added.

"It would be a terrible thing to have an influential man like Pendexter wiped out by a worthless old coot like Peabody. It's up to you, perhaps, to keep such a disaster from happening. Do what you can, Wilkinson."

Condon led his horse out from the shadowy chaparral and vaulted into the saddle.

"The best way to stave off disaster is to have Reeves capture Peabody as soon as possible," the artist suggested.

"I'm afraid he's too cunning for Reeves," was the reply. "If you can't get Pendexter to go back to Califor-

nia, then do what you can to protect him. So long."

Condon whirled his horse and galloped off. Wilkinson watched him until he had melted away into the shadows of the desert trail.

CHAPTER VIII.

A BUNDLE OF MONEY.

NEXT morning, after breakfast, Wilkinson tried to convince Pendexter that camping out in the hills was bad for his health. He suggested that they go to Ojo Caliente Valley at once, get the rocking stone and surroundings sketched in accordance with Pendexter's fancy, and then hurry Pendexter to Buenas Noches so he could catch the afternoon train for Los Angeles. The magnate of the coast wouldn't hear of it.

He had made up his mind to knock around the deserts for a week at least. There was business for him to attend to right there in the hills. It would take more than a day to get the vanished rocking stone satisfactorily recreated in fancy and on its base in the valley. In fact, Pendexter declared, he had made up his mind to hang around until that final picture of the series was finished. Then, again, Reeves might corral Peabody at any moment. If the old scoundrel was really Cady Vanette, Pendexter wouldn't miss putting him through for what he had done to McGaffney for a million dollars. On top of that, there was the Dolly Varden business to be looked after. Pendexter had pledged his word to talk with Bill Ranley and do what he could to help Mrs. Manning. As for his health—and here the nabob of Los Angeles and Hollywood laughed—why, he had never felt better in his life.

Wilkinson had done his duty. He had known very well that nothing he could say would hurry Pendexter out of the country. To hint at personal

danger would only have drawn another laugh, and the artist had been wise to keep that angle of the situation in the background. Napoleon G. was in the desert to stay until he was good and ready to entrain for home. There was no prying him loose from the perilous country, nor from the perilous business to which he had set his hand. Nor would Napoleon G. go to Ojo Caliente Valley that morning. There was no particular hurry about that, and he had planned to call on Mrs. Manning once more and learn further particulars regarding the chicanery of the mining shark.

Pendexter went alone to the Dolly Varden claim. He hadn't been gone ten minutes from the camp when Sam emerged from the tent, where he had been rolling up the blankets and putting things to rights, and handed Wilkinson a fat wallet. "The carelessness of wealthy persons is difficult matter to comprehend," Sam remarked. "Honorable Pendexter leaves pocketbook under pillow for first man coming along to pick up. Please count contents of purse, Mr. Wilk. Should anything be gone, I desire to be guaranteed innocent."

Wilkinson opened the pocketbook, and a bundle of brown-backed paper money was revealed. He thumbed over the bills, and found that they totaled five thousand dollars.

"Carrying that much money in a country like this is what I call a crime," said Wilkinson.

"If known," Sam returned, "it would be invitation to holdup rascals to commit lawlessness. Please to take charge of money, Mr. Wilk. My mind will be very much released by shifting responsibility." He went back into the tent.

With the pocketbook open on his knees and the bundle of bills lying upon it in plain view, Wilkinson sat in the canvas chair, wondering at the reckless-

ness of men of wealth. Why had Pendexter brought all that cold cash with him? He ought to have known better. If some men in that lawless wilderness ever learned that so much treasure was to be had by a quick raid, then——

"Where's this multimillionaire, Pendexter? I heard from Reeves that you and him were at my office yesterday looking for me."

Wilkinson lifted his eyes with a start. Bill Ranley stood in front of him, looking hard at the money. A dozen yards in the background stood Ranley's horse. The mining shark must have approached the camp with care and caution or Wilkinson would have heard him. The secret of the money was out. One of the slyest, most unprincipled rogues in that section had discovered it. Wilkinson was glad Pendexter was not around. After the first shock had passed, he began using his wits.

"Mr. Pendexter is not here at present, Ranley," remarked the artist, picking up the bills in a seemingly careless manner and toying with them in a way that showed their denomination. "He wanted to talk with you about the Dolly Varden deed, I think."

"He can talk, but he can't bluff me." Ranley could not take his gaze off the money. "When'll he be back? I'll wait here and talk with him."

"If you'll be in your office this afternoon I'll tell him about it and maybe he'll make another call. He's got business to attend to just at present." Wilkinson slipped the money into the wallet and pushed it into his pocket. "I don't know that I can go with him to town, though. At three this afternoon I'm starting for Hardly Able Flat to wind up a little deal. The deal has nothing to do with painting pictures," he confided.

"You're going to pay over all that money for a mining claim, eh?" queried Ranley.

"Don't jump at conclusions," suggested Wilkinson.

"You wouldn't be fool enough to have so much of the long green about you if you wasn't calculatin' on paying it out," insisted Ranley.

"It's a private matter. While I'm attending to it, my man can drive Mr. Pendexter to town to see you. When will you be in your office?"

Ranley reflected. "Make it three-thirty," he said finally.

"All right," said Wilkinson.

Without another word, Ranley made for his horse, mounted, and spurred away. Sam, wide-eyed, stood looking out of the tent. His face was troubled. "Mr. Wilk, exkoos," he said, "but you are not planning expedition to cañon alone with such vast amount of wealth?"

"Hardly," answered Wilkinson. "Forget it, Sam. Not a word about this to Pendexter or any one else, understand? I'll thank you for my Gatling."

Sam ducked back into the tent and returned with the six-shooter. Wilkinson slipped it into his pocket and got up.

"I'm going to make a hurried trip to the Seven Stars camp," he announced. "If Mr. Pendexter returns before I do, just tell him I'm away somewhere, but won't be gone long. That's all. Get that?"

"What you say, Mr. Wilk, I shall do," said Sam gravely. "One must use common senses in all proceedings that concern money and such rogues as Ranley."

Sam could be depended on to carry out orders. He might be curious, and he might be worried, but he was devoted to Wilkinson and had sublime faith in Wilkinson's judgment.

The artist was gone an hour from the camp. Long before Pendexter returned he was back, much to Sam's relief. Wilkinson couldn't sing, but

whenever he was particularly pleased with the course of events he made the attempt. With the flivver in its accustomed place and himself again in the canvas chair in the shade of the tent fly, he burst into something supposed to be song:

"Oh, a bold, bad man was this desperado,
And he blew into camp like a young tornado——"

Sam was working around the gasoline stove, getting dinner ready. He smiled as he worked. If Mr. Wilk was pleased, then Sam was pleased. The Jap watched his friend and employer out of the corners of his eyes. Wilkinson opened a portfolio, leaned one flap of it upright against the tent wall and against the flap he stood the charcoal sketch of Peabody. For a few minutes he studied the sketch in silence, and then he bounded out of his chair with a whoop.

Sam staggered and nearly dropped a skillet of bacon. "Something is wrong please?" he inquired.

"My wits have been twisted and squeeged, Sam," declared Wilkinson, "and I'm just beginning to get them untangled. This is beginning to look like my happy day."

He closed the charcoal sketch inside the portfolio, and turned to watch Napoleon G. Pendexter, who was just turning into the arroyo. Pendexter had had a pleasant visit at the Manning adobe. He declared that Mrs. Manning was a wonderful woman and that her daughter was the most charming young lady he had ever met. He was going to do something for those two ladies, by George! He would see Ranley and force him to clear Mrs. Manning's title to the Dolly Varden claim; then, just for the girl's sake, he would furnish the necessary capital to develop the claim and make it a big winner.

Wilkinson had never seen him so enthusiastic or in a more genial mood. "You left this under your pillow last

night," said the artist, offering the wallet.

"I thought about it while I was over at Mrs. Manning's," was the answer, "but I knew it would be all right."

"Better count the money, Mr. Pendexter."

"Tut, tut!" returned Pendexter, and was about to transfer the long purse to his pocket without a look at its contents.

"That's a beautiful wallet," remarked Wilkinson. "Where could I get one like it?"

Pendexter promptly opened the pocketbook, took out the bills, and tossed the pocketbook to the artist. "There you are, son," said he, and wadded up the five thousand dollars and stowed the money away in his pocket. This was exactly what Wilkinson had expected, although he demurred out of politeness. Pendexter insisted. And this again was exactly as Wilkinson had expected. "We had a caller while you were away," Wilkinson announced.

"Reeves?"

"No, Bill Ranley." Pendexter was intensely interested at once. "He'll meet you at his office in town at three-thirty this afternoon," the artist went on.

"Why didn't you hold him here and send over to Mrs. Manning's for me?" Pendexter demanded.

"I thought of sending for you, but when Ranley made the appointment in town I decided to let it go at that. Sam will take you to Buenas Noches in the car. I won't go along. It will probably be better for you to be alone with Ranley when you have your séance with him."

"This is pretty good!" Pendexter exclaimed. "I'm all primed for that tin-horn, and he'll do the right thing or I'll know the reason why."

It was after two when Pendexter and Sam left the camp. As soon as they were out of sight, Wilkinson hur-

ried over to the Dolly Varden claim and borrowed the pinto cayuse of Miss Manning. He explained merely that he wanted to take a little ride and wouldn't be gone long. Perhaps Miss Manning would keep an eye on the camp while he was gone? Mr. Pendexter and Sam had left for town and might not be back for some little time. Miss Manning declared that she would be glad to watch the camp, and would be right over.

Back at the tent, Wilkinson took some sheets of paper from a sketching pad, folded them, and stuffed them into Pendexter's wallet; then pushing the wallet into his pocket, he lengthened the stirrup straps of the pinto's saddle, mounted, and rode away.

He had done some close figuring. Was it to work out successfully or not? His plan was hedged about by many contingencies, and if one detail went wrong the whole idea would work toward failure. But he was hoping for the best.

"You put one over on me at the caves of the Cattywampus, Ranley," he was saying to himself, "but I'm gambling on squaring accounts by this ride toward Hardly Able Flat. Some more tact, and this time a little finesse! If that combination doesn't get me anywhere, I'll be ready to throw up my hands."

CHAPTER IX.

WITH AMAZING SUDDENNESS.

A TRAIL not often traveled and therefore dim and uncertain left the Buenas Noches road and meandered toward Cattywampus Cañon. Wilkinson had covered the course once and had no great difficulty in covering it again. What he was expecting came to pass, and at one stroke fate swept aside most of the contingencies that might have marred his scheme.

In a bit of a swale littered with boulder heaps he was suddenly confronted

by a man on horseback, leveling a revolver with each hand. The man's hat was pulled down over his eyes, and his coat collar was turned up about his face. When he shouted "Halt!" his voice was husky and palpably disguised. Having invited the holdup, Wilkinson had no intention of disappointing the two-gun man; at least, not at that stage of the proceedings. He halted. Another man rode out from behind the same pile of rocks that had served as a screen for the first man. Road agent number two also carried a brace of guns, and his hat and coat collar were likewise adjusted to hide his face and confuse the details of identity. He took up a position in the trail behind the pinto, so that Wilkinson was caught between two fires.

"Howdy, gents," said Wilkinson. "Please don't get nervous with all that artillery pointed in my direction. Sometimes these guns work on a hair trigger and turn a pleasant little joke into a fatality."

"Don't get gay," grunted the man at the pinto's head sourly. "There's a bunch of boodle in your clothes and we're after it. Cough up!"

Wilkinson tried hard to register consternation. He talked wildly, but even as he talked he was fumbling at his coat and removing Pendexter's wallet from his pocket. The man in front put away one of his weapons, spurred alongside the pinto, and snatched the fat pocketbook.

"I reckon that will be all," he snapped. "You ride on, and ride hard. Look back and we'll pepper you. Git!"

Wilkinson rode about twenty feet, and drew rein as a sharp command went ringing across the swale: "Up with your hands, you two! Quick, or we'll drop you out of your saddles!"

The artist looked around then, and turned the pinto so a comprehensive view might be had of the whole scene. Topping the swale banks on left and

right were four mounted men with rifles. The riders, appearing with amazing suddenness, occupied the four corners of a great square, in the center of which and below were the two astounded road agents. The rifles were deflected to command the pair in the swale, and escape was impossible. Slowly the men on the swale banks rode downward, converging upon the central point.

The road agents were Bill Ranley and Jim Higgins. If there had been any doubt of the men's identity in Wilkinson's mind, it was set at rest by the clear view he now had of the baffled faces of the pair. Ranley and Higgins held their hands high in the air. Their revolvers had been put away, but Ranley's hands were not empty, for in one of them he clutched the long, fat wallet just taken from Wilkinson.

"This .once, Ranley," said Alonzo Condon, in charge of the riders from the Seven Stars camp, "you have been caught red-handed."

"And with the goods," said the artist. "Condon, you were certainly Johnny on the spot. I'll trouble you for that wallet, Bill."

Ranley scowled blackly as he gave up the wallet.

"I'm in for it now, I reckon," snarled Jim Higgins, "and Ranley swore it was a sure-thing game—just frisking a lone painter of a bunch of the long green. Oh, well, I guess I can take my medicine."

Two of Condon's men disarmed the captives. "The next thing, I suppose," remarked Condon, "is to take them to Buenas Noches and turn them over to Reeves. Tie them to their saddles, boys," he added to his companions.

"Wait a minute," interposed Wilkinson. "If I can make a deal with Ranley to clear the title to the Dolly Varden claim, why not do it?"

A gleam of hope shot through Bill Ranley's face. "If you want to talk

business with me," he said curtly, "get busy."

"Have you got that statement you wrote out for me over in the cañon?" Wilkinson asked.

"No."

"Will you write out another?"

"Yes, if you'll agree to drop this holdup matter right here. Nothing more is to be done about it and I'm to have my liberty."

"How about my liberty?" demanded Jim Higgins.

"I'm not worryin' much about you," said Ranley.

"You're to give Wilkinson what he wants," put in Condon to Ranley, "and leave the country for good within twenty-four hours."

"All right," was the surly response; "give me something to write on."

Wilkinson fished a piece of paper out of the wallet. Ranley uncapped his fountain pen, laid the blank sheet on the saddle horn, and began to write. When he had finished, he handed the paper to the artist. The latter read aloud:

"Mrs. Manning is the lawful owner of the Dolly Varden claim, turned over to her by Joe Skeel. My deed is a forgery. This will be her warrant for having the record corrected and my deed set aside."

Wrath blazed in the faces of Condon and the others from Ojo Caliente Valley. "Ranley ought to be lynched!" declared one, and the rest vociferously seconded the opinion.

"You forged that deed yourself, didn't you?" asked Wilkinson.

"What's the odds? You've got what you want, haven't you?"

"Make a clean breast of it in writing," the artist went on. "What we want is the truth. If we can't have what we want, Ranley, we'll turn you over to Reeves and you'll get what you don't want—and that will be several years in the stone house at Yuma."

Ranley took back his written state-

ment, added "I forged the deed myself," and signed his name. Wilkinson and all four of the men from the Seven Stars Mine signed their names to the document as witnesses.

"Now you can go, Bill Ranley," said Condon. "If you're caught in this country after the twenty-four hours are up, we'll all appear against you for your work here this afternoon. Don't forget that. It's in line with our agreement."

"I've had my affairs in shape so I could dig out of Buenas Noches at a minute's notice," returned Ranley. "You fellows aren't so blamed smart!" His spurs clattered and he made off down the swale.

Higgins started to follow. Wilkinson leaned down and caught Higgins' horse by the bits. "Just a minute, Higgins," said the artist.

"You can't hold me and let Ranley go," cried Higgins.

"I just want a word with you. Listen! If any move is made against Napoleon G. Pendexter, we'll get Reeves after you. You can be held for this afternoon's job, all right, if you make it necessary. Tell that to those who ought to know. Now clear out."

Higgins galloped off. When he had vanished from sight, Condon burst into a gleeful laugh and caught Wilkinson's hand.

"That's the slickest job that was ever pulled off in the Southwest!" he declared. "You've done a big thing for Mrs. Manning, Wilkinson."

"Half the plan fell through, though," said Wilkinson. "I counted on Ranley getting Peabody to take a hand in the holdup. And that's what Ranley didn't do. Thunder! Why couldn't the whole scheme have worked out without half of it going wrong at the pinch?"

"I think you ought to be satisfied," remonstrated the amalgamator. "Have you given up trying to do anything for Jim Higgins?" he asked.

"We don't know so much all the time as we do just some of the time," answered Wilkinson cryptically.

CHAPTER X.

AS IF AT A VISION.

CONDON and his companions returned to the Seven Stars Mine, and Wilkinson galloped back to the camp in the arroyo. Pendexter and Sam had returned. As Wilkinson came within sight of his camp, he saw the man from the coast sitting in front of the tent and chatting with Miss Manning. Sam, greatly relieved in mind, if his face and manner were any indication of his feelings, ran to take the pinto as his employer dismounted.

"Where in Sam Hill have you been?" demanded Pendexter of Wilkinson.

"Been having a picnic," was the smiling answer.

"That's more than I had in Buenas Noches," said Pendexter fretfully. "Ranley didn't keep his appointment; I didn't see him at all."

"I rather expected that would be the case," Wilkinson went on. "You see, Ranley couldn't be in two places at the same time, Mr. Pendexter. About the time he was to meet you, Ranley and I came together on the trail to the box cañon."

The man of large affairs frowned in his bewilderment. "You sent me on a wild-goose chase, eh?" he asked sharply.

"Not exactly." The artist's genial smile parried the rising anger of a magnate accustomed always to being treated with the utmost consideration. "One or the other of us was to go on a wild-goose chase, and it was about an even break which one it would be. Here's your wallet, Mr. Pendexter. I found it mighty useful, and that was my reason for coaxing it away from you."

The capitalist's face was a study as he took the long pocketbook, opened

it, and drew out the paper padding. "I never was much of a hand for puzzles," he remarked.

"I'll work this one out for you," said Wilkinson. "Miss Manning, I'm obliged for the pinto. Sit down, please. I'm going to tell Mr. Pendexter something that will interest you."

He began at the point where Pendexter left the arroyo to make his morning call at the Dolly Varden claim; told of Sam's finding the wallet and the money, and of the stealthy coming of Bill Ranley while pocketbook and bills were in plain sight on his—Wilkinson's—knees; the greedy expression on Ranley's face while he looked at the cash was described, along with the plan Wilkinson evolved for letting the mining shark's greed accomplish his undoing; the call at the Seven Stars camp to get an armed party to watch the trail to the cañon, keep out of sight, and yet be ready for a quick move at the right moment, was detailed without mention of any names; and then followed the narrative of events in the order of their occurrence, climaxed by the written statement wrung from the baffled Ranley.

"The same man can fool me once," said Wilkinson, "but if he does it twice it's my own fault. Look at that, will you?" He offered in evidence the written statement that was to clear for Mrs. Manning the title to the mining claim.

Pendexter whistled softly as he read the statement, and then handed it on to the excited and wondering girl. The latter, after passing her eyes over the scrawl, got up from her chair and took one of Wilkinson's hands in both her own.

"So, without telling mother or me anything about it," she murmured happily, "you formed this clever plan and carried it out—just for us! How can we ever thank you, Mr. Wilkinson?"

"Give your thanks to the leader of the men from the Seven Stars Mine,

Miss Manning," said Wilkinson significantly. "It was no easy job to watch the trail, keep out of sight, and then show up promptly right in the nick and pull the business through to a success." Pendexter, getting out of his chair, began walking up and down in front of the tent, his head bowed in thought. "Alonzo Condon," the artist whispered, "was a regular man at the show-down."

The girl blushed, and then her eyes grew troubled as they swerved to Pendexter. "Mother and I," she said, "are grateful to you both—more grateful than I know how to express."

Pendexter halted in front of Wilkinson. "You're an artist, my boy," said he, "not only in spilling paint on canvas, but in beating a crook at his own game. I'll be hanged if that work of yours wasn't pretty smooth. If you ever get tired painting pictures, come around and tell me. Now, who is this Alonzo Condon that signed the statement as a witness?"

Again the telltale red leaped into the girl's rounded cheeks. Pendexter flashed a shrewd glance at her, and withdrew his eyes to give Wilkinson a significant look, half humorous, half sympathetic.

"Condon is an amalgamator in the Seven Stars mill," Wilkinson explained.

"Young or old?"

"Young, and as fine a lad as ever hung up a battery of stamps."

"I hope to see him when we go over to Ojo Caliente Valley."

Miss Manning, in some confusion, excused herself and started for the pinto. "I hope you will call at the adobe, Mr. Wilkinson," she said as she moved away, "and give mother a chance to thank you."

When she had gone, Pendexter lighted a black cigar. "To-morrow," he announced, "I'll help you get started on the last picture of the set."

This was good news to Wilkinson. Not until he had finished his work would there be any chance of getting Pendexter to leave the country. So far the activities of Reeves and the machinations of Peabody had not resulted in any harm to the wealthy old man, but the danger would remain so long as Peabody was at large and Pendexter was where the old desert freebooter could get at him.

It was decided not to move the camp from the arroyo. Pendexter and Wilkinson would use the car for going and coming between the arroyo and the valley. The first day's work was largely preliminary. Pendexter reconnoitered in the vicinity of the spot where the rocking stone had been balanced on its granite base, and carefully refreshed his memory.

While Wilkinson was making penciled sketches from his companions' description, a man arrived on the scene from the Seven Stars mill. He brought the very thing—a kodak picture of the mammoth stone taken by one of the mill hands just before the natural curiosity had been blasted to fragments. Condon, the millman explained, had asked him to watch for Wilkinson and to get the picture into his hands.

"Where's Condon?" asked Pendexter. "Why didn't he bring the picture himself?"

"He's away," was the answer, "helping Reeves round up Peabody and his crowd."

Pendexter, after the millman had left, expressed his regret at not being able to meet Condon. "I'd like to make sure," he remarked, "that he's worthy of that little girl at the Dolly Varden."

With the photograph to work from, Wilkinson had no difficulty in getting his picture sketched to Pendexter's liking. Day after day the two drove in the flivver to the valley. Wilkinson painted, and Pendexter sat in the car and smoked, or watched the picture

taking form under the artist's brush, or strolled over to the Seven Stars camp and watched the mining and milling. But Condon remained away, and was not to be seen.

In five days Wilkinson's work was done. The six pictures were taken to Buenas Noches and left with a furniture dealer to pack carefully and ship by express to Hollywood. Wilkinson was now ready to say good-by to the deserts, to pack his equipment into the tonneau of the car, and to hit the long trail for home. But Pendexter was not ready.

Reeves and his posse were crowding Peabody hard, but they had not yet been able to round him up and get hands on him. Just to make the deputy sheriff more industrious, Pendexter had offered him another thousand dollars for bringing in the old desert fox.

"While we're waiting," Pendexter suggested to Wilkinson, "I might as well pay a visit to the box cañon. I've been thinking of that ever since I got here. Now's my chance."

The visit was to consume two or three days. They were to camp on the flat, and Pendexter was to survey the old scenes at his leisure. He was as happy as a boy over the prospect. On their way out, they halted at the adobe on the Dolly Varden claim. They found Reeves there with a couple of men. The party had just ridden up to water their horses from the overflow at the arrastre.

"We'll have Peabody, Mr. Pendexter," the deputy sheriff declared confidently, "maybe this afternoon or tomorrow or next day. We're closing in on the old devil, and he can't possibly dodge us much longer. I've found out something about him—got it straight as a string. Years and years ago he used to be around here, but he got caught at some of his tricks and was sent over the road. I've found

just one old prospector who remembers anything about Peabody in those early days. The prospector is Jeff Bly. He says Peabody wasn't the man's name when he used to be cruising around these parts, but what he called himself then Bly can't remember. The ex-convict is a desperate case, Mr. Pendexter, and he's made threats against you. I think you'd better go back to town and wait till we get him corralled."

"Go back to town?" echoed Pendexter. "Why?"

"Because," answered Reeves bluntly, "you'll be a heap safer there than if you're knocking around these hills. Peabody lays all his recent troubles to you; with a record like he's got, and all this other stuff on his mind, it won't be hard to figure what he'll try to do if he finds you within gunshot of him."

Pendexter laughed easily. "Why, I'm an old desert man myself, Reeves," he said, "and all I want is to come close enough to Peabody to give him a good square look. That's it, a good square look. I'll consider myself in luck if he crosses trails with me."

Reeves had said enough to make Wilkinson nervous, not on his own account but on Pendexter's. He tried to persuade Pendexter to follow the deputy sheriff's advice, and put off his visit to the cañon until Peabody had been captured. But Pendexter was obdurate, and resented such advice as an aspersion on his courage.

"There's going to be a storm," Reeves put in, looking at the cloudless sky and sniffing the still air; "the barometer says our annual rain is about due. You won't have a very pleasant time in the cañon if the water comes down on you."

"During my ten years in these deserts," returned Pendexter, "I saw only two rains. There was a sprinkle for five minutes, and not enough water anywhere to give a road runner a drink. Bosh!"

While Pendexter was talking with Reeves, Wilkinson went to the adobe and called Cherry Manning to the door. "I wish you'd get word to Condon, Miss Manning," he said, "to come to the box cañon this afternoon."

The idea seemed to stir the girl strangely. "Why?" she asked. "I wish Mr. Pendexter wouldn't insist on having an interview with him; I—I——" Her voice failed her, and the crimson flooded her face.

"I don't want him to come over there to see Pendexter, but to see me," Wilkinson went on. "It's important."

"In that case, I'll go over to the Seven Stars Mine myself," said Cherry.

The artist thanked her, turned away, and climbed into the car. Sam was already sprawled on the luggage in the tonneau, and Pendexter was waiting for Wilkinson to take his seat so he could get aboard. It was about ten o'clock in the forenoon when they left the Dolly Varden claim, and at eleven they were picking their course along the rocky bed of the cañon toward Hardly Able Flat.

Pendexter was launched on a flood of reminiscences. He was living over the old times with Pecos Pete McGaffney, and every landmark had its own particular story. Wilkinson's fears of Peabody dwindled as he listened, and when they reached the flat and pitched camp he was in his normal frame of mind and cheerfully ignoring the dread possibilities. The surprise came after dinner while Sam was getting the camp work out of the way and Wilkinson was listening to Pendexter describe the fight with the Tar Heel Gang and the shooting of McGaffney.

"Vanette and his crowd were among the rocks over there," Pendexter was saying, "and I was standing about here, and Pete was where you are, throwing a diamond hitch over the pack on the buckskin mule. All at once Pete jumped clear over the mule and landed

on me and toppled me over. Bang! went a gun from the boulders. Pete staggered and fell in a sprawl under the cottonwood. I looked around and saw Vanette, leaning across the rocks, a smoking rifle in his hand. He was just where the rocks at the edge of the flat form a sort of notch——"

Pendexter had turned to indicate the exact spot from which Vanette had fired at McGaffney. His hand was lifted and his finger was pointing. The words faded from his lips, but his hand and pointing finger still hung in the air. A man was leaning across the top of the boulders—a man with a lean face, wrinkled and leathery, and out of which gleamed eyes that smoldered with the fires of hate. He held a rifle.

Pendexter drew a quick breath. It was as if he gazed at a vision, conjured out of the past. He drew in his outstretched hand and passed it across his eyes. Wilkinson whirled and started at a run for the car to get his revolver. Another man, starting up as if out of the solid earth, posted himself in front of the car and waved the artist back with a rifle.

Off to one side, in the vicinity of the tent, a yell of warning cut the still, hot air like a knife. It was Sam, his body half crouched, his hands half extended, awaiting the attack of a third man who was running toward him. A trick of jujutsu, in the most approved style, settled for Sam's assailant. The fellow went down in a huddle. Before the Jap could straighten and whirl around, however, a fourth man had rushed up behind him and struck him down with a heavy blow straight from the shoulder.

"I reckon you're mine now, Nap Pendexter!" called Peabody, his voice husky with triumph, as he stepped clear of the rocks. "You ort to have knowed better than to set the law on me, and git me all stirred up. Now you'll take what's comin'."

In that moment a cloud curtain was drawn swiftly across the sun. A gust of wind sucked through the cañon, driving at the tent until every guy rope creaked under the strain. Overhead, loose sand was flying like smoke billows. The blast whimpered and whistled among the rocks and crags, and from a great distance came a muttering, ominous of what was to follow.

Peabody continued slowly across the flat, his rifle in the hollow of his arm, his glittering eyes never once swerving from Pendexter.

"For thirty years," he went on, lifting his voice above the clamor of the wind, "your shadow has been across my path. In the old days you was called a man who never failed to run out your trail. You hung to a grudge like a hound dawg to a bone. You had swore you'd 'git' me, and I knew it. I slid around through the hills like a scairt coyote, pickin' up a livin' as best I could, and I was hooked by the law in the Mogollons and sent up for raidin' a camp and nigh killin' a man who stood between me and the grub I needed and had to have. Fifteen years I done for that. When I come out I reckoned people had forgotten me. But not you, Nap Pendexter! You don't never forget. I got word from Noches you was comin' here, and I got here first and laid for you. I know what I got to do to save my scalp, and you can gamble I'm goin' to do it."

"Cady Vanette!" exclaimed Pendexter. "Something told me I had you plumb to rights. Tar-heel Vanette!"

CHAPTER XI.

WHILE THE FLOOD RAGED.

THERE is no more peaceful occupation in the world than that of painting pictures, but Jack Wilkinson, in following his chosen career, seemed prone to adventure as the sparks fly upward. There was his experience with

Gar Raeburn when, at sleepy Capistrano, he painted his now famous picture, "The Last Requiem." It was no fault of Raeburn's that Wilkinson's own requiem had not been chanted that time. And there was the trouble in Sespé Cañon, out of which came the noble canvas that had thrilled art lovers at many an exhibition. Again, heralded wide and far for its symbolic beauty and sure craftsman's touch, was the painting known as "The Last of His Race," hanging now on the walls of a palace in Orange Grove Avenue, Pasadena. If that canvas could speak, what stories it would tell of the Old Santa Fe Trail! Wilkinson's life had been so crowded with adventures that he had come to expect them, and, expecting them, he was rarely found unready at the pinch of a crisis. Never before, however, had he tried to weather adverse circumstances with a headstrong multimillionaire. He felt his responsibility, and was to be pardoned the flash of dismay that darted through him.

Pendexter, with only his two hands, was confronted by an armed ruffian in a killing mood. The link connecting Cady Vanette with death or life imprisonment was this financial baron from Los Angeles and Hollywood. The logic of Vanette's desperation was plain.

Sam Hooray was flat on his back and breathing in gasps. Between Wilkinson and *Togin Sama*, where were stored all the firearms of the campers, stood a wild-eyed man with a gun. Vanette, counting himself, had four in his party—ruffians all, hard-pushed by the deputy sheriff and reckless and ready for anything. Sam, striking with the edge of his flattened hand and gouging cunningly at certain nerves with his two thumbs, had worked havoc with one of Vanette's followers before he himself had been struck down. There remained three against three, in

the event that Sam recovered quickly and could bear a hand. But three with guns could work their will against three without.

What was to be done? Wilkinson put the question to his wits, and for once his wits had no ready answer. Then he saw the man bowled over by Sam, hitching on all fours across the sandy flat, mumbling dazedly under his breath. It was Jim Higgins. Wilkinson already had changed his views about Higgins. He was not surprised to see the man there. If Higgins, in his blind progress, crawled close enough, it might be possible to snatch the weapon that hung in his belt. Wilkinson waited and watched, only to be disappointed. The fellow with the heavy fist, who had accounted for Sam, ran to Higgins, caught him by the collar, and dragged him to the base of the cottonwood.

Wilkinson took another look at the man barring the way to the flivver. The fellow was on his job, and jeered loudly. The wind snatched the wide-brimmed hat from the man's head, hurled it across the cañon, and pinned it to the rocks. The owner of the hat never even looked around. He was there to watch Wilkinson, and he did it.

The flat was in two terraces on the riverside. The car had been driven to the first terrace, some five feet below the flat's level. The width of the terrace, however, threw the car into plain view of those above. Vanette's men had climbed to the upper surface, where he could better command the situation.

Pendexter and Vanette, bracing themselves against the growing force of the wind, were standing a dozen feet apart. Silence had fallen upon them. Twice Vanette had half raised his rifle. Some quirk of the mind had caused him to lower the piece. He delayed. Not because of any compunction

against dropping a helpless man out of hand, for such a feeling could not square with his nature. He had his enemy where he wanted him, and perhaps he took heartless satisfaction in keeping him there for a space.

Wilkinson was touched with admiration for Napoleon G. Pendexter at that moment. The captain of big affairs was "game." He did not flinch, although he must have realized fully what Vanette was planning for him. Great wealth, no doubt, makes many changes in a man's life, but they are more often superficial than fundamental. At least it was so in Pendexter's case. Down at the roots of his soul he was the same man who had faced the Tar Heel Gang on that same flat thirty years before.

The wind increased in fury. The twilight darkness in the cañon deepened with the gathering rush of clouds. The distant muttering grew louder. Somewhere in the north there had been a cloudburst. Every lateral defile that opened through the walls of the main cañon was delivering a stream into the headwaters of the Cattywampus. The river was no longer a joke. But as yet there was no change in the box cañon. The pools, rippled by the stirring air, still were separated by stretches of dry sand. Rare as it is, a storm in the desert country is about the quickest thing in nature.

"Vanette," Pendexter shouted to make himself heard over the roar of the wind, "you're a fool to think you can save yourself by putting me out of the way. You've got to pay for what you did to Pete McGaffney."

"I can't pay no more," was the answer of the enraged Vanette, "if I do to you now what I done to Pecos thirty years ago. And, as I said, you've got it comin'."

With a crash like the explosion of a cannon the guy ropes gave way and the tent was hurled across the flat. The

man between Wilkinson and the automobile was caught and enmeshed in the sailing canvas. He was thrown off his feet, rolled over and over, and finally dropped neck and heels to the first terrace. The tent went booming down the cañon, while the man picked himself up dazedly and began climbing up to the flat again. He had dropped his rifle. Wilkinson rushed for it, picked it up, and whirled to command the scene between Pendexter and Vanette, which was fast approaching a climax. A report echoed from the north side of the flat. The man who had played such havoc with Sam had planted himself firmly with his back to the wind and his gun at his shoulder, and was making a target of Wilkinson. He fired twice, one bullet digging into the sand at the artist's feet and the other fanning his face as it went on to flatten against the rocks. Then Sam, reviving, caught the marksman about the knees with both arms and pulled him down.

Vanette, with a wild oath, jumped for the cover of the rock heaps. He was the only one on the flat in a position to shield himself. It looked as if Pendexter, Wilkinson, and Sam, out in the open, were to be at Vanette's mercy.

"Get down to the river bed, Pendexter!" yelled Wilkinson, and had hardly given the warning before he found himself at handgrips with the man whose rifle he had picked up.

Sam was engaging the other man, and the two rolled over and over on the ground. Just at that moment a wall of water charged into the box cañon, tumbling and tossing like a tidal wave.

Wilkinson's assailant wrenched away from him. "Look out for the water!" he bellowed. "It's comin' down on us!" With that he raced for the cañon wall.

A deafening roar drowned out the words, and Wilkinson must have been the only one who heard them. The alarm was unnecessary. Every one on

the flat was aware of the approaching flood. Vanette, startled out of his murderous scheme, was scrambling toward the foot of an ancient path that scaled the cliff behind the flat. Wilkinson and Sam rushed toward Pendexter, who, a dim figure, was beckoning with his hand.

Pendexter followed Vanette, and Wilkinson and Sam trailed after Pendexter. They gained the narrow, dizzy path, and were in safety when the water hurled itself past them at race-horse speed, submerging the flat and picking up the automobile like an inconsequential chip and carrying it along. A smother of rain dropped from the black clouds overhead. It fell like a curtain, shutting off from Wilkinson the sight of his friends and enemies and almost beating him downward into the flood. Water ran like a stream in the path, and Wilkinson lay in it and clung to the rocks.

The deluge lasted for a few minutes only, and ceased as suddenly as it had begun. Mists lifted slowly. A few feet above him, Wilkinson saw Pendexter, hanging for dear life to a bush that grew out of the rocks. Directly below Wilkinson was Sam, wedged securely between two boulders.

"Are you all right, Pendexter?" Wilkinson called.

"I'm all right now," was the gurgling answer, "but I came within an ace of pitching off into the river. In all the time I spent in these deserts I never saw anything like this before. I remember this path. It widens out just above me and turns around a shoulder of rock and leads to the top of the wall. If you and Sam are able, we'd better climb out."

Wilkinson looked upward as he began to climb; then what he saw caused him to stop climbing. Just before the path turned the angle of the cliff it crossed a wide shelf under a high overhang. In this niche stood two horses,

one a pinto and the other a buckskin, and on the pinto—could Wilkinson believe his eyes?—was Cherry Manning!

Calm enough, although drenched to the skin, the girl sat in her saddle. Her attention was riveted on Alonzo Condon, who had dismounted and was moving across the shelf toward the point where the path fell steeply down to the flat. The amalgamator was crouched forward, and his soggy garments trickled rills of water as he moved. Between him and Pendexter, and facing the man below, was Cady Vanette. Vanette had lost his rifle, but he was drawing a stag-handled dirk from his pocket. It was quite evident that he knew nothing of the presence of the girl and Condon in the path above him.

A slow horror gripped Wilkinson. At no time since he and Pendexter and Sam had encountered Vanette and his men so unexpectedly had grisly tragedy hastened more surely toward dread results than then. He was powerless to help Pendexter. All he could do was to crouch in the steep, slippery path, stare upward—and wait.

CHAPTER XII.

DAME FORTUNE'S TRUMP.

VANETTE, descending toward Pendexter with a slow, catlike step, pulled the thin blade out of the sheath. Pendexter started up. The quickness of the movement caused his feet to slip on the dripping stones. He went down flat, but caught at the bush again and held himself, sprawling, in the path. Picking his steps with certainty and swiftness, Vanette came on. He was obsessed with fears, with the thought of vengeance long deferred. The shadow of an evil past was over him, urging him on to deeds more evil. He came to Pendexter, and was bending down when Condon caught him from behind. Had Condon delayed another moment it would have been too

late. A breath of relief escaped Wilkinson.

One event had followed another so rapidly that the artist had had no time to wonder at finding the girl and the amalgamator, with their horses, halfway up the cañon wall. He had sent for Condon. The girl had come with him. And it was a fortunate circumstance that the two were there.

Pendexter lifted himself to his knees as Vanette faced about and began a struggle with the amalgamator. Cherry Manning, her face white and her eyes filled with anxiety, leaned forward across her saddle horn and looked down. Not a detail of the fight in the narrow path, drenched and treacherous as it was, escaped her.

Vanette had a knife. Condon had only his bare hands. But Vanette was old and Condon was young. As the two swayed back and forth, the amalgamator gripping the wrist of the hand that clutched the knife, Vanette must have realized how unequal were his powers in such a struggle. Some wild thought struck at his mind, and a fury of purpose showed in the twisting lines of his face. He dropped the knife and clasped both arms rigidly around Condon's neck. Over Condon's shoulder he could see Pendexter—meet his glance fairly for a moment.

"One way I can git you, Nap Pendexter, if I can't another!" he rasped. Then deliberately he heaved both himself and Condon sidewise out of the steep path, hanging to Condon's head and shoulders and dragging him into the boiling waters that filled the cañon.

A groan wrenched Pendexter's lips, and he dropped his face in his hands. Sam, lifting himself out from between the two boulders in which he had wedged himself, called to Wilkinson and held up a coil of rope. Where Sam had picked up that reata, or what motive had swayed him when he did so, Wilkinson did not know. The Jap was

preparing for a quick cast when a pinto horse with a girl rider pitched off the shelf above. For pure daring, Wilkinson had never seen anything to equal that jump. The pinto hit the water with a resounding splash. Cherry Manning was curtained from sight for a moment by upflung waves and a mist of flying spume; then, when she and the pinto reappeared, they were whirling down the cañon, fighting their way closer and closer to the two forms that battled amid the churning eddies. Thus the girl and the pinto and Condon and Vanette were hurled onward toward the old placerings and lost to sight of those in the path.

Pendexter had lifted his face to watch; then, when he could no longer see, he had risen to his feet and thrown up his hands. His eyes were dull, his face of an ashen color, and he was shaking like a man with the ague.

"They're—they're done for!" he whispered. "Wilkinson, nothing on earth can save them!"

He seemed very old then. He put out a hand to catch Wilkinson's arm and steady himself. Pendexter had come to a point in his career where his strong spirit faltered and was near failing him.

"Don't be so sure about their being done for, Pendexter," returned Wilkinson.

"The boy was fighting for me," Pendexter quavered, "and Vanette pulled him down deliberately and with the intention of sacrificing himself if only he could take the boy with him."

"That was Alonzo Condon, the young fellow I have been telling you about."

"And the girl!" murmured Pendexter. "It was a deliberate sacrifice on her part, too!"

"We've got to get out of this," said Wilkinson. "This narrow trail, you say, leads to the top of the cañon wall. Brace up, Pendexter, and we'll climb out."

Pendexter could do little to help himself. Wilkinson and Sam, between them, got him to the shelf under the overhang; then they turned the buckskin horse, got Pendexter to the animal's back, and went on slowly and carefully up the treacherous slope. The path broadened beyond the turn, so that Sam could walk beside the buckskin and hold the drooping form of the Los Angeles man in the saddle.

In due course they got out of the cañon by the same way Condon and Cherry Manning had ridden down into it, and there they met Reeves, dismounted and holding his horse at the cliff's edge. A yell of satisfaction broke from the deputy sheriff.

"By gorry, here you are! I didn't reckon I'd ever seen you again. I warned you to keep out of the cañon, and—— What's the matter with Pendexter?" he asked of Wilkinson, staring at the drenched and disconsolate figure on the buckskin horse.

Wilkinson started to tell him what had happened.

"Never mind that," Reeves cut in, "I saw most of it from up here—Condon's plunge into the water with Peabody and the girl's dive after them on the pinto. But Pendexter needn't feel so broken up. The girl made a landing with Condon on the old gravel bench, and my men fished out two of Peabody's gang with their ropes. I don't know what became of Peabody, but I guess that won't worry us. He is——"

Pendexter flung up his head. "You say the girl and Condon are safe?" he demanded.

"Come this way and I'll show you," said Reeves.

He led them along the brink to a point not far from the caves of the river. The wall was notched out above the caves, and in the bottom of the notch stood three of Reeves' men, watching the flood recede and keeping

guard of the two who had been Vannette's aids during the recent troubles on the flat. There was the man who had stood between Wilkinson and the car, and the other man who had struck Sam down from behind. The flivver, a sorry wreck, was hanging on the spur of granite that concealed the secret entrance to the caves.

A wail went up from Sam, and he beat the air mournfully with his hands.

"*Ai, ai! Togin Sama* gone up the flume, Mr. Wilk. Honorable car all busted in pieces! No more will *Togin Sama* carry you to painting scenes in California beauty spots! Beautiful machinery all smashed by pig of a river! *Ai, ai!*" Sam almost wept. "Painting material also gone! Camp gone! Wonderful gasoline stove, where is it? This joke river has completed wholesale destruction!" He shook his fist at the river, and said savage things to it in his native tongue.

Below, on the old gravel bench, far up toward the side of the cañon and well out of the flood, could be seen the girl and Condon and the pinto horse. Pendexter knelt and looked over the brink of the wall. He stretched out his hands, and happiness flooded his face.

"Hugh!" he called. "Hugh!"

And Alonzo Condon waved his hand, his right hand, for his left hand and arm were around the waist of the girl. Both looked upward.

"Dad!" Condon called back.

Although a hundred feet of sheer wall separated those on the bench from those on the cliff's brink, reconciliation bridged the space. Destiny, through the long years, had worked unerringly toward that scene in the box cañon, and Fortune, prodigal of the favors she had showered upon Napoleon G. Pendexter, had led him into perils merely that she might play for him her trump card.

After some time, Wilkinson and Pendexter reached the spot where the others were gathered. The receding flood left the crumpled and lifeless forms of Cady Vanette and Jim Higgins far down the cañon, caught almost within arm's length of each other by the same boulder heap. There was a significance in this, for Bart Holloway, one of Vanette's men, asserted that "Jim Higgins" was Vanette's son, James Higgins Vanette.

Young Vanette, as he lay with the hair washed back from his brow, upturned a face that was almost smiling. Bart Holloway explained further: "Jim was with me, and he'd 'a' been all right if he'd stayed where he was. But no. When Cady come downstream, fightin' with Condon, and when the girl drove along on that pinto cayuse and grabbed Condon by the arm, Cady was in a hard row o' stumps. Jim went after him, and Cady grabbed the boy and they both went down. That's the how of it."

"He worked at the Seven Stars mill for a while," said Condon, "but he was discharged. After that he got to trailing around with Bill Ranley."

From the crumpled, water-soaked, and sand-stained brown corduroy clothes Wilkinson gently removed a gold watch with a cheap leather chain. Strangely enough, that watch had not been lost out of the pocket that held it.

"This is yours?" he asked, handing the timepiece to Condon.

The amalgamator nodded. "I missed it while Jim Higgins was on the night shift with me in the mill," he said reluctantly. "This watch caused you to make a wrong guess, Wilkinson," he added.

"A little study of the sketch of Cady Vanette caused me to revise that opinion. I had another guess then, and it was closer to the mark. There was nothing in the face of Jim Higgins to

remind me of Napoleon G. Pendexter, but there was in yours. Condon—where did you get that?"

"My mother's name," said Hugh. "Dad—and he was quite right about it—had forbidden me to use the name of Pendexter until I had shown myself fit—"

"Let's forget that, boy," cut in Pendexter.

The amalgamator smiled. "Willingly, dad," he answered. "Alonzo was my middle name; so, as Alonzo Condon, I was a stranger to those who had known me as Hugh Pendexter. I've made many mistakes—"

"We've all made mistakes," Pendexter interrupted. He put out his hand and rested it on the shoulder of Cherry Manning. "One of my worst mistakes would never have been made had I known this brave and charming girl as I know her now." He put his heart into the words. "When I saw the name, 'Alonzo Condon,' signed as witness to that statement of Ranley's," he continued, "and when I heard it from Wilkinson and—others," he smiled at Cherry—"I began to get my eyes opened."

"I sent word to Condon by Miss Manning," spoke up Wilkinson, "when you insisted on coming to the box cañon in the face of Reeves' warning. I wanted him around. He had shown so much anxiety about you, Mr. Pendexter, that I had pretty nearly figured out the mystery. I felt that Condon would want to be on hand if you were in danger."

"Cherry brought the word," Hugh put in, "and insisted on coming with me. We looked down from the rim of the cañon while Vanette and his crowd were making trouble, and I started down the old goat path. I hadn't an idea Cherry was following."

The girl smiled at him. "Aren't you glad I did, Lon?" she asked.

CHAPTER XIII.

RECEIPTING A BILL.

ON the day following, in the Delmonico Hotel in Buenas Noches, Pendexter transacted a little business with Jack Wilkinson. Sitting at a table in the office, the man of large affairs requested the artist to make out his bill. It took Wilkinson about two minutes:

Napoleon G. Pendexter, Esquire,

To Jack Wilkinson, Dr.

To six desert landscapes, as per agreement, \$500 each..... \$3,000

Pendexter looked at the bill, then picked up a pen and did some writing on the document. "That looks better to me," he said, returning the paper. "How does it look to you?"

Wilkinson's eyes widened as he read:

To six landscapes, as per agreement,	
\$500 each	\$3,000
To one flivver, wrecked in the flood..	500
To painting equipment, do.....	500
To sundry experiences, not in contract	6,000
	<hr/> \$10,000

"Kindly receipt that, my boy," said Pendexter.

"Look here," said Wilkinson, "what are you trying to put over on me? I don't know whether to feel like a rogue or a hero."

"Money can't pay you for what you went through with me on Hardly Able Flat," insisted Pendexter. "I claim the right to make up to you, in so far as possible, for the danger and inconvenience into which I dragged you in the cañon. But if you deny me that right, I shall fall back on our verbal understanding in Los Angeles of paying a bonus over and above the price agreed on for the pictures. Your pictures have pleased me very much, Wilkinson. I selected just the right man for that job."

"That's all right," Wilkinson returned, "and I appreciate the feeling that prompts your generosity. But I can't take pay on account of troubles we got into with Cady Vanette. If

you were pleased with my work, you were to double the payment for the pictures." He laughed. "You can go that far, Mr. Pendexter, and right there I draw the line."

He amended the last item on the bill to read: "To bonus as per verbal agreement, \$3,000."

"It's all right to pay for the car and equipment," he went on, "although you flatter *Togin Sama* and the stuff on the flat and in the tonneau. But never mind. I'll remember Sam out of the proceeds, and maybe it will comfort him on account of losing the car."

"I've already remembered Sam," said Pendexter. "You didn't think for a minute I'd forget him, did you?"

And right at that moment Sam came into the hotel office, after an extended tour of the Buenas Noches clothing emporiums and haberdashers' shops. His wardrobe had suffered in the flood, but he was now dressed in the extreme of the prevailing mode.

"Mr. Wilk," said he, "observe what illustrious gentleman has done to me. I have great passion for fine garments, which inspire noble thoughts in wearers of same. Friends in Los Angeles will be cheered to learn of my ample fortune."

"There's a check for seven thousand dollars, Wilkinson," remarked Pendexter, after scribbling in his check book and tearing out an oblong slip. "But I'm accustomed to having my way, and you'll get the rest of it. Watch me."

He reached for a pad of telegraph blanks, and wrote out two messages. One he showed to Wilkinson and the other he folded and pushed into his pocket. The telegram Wilkinson read was to Mrs. Pendexter:

Have found Hugh, mother. He is a man grown, and has proved it. There's going to be a wedding, and it can't go on without you. Catch first train for Buenas Noches.

Wilkinson was pleased. "This is fine!" he exclaimed.

"You're going to stay for the doings, Wilkinson," Pendexter declared. "Hugh and Cherry insist on it. So do I. We'll have a few days in Buenas Noches before the big event, and I'm going to start improvements at the Dolly Varden. A lawyer is busy now with that statement of Ranley's."

"I'll stay, of course," said Wilkinson.

"Of course you will, and while you're here you'll paint a picture of Cherry Manning—of Cherry, on that pinto cayuse. I'll give you a thousand for that. Gad, but there's a girl! Look—here she comes with Hugh."

The ex-amalgamator and the little lady from the hills entered the hotel at that moment. Cherry went at once to Pendexter and took him by both hands. Her face was glowing with happiness. "You've come to know Hugh as I know him, haven't you?" she asked.

"I reckon that's the right way to put it, but what has straightened out my differences with Hugh is my coming to know Cherry Manning as he knows her." Pendexter drew a long breath. "What a fool an old money grubber can make of himself—sometimes," he added regretfully. "Son," and he turned to Hugh, "Dutchman's Hill, Ojo Caliente Valley, the Dolly Varden claim, and the Cattywampus country are really inspiring, after all. Eh?"

"For real inspiration, dad," said Hugh, with a quiet smile, "the Dolly Varden claim is worth all the rest of that scenery."

"I don't know but you're right," agreed Pendexter, chuckling.

Mrs. Pendexter arrived next morning, and a happier woman Wilkinson never saw. What she had longed for had come to pass: Hugh had proved his worth, and he and his father were again the chums they had been before domestic ties had been broken in Los Angeles. Mrs. Pendexter loved Cherry from the start, and was taken out to

the Dolly Varden claim to get acquainted with Cherry's mother. Napoleon G. and Hugh went along, leaving Wilkinson and Sam Hooray in town.

In the afternoon, Wilkinson got a message from home: "Have sold 'Sea Mists' to art connoisseur named Jordan for three thousand dollars. Come home and let's celebrate." This was signed by Mrs. Jack Wilkinson.

Wilkinson tumbled into a chair. "Can you beat it?" he said to Sam Hooray. "That little girl at home has sold a picture I held at five hundred dollars for three thousand."

"Banzai!" cried Sam. "Mrs. Wilk is wonderful saleslady. Allow me to felicitate, please."

"She sold it to a man named Jordan," Wilkinson went on.

"What difference, so long as most excellent picture is disposed of?"

"Well, Napoleon G. Pendexter's lawyer is a man named Jordan."

"Ah, ha!" Sam grinned delightedly. "So you receive what you would not take in spite of all by instrumentality of Mrs. Wilk. A most clever idea of illustrious Pendexter. I would call such proceeding, in business parlance, Receipted in Full."

"I suppose so, Sam. It's no use hanging out. I can see that he won't rest until I accept the money. Well, if he insists on paying that much for the picture, my conscience is clear."

"Pleased to observe change of heart in Honorable Wilk. Wonderful talents for painting, like yours, will be recognized with great wealth in spite of personal modesty. All this makes me very jolly boy, Mr. Wilk."

"You're a jollier all right, Sam," said Wilkinson. "Let's stroll around to the telegraph office. Pendexter told me to send Mrs. Wilkinson a wire inviting her to the wedding. We'll do our celebrating in Buenas Noches."

"Pleased to do," said Sam. "Happy times is good for celebrating."

Too Sure

By C.T. Jordan



(COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE)

CHAPTER I.

SOMEWHAT OVERCONFIDENT.

THAT last page of his father's letter vexed Fred Creighton. He was inclined to take it resentfully. "A fellow's got to filter in a little recreation along with his studies," he brooded. Again he picked up the closing page of the unusually long missive and read:

Now for a final word, Fred. Don't think I'm scolding you. I merely want to give you a word of advice. The tone of your last letter leads me to believe that you are altogether too sure of yourself. Change your attitude, son. There's nothing on earth so bad for an athlete as a swelled head. That malady has lost more races than I'd care to count. I want to have you win, but I want you to go about it in the right spirit. You say you're absolutely sure of winning your event this spring. How can you be? Isn't it conceivable that Tartown is not boasting of her runners' prowess this early in the season? You can never tell what you are going to run up against until you toe the mark in the crucial race.

But enough of this. Just follow the lead, and don't bank on seeming certainties. About your request for an increase in your allowance. I don't like it, Fred. I don't grudge you the money, but candidly I think you're having enough as it stands. Your allowance is bigger than mine ever was. I hope you are not doing excessive night running?

Nothing will so quickly waste health and money. But I'll scold no more. Write soon, Fred, and reassure me.

Affectionately your father,

JAMES B. CREIGHTON.

P. S.—I inclose check as per your request.

Fred folded the sheet and placed it with the rest of the letter in the drawer of his study table. He was in argumentative mood. "If he calls going to a dance now and then night running," he muttered sourly, "then I suppose I'm dissipating. But there's nothing else to do in the evening—especially when there are no lesson assignments. And the money—— If some of the fellows would only return promptly what they borrow, I wouldn't have to call on him for more."

He drew from his waistcoat pocket a fountain pen and uncapped it. A search through the litter of books and papers on the table brought to light a little-used writing tablet.

"He doesn't understand how it is," Fred ruminated, the pen held loosely between his lips. "Why Tartown has absolutely no one who is worth beans in the furlong. It'll be a dead walk-away. If dad were here and knew conditions as I do, he'd soon see the needlessness of worrying," he added knowingly. "Well, here goes, anyway."

"I'll have this letter off my mind to-night."

It took the young junior the better part of an hour to put his reply on paper, but finally he had it done to his own satisfaction. But it is very doubtful that, had he been in his father's shoes, he would have interpreted much reassurance from the letter.

Last year in a very close race Fred Creighton had won the two-hundred-and-twenty-yard dash from a speedy Tartown man. But the latter had been graduated in the summer. This, perhaps, was the clue to Fred's feeling of confidence. The big dual meet was a month away still, anyway, he reflected, and there remained plenty of time for hard work if unexpected talent should show up on the rival college's team.

Creighton was in the act of sealing his letter when a shrill whistle sounded below his window. He jumped up from his chair and raised the sash. "That you, Will?" he called. Then, receiving an affirmative answer: "Be down in a minute."

He closed the window and settled his coat snugly to his broad shoulders. Before his dresser mirror he gave a finishing touch to his hair with the silver-backed military brushes, fussed with his tie, and, picking a checkered cap from his collection of headgear, switched the light off and ran down the stairs.

Will Mallory was eagerly awaiting his appearance at the foot of the front steps. "We haven't got much time, Fred," he cautioned. "The train leaves in five minutes."

Inasmuch as the station was only a couple of blocks distant they arrived in time. Will Mallory might almost have been called a dandy. He was fond of the latest in clothes, and usually wore it. Always short of money, he had cultivated Fred Creighton, for that young man had never yet refused to tide him over.

The big-chested, gray-eyed junior liked Mallory in a way. He knew that his money was what the other liked most about him, but that worried him little, for Mallory knew more girls than any one else in Scott College. It was through him that Creighton had become acquainted with Eva Stone. She would be at the dance to-night. That was the main reason Creighton was going. Miss Stone attended Tartown College—the rival institution—and Creighton had found her to be the most delightful of companions. She was small in stature, had adorable blue eyes and sunny brown hair, and a smile that was worth going miles to bask in.

At half past eight they reached Tartown, and fifteen minutes later they mounted the wide stairs of Odd Fellows' Hall. Creighton found Miss Stone in rare good spirits that evening, and had several dances with her. It was while negotiating the steps of the latest novelty to reach Tartown that he chanced to look over her shoulder toward the door to an anteroom.

Two persons in the doorway were evidently much interested in himself. One was considerably older than the other, had a brown mustache and a puffy face. He was looking intently in the direction the younger man's finger pointed—and that was directly at Fred Creighton. But the hand was quickly lowered when they noticed that Creighton was observing them, and they turned about nonchalantly and strolled out into the smaller room.

The action of the strangers puzzled Creighton, and though his glimpse of them had been only momentary, he could not banish them from his thoughts during the remainder of the evening. He did not see them again in the hall, even though he took the trouble, in the interval between dances, to saunter to the room he had seen them enter.

"Now be sure you don't forget Fri-

day night two weeks from to-night," Miss Stone cautioned him, as he and Will Mallory seized their hats preparatory to making a dash for the last train to Scott. "It'll be a much better dance than to-night's. You'll come sure?"

"It's pretty close to the date of the meet," Creighton said. "But shucks! I've nothing to fear. Yes, I'll come, Eva."

When, after one in the morning, Creighton entered his room and switched on the light, his eyes fell on an envelope on the table.

"Pshaw!" he muttered. "Did I forget to mail my letter to dad?"

He picked it up and weighed it undecidedly in his hand. Then putting on his cap, he ran to the corner and dropped it into the mail box.

CHAPTER II.

NEWS AND A PRESENT.

MORE than once, in the days that followed, Creighton found his mind dwelling on the pair of strangers he had observed at the Tartown dance. Why had they looked upon him with so much apparent interest? Who were they? The younger of the two had appeared to Creighton, in the brief instant he had seen him, to be a decent-enough-looking chap. But the older man had not made a favorable impression on the Scott College junior.

Creighton determined, if he should see either of them on his next visit to Tartown, that he would find out who they were. He realized, when he came to give it sober thought, that he had no right to promise Miss Stone that he would come to the dance—only two weeks ahead of the big meet. That was the time when he should be training hardest and staying in nights. But he had promised on the spur of the moment, so what was there to do about it?

Saturday afternoon, eight days after

his evening journey to Tartown with Will Mallory, he picked up the grip containing his track togs and set out for the athletic field. He changed his clothes in the dressing room under the grand stand, and, coming out, vaulted the low fence separating the track and the bleachers and jogged once around the oval.

The Scott College cinder path was not a quarter-mile one for the simple reason that the plot was not large enough to accommodate an oval of that length. Without pinching the width of the track, every available foot of land had been used. The total circumference was exactly three hundred and seventeen yards.

This explained the presence of so many whitewashed posts at various points along the inner edge of the track. They were the carefully reckoned starting points of the several running events.

Todd, the trainer, was on hand that Saturday afternoon, and directing Creighton to go to the starting line for the two-twenty-yard dash, he took his position at the finish and clocked the junior for a trial furlong. As Creighton pulled up after crossing the line he joined Todd. From the expression on the trainer's face he deduced that his time had not been very satisfactory.

"Too slow?" he asked.

"Slow!" sneered Tod. "Why, you couldn't keep up with a tow mule at that rate! You're very bad. What's the matter with you, anyway?"

This was Todd's usual manner, so it disturbed Creighton's equanimity but little. "It's quite a while before the meet still," he returned light-heartedly. "Lots of time yet."

"Lots of time nothing!" said the trainer heatedly. "You're plumb out of condition and won't be worth a whoop unless you get down to hard work. I've been watching you a good bit lately, and it seems to me you don't much care whether you train regularly

or not. Now you've got to cut the foolishness and get in and dig. You want to make the team, don't you?"

This was going a little far, even for Todd, thought Creighton, but even though the trainer's words stung he wisely controlled his temper. But he could not resist one attempt at argument. "There's no one at Tartown can beat me," he said, voicing his favorite theme. "I don't see why I have to work my head off when I can win without training at all."

"Say, young fellow," retorted the trainer hotly. "You want to can that notion, and mighty pronto. If I hear much more of that brand of wisdom, I won't enter you. That's final." Todd turned away.

Creighton, after a few minutes more of desultory trotting around the oval, returned to the dressing room. Soon he emerged in his street clothes. His cheeks burned as he walked briskly back to the boarding house.

"Great Scott, but Todd was in a huff!" he mumbled pugnaciously as he strode along. "But I guess he doesn't know everything. And he talks about keeping me off the team! I'd like to see him do it. Why, the student body wouldn't stand for it a minute. Well, one thing is certain: I'm going to that dance next Friday in spite of anything. If Todd had been a little more decent, I might have explained things to Eva, and broken the date with her. But I won't now!" he added vehemently. "Not for anything."

Creighton was thoroughly angry, and it would take some tall and tactful persuasion to show him that he was in the wrong.

When Creighton reached his room he found Will Mallory lounging comfortably in his own favorite chair. Will was not an athlete and never wished to be one. He loved too well to be master of his own time.

"What's the matter, Fred?" he in-

quired, noting that the junior was not in his usual spirits. "Todd get your goat?"

"Never mind Todd," was Creighton's reply. "He's a mutt."

"I know it," chimed in Mallory. "You fellows are fools to let him domineer you. But say, have you heard the news?"

"What news?"

"Tartown's got a new trainer. Name's Clemens. He's from the State University."

"What of it?" said Fred. He was in no mood for conversation.

"Oh, nothing," replied the other, realizing, for a wonder, that his presence was boring the ill-tempered junior. "Guess I'll have to be going. But I almost forgot it. I called in at the post office and brought your mail along. A parcel and a letter. And say, Fred, who is corresponding with you from Tartown? Well, so long." He handed over the mail and departed.

Creighton's feelings softened somewhat when his eyes scanned the girlish handwriting on the expensive envelope. "There's only one girl in Tartown who knows me well enough to write to me," he thought. "And that's Eva Stone."

He opened the envelope carefully and read the brief, penned note it contained. It was from Miss Stone all right, but it merely told him that the Tartown dance had been postponed one week, and would he be sure to come?

Creighton wrote a warmly affirmative reply, and went to the corner and mailed it before he thought again of the parcel Mallory had brought from the post office. When he returned to his room he gave it his first attention. The superscription immediately made him cognizant of the fact that it was from his father. Then he recollected.

"Birthday present, I suppose," he told himself. "I'm twenty-two to-morrow. Takes the folks to remind a fellow of his age."

It was a small, square package, and had come by parcel post, insured. It did not take him long to unwrap it and lift the cover of the box inside.

"Good for you, dad!" he exclaimed, as he lifted out the contents. "I've wanted one for a long time."

It was an expensive gold stop watch. To the ring was attached by a piece of colored twine a small card. The brief line of writing on it caused Creighton to ponder.

"Keep an eye on your time, boy," it read.

CHAPTER III.

AN ANONYMOUS MESSAGE.

CREIGHTON spent half of Sunday in a sulk, but toward evening he became more like his usual self and decided to go for a walk. His feet carried him toward the public library, and, noting that it was an hour before closing time, he entered the reading room, having nothing better to do.

He chanced to pick up a current copy of the *News*, Tartown's modest eight-page daily. In glancing through its columns his eyes came to rest on a small item having to do with athletics. He dropped into a chair and read it with mild interest.

"Tartown College," the paragraph recorded, "has been fortunate enough to secure the services of Dalton Clemens, a brother of Craig J. Clemens, proprietor of the pool room and bowling alley of this town. Mr. Clemens has just been graduated from the State University, where he enjoyed an enviable reputation as a sprinter. Though he has been in town for the last fortnight, his advent here has been kept quiet up to now. He is said to be as good a coach as he is a runner, and he has undertaken to train our home team for the big meet at the Scott College athletic grounds two weeks hence. It is confidently expected that he will develop a winning team, and that he will

bring to light unlooked-for talent in the sprints. Consequently Tartown's hopes for a decisive victory are high."

"Humph!" derided Creighton, tossing the paper aside. "It takes more than a trainer to manufacture a winning team. He has to have the right timber to work with, and the material at Tartown's on the blink this year."

Happening to glance toward one of the reading tables in a farther corner, Creighton's eyes encountered the always recognizable figure of Mat Murphy, captain of his own track team. Creighton got up and joined the other. "See that item in the Tartown sheet, Mat?" he said.

"Yes, I saw it."

"What do you think about it?"

"That's hard to say, Fred. But I've heard that Clemens is a crack—a bear for discovering new talent."

"But there's nothing to discover at Tartown," remonstrated Creighton. "The place has gone sound to sleep. I don't believe that they'll take a quarter of the points in the meet."

"I wish I were as confident as you," said the captain. "Have you any definite reasons for your opinion?"

"I'm only figuring from the showing they made last spring," stated the sanguine junior. "They've lost all their best men by graduation, and a freshman never amounts to much."

"Don't you believe that!" answered Murphy. "There's been more than one world record shattered by a freshman. I think you're taking too much for granted, old man, and that's the worst thing you could possibly do. As for myself, I look for victory, of course, but a mighty close run for it—and nothing doing at all unless every man of us is right on the crest of good condition. And to be fit we've all got to work like trench diggers."

Creighton kept silence. His opinion was directly contrary to his captain's, but for once he was weary of arguing

the matter. Why, every one he talked to seemed to be afraid—even his father. But he could make none of them adopt his viewpoint, so——

"Going soon, Mat?" he finally asked.

"Right away, if you want to," replied the captain, rising from his chair and picking up his cap. "Let's go past the station and see the six o'clock pull out."

"Surely," agreed Fred Creighton, and they sought the street.

And it was at the Scott railroad station that Creighton had his second view of the person that had occupied his thoughts considerably for the last few days. Just before the train pulled out, a man with a puffy face and a brown mustache suddenly appeared and rushed up to the ticket window. His ticket purchased, he made a bee line for the train.

Fred clutched his friend's arm. "Mat, do you know who that is?" he asked excitedly, pointing to the figure which was mounting the car platform.

"I didn't see his face," replied the captain, "but from his back I'd say it was—but there—he's inside the car now, at the third window. Yes, it's he all right."

"But who?" queried Creighton.

"Why, Clemens, of course."

"Clemens? Not the new trainer?"

"No, no. His brother, the pool-room man—a regular sport, so they say. Bets on all the athletic contests." He paused and surveyed the junior, who was following with his eyes the train as it steamed out. "Why were you so interested in him?"

Creighton told Murphy of the man's actions at the dance at Tartown, but the captain at once explained the matter away lightly. "Probably he merely wanted to know who you were," he suggested.

"But why did he sneak the minute I spotted him?" questioned the junior.

4B TN

"And why should he have wanted to know who I am?"

"I wouldn't worry over it," advised Murphy. "It's too trivial. You need your rest at night, and if I were you I wouldn't go to any more dances until the season's over."

"Why not?" Creighton was on the point of demanding, but he curbed himself, and instead replied meekly: "That's so."

Creighton and Murphy parted in a few minutes, the former setting out for home and supper. "So that was Clemens, eh?" the junior pondered. "Well, any one that looks at me the way he did at the dance isn't doing it for fun. I wonder what he's been about in Scott to-day?" When he reached the boarding house, he found out—or thought he did, at any rate. "A man was here with a message for you, Mr. Creighton," the landlady announced as he started up the stairs to his room.

"A message for me? Did he leave it?"

"Yes." She handed him a soiled envelope, addressed to himself on a typewriter.

"What sort of a looking man was he?" he inquired, before opening the message. "Did he give you his name?"

"He didn't mention his name," she informed him. "Just gave me that envelope and asked me to hand it to you. He was a rather large man and had a mustache."

"A brown mustache?" Fred asked. "Sort of a fleshy face—a derby hat and a gray suit?"

"Yes. That's him to a T. Supper's almost ready," she added, excusing herself.

In his room, Creighton opened the envelope, and read in bewilderment the missive it contained:

Go to the oval any morning at five o'clock, and profit by what you see. Don't refuse to take stock in this hint for the mere reason

that the writer prefers to withhold his identity. You are assured that this is intimated to you with nothing but the friendliest of motives.

"Well, I'll be hanged!" exclaimed the sanguine athlete. "What the——" But the supper bell rang just then.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DARK HORSE.

AS Creighton ate his supper he was absorbed in wild conjectures as to the whys and wherefores of that anonymous note. He rose from the table without partaking of the coffee jelly, his favorite dessert—which, in turn, caused the lady of the house some apprehension.

Back in his room, he could consider the thing undisturbed. That the note had been delivered by the pool-room Clemens he had not the slightest doubt. But what did the message refer to? And what was the motive behind its delivery to himself? It was a teasing problem, and by bedtime he was no nearer its solution than he had been before supper.

"It must be some game he is up to," Creighton thought, as he got ready for bed. "And the only way I see to find out is to get up at the unearthly hour of five and pike down to the track. It can't be a practical joke?" he questioned on second thought. "No, it can't be. And I'll warrant that Clemens being at the Tartown dance and having me pointed out has something to do with this affair."

He wound his new watch and the alarm clock, setting the latter's alarm for four-thirty, switched off the light, and tried to go to sleep. But it was a hard task. When he finally did succeed it was only for a restless slumber, accompanied by many awakenings. After what seemed to be several weeks, and just as he was beginning to get a little rest, the alarm sounded. He ruefully

jumped from bed and got into his clothes in the half light of early dawn.

"If I wasn't so keen after a little information you'd never see me dressing at this hour," he mumbled to himself as he put on his cap.

Save for the one milkman he passed at the corner below his boarding house, Creighton did not encounter a soul. The air was crisp, and the walk invigorating. Birds were singing, and the first rays of sunshine were appearing over Dobb Hill. He turned at the station, crossed the railroad tracks, and plodded out the winding, oak-sheltered road that terminated at the college grounds. The fresh, early-morning smell of growing things was nectar to his lungs, as he breathed deeply of the fragrant air.

He crossed the campus, still damp with dew, by a diagonal path, followed the gravel path to the left of Swinner-ton Gymnasium, and caught his first glimpse of the athletic inclosure at the foot of the easy slope before him.

He could not see the track itself from here, because it was entirely screened on the near side by a dense growth of maples, with here and there a mighty oak. It hardly took a minute to reach the big wooden gate.

Creighton tried the latch, but found that the gate was locked. He made his way in among the trees that sheltered the south end of the oval. The only fence at this end was of barbed wire, but it was so thickly and intricately arranged that he didn't care to risk tearing his clothes in climbing it.

He stood where he was a moment, and, brushing the leaves out of his way, peered in, his eyes sweeping the athletic field from one end to the other. But his gaze encountered nothing out of the ordinary.

"Shucks!" he exclaimed, disappointed. "I expected to find something doing. Dollars to doughnuts it's a practical joke!"

But just at that instant he thought he detected a movement at the front of the grand stand on the right. Yes, something was there all right—two somethings. In an instant more he could make out their outlines more distinctly. Two men were standing near the door to the dressing room under the bleachers. And—he was sure of it now—one of them was in a track suit.

Creighton decided not to make his presence known just yet, but he determined to find a spot from which he could follow the movements of these early birds with greater facility. Treading cautiously around to the left, he found an ideal vantage point, almost opposite the finish post, which was, of course, on the far side of the oval.

Where Fred was the screen of trees came in to the very edge of the track, and, though entirely out of sight himself, he could, by leaning forward a little, see any portion of the track's circumference he desired. The two men were still at the bleachers just opposite, but now Creighton could see them distinctly enough to recognize their faces, had he been acquainted with either of them. But he found that, though there was something familiar about them, he could not place them. The one in the track suit wore a black upper, and across his chest was a large letter "T."

"Tartown!" exclaimed Creighton the instant he observed it. "What the thunder is a Tartown man doing on the Scott oval at five o'clock in the morning? Who is he? Some one they're keeping still about, I'll bet. Wouldn't wonder if that other chap was their new trainer, Clemens. There was something in that anonymous note, after all."

The two he was observing were in motion now. He could even catch the words the man he took to be the trainer was saying.

"That's the start over there," the man said, pointing to a spot well to Creighton's right, on that interested watcher's side of the oval. "I'll stay here at the finish and start you by clapping my hands. A pistol report would make too much noise."

"By George!" exclaimed Creighton. "If he isn't going to do a trial furlong, I'm a beefer." He watched the athlete in the black upper cross the field to the starting post. Holding a leafy bough in front of his face so that the man just opposite would not see him, Fred leaned out and saw the runner kneel at the line.

"I'll bet Clemens' game is to get his men used to our track," the Scott College junior surmised. "Well, if they have no scruples against training on our grounds secretly, I don't think I'll worry over the ethics of the matter myself. I'm going to nab his time."

He drew forth his new stop watch, then turned and watched the man in civilian clothes. As the latter clapped his hands Creighton released the finely adjusted timing mechanism of his watch, then instantly focused his gaze on the runner.

The athlete circled the south turn as though it were a straightaway and flew along the home stretch without once slowing up. Creighton knew instinctively that the runner was making time. As the runner crossed the finish and Creighton glanced at the time recorded, his lip drooped decidedly.

"Twenty-two—one," he murmured, amazed. "And a curved track at that!" He scrutinized the faces of the two men, who were themselves looking satisfiedly at the watch the starter had held.

"I've seen their faces before!" It dawned on him suddenly. "But where? That sprinter has never attended Tartown before this year, but his mug is as familiar as—as—Bill Mallory's!"

The two lingered only a minute

longer, then disappeared beneath the grand stand. Fred stood rooted to the ground until he had seen them emerge and climb the board fence on their side, then vanish.

CHAPTER V.

DARK HORSE NUMBER TWO.

IT was only after several minutes that the significance of the performance he had witnessed came upon Creighton. And when it did, it stunned him. "Twenty-two and one-fifth seconds," he muttered. "And made by a Tartown man without competition. A man I'll be pitted against, too. And a whole fifth second faster than I have ever made!"

Consideration of the proposition in this light so absorbed him that he did not notice the two figures that appeared on the fence opposite and dropped lightly to the ground inside the inclosure. That is, he did not observe them until he heard their footsteps on the grand stand. This sound attracting his attention, he gazed at them in amazement.

"What the dickens is going on!" was his smothered exclamation. "Am I going to witness an entire field day? Doesn't it beat——"

The men had gone into the dressing room, but in the brief space he had seen them Fred had realized that they were not exactly strangers to him. One of them wore a gray suit, had a puffy face and a brown mustache; the other was the young man whose hand had pointed at Creighton at the Tartown dance.

In the course of a few minutes the two came forth. As with the other pair, one was attired in a track suit—the younger chap. Fascinated, Fred watched them leap over the low wire fence to the track. "What race is this fellow training for?" Creighton asked himself.

The brown-mustached man looked searchingly about the oval; then, seemingly satisfied, spoke to the athlete beside him. But his voice was pitched so low that Creighton could not make out what he said. However, after the older one was done, the athlete set out across the field in the same direction as had the earlier bird.

"Looks like another two-twenty," commented Creighton. "What is behind all this, anyhow? Is it being cooked up especially for me? Looks decidedly queer."

"This the one?" he heard the runner call out, pointing to a whitewashed post far down the track.

"Yes," came the answer from the man at the finish line. "Are you ready?"

"Sure. Any time."

Creighton again held his watch tensely—it was still in his hand—and awaited the starter's signal.

"On your marks! Get set!" shouted the athlete's friend, then clapped his hands loudly.

Creighton caught the start on the dot, and stared in stupefaction at the runner, who had made the south turn in amazingly short time. "What a whale of a start!" he said to himself.

Into the home stretch tore the sprinter, his stride even, clocklike in its regularity, and—fast! Creighton's eyes were glued to the flying figure, and not once did he remove them until the runner had flung himself across the finish line. His finger stopped the recording hand of his watch mechanically; then he glanced down at its dial.

It would be difficult to say who was the more amazed at the time indicated. The man across the track almost went into hysterics as he showed his time-piece to the surprised runner. Creighton rubbed his eyes as he read the record on his. His watch indicated eighteen and two-fifth seconds!

Almost three seconds under the world's record was a little too much for Creighton. Either he was seeing things, or—of course, that was it! He'd go to the jeweler's at his first opportunity and learn what was wrong with his watch.

He waited until the other two had departed, then started for home himself, his mind a labyrinth of conflicting thoughts. He wondered if that second chap was a Tartown man, too. He must have been, he reflected; else why should he have been in the company of Clemens, the pool-room man? One thing was certain. Even if his watch were distressingly out of order, that last man had covered an exceedingly speedy furlong.

But why had he, Fred Creighton, been informed in an anonymous note of the early-morning goings-on at the cinder path? It certainly seemed strange that Clemens, if secretly getting the Tartown athletes accustomed to the Scott oval were the object, should himself have delivered information concerning it to a Scott College athlete.

Creighton wondered if it could be a plot to scare him. "If they think they can get my goat that way, they're mighty mistaken," he said to himself. "I may not be able to beat that last speed demon, but if I get in and train good and hard, I can put up a pretty stiff race against him. Maybe I was a little too confident," he suddenly admitted to himself. "But I'll make up for it. They'll be sorry they ever started this thing. I'm going to train as though my life depended on it."

On his way to college after breakfast he left his watch with the jeweler. That afternoon he surprised Todd, the trainer, with the energy he displayed in his training. When he called for his watch that afternoon the jeweler averred that there wasn't a thing

wrong with it. "I doubt if it would lose three seconds in a month," he said emphatically.

CHAPTER VI.

MADE OF MONEY.

CONSIDERING the positiveness with which the jeweler had spoken, Creighton found himself forced to believe that a running phenomenon had at last been discovered. He had read many learned discussions as to whether it was possible for a human being to cover two hundred and twenty yards in less than twenty-one seconds, and he had himself firmly believed that time to be the absolute limit, and on a straightaway course at that. But here he had witnessed with his own eyes an eighteen-and-two-fifth seconds furlong.

He realized that he would stand no show at all against such a runner, but it was also brought home to him that he had not been doing his best this season, and he resolved that from now on he would set the pace for strictly living up to training rules.

He retired early that evening, and was surprised at his feeling of freshness when he awoke next morning. He glanced at his alarm clock. It was not yet five. "Blamed if I don't take another walk this morning," he decided, and promptly put the words into practice. A few minutes later he found himself among the trees at the west side of the oval. Instinctively he had gone there. And what he saw was the performance of the morning before repeated in every detail. Even the times did not vary one-fifth of a second.

"Shows what regular training will do," was his comment.

He had decided from the first to keep these morning visits to the track to himself. If some huge joke were being perpetrated on him he didn't want the whole college to know it. And

if it weren't a hoax—he hardly saw how it could be—it wouldn't do the team any good to know what they were going up against.

Wednesday afternoon, at Scott station, there stepped from the three o'clock local a flashily dressed individual. He inquired his way to the Bremen Hotel, and there established himself. In less than two hours it became known throughout Scott that any loose change any one might wish to stake on Scott College's chance of victory in the coming meet with Tartown would be cheerfully covered by Mr. Tapwell—the name the newcomer had registered under.

It was Will Mallory who brought this information to Creighton in the latter's room that evening. "Can you spare me twenty, Fred?" he asked, as soon as he had delivered himself of the news.

"I could let you have it, Will—yes——" Creighton hesitated. "But if you are thinking of placing it with your Mr. Tapwell, I'm afraid I'll have to refuse you."

"Why so?" questioned the disappointed Mallory. "Are you so set against betting?"

"I never did approve of gambling," stated the junior, "and I don't intend to lend my money to be used for that purpose. If I were a betting man, I'd hesitate a long time before taking this chap up, anyway."

"But it's easy money, Fred. He seems more eager to cover bets on the two-twenty than on the whole field day, though he refuses neither. And with you in it—well, it's a cinch! And I'd like some of the pickings."

Fred began to realize that perhaps he had done an unwise thing in remaining silent about the early-morning séances at the track. It might mean the loss of considerable money to the sportier, patriotic Scottites.

"Don't you believe it's a cinch, Mal-

lory," he said earnestly. "You see all the fellows and spread the news that there's a hen on. Tell them to hang onto their money, and that I say so."

"But——" protested the open-mouthed Mallory. "But——"

"Do as I say," urged Creighton. "You'll wish you had afterward."

Mallory attempted to question his friend, but Fred was not inclined to talk. "If you are fool enough to bet your money after what I've told you, you deserve to lose it," he said with finality. The nonplused Mallory decided to beat a hasty retreat.

"I believe I'll have to take Todd into my confidence," Creighton mused, when the other had gone. "But I hate to admit to him that what I've seen mornings is all that has spurred me on to earnest work on the track. Still, I'd hate to see the fellows pass over a lot of money to that sure-thing worker."

Fred was morally certain that the newcomer was thoroughly aware of the ability of that marvelous runner he had himself watched for the last three mornings. Though averse to betting, he felt that, if some way to turn the tables on this sure-thing man could be devised, he could at least watch proceedings without much compunction.

"But there is no way that I can see," he reasoned, "unless the phenom could be kept out of the race. But if he's an amateur I should strenuously object to anything like that. No, there's no way out of it. That chap's slated to win, and he'd have to be considerably out of form to lose—which isn't saying that I won't do my best."

After all, he concluded, if folks were going to bet, that was their lookout. Before he went to bed Will Mallory returned. "Well, Bill, what's this mean? Have you been the rounds already?" Creighton asked.

"Plenty far, Fred," replied Mallory, his tone a little odd. "But I was too

late. That Tapwell has covered three thousand dollars on the two-twenty alone."

CHAPTER VII.

A CANCELED ENGAGEMENT.

THREE thousand dollars! Mallory's announcement almost struck Creighton dumb. "The boobs! The half-wits!" was all he could say.

"But that isn't all, Fred," his friend went on. "You have got yourself into hot water by sending me out with your warning."

"Hot water! What are you driving at?"

"The fellows think it looks queer—your advising them not to bet on you after they've already placed their money. They talk as if they think you're double-crossing them."

"What!" Fred fairly shouted his amazement. "They think I'm going to throw the race? Is that what you mean?" he angrily demanded.

"That's the way their talk sounds," Will admitted. "But don't think that I believe it."

Creighton became thoughtful. He brooded silently over the whole affair, and came to the conclusion that perhaps there was some ground for such an opinion. It might naturally impress one who didn't know the inside facts that his action was queer—especially after his having repeatedly contended that he would win in a walkaway.

"But they ought to know better," he remonstrated aloud. "How was I to know they had put up their money? And if it were so that I intended to throw the race, do they think I would have come out in the open and warned them?"

Though he sympathized with the junior, Mallory could offer little solace, so a few minutes later he left Creighton alone.

"I should have gone to Todd the minute I learned what was going on at the

track," the sprinter chided himself. "But how was I to foresee that this was to be the outcome? And now, when I do lose—as I'm certainly bound to, barring a miracle—what will the fellows think of me? Explanations afterward will sound hollow. I've got to confide in Todd to-morrow—before it's too late."

The prowess of that mysterious early-morning runner had so dominated Creighton's thoughts that he had forgotten his promise to Miss Stone. This Wednesday night recollection of his promise to attend the dance at Tartown Friday evening came to him.

"But I can't do it," he decided instantly. "I hate to disappoint Eva, but I can't break my training at this crucial time—even for her. I'll write a letter now. She'll understand how it is."

He searched for writing materials, and soon was at work on the missive. He walked to the corner and mailed the letter, then returned to his room and prepared for bed.

Next morning he went as usual to the track, and for the fourth time clocked each of the runners. The phenomenon was not at his best this time, but nineteen seconds flat was remarkable enough, Creighton thought.

At classes that forenoon Fred was aware that he was being regarded by fellow students in an altogether unusual manner. Most of them seemed to want to hold themselves aloof, but one of them went so far as to remark threateningly:

"If you don't win, Creighton, you'll regret it as long as you live."

Creighton was sick at heart when he returned to the boarding house for lunch. He had not yet seen Todd, but was determined to see him that afternoon. He was certain the trainer was the proper person to confide in. A letter awaited the junior on the hall stand. It was from Miss Stone—a mere note.

"Don't come to Tartown Friday," it

read. "I never would have invited you if I had known. I will explain everything when I see you. Please heed this for your own sake."

"Well, that makes it certain that Eva won't be mad at me for not coming," Creighton reflected. "But I wonder what could have made her write like that?"

He was not given much time for reflection, however, for half the noon hour was gone already. He ate a light lunch and returned to the campus. That afternoon, after classes, he walked down to the cinder path, his track suit in the light valise he carried. He spotted the trainer over by the jumping pit, and immediately started toward him. Before he could speak, however, Todd accosted him.

"I want to see you, Creighton," were his words, and the manner in which they were spoken caused the junior some uneasiness.

The veteran coach led the way to a bench at the other end of the field. "I want to know what's what," he said, coming to the point immediately. "There's some talk floating about the campus that doesn't make a hit with me. No doubt you know to what I refer?"

Creighton nodded, but didn't speak.

"I thought, the last few days, you had taken in the slack, and were getting your nose down at last. It encouraged me. Now they tell me you don't intend to win your race. How about it?"

"I never told anybody I didn't intend to run for all I am worth," contended Creighton. "But, Todd, I can't win."

"What! You can't win? What do you mean by that?"

"I can't win. That's all there is to it. I'll try, but I can't make it."

"That's almost as bad a malady as overconfidence," stated the trainer. "Might I ask the reason for your suddenly reversed viewpoint?"

"If you'll meet me near the gymna-

sium a little before five to-morrow morning," Creighton proposed, "you'll see the reason quick enough."

"The gymnasium? At five in the morning? Have you gone nuts?"

"Not a bit of it. But if you'll be there you'll see something that'll make your mouth drop."

The trainer was genuinely interested now. Perhaps there was some method in Creighton's madness. "I'll be there," he said. "Get into your togs and go through the regular stunt."

Five o'clock Friday morning found Creighton and Todd sharing the little space among the trees that lined the west side of the oval. In silence the two watched the performance with which Fred was only too familiar. Each of their watches recorded the flight of the first man—the one wearing the black Tartown upper. Twenty-two and a fifth seconds was the time both chronometers caught.

Todd looked curiously into Creighton's face. "Is this all that's been bothering you?" he inquired, the trace of a smile on his lips.

"Just wait a few minutes," Fred replied.

At half past five the second dark horse and his companion appeared. Todd evidently recognized the puffy-faced individual, for he muttered under his breath: "The nerve of him, using our track without permission!"

Creighton wondered why he had not commented similarly on the first pair, but Todd vouchsafed no information. The athlete who was a phenomenon in Creighton's eyes crossed the field, and the two onlookers prepared to time him.

The man across from them clapped his hands, and the trial was on. Todd gave a smothered exclamation as the runner rounded the turn, and glanced sharply at the face of his watch. For an instant an expression of amazement appeared on his face, but it suddenly vanished. His eyes followed the

sprinter, and his finger stopped the recording hand of his watch as he crossed the line.

"What time did you get?" whispered the excited Creighton.

"Eighteen and one-fifth seconds," replied the trainer in a voice whose calmness surprised the junior. "Not bad," he added.

"Not bad!" exclaimed his amazed companion. "What——"

Todd slapped him heartily on the back. "Is this all that's been bothering you?" he said, his sides quaking with suppressed mirth.

"All!" exploded Fred.

"Come on; let's get out of here before they hear us. Creighton, I'm surprised at you. You get in and dig when your race comes and you'll do all right."

"But—he made it in eighteen-one," protested the wondering junior.

"So could you if you had to," was Todd's mysterious reply.

CHAPTER VIII.

A GLEAM OF LIGHT.

OBEDIENT to Todd's wishes, Creighton ceased making his five-o'clock pilgrimages to the oval. The trainer had refused to give any explanations, saying that the joke was too good to give away this early in the game. "If I were a betting man, I'm afraid I'd be tempted to place a wad with this Tapwell myself—but I'm not," he had remarked.

A change had come over Creighton during the last few days. He had begun to have a great deal of confidence in his trainer, and his hat would now fit easily on his head.

Saturday, the day of the meet, arrived at last, and after a quiet forenoon Scott turned out in full force and made its way to the athletic field. As Fred walked in front of the grand stand, on his way to the door to the

dressing room, he caught sight of a certain familiar figure on one of the higher tiers of seats. He ran up the aisle and grasped heartily the hand of a middle-aged man who seemed as pleased as he at the meeting.

"Well, of all things! I never expected to see you here, dad!" Creighton exclaimed. "And you, Eva?" She sat next to his father.

"Allow me to make several introductions," broke in Mr. Creighton. "This gentleman on my right is Mr. Stone, of Tartown."

"Your father, Eva?"

"Of course."

"Mr. Stone and I have been friends a good many years," the elder Creighton explained. "And here, Fred, are two gentlemen I believe you have heard of before—Mr. Graham and Grant Sterling, the world's professional champion in the furlong. Mr. Graham is his manager and trainer."

In bewilderment Creighton acknowledged the introduction, for the two men before him were the two he had watched so many mornings on the oval. Sterling was the athlete who had worn the Tartown upper.

"Don't look so stupefied, Fred," said his father, amused at his son's absolute dumfounding. "I am going to confess to a little underhanded work."

Fred's surprise only grew, to the keen enjoyment of the several seated before him. Eva's eyes twinkled.

"When I got your answer to my letter," Creighton, senior, went on, "I was completely up in the air. I decided that I must find a means to knock a little of the—I'll mention it in a whisper—conceit—but you needn't be embarrassed—out of you. I finally hit on the plan of hiring Mr. Sterling, the professional, to do some fancy sprinting for your sole benefit. I corresponded with my old friend, Mr. Stone, and he wrote an anonymous note for me."

"I wasn't able to deliver it myself,"

Stone put in, "but I had a friend of mine, a Mr. Clemens, do it for me."

"So that explains Clemens' mission in Scott," said young Creighton. He chuckled on wondering what Clemens' emotions might have been had he known the note's contents. Evidently he had no knowledge at all of the earlier running of Sterling. He had no doubt conceived the idea of training his star man on the track where the crucial race would be run, and had set the training hour a little later than Sterling's.

"Then I'm not to run against Mr. Sterling?" said young Creighton, with some relief.

"Certainly not," replied his father. "I merely hired him to make you see that there could be such a thing as a chance of your losing. I'm here to-day to see how my scheme panned out. Were you so confident of winning half an hour ago?"

"No. And I'm not confident now," Fred stated emphatically. "But what made you cancel our date, Eva?" he asked.

"When I realized that it meant breaking training rules for you, I couldn't do otherwise," she replied. "I want Tartown to win, of course, but not by taking advantage of any one. Well, father, don't you think we'd better be going to our own section of the bleachers?"

"And I've got to report now myself," said Fred.

All was excitement in the dressing room which had to serve for the members of both teams. The secret was out. Tartown had discovered the greatest speed marvel in the history of athletics—that is, Clemens, the coach, had discovered him. Clemens had allowed his brother, who knew somewhat of conditioning himself, to direct the athlete. And—all the training had been done at an early hour in the morning

on the Scott oval. Tartowners were bubbling over with optimism. The find would also run in the relay and assure the winning of that event. Todd's attitude toward all this talk was a little puzzling to Creighton. The trainer seemed not a bit impressed.

Beedle was the discovery's name, and he was much in evidence in the dressing room. Creighton surmised that recognition of his ability had gone to his head. Suddenly Creighton remembered that he had a question he would like to ask the man. He approached him.

"Do you remember the dance a few weeks ago at Tartown?" he asked him.

"Sure," the other replied. "Some one told me you were Creighton early in the evening, and I pointed you out to Mr. Clemens, who has trained me."

Creighton was taken aback. Was that all it had amounted to? "But why did you fellows clear out as soon as you saw me watching you?"

"You don't think that was our reason for going?" the marvel laughed. "No. Clemens had come to tell me it was time to go home and to bed."

The frankness of this explanation satisfied Creighton. After a few more words he returned to the Scott side of the room.

The afternoon wore on until the time drew near for the two-twenty. No, the meet did not hinge on this event. The furlong was not the last event on the program, either. It occupied its usual place.

Just before the last call was given, Todd drew Creighton aside and spoke a few words of advice into his ear. "Just start out with the gun and tear," he said. "Don't be afraid of any one. Run your own race."

The athletes went to the starting line, and Fred noticed the expression of chagrin that marred the phenom's countenance as he drew his position from the starter's hat. But Creighton

did not guess just then what was troubling Beedle.

Three men were entered from each college. Beedle drew the pole, and Creighton the next position. Beedle's knees trembled as he crouched, and Creighton noticed it. "Is he getting nervous?" he wondered.

The crowds in the grand stands were on their feet, and the whole trackside blazed with colors. Arms were waving pennants, and hoarse voices were yelling.

The starter's pistol spoke, and Creighton left his holes abreast his rival. And then—to Creighton—an amazing thing happened, or, rather, didn't happen. He had confidently expected to see a flying figure buzz past him and shoot round the turn into the straightaway. But nothing of the sort took place. Instead, he was amazed to find himself still in the lead when there were but seventy yards left to go.

But he dared not look behind; Todd's rules were strictly against such tactics. The other might be teasing him; might be holding back on purpose, intending to skim into the lead in the last few yards, and thus play himself up to the bleachers.

The tape was parted by Fred Creighton's chest, and he had time to turn around before the Tartown speed demon crossed the line. Before he had time to give voice to his astonishment, Todd had him by the arm and was leading him to a quieter spot.

"You poor simp!" exclaimed the trainer in his characteristic vein. "Aren't you hep yet?"

Then something dawned on Creighton. They were standing near the post where the milers were already lining up. "Can it be that——"

"What else? We were looking directly down the track that morning, and couldn't judge very well. The posts aren't marked, and Beedle——"

"Started all those trial sprints from

the mile post," put in Creighton. "No wonder he made it in eighteen something. It's only a hundred and seventy-five yards!"

"Do it yourself, couldn't you?" Todd laughed. "But they're calling out the result of the furlong. What's that? Hear that, Fred? Megaphone man says twenty-two seconds flat, breaking the record!"

"What I'm thinking of is Clemens, the poolist," said Creighton, laughing.

"Yes," acquiesced the trainer. "I have positive information that he put up all the money Tapwell bet. But say, you have never told me what put you on to the doings at the track?"

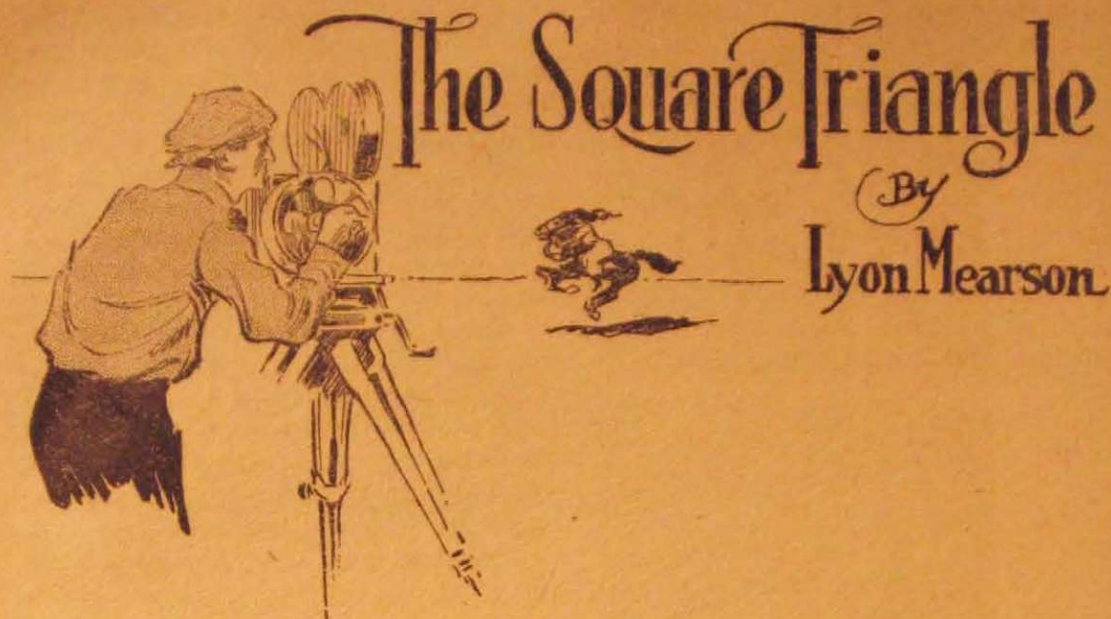
"Ask Clemens," was Creighton's reply.

The Swiss President

THE most modest and unassuming ruler in Europe is undoubtedly the President of the Swiss Confederation. It is an astounding fact, but even in his own country his name is not widely known, and if a Swiss who resided outside his native land were asked the name of Helvetia's official head, he would invariably express complete ignorance on that point.

The president, who is elected by the federal assembly, holds the office for only one year, from January 1st to December 31st, and usually the vice president succeeds him. His chief duty is to direct his country's foreign policy, for most of the internal administration is in the hands of the cantons or districts. There are thirty-five cantons, each of which is represented at the two Houses of Parliament.

The president this year is Mr. Edmund Schultheff, and his official salary is twenty-five hundred dollars, with an additional three thousand dollars for expenses. He has a federal council of seven, which forms a sort of cabinet, and each member receives twenty-four hundred dollars per annum.



The Square Triangle

(By)
Lyon Mearson

THE director of the Central Film Corporation—Bill Wright—finished his exposition of the latest script and put it down before him on the desk, gazing inquiringly at the faces of Rowland Harding, the lead, and Edith Morrow, who played opposite him.

They maintained the silence for a space, and Harding returned the director's gaze a little sullenly. Edith was quiet, with a calm, introspective look in her clear blue eyes that seemed to indicate that she was so busy with her thoughts that she had heard nothing. This, however, as both knew, was not the case.

Finally Harding broke the silence, just before it began to be awkward. "Nothing doing, Bill," he said, shaking his head. "There is absolutely nothing stirring."

"What do you mean?" queried Wright, flashing a quick glance at him from his keen eyes.

"Just what I say. I won't do it," Harding announced calmly, with flat decision in his even tones. "You'll have to get a double for me in the stunt."

A stunt double is a dare-devil of the films who takes the place of the lead in a dangerous scene. Some stars are never "doubled," preferring to take their own risks; some are always doubled. It is a question merely of personality and temperament—not to say courage.

The scene under discussion was risky; there was no question of that. The script called for the hero to take a jump from the top of a freight train, going at a dangerous rate of speed, to the top of a freight standing on the next track. Not only that, but the heroine was to be in his arms. It called for a nifty piece of work where a misstep meant, at the least, broken bones, but it had been planned by a scenario writer who had never done anything more dangerous than defying a hat boy in a Broadway restaurant.

"I won't do it," Harding repeated. "My value to the pictures is too great for me to risk my life doing a stunt like that. I also insist that you get a double for Edith in that scene. It's much too dangerous for her to attempt. It's——"

"Speak for yourself, Mr. Harding!"

flared up Edith at this, casting him a glance from her usually calm eyes that caused the blood to mount in his cheeks. "I am quite capable of judging how valuable I am to the films without the help of any one."

"Oh, I say, Edith," protested Harding. "I was thinking only of your own good——"

"I have thought of all that," broke in the director, with a troubled glance at Edith. "It can't be done; there will have to be no doubling in this scene. It's got to be a close-up. I'm going to shoot it from the top of the car."

"Well, I won't do it," said Harding stubbornly. "As you know very well, it is not a question of my personal courage"—here he glanced obliquely at Edith—"I've done enough stunts for you to know that. It is only——"

"How about me? I'm going to do it," cut in Edith wickedly. "And you won't."

"Well, you're very foolish," Harding persisted.

"There's no use in arguing about it," said the director. "If you really won't do it, then I'll have to get some one else for the lead in this script, because the whole story hinges on it."

Harding and Edith looked at him quickly. "You haven't got anybody," declared Harding.

"I will have by to-morrow morning. There's a new man coming—Clifton Rogers."

"Clif Rogers coming!" echoed Edith and Harding in one voice. A steel-blue gleam crept into Harding's eyes, and the lines about his jaw hardened. The good old-fashioned triangle was complete once more.

He and Edith and Clifton Rogers had worked together for the same company before the organization of the Central Film Corporation. Rogers and he had been rivals then, the hypotenuse of the triangle being Edith. Neither one had

appeared to make much headway. The girl had liked them both. When the triangle was broken up by the shifting of Edith and Harding to the new company, Harding had breathed a sigh of relief at having a clear field once more. The Central's studio was in Fort Lee, New Jersey, and with Rogers working in Hollywood, California, it had seemed to Harding that things would be easier.

They were not. Edith was as far removed as ever, and although she seemed to like him as much as she ever had, he was getting nowhere in his suit. He stole a look at her now. She was gazing at Bill Wright with that familiar, lovable, far-away light in her eyes, but there was a softer gleam, it seemed to Harding, in them now. He knew what it was—the thought of Clifton Rogers, and the knowledge of this made him furious.

Not that he and Rogers were enemies. They had been very good friends in spite of their dual aspirations to Edith. Edith had distributed her favors evenly, however, and neither could say that he had the advantage.

II.

CLIFTON ROGERS came the next day. A tall, good-looking chap he was, as handsome in his Grecian-god way as was Harding in his more rugged type. They greeted each other in a friendly enough manner, with even a tinge of warmth in their tones, and stood chatting until Edith came in.

When Rogers saw her he detached himself from the little group of actors that had formed around him, and hurried to her.

"Hello, Clif!" she said as he took her hand.

"Edith—it's good to see you again," he said.

She looked up at him gratefully, and

he mistook the light that was in her eyes.

"Will you marry me?" he asked in his impulsive, impetuous way.

"'Nobody asked me, sir,'" Edith quoted, but her eyes sobered in an instant. "No, certainly not," she said decidedly. "You're much too rapid a worker. Give me a chance to get used to seeing you around again, will you? Talk about speed!" They both laughed.

"I thought maybe you had decided," Rogers apologized, "so I took a chance."

Harding watched the pair with darkening eyes.

The Central's studio is an industrious place, and there was no time for the play and cross-play of emotions except before the camera man. Rogers started work that afternoon.

The company owned a short spur of track a few miles back of the studio, where they took their railroad pictures. The actors, director, and camera man crowded into two touring cars and drove out there.

"Now," said Bill Wright, as they stood in front of the freight trains, "I don't want to have any retake on this, so let's rehearse it once slowly."

The camera was fixed firmly on the roof of the train. In front of the camera were Rogers and Edith. "Going to be nervous, little girl?" asked Rogers, smiling.

"Of course not," she flashed back, "and don't call me little girl."

"The train is going to pull slowly past the dead freight—very slowly," said Wright to them from his place behind the camera. "This is just to get your distance, so that you can be a little familiar with the jump when you make it. Jump in the direction we're going—and don't try to stop short. It will cost you a couple of legs if you do. Take Edith by the waist; and you, Edith, jump at the exact moment he

does, but be careful not to deflect him.

"And, Clif," he added, "if anything happens to Edith and you come out of it alive, I'm going to bash in several inches of your head." He looked at Edith with wearied, worrying eyes.

"Oh, don't worry, Big Bill." She laughed back at him. "Nothing will happen."

The rehearsal went off as scheduled, and the train pulled back to the starting point.

"Think you have it, Edith?" asked Rogers solicitously.

"Yes; don't worry about me. You have the hard part of this," she answered. "Not afraid, are you?" she asked.

"Afraid? With you acting as if it were just a little vacation trip! You would never know it, any way, if I were," he replied, smiling into her eyes.

"Now!" said Wright very soberly. "And for Heaven's sake let's have no accidents. Oh, wouldn't you rather I put some one else into this picture, Edith?" he asked, gazing at her intently.

"No; certainly not," she hurled back at him. Big Bill grunted, as was his way when moved, and motioned to the engineer.

"Go ahead!" he shouted. "Camera!" The wheels of the engine began to gain speed, and the whirring, monotonous grind of the camera was heard over the jarring brakes and grunting exhaust. The speed of the train increased rapidly.

Poised in front of the camera were Edith and Rogers, his arm around her waist with a clutch that was like a vise. In their tensed, expectant faces could be seen the strain under which they labored as they waited for the train to come abreast of the stalled freight.

Now they were alongside. They poised themselves on their toes.

"Action! Jump!" rasped Wright above the noise of the train.

The two jumped on the word, landed on the freight roof, lurched forward, regained their balance, lurched again, and tumbled in a breathless heap as the flying train ripped past.

They were waiting on the ground when Wright came running back to them. "Fine—wonderful!" he congratulated them. "Hurt?"

"No," they both answered. "Except that I feel a little shaken up," added Edith.

"Whew!" exclaimed Wright in a low tone, wiping his forehead. "I'm glad that's over. I was sorry just as soon as I gave the word," he said to Edith.

III.

ROGERS went through with the rest of the picture, and on its release it proved to be an unqualified success. There was a lot of ability—hitherto latent—in Rogers, and if he had not attained to a reputation such as Harding had made, it was only because he had not been given the opportunity in his former position.

As for Edith, she seemed again to distribute her favors evenly between Harding and Rogers; to the outward eye there was scarcely any difference between her treatment of the two. They both courted her assiduously and persistently. Harding, however, felt that there was a difference, and that he was on the weak side of it. He expressed this in a subsequent conversation with Edith.

"No," said Edith in reply to his question. "I've said no to you three times this week. Nobody is going to marry me yet, Rowland," she added more softly. "You know, I really like you an awful lot and——"

"I know you used to," Harding said a little bitterly, "but since the time I

refused to go through with that darned stunt picture——"

"That has never made any difference to me," she cut in, but there was a shade of dubiousness in her tone, and he sensed it instinctively.

"Yes, it has," he insisted. "You think that I'm lacking in courage because I refused to risk my life for a film. You should know better than to——"

"I was willing to risk my life," Edith broke in, led into the argument through his persistence, "and so was Clif Rogers."

Harding was silent for a space, staring off into nothingness, as he mused upon the case of Clifton Rogers. "That's the trouble," he said finally. "Clif. You think that because he took a risk that I side-stepped that——"

"Nothing of the sort," she said. "I like Clif very much, as I do you, but your physical courage, or cowardice, or Clif's, is nothing to me."

That was where the matter rested, then, for a while. Nevertheless, Harding had hit very near to the truth. Although Edith had not expressed it, even to herself, there was a vague feeling in her mind that Clifton Rogers was the better man. She was a woman of unlimited courage herself and could, in her state of mind, scarcely be expected to have patience with a man whom she suspected was lacking in that respect.

It was not that she considered Harding lacking—she knew that he possessed nerve of a sort—it was only that in one instance he had struck a false note by refusing to take a risk that she herself had accepted merely as incidental to her work. And then Clif Rogers had come back suddenly and gone right into the thing without a thought or a question. Whether she admitted the fact or not, it made a difference.

Rogers, while he felt that there was

a certain warmth in her attitude toward him, did not know to what special gods to attribute it. He did not know that Harding had refused to perform the stunt which he himself had gone into so unhesitatingly.

It was after Rogers had been there for seven or eight months that awakening of a kind came to Edith. Awakening, that is, to the points of difference—or rather similarity—between the two men. Perhaps the incident might not have happened if Rogers had known of the disagreement that had preceded his arrival.

The scene was almost identical with the one that had been held before in Bill Wright's little cubby-hole of an office. He had finished the exposition of a script that called for a hair-raising adventure on the part of Edith Morrow and Rogers.

Rogers looked at the director fixedly for a space. Finally he spoke: "Nothing doing, Bill." He shook his head.

"What do you mean?" asked Wright, although he knew perfectly well.

"Just what I say; I won't do it," Rogers said flatly. "You'll have to get a double for me. My value to the pictures is too great for me to risk my life doing a stunt like that."

Thus unconsciously did Clifton Rogers repeat the exact words of Rowland Harding on a similar occasion.

Edith looked up at him, startled for a moment, with the feeling that comes to one who thinks that some time, in a previous incarnation, perhaps, he has lived through a similar occurrence. Her mind flashed back to Harding, and it occurred to her that in her thoughts she had either been unjust to him or overjust to Rogers. She could not think it out yet. Through the haze of her reflections, Rogers' words came to her.

"And I think you ought to get a double for Edith," he was saying.

"Oh, never mind me," she broke in wearily. "You people are so busy thinking about yourselves that you needn't bother about me. I am quite capable of taking care of myself."

Wright's troubled gaze fell upon her then. "I was thinking of that, Edith," he said slowly. "I am not much in favor of all these risks you are taking for the pictures. But my main business is to follow orders here—the orders from headquarters—and I have to give them what they want."

Thus did Rogers wipe out whatever advantage may have existed in his favor. He placed himself in the same class with Rowland Harding in Edith's mind, and the relative position of the two men was something which she could not then determine.

IV.

FOR sheer beauty and ruggedness of scenery, there is scarcely any necessity to go farther than New Jersey and the Palisades. Curving its devious way down the mountainside to the Palisades, and then following the river for many miles, there is a narrow country road that could have been cut out of the heart of the Grand Cañon. Over the side is an abrupt drop of more than three hundred feet into the clear-blue Hudson, a drop as straight as a plummet and with nothing to impede the fall.

At the foot of the road, just where it straightens out parallel with the edge of the Palisades, and in front of the flimsy wooden railing that stood between them and eternity, stood the director, Bill Wright, and his camera man.

About a hundred yards in front of them, on opposite sides of the road, stood Rogers and Harding midway between the camera and the point in the road where Edith was to emerge on a horse from behind a projecting ledge

around which the road wound its snaky way.

"I wonder what's keeping her," remarked Wright. "Start turning," he ordered the camera man; "she'll be in sight in a moment."

There was a shout from up the road, and Edith and the horse swung into view.

Pale and tense of countenance, and with her bronze hair streaming behind her in a straight line, whipped by the wind of her speed, she was pulling on the reins with all her womanly might, but to no avail. Whatever it was that had startled her spirited animal, it was thundering down the road toward them at a terrific pace, straight down to the weak, flimsy wooden railing that separated the road from the sheer three-hundred-foot drop into the smiling Hudson.

Like missiles shot from forty-two-centimeter guns, Harding and Rogers leaped for the horse as it came up to them. Misled by the speed at which it was going, they both miscalculated, and were flung aside like twin straws in a Niagara of water, senseless and inert, silent heaps on each side of the road.

Straight for the camera flew the horse with speed unchecked, and Edith, pale and silent, sawing at the reins. Twenty yards in front of the turn of the road at which the camera stood was Bill Wright.

Just as the frightened horse was about to ride him down, Wright swerved to the left and jumped, catching the animal about the head and hanging on with his full weight. The momentum was checked, and in that instant the director managed to swerve the horse into the road parallel with the edge. In fifty yards the horse slowed down and stood still, trembling in every limb.

Weakly Wright assisted Edith down.

"Some picture!" said a voice behind them. It was the camera man. "I saw that I wasn't needed, so I continued turning the crank. Best picture I ever took—and the most realistic. There was no doubling in that."

V.

TIME: The next day. **Scene:** The "prop" room of the Central Film Corporation, which had been turned into an improvised hospital and housed Rogers and Harding under its roof on adjoining cots. Enter Edith.

The two men smiled up at her as she approached. Neither one was much hurt, only bruised and shaken up. The doctor had told them they could be up and about in twenty-four hours.

"I want to thank you boys," Edith said slowly, "for what you tried to do for me yesterday."

"Oh, forget it!" ejaculated Harding. "Anybody would have done it—without waiting for a double. This was the real thing."

Rogers smiled his acquiescence.

"Yes, it was the real thing," Edith agreed, "and it opened my eyes to one or two other things. I really owe an apology to both of you; not for anything I have said or done, but for something that has been in my head subconsciously—about courage, you know."

They nodded.

"And another thing," Edith added, "I'm through with the pictures for good. Bill Wright has decided that my value is too great for me to risk my life doing stunts"—she smiled bewitchingly—"so we are going to get married."

"Bill Wright!" the two men ejaculated in one voice.

"How long has this been going on?" demanded Rogers.

"Oh, ever so long; only Bill didn't seem to know it. I couldn't seem to get him to—er—speak; that's why I couldn't tell either of you that there was another man. It took a moment like yesterday to bring him to it."

"He proposed finally?" queried Harding, almost under his breath.

"No." Edith smiled and blushed. "I proposed to him. He merely accepted me."

"Lucky man!" came from two cots.



JUST WANTS TO GO

By Berton Braley

I WANT to go to Callao
 Across the tumbling seas;
 I want to roam the restless foam
 As free as any breeze.
 I do not care what may be there,
 My heart is all aglow
 To sail the deep where billows leap
 And go to Callao.

I want to go to Callao,
 It sounds and seems so far,
 A port, perchance, of great romance
 Where dreams and glamour are.
 If it's a spot that's foul and hot
 And dull and mean and slow,
 Still would I sigh to make the try
 And go to Callao.

I want to go to Callao,
 A name that rumbles free
 In deep-toned notes from sailors' throats
 In chanteys of the sea.
 I may not like the port I strike,
 And yet, and yet I know
 I'd like to slip aboard a ship
 And go to Callao!

-A Dorothy and Arthur Tale-



More than a Guess

By Augustus Wittfeld



DO think that, for a man, Arthur Armitage Oliver buys some of the most unheard-of things imaginable. Why, one time he actually bought a parrot from a dissolute seafaring man, because, as he said, the nautical gentleman had told him that the parrot spoke Spanish, and Arthur thought that it would help him in his study of that language. But developments disillusioned him, for when he repeated some of the classical Castilian he had acquired from his feathered tutor to the maiden lady from whom he was taking lessons the result was disastrous.

One evening several weeks ago he came home in such jolly good humor that I asked him by how many runs the home team had won.

"Home team?" he questioned absently. "Oh, yes, to be sure! They won hands down. Three to one. But I wasn't thinking of that, Dorothy. I was thinking of the great bargain I struck to-day. Biggest thing ever."

"What utterly impossible thing have you been buying now?" I asked. "I fully expect that some day you will come home and tell me that you have acquired a slightly damaged second-hand family tree. What is the very wonderful bargain you have secured?"

For answer Arthur produced a piece of paper from his wallet. "Exhibit A," he said gleefully. "A pawn ticket for a classy gold hunting-case watch. Thin model, seventeen jewels, water-cooled radiator, nonchoking carburetor, fully equipped with peerless shock absorbers, wind shield, and one-man top. A 1917 model, warranted not to skip, skid, or turn turtle."

"Arthur Armitage Oliver," I asked, "what in the world are you talking about?"

Arthur laughed. "Say, Dorothy!" he exclaimed. "I feel so chipper over this deal that I could kid the ears off an army mule."

"But I am not an army mule," I objected.

"That's where I score one on the army." He laughed. "But, joking aside, this ticket sure does represent some watch. From the description of it I got from the fellow who sold me the ticket, it must be a dead ringer on the one that I won in the tennis tournament the year we were married, and that sure was some watch."

"Yes," I agreed, "that was some watch—while it lasted. But it didn't last long enough. If I remember rightly, a pickpocket relieved you of it the first time you wore it."

"Yes," said Arthur; "he did. And he was some slick guy to get it. He got my time, all right. I've always wanted to get another one like it, and to-day, when that fellow offered to sell me the ticket for five dollars, after describing the watch and telling me a hard-luck story of having to pawn it on account of having gone broke in a poker game, I fell for it and bought the ticket."

"Arthur," I said severely, "do you mean to stand there and tell me that you encouraged a poor man to lose money in a poker game? The fact that you got the watch for five dollars is no excuse for such an act."

"But I don't get the watch for five dollars," said Arthur. "There is something like twenty-one-twenty to pay on it."

"Twenty-one-twenty!" I exclaimed "What for?"

"Why," replied Arthur, "the fellow borrowed twenty dollars on it and——"

"Well," I interrupted, "if he borrowed twenty dollars on it, why in the world doesn't he pay it back? I don't see why in the world *you* should pay another man's honest debts."

"Dorothy," said Arthur, "when it comes to business you are absolutely hopeless. A man pawns a watch for twenty dollars. The watch is worth probably fifty dollars. Then, as it is impossible for him to redeem the watch, he sells the ticket for five or ten dollars, and the one who purchases the ticket has to repay the loan, with legal interest added, to get possession of the watch. That is a straight business proposition."

Now, wasn't that just like a man? The idea of telling me that giving a man five dollars for the privilege of paying *his* debts was a straight business proposition! Is it any wonder that so many men fail in business? Why, with ideas like that, it is surprising that so

many of them are successful. But Arthur is so headstrong—especially when he knows that he has made a business blunder—that I did not argue the matter further with him. Instead, I reminded him that he had only twenty minutes to dress for Mrs. Bouvier's reception.

II.

THE next evening, when Arthur came home, he brought the watch with him. It really was an excellent-looking watch, and I told him that I thought he had got it real cheap for five dollars.

"But," he protested, "I didn't get it for five dollars. I had to pay the pawnbroker twenty-one-twenty for the watch."

"No such thing," I argued. "You gave the man five dollars for the pawn ticket, and, to my mind, that represents what you paid for the watch. If you were foolish enough to assume the man's debts, I cannot see that that has anything to do with the cost of the watch."

"All right," said Arthur resignedly, "we'll let it go at that. But there is something in the watch that didn't cost me a cent."

He snapped open the case and held it toward me for inspection. "Goodness me!" I exclaimed. "Isn't he too awfully cute for anything? I wonder who he is."

"Search me," replied Arthur. "Whoever pasted that picture in the case has a kid to be proud of."

Arthur was right. The picture in the case was that of the cutest, dearest, sweetest little boy that ever was. He was about three years old, with a chubby little face like you see in the pictures of cherubs in those quaint old European churches. Tight little curls covered every spot of his head where curls belong, and I knew positively that

they must be golden. A pair of laughing eyes, which absolutely could not be anything but blue, gazed into mine, and—oh, he had the cutest, cunningest pair of dimples that ever won any one's heart. I loved him the minute I laid eyes on his picture.

"Some kid, believe me!" exclaimed Arthur in a tone that was almost reverential. "Say, Dorothy, if we——"

The doorbell shrilled an impatient summons, cutting short Arthur's half-expressed thought, and I am awfully glad it did. I would not for worlds want you to know what I know he was going to say.

Arthur called down the speaking tube and asked who was there. He listened to the reply with a puzzled frown on his face, and then he pressed the button that opened the door in the lower hall. In a short time a tall, distinguished-looking man stood on the threshold of the apartment, and Arthur invited him to enter.

"I trust you will pardon the liberty I have taken in calling on you, Mr. Oliver," he said as he entered, "but as my time in your city is limited I thought it best to call upon you at once. This," he continued, producing a card and handing it to Arthur, "will tell you who I am and the nature of my business."

"Hamilton W. Keene, Investigator," read Arthur aloud. "Mr. Keene," he continued, "I am very pleased to meet you. I know that my wife is just dying to learn the object of your visit. Permit me to present her. Dorothy, this is Mr. Keene. Mr. Keene, my wife, Mrs. Oliver—the brains of the establishment." Wasn't that nice of him?

Mr. Keene smilingly acknowledged the introduction, and after we were seated he plunged right into business. "Mr. Oliver," he said, "you may not be aware of it, but I sat next to you in the trolley car this evening as you

were coming home. When you pulled your watch out of your pocket I noticed it particularly, because it is like the one which I carry. But when you opened it and I beheld the picture which it contained my interest in your timepiece went up about a thousand per cent. Are you aware, Mr. Oliver, that that picture is a photograph of little Raoul Delacour, who was kidnaped from his home in Chelsea several weeks ago?"

Arthur was too astonished to reply. And no wonder, for it seems to me that every time the dear boy does anything there is always a "kick" to it, as he says. When he bought that pawn ticket for the watch and obligated himself to pay another person's honest debts, I am sure that he had no idea that he was also getting mixed up in a kidnaping case.

"Goodness gracious, Mr. Keene!" I exclaimed. "It isn't possible that any one would kidnap such a sweet child. The very idea!"

"I am sorry to say that it is not only possible," replied Mr. Keene, "but it is a fact. The child disappeared mysteriously several weeks ago, and his parents, whom I know personally, are nearly frantic. I have been unable to take up the case, as I am at present engaged on a very important one for the government. Nevertheless, when I saw little Raoul's photograph in Mr. Oliver's watch, I determined to follow the clew. What makes it all the more mysterious is the fact that the little fellow's parents never have had his picture taken, and I did not know that there was a photograph of him in existence."

"If that is the case," I said, "that photograph may have been taken by some one who was implicated in the kidnaping."

"That is quite possible, Mrs. Oliver," agreed Mr. Keene. "Will you permit

me to examine the photograph, Mr. Oliver?"

For reply Arthur handed the watch to Mr. Keene without comment. The poor boy seemed dazed at the turn events were taking.

Mr. Keene took the watch and gazed at the photograph long and intently. "Poor kid," he finally remarked; "it is his picture all right. Mr. Oliver, would you mind telling me how it came into your possession?"

"I will be only too glad to do so," replied Arthur, and he told Mr. Keene all about purchasing the pawn ticket and redeeming the watch.

"And the fellow from whom you purchased the ticket was a stranger to you?" questioned Mr. Keene, when Arthur had finished.

"Absolutely," replied Arthur. "I never laid eyes on him before."

"Would you know him if you saw him again?" asked Mr. Keene.

"I certainly would," exclaimed Arthur. "I'd know that guy in a million."

"If by any chance you should happen to see him," said Mr. Keene, "have the police authorities shadow him. They may be able to locate the child through him. I am extremely sorry that other duties prevent me from following this clew. It seems to me that the only thing we can do is to turn over what evidence we have to the local police and let them get busy, but I would much prefer to put the matter into the hands of a good private detective who could devote all his energies to the case."

"I wonder——" I said, looking at Arthur.

"So do I," said Arthur, who seemed to sense my unuttered thought. "The poor dub would be tickled to death to be called into this case."

"To whom are you referring?" inquired Mr. Keene.

"A local, half-baked detective," re-

plied Arthur. "Mrs. Oliver has an exaggerated opinion of him. Thinks he's a wonder and all that kind of stuff."

"No such thing," I expostulated, "but I certainly do give Mr. Judson credit for having been successful in every case he has undertaken, and he is certainly energetic and enthusiastic."

"Just the man we want," said Mr. Keene. "Would it be possible to have him in? I know that the Delacours would approve of any step I may take with a view to recovering the child, and if Mr. Judson is agreeable I will turn the case over to him and acquaint him with all I know about the kidnapping."

Arthur got Mr. Judson on the phone and urged him to come over; told him it was the chance of his heretofore innocent and uneventful young life, and a lot more stuff of the same kind. Really, I think it is awful the way Arthur talks to the poor man, but Mr. Judson seems to take it good-naturedly. He asked Arthur a few questions, and told him he would be over in a jiffy.

III.

WHEN Mr. Judson arrived, Arthur introduced him to Mr. Keene, who seemed to be very favorably impressed with him, and after a few commonplace remarks he started telling him all about the kidnapping case. Then he showed him the picture in the watch, and told him how it had come into Arthur's possession.

Mr. Judson listened very attentively to everything Mr. Keene said, and when Mr. Keene showed him the watch he took it and examined it very critically. "This is practically a new watch," he said. "The case does not show any evidence of it having been carried very much." Then he fixed his attention on the photograph, and after he had gazed at it for a few minutes a happy thought seemed to strike him.

"Mrs. Oliver," he said, turning to me, "can you let me have a cup of hot water and a teaspoon?"

"Why, certainly," I replied, wondering what in the world he wanted with them. I went to the kitchen, drew a cup of hot water, and, returning to the living room, I placed it on the table in front of Mr. Judson.

"Mr. Oliver," he said, addressing Arthur, "I am going to take liberties with your watch. Won't hurt it a bit. Just want to prove a theory I have formed."

"Go the limit, old scout," said Arthur heartily. "I'm in this thing to the finish, even if you have to drain the spring of that watch to the last drop of water."

I was all pins and needles wondering what Mr. Judson was going to do, but he didn't keep us waiting very long. He filled the teaspoon with water, and then very carefully poured it into that part of the case containing the photograph. He let the water remain for a minute or so and poured it back into the cup. Then he poured another spoonful of hot water into the case, and after letting it remain for a while he poured that also into the cup. He repeated the process about a half dozen times, and then he was able to lift the moistened photograph from its place. Then he took his handkerchief and wiped the case dry, looking intently at the inside as he did so.

A smile of triumphant surprise flashed over his face as he closed the case and laid the watch on the table. "So far so good," he announced, rubbing his hands together. "Mr. Keene," he continued, addressing that gentleman, "when you showed me that photograph in the watch I was puzzled. I could not understand why any one who had anything to do with the kidnaping would take the chance of putting an incriminating photograph in the case before pawning the watch. If it was

put there, it must have been for a purpose. Can you think of any reason why any one would put a photograph into a watch when about to pawn it?"

"No," replied Mr. Keene slowly, "I cannot."

"Neither could I, until I happened to think that it might have been placed there to facilitate the pawning of the watch."

"But I fail to see how the picture would enhance the value of the watch," said Mr. Keene.

"It would enhance the value of the watch by covering up something which might prove a bar to its pawning," asserted Mr. Judson. "Pawnbrokers, as a rule, are unwilling to accept pledges that bear any engraved inscriptions upon them. Unredeemed pledges which bear any such engraving are very hard to sell. This watch bears an inscription on the inside of the case, and it was absolutely necessary that it be concealed before the kidnaper attempted to pawn it."

"Why do you think that the watch was pawned by the kidnaper?" asked Mr. Keene.

"Because," replied Mr. Judson, "the photograph was made by an amateur. It's a mighty good photograph, but it is an amateur one just the same. You have said that there was no photograph of the child in existence. Consequently this photograph must have been made after the child was stolen, and my theory is that it was made for a purpose. I will get you to verify that theory by and by.

"The kidnaper has the child on his hands, safely hidden, of course, and it becomes necessary for him to raise some funds," Mr. Judson went on. "What is more logical than that the crook should turn to the place where he could most easily get money? He has the watch, but the inscription inside the case is a bar to its pawning. He still has the negative of the photo

he took of the child, and he makes an extra print and pastes it in the case. The fact that Mr. Oliver acquired the watch with the photo in it will give color to my theory."

"But," objected Mr. Keene, "do you think that the kidnaper would take the chance of pawning a watch with the evidence of his crime pasted in it?"

"A photograph in a pawned watch is as safely hidden as if it were locked up in a safe-deposit vault," replied Mr. Judson. "The fact that the ticket was afterward sold to Mr. Oliver doesn't prove anything except that the crook may have needed money so badly that he was willing to take a chance. This amateur photographer is also an amateur at the kidnaping game, and he is a purely local amateur at that."

"A local one!" exclaimed Mr. Keene. "Say, Mr. Judson, did the watch tell you that, too?"

"Sure thing," replied Mr. Judson. "I'll leave it to Mrs. Oliver," and he handed me the watch, opening it as he did so that I might read the inscription on the inside of the case.

"Goodness, gracious me!" I exclaimed, as I read it. "Arthur Armitage Oliver, this is really the most astonishing thing that has ever happened," and I handed him the watch.

Arthur took it and read the inscription. His face was a study in emotions. As they say in the moving pictures, he registered everything from surprise to unbelieving astonishment.

"Well, I'll be bombed!" he exclaimed. "This is the identical watch I won at tennis two years ago!"

IV.

AFTER the excitement incident to the discovery that it was Arthur's own watch that he had bought had died down, Mr. Judson went into further details.

"The watch was stolen by a local

crook, and an amateur one at that," he reiterated. "If it had been stolen by a professional pickpocket, it would have been disposed of immediately. Those fellows don't take any chances. The fellow who stole it feared to sell it, but when his needs became pressing he concealed the evidence of his crime beneath the picture of the kidnaped child. Would it be possible for you, Mr. Keene, to get the Delacours on the long-distance phone?"

"Certainly," replied Mr. Keene. "If Mrs. Oliver will be so good as to let me use the instrument. But what is the idea?"

"I have a hunch that the Delacours have received a duplicate of that photograph within the last week," replied Mr. Judson. "The kidnaper made the picture with the sole idea of impressing them with the fact that he meant business and of proving to them that he has the child."

Mr. Keene went to the phone, and, after what seemed an age, succeeded in getting the Delacours. It really was remarkable how Mr. Judson had grasped every detail of the case, for in his conversation with Mr. Delacour, Mr. Keene learned that a letter had been delivered to them in some mysterious manner. The letter, Mr. Delacour stated, had contained a small photograph of their son, and the writer had stated that the child would be returned if satisfactory arrangements could be made about the ransom. Mr. Delacour further said that the writer had not stated the amount he desired for the return of the child, but had intimated that arrangements might be made through the personal columns of a prominent New York daily paper.

"A rank amateur," exclaimed Mr. Judson, when Mr. Keene repeated what Mr. Delacour had told him. "He's got the child and he's all up in the air about landing the ransom. He's as good as caught. Mr. Keene, I think that you

may safely assure the anxious parents that we are on the right track and that the child will be returned to them very shortly."

Mr. Keene did as Mr. Judson advised, and I know the assurance must have been very heartening to the parents. After telling them to be patient for a few days more, Mr. Keene hung up. Then, after complimenting Mr. Judson on the able manner in which he had taken hold of the case, and urging him to give it his best efforts, he announced that he must be going. After promising to call upon us when again in our city, he took leave of us, accompanied by Mr. Judson, and Arthur and I sat up until nearly midnight, talking over the wonderful affair.

Mr. Judson called Arthur up at the office the next day and got the name of the pawnbroker from whom he had redeemed the watch. Arthur told me this when he came home that evening, and added that "Jake" would be around that evening to discuss the matter, and I knew that if he came he surely would have something to report.

Sure enough, when Mr. Judson called later in the evening, he was fairly bubbling over with good spirits.

"Well, Jake, old man," said Arthur, "what's the good word? You look mighty happy."

"The smiles are indications of success," replied Mr. Judson. "I've done a good day's work. I called upon our pawnbroker friend, but at first he didn't seem to be able to give me any definite information as to who had pawned the watch. Said that the name Lacey on the ticket was no doubt a fictitious one and that he thought it would be a waste of time to try to locate any one by that name and try to fasten the theft of the watch on him. Of course, I hadn't told him anything about the kidnapping case, as I thought it best to let him think that I was merely trying to trace the fellow who stole the watch.

"I asked him whether the fellow had pawned anything besides the watch, and, after consulting his books, he said that a camera had been pawned by a man named Lacey on the same day as the watch.

"At my request, he got the camera and let me examine it. It proved to be a camera such as would take a picture like the one that was pasted in the watch. The camera seemed to refresh his memory, and he said that, to the best of his recollection, the man calling himself Lacey was about five foot ten, well set up, dark-complexioned, and fairly well dressed. What did the fellow who sold you the pawn ticket look like, Mr. Oliver?"

"Short, red-headed chap," replied Arthur. "Looked like a pugilist."

"Lacey evidently gave him the ticket to dispose of," commented Mr. Judson. "Didn't care to take any chances himself. After leaving the pawnshop, I stopped in at several others, and, after showing my authority, I asked whether a man giving the name of Lacey had pawned anything with them lately. They looked over their records, but could not find that he had. Finally I struck an obscure place near the northern end of the town, where the pawnbroker found that he had a pledge which had been left there by a man giving that name. It was a tennis racket and it proved to be a high-grade one at that. It had the letter 'L' engraved on the butt of the handle, and it looked as if it might have belonged to a professional. Did you ever meet a professional tennis player by the name of Lacey, Mr. Oliver?"

"No, can't say that I ever did," replied Arthur. "But say! No, it couldn't be. The idea seems preposterous."

"What idea?" asked Mr. Judson.

"Why," replied Arthur, "the fellow from whom I won the finals in that tennis tournament was named Lessig."

"Ah!" exclaimed Mr. Judson, rubbing his hands together. "This sounds interesting. What became of this man Lessig?"

"Search me," replied Arthur. "He was a poor sport, and I didn't cultivate his acquaintance. He got as mad as a wet hen over losing the championship, and some of the fellows at the clubhouse said they heard him vowing to get square with the dude who defeated him, but I didn't take much stock in the chatter. Wonder if he could have pinched the watch from my locker the day after the match? I went out there to limber up the next day. Remember, Dorothy?"

"I certainly do," I replied. "It was when you returned home from the club that you first missed your watch."

"Case is closed against Lessig—alias Lacey," exclaimed Mr. Judson. "He's the man we want to find. Guess I'll tear myself away and get busy trying to locate him. Call you up to-morrow and let you know how I make out."

V.

IT was late in the afternoon of the next day when Mr. Judson called up and asked for Arthur. I told him that Arthur had not yet returned, but that I expected him any minute.

"All right, Mrs. Oliver," he said. "Won't you tell Mr. Oliver that I've located a fellow who goes by the name of Lacey? Lives out on the Bluebell Road, about five miles from town. I haven't been able to get out there to-day, and I was wondering whether Mr. Oliver would drive me out there in his car. I think the fellow is the one we are looking for."

"How perfectly exciting," I said. "Have you seen the man?"

"No," replied Mr. Judson; "but from what I've learned of him I think it is the tennis sharp who was known as Lessig."

Just then Arthur came in, and when I told him what Mr. Judson had said he called to him over the phone and told him to come right up and the car would be ready for the run out to Bluebell Road.

Of course it was absolutely out of the question to let them go alone, and when Mr. Judson arrived the three of us started.

It was a perfect evening, and the July sun was just beginning to lose its intense glare when we struck the country. Our car purred along, like the perfect machine that it is, and, had it not been for the excitement of the chase, I would have given myself over to the enjoyment of the occasion. We bowled along mile after mile, passing very few houses, and when the meter showed that we had traveled about five miles along the Bluebell Road, Arthur halted a man who looked like a native and asked him if he knew where a man named Lacey lived.

"Lacey?" mused the man. "Seems to me that's the name of the fellow who moved into the old Deering place a couple of weeks ago. He's a young fellow and lives there with an old lady who looks as if she might be his mother. They've got a little chip of a girl running around the place."

"Sounds as if it might be the man we are looking for," commented Arthur. "Where is the place?"

"Turn to the left, first road you come to," replied the man. "You can't miss it. It is the only house there."

Arthur thanked him and proceeded to follow his directions. As we turned into the road indicated, Mr. Judson told him to drive slowly so that he might take a look around and pick up any possible clues.

As we neared the place a mite of a girl in a gingham pinafore, with a cute little blue and white check sunbonnet on her head, came racing out of the house. She seemed to be pursuing

something. Presently she caught it, and, with a shriek of delight, she straightened up, holding the cutest and most adorable little kitten by the tail and swinging it around as if it were something inanimate. I never before in all my life saw such cruelty. It made me awfully angry.

"Stop the car, Arthur!" I managed to gasp, and as he did so I called to the child: "Little girl, put that kitten down immediately. Do you hear?"

The little vixen paid absolutely no attention to my command, but at the sound of my voice an aged woman appeared at the door of the house and took in the scene at a glance. "Ruth," she shrilled, "put that kitten down. Do you hear?"

"The little imp stopped her antics and glanced at the old woman. Then the kitten was given an extra violent swing and deliberately tossed into a clump of bushes just as Arthur started the car.

"I wonder whether there are any more children in that house," said Mr. Judson as we pulled away.

"I should hope not," commented Arthur. "Not if that is a sample of the rest."

"I never saw such heartlessness in all my life," I exclaimed indignantly. "Why, that child has evidently had absolutely no bringing up. The poor, dear little kitten. To think that a little girl would——" I stopped as an utterly impossible thought flashed into my mind. "Stop the car, Arthur, please," I said.

"What's up now?" he asked, as he complied with my request.

"I wish to go back to that house on foot," I replied. "Now please don't ask any questions, but do exactly as I say. Turn the car around and keep the engine going, and when you see me wave my handkerchief from the gate rush down as quickly as you can and pick me up."

"All right," replied Arthur. "I don't understand what it is all about, but I'll do it."

When I reached the gate of the house the child was playing around the garden, while the old lady was puttering around among her plants. I stopped and called to her. "Madam," I said, as she approached, "I came back to see whether you would let me have the little kitten to take home. I am afraid the little girl is making its life miserable."

"I would gladly let you have it," replied the old lady, "but I am afraid that Ruth would miss it very much. She is very fond of it, although she does mistreat it dreadfully."

Just then the kitten emerged from the clump of bushes where it had been tossed, and started racing toward us. The child saw it, and, with a shriek of delight, started racing after it.

"Oh," I cried, "she will hurt it!" As the little imp pounced upon it, I clutched my heart and staggered, as if about to fall.

"What is it?" asked the old lady anxiously. "Are you ill?"

"Water," I gasped. "My heart!"

The old lady started for the house, and I waved my handkerchief wildly to Arthur. As the car raced up the road, the kitten escaped from its tormentor and came running toward me with the child in full cry after it. As the car stopped at the gate, I rescued the kitten from its tormentor.

"I want my kitten," wailed the youngster.

"Come with me and I will give it to you," I said, running toward the car. The child tugged at my skirts as I ran, and, as I reached the car, I handed the poor animal to Mr. Judson. Then I picked the child up bodily and sprang into the car.

"Drive like mad," I told Arthur, and he did. When we were several miles

away, Arthur stopped the car and turned to me. "What's the big idea?" he asked. "What are you going to do with that kid?"

For reply I tugged at the strings of the little blue-check sunbonnet. They were tied in a hard knot, and I had quite a time to undo them, but finally I succeeded. Then I pulled the bonnet off. "This," I said, exposing a little round head covered with the cutest little golden curls, "is the answer."

"The Delacour kid!" gasped Arthur. "He's the original of the picture in the watch, all right."

"Well, I'll be—blowed!" exclaimed Mr. Judson. "But how in the deuce did you guess that it was a *boy*, Mrs. Oliver?"

"That was more than a guess, Mr. Judson," I replied, laughing happily. "It is the result of nature study. If you know anything at all about little girls, you should know that they never pick little kittens up by their tails. They cuddle them like they do their doll babies."

"That's a new one on me," said Mr. Judson. "Guess I'll have to take a course in nature study."

When we reached home I telephoned immediately to Mrs. Delacour and told her that we had recovered the child. It is needless to state that she was overjoyed. She said that she would motor right over and get him. She said that it would take about two hours to make the run, and then she asked me what little Raoul was doing.

"Oh," I replied, "I wish you could see him! He's marching up and down the room, as happy as a king, swinging his little kitten by the tail. It looks just too cute for anything."

"Judson's going out to get that fellow Lacey," said Arthur, as I hung up. "I'd like to be on the jury that convicts him. He'd get his all right. About fifteen years'd be the fitting end of a perfect jay."

The Other Fellow's Troubles

THE tendency often is to believe that others are better situated than ourselves. Those who are earning salaries and paying the higher prices charged for nearly all articles of food and for many articles of apparel, are almost unanimous in believing that the farmer has the best of it.

But a farmer not far from Boston, who says he is the owner of a fair-sized improved farm, stocked with horses, cows, swine, and chickens, has written to a Boston newspaper announcing that he cannot make wages, under present conditions, and that he is ready to sell his property and work for some one else.

Perhaps the discontented farmer does not know the other part of the story as well as he knows his own.

Why Didn't He?

AN amusing anecdote is told of Lord Cardigan, who fought in the Crimean War, when a coalition of England, France, Turkey, and Sardinia fought Russia. Cardigan was a choleric old general, whose bursts of temper were a constant dread of all his subordinates in the army.

It once happened that provisions for the troops ran very short; in fact, the army almost faced a famine. One morning, when the general appeared for breakfast, the cook came before him and said, in a troubled tone:

"Pardon me, your lordship; I have set the table in the dining tent, as usual, but there isn't any bread!"

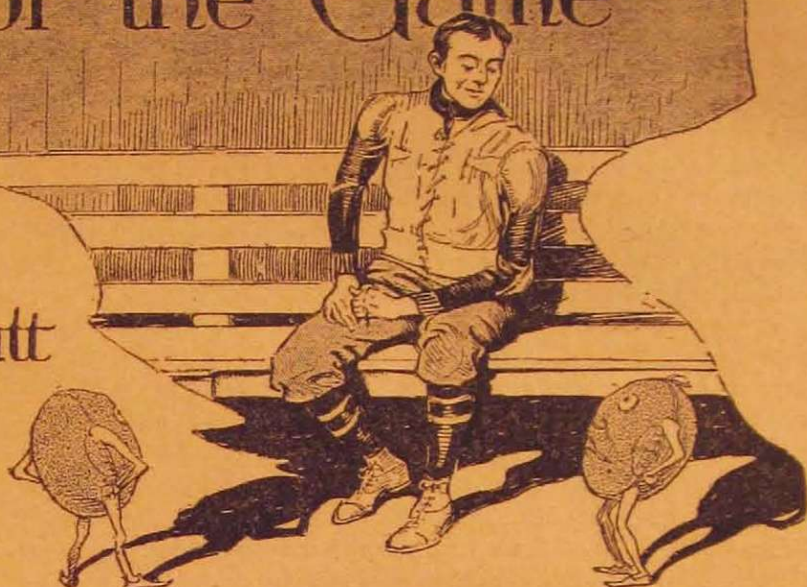
"No bread?" roared the general. "Why didn't you buy some?"

"There isn't any to be had; the stores are all run out," replied the cook.

"Well, don't stand there like a blooming idiot! Why under the sun don't you get me some toast?"

All for the Game

By
W.E. Schutt



(A COMPLETE NOVELETTE)

CHAPTER I.

ON A LUCKY FLUKE.

IT was the third down, with three yards to gain. Wallace, Cornwall's right end, shook the grogginess out of his reeling brain and tried to get to his position without staggering too much, and thus revealing to the State College quarter that he had had all flesh and blood could stand. It seemed to him that every play since the beginning of the last half had been directed at him; it seemed that half that incredible distance since the kick-off had been made around his end, either by straight rushes, or by trick plays that the others saw too late to back him up, when his sole hope was to wriggle through the interference, with no chance to tackle; when he could only cling to the man with the ball and feel himself dragged yards and yards until some one finally found the ball and stopped it.

Wallace blamed himself for it. The fact that the State College backfield outweighed theirs so much was no mitigation to his self-humiliation; nor the fact that they had set out persistently to kill him off by constant hammering. Dazed as he was, he could not believe that the Big Blue team was not backing him up properly, for to his mind the team could do nothing wrong. Of course, by this time he could not overlook the fact that something was amiss, but he held himself, and not the team, accountable for it.

The Cornwall team was demoralized, utterly routed. State College had dumfounded them, left them stunned and gaping. This game with a supposedly minor team, the last one before the big game of the season, had been looked upon by Cornwall merely as a part of the schedule to be run through as a practice game in preparation for the crisis against Pittsville. And Cornwall had counted on annexing the Conference Championship! Thus far they had

met no defeat, had not even seen their goal line crossed. They had started this game with practically all substitutes, in order to save their best men for the Pittsville game. Man by man, the varsity regulars had been sent in to save the game, until Wallace was the only sub left.

For, in spite of State College being only a minor team, Cornwall had to save the game to win the championship. One defeat, even by a minor team, would knock them out of it. Still the game was unsaved; and it almost seemed as if the Big Blue team grew more ragged as the regulars came in. It was an unaccountable slump from a championship to a third-rate team, and Wallace could see only himself to blame for it.

Throughout the first half, he had held his own as well as and even better than could reasonably be expected of a man of his weight. That, however, was not the only reason why they left him in so long; or, at least, so he thought. The real reason was that "Slim" Gibbons, regular varsity right end, simply must be kept in shape for the Pittsville game. Slim Gibbons—many of the men had changed his nickname to "Slime" in the past year—had to be coddled; they could afford to take no risks on his playing against Pittsville, although there was always a question as to his fitness. In his sophomore year, he had been a whirlwind; had been named unanimously as an all-varsity end. In his junior year he had lost out on the greater honor, but had played admirably for Cornwall in the bigger games. During this, his last year, his nocturnal habits had made his condition decidedly shaky.

But he had braced up, had shown unmistakable flashes of his old-time brilliance; so that, with the proper nursing and care, the varsity depended upon him to accomplish marvels against Pittsville. At the same time, every

one understood that a hard game now was sure to put him out of condition for the Pittsville game; and Wallace knew quite well that they must not put Gibbons in at end except as a last desperate resort. Moreover, Wallace knew that, preceding the last three plays, Captain Karlson had mutely signaled the coaches to put in Gibbons, to save those murderous attacks. From the coaches' refusal, he gathered that the risk was too great, comprehended that he had to stick it out somehow because they banked on him to save Gibbons.

The State College men crouched with grins on their faces. They could afford to grin. For, though the score was three to nothing against them, Cornwall had not made a score since the first two minutes of play; there were at least ten minutes more to play, the ball was theirs on Cornwall's fifteen-yard line, and Cornwall had been on the run during the last half, with holes everywhere in their line. It was too easy for their quarter; any old signal was as good as any other, or had been since the intermission. It was just possible, however, that Cornwall would take a brace in the shadow of their own goal posts, and manage to knit the line to its old impregnable defense. As State College quarter's eye roved over his opponents, he knew what play they expected from the look on their tense faces. "Seven, thirty-two, six, twelve," he barked out, almost before his center had gripped the ball.

State College's signals thus far had been baffling. But Wallace, by pure deduction, knew what was coming. State College was only eighteen yards to a touchdown, making five or ten yards at will. To Wallace, there could be no question as to what that signal meant.

Their guards locked legs with their center to keep Cornwall out; their full back stepped back; their left end came out opposite Wallace to pick him off, or so it looked. There was every in-

dication of a drop kick for goal. Wallace knew that his own line would play for that—charge straight through in a forlorn hope of blocking the kick. He knew that he must kill their play alone; for State College was not going to be satisfied with three points when they could as easily make it seven, with no appreciable risk.

As the ball snapped back, Wallace leaped to the left and dodged the State College end, who was there to lay him low. He side-stepped their half as he started to lead the interference, and dodged out again, a little wide, to escape their other half. The full back, already starting with the ball on his fake-kick rush around right, saw Wallace through and charging him. He changed the ball to shove him off, and at that instant Wallace catapulted into him. The ball was down, at a loss of yards.

No, not down, either; for then the miraculous happened. The full back lost the ball as he went down, insecure as it was from being suddenly changed. It bounced, bounced high from the very force with which Wallace tackled. Their right end, circling to complete the interference, scooped it up on the run, and went on; and he, protected by the half backs whom Wallace had dodged and not picked off, ran the eighteen yards to a touchdown.

There went the game, beyond possibility of dispute; on a fluke of the luckiest, to be sure, but the game nevertheless. True, they probably had the game sewed up, anyway; but this—this was rank treachery, a present of seven points to State College. Jeers and cat-calls came from the grand stands; a cry or two of "robber, robber!" But Wallace was past hearing these, so that it did not worry him whether the remarks were directed against him or against the State College end who had made the touchdown on the fluke.

But Wallace, stunned at the incredible result, half blinded by tears of rage

and mortification, was not permitted to doubt what the disgruntled Cornwall team thought of his play. As they lined up on the goal line to receive the try-at-goal, Davis, the varsity tackle, said in an undertone: "You blind idiot, why didn't you play wide and pick 'em off, instead of coming in?"

"Playing it alone," panted Wallace; "had to get the man with the ball. How could I stop their whole interference?"

"You're playing too much alone," growled Davis. "If you'd play more for the team and less for the grand stand, these dubs wouldn't run over us."

Wallace could not have replied, even if he had had the wind to talk. Completely fagged out, choking with resentment at this unjust criticism—for Wallace knew he had played it right and that the varsity was wrong—his first word would probably have ended in a choking gasp.

State College kicked the goal, of course. As Cornwall moved to the kick-off, Captain Karlson took matters into his own hands, and yelled to the side lines for Slim Gibbons. This summons knocked out of Wallace's head all thoughts of himself. The Pittsville game was more important, vastly more difficult, than this game. For weeks it had been drummed into them all that Cornwall could not win it without Slim Gibbons playing up to his old form. Slim must be saved for the Pittsville game. All this flashed through Wallace's brain as one thought; fear of injury to Gibbons cleared his brain as a swift wind drives away fog, and pulled him together.

He rushed to Captain Karlson. "Give me another chance, cap," he begged. "Don't put Slim in. He'll get hurt, sure as fate."

Karlson withered him with a glance. "Play without an end, eh?" he said, in a tone that can be imagined. "You get off the field."

"But I'll come through yet," Wallace said. "I'll hold 'em from now on. Two good runs by Moffatt, and——"

"Off the field, Wallace!" Karlson commanded; and again he raised his voice and shouted for Gibbons.

Back by the gate that led to the clubhouse, out of earshot of the nervous, blanket-shrouded substitutes, the head coach and the end coach were holding a powwow. Presently the word was given. Slim shucked his blanket, danced up and down a few times to get his blood in motion, and ran out to his place, greeted by an echoing thunder of applause in the grand stands as the desperate rooters found new hope in the arrival of their old-time hero.

"I'm going to get you for this, you simp," Slim Gibbons said to Wallace as they passed on the edge of the field. "Maybe you think you can play football, but——"

"Oh, Slim, play it safe," Wallace broke in. "If you get hurt, I'll——"

"Aw, bunk!" Gibbons shot back at him. "Why didn't you think of that sooner?"

Wallace hurried on to hide his shame in the seclusion of the dressing room, though he was followed in closely by Hartigan, the end coach; and Hartigan's grizzled face, oddly enough, was beaming.

CHAPTER II.

FROM THE INSIDE.

BEHIND the newspaper stand in the lobby of the Palace Hotel, Miss Heaton thrilled to the victory cheer that broke over the city like a storm from the Cornwall athletic field. Meager details spread rapidly, that Cornwall had won by the score of ten to seven; that Slim Gibbons had come in at the last moment and saved the game with his first two plays. She paled a little at the mention of Gibbons, but every one in the semideserted lobby was too enthusiastic at the moment to notice her;

and she could not bring herself to ask any one what was of greater importance to her—what part Jimmy Wallace had in the game. It remained for her to learn this from the lips of a stranger.

This stranger had been something of an enigma to her. He was a powerfully built, but rather debauched-looking, man of thirty or more, who had registered the night before as Theodore Paulsen, of Milwaukee. But his first demand upon her had been for the Philadelphia papers. Through her, he had bought the best seat to be had for the football game against State College, and, in paying for it, had flashed a roll of impressive size.

He was the first man to enter the hotel after the football game, coming up to her with the easy familiarity which her position forced her to endure. "Philadelphia papers in yet, little sister?" he asked.

"Not until six o'clock, sir."

"Say," he went on, "I ought to get half my money back for that grandstand seat. Punkest exhibition of football I ever witnessed in all my evil life."

"I understand that Mr. Gibbons made some spectacular plays," Miss Heaton vouchsafed, with just suggestion enough to draw him out.

"Sure; spectacular's right. Just two plays, only because State College was afraid of him at first. He ran down the kick-off, and ran on to a touchdown from blocking their kick. And then your great Gibbons shot his wad. He's N. G.; he's all in. Two fifty-yard runs was all he could stand. After that he didn't play as good a game as you could've played yourself. If time hadn't been called just as it was, State College would've had seven more."

"He didn't get hurt!" she exclaimed anxiously.

"Hurt nothin'," said Paulsen. "He's done himself as a football player. Too much booze and night life. He can't

stand the gaff any more. I know Gibbons, and I know football. He's never played a game since he entered the varsity that I haven't seen."

"But probably they can get him into shape for the Pittsville game," Miss Heaton went on, still timid about approaching directly the subject that most interested her. "They'll simply have to, I understand."

"Don't you think it, little sister," said Paulsen. "I know this game of football from A to Z and backward. Played myself, and coached. Take it from me, Charley Rourke don't care a hang whether Slim Gibbons plays against Pittsville or not. They've unearthed a new end that can play circles around anything Slim Gibbons ever had. This man Wallace has got the brains, I tell you. If he had the weight, he'd be a second Tom Shevlin——"

"Wallace," Miss Heaton interrupted, with a gasp, as if she could not believe it.

"Aha, little sister," Paulsen remarked. "Interested there, are you?"

Miss Heaton said nothing, but she could not keep down a blush, even if she did make a pretense of rearranging the newspapers; and Paulsen had as good an answer to his question as words would have been.

"Well, little sister," he said, "you can take it from me, that Wallace is the bright particular star of the Cornwall team this year. He played like a fiend this afternoon; only man on the team who played anything like football. The rest of the bunch was outclassed, sore because they were licked from the start, and they took it out on him. I could see plain as day they were blaming him for their defeat. I was in a grandstand seat right behind Charley Rourke and Hartigan when they were discussing taking him out to save him for the Pittsville game. He'd had just about all he could stand, Wallace had, playing for eleven men with his hundred

and forty pounds; and then Cornwall got sore on him because State College got through on a fluke after he'd played it right."

"But—are you sure, Mr. Paulsen?" the girl asked, still incredulous. "They took him out, you say? You must be mistaken about his being so good."

"Listen; I was tellin' you," Paulsen went on. "I heard the coaches—Charley Rourke and Hartigan—when they decided to call him off the field. So, if I don't know this game well enough to judge, I overheard what they thought about him. They knew the rest of the team was sore on him; they knew he was light and had been playing for eleven men. So Hartigan, the end coach, tells Charley Rourke that they'd better take him out before he punishes himself too hard, because they wanted to save him for the Pittsville game; and they shoved Slim Gibbons into his place because Slim was rotten, anyway, and they didn't much care what happened to him. Of course, Slim made a couple of big plays, but that's all he's good for. He wouldn't last more than two minutes in a real game, and Charley Rourke knows it by this time. It just happened that Slim made the winning touchdown, and Wallace was blamed for their fluky points; so Slim's the popular hero again and Wallace is the dub. That's what all the undergrads think now; but you can't fool a pair of old-timers like Charley Rourke and Hartigan—and me. So put that in your perfumed cigarette and smoke it, little sister."

"Some way," Miss Heaton murmured doubtfully, "I can't believe it yet. Mr. Wallace—and every one—has been telling me that Mr. Gibbons——"

"I know; that's Wallace. He don't half know how good he is; and that's one reason why he plays such a crackajack of a game. Hartigan followed him into the dressing room just to ease the youngster's mind and keep

him from brooding; but Hartigan won't take any chances on spoiling him by telling him how good he is, so that'll be up to you. I'll bet you'll tell him good and plenty, won't you?" Paulsen grinned knowingly at her.

"I'd certainly like to," said Miss Heaton; "but if it's likely to spoil his game, I think I'll deny myself the pleasure."

"Aw, take a chance on it, anyhow," suggested Paulsen, a little more seriously than he had spoken heretofore. "Say, it would make him worship the ground you walk on if you'd tell him all this. I know how I'd feel if I got an earful like that from a girl like you."

"There's no danger of that," said Miss Heaton coolly.

Paulsen grinned at her and walked away. Miss Heaton looked after him a little curiously. What was he, anyway, this Mr. Paulsen? What was his interest in Wallace? It almost seemed as if he had wanted her to spoil Wallace's game.

CHAPTER III.

TAKING NO CHANCES.

SLIM GIBBONS, once more the worshiped hero of the undergraduate body, could not resist the temptation to show himself in the grillroom again for a little while, and bask in the admiration of such boisterous students as frequented the hotel of nights. After dinner at the training table, he strolled down with one or two old cronies. He need not break training, of course; there would be no harm in a lemonade and a sandwich. And it was so long since he had received the homage of his fellows that he could not withstand the temptation.

His entry into the noisy grillroom was the signal for a varsity yell that raised the roof; instantly he was set upon by half a dozen, raised to a throne atop of a table, and called upon for a

speech; though, as always upon such occasions, the speech could not be heard for the shouting of the revelers.

This public worship failed to please Gibbons as it had done in the past. Gibbons knew that it was his last court, and that he scarcely deserved even this one. He knew, in his own mind, that the death knell had rung upon his football career. Though he kept it to himself, and did not think that any one else realized it, nevertheless he knew from the last few minutes of that game to-day that he was through. And even if he had not heard a smattering of that conclave between the coaches when he was sent out to supplant Wallace, nevertheless he knew the game well enough to understand that Wallace had far outplayed him, that it was now Wallace, and no longer Slim Gibbons, who was to be coddled for the great Pittsville game.

He hated Wallace for outplaying him, for robbing him of these sweet honors he was now receiving. That threat which he had muttered to Wallace as they passed on the field had been no idle one. Slim would have ruined Wallace if he could, out of sheer vengeance for a fancied wrong; but Slim could not figure out any way to do it so that his own hand would be concealed.

From his table-top throne, through the smoke-laden atmosphere and over the heads of his roistering fellows, Slim suddenly saw a familiar face framed in the doorway, a huge figure that beckoned a discreet summons. As soon as he could, Slim slipped down and worked his way to the door. "'Lo, Carter, old scout," he said. "What are you up to now?"

"'Lo, Slim. Saving you from sure destruction just now," Paulsen returned jovially. "No place, that, for a varsity man, and you ought to know it."

"Shucks," returned Gibbons. "No

harm done. Soft drinks and a sandwich and a yell or two——"

"But the smoke and the beer fumes—say, come on up to my room a minute, now you're clear, and let's have a talk. I'm lonesome. Besides, that's no place for you, and now you're clear of the bunch, you'd better stay clear."

"All right; ten minutes with you. Then I'm going to hit the hay."

As the elevator let them out on Paulsen's floor, Gibbons repeated his question: "What you doing here, Carter? Spying for Pittsville?"

"Sure; but nobody would guess it but you. Pittsville sent me up on the Q. T. to get a line on the game you fellows are playing. And say, go shy on that Carter stuff; I'm Paulsen here."

"Trust me. Everybody does it. Hot bunch you saw in action to-day."

"Bunch of prep-school freshmen—all but Wallace. He shows you up for a clothin'-store dummy."

Paulsen shut his door behind them, motioned Gibbons to the one chair, and himself sat on the edge of the bed. He started to light a cigar, but refrained out of deference to Gibbons and his training rules.

"Come again, Carter," said Slim. "Wallace is all right in a dinky game, but he wouldn't be there against your bunch."

"He played circles around you," said Paulsen calmly.

"That's because I haven't been in very good condition this season so far; not as much practice as I should have had. But I can do a lot in the ten days between now and your game."

"What are you fooling yourself for, Gibbons? You know, as well as I, that Charley Rourke has already decided to play Wallace, and not you, against us next Saturday week."

Gibbons grimaced, was about to remonstrate, saw the futility of it, and laughed uneasily. "It'd take a bigger man than I am to tell you anything

about this game," he admitted, with an ill-feigned air of jocularly.

"How d'you feel about it, Slim?" asked Paulsen, with an unusually keen glance at Gibbons.

"Bad, of course," growled Slim. He waited a second for Paulsen to say something, and when Paulsen maintained silence, Gibbons burst out with an impassioned invective like a pent-up torrent of hatred. "I tell you, it's awful, Carter. Look at me, will you? All Conference end as a sophomore, lionized and worshiped by everybody that knew my face. You know about it; you were there at that dinner after the game when I first made my rep; you know what the fellows did to me that night. Then, the next year, my game went off; I was just good, and that's all. I managed to get into the big games, and won my C, but I was no better than any other end, and that was almighty hard for me. And then look at this year, my last year; why, Carter, the way it looks now I won't even make my C. Me, Slim Gibbons, the All Conference end two years ago, can't even make my C in my last year unless I get into that Pittsville game. I tell you, it's horrible; when I think of it, I just about go mad with the shame and disgrace of it. I wish to the deuce I'd have broken an ankle, or even my fool back, in that game to-day, so I could have an alibi for not playing in the Pittsville game. Then it wouldn't have been so bad; then the men could have said that Slim Gibbons would certainly have made some of his old brilliant plays if Wallace could have kept him from getting his leg broken. But as it is, what excuse can I offer? What other reason is there for not getting my C, except that I wasn't good enough, except that Wallace, a little undersized, Sunday-school boy, who never played a decent game in his life, was better than I am. By Jove, Carter, sometimes it hits me so hard that I feel as if I could mur-

der that little runt so he couldn't play against you fellows, so Charley Rourke would just have to stick me in and I could get my last letter."

Paulsen examined his nails, probably without seeing them. "There are plenty of ways," he said softly, "short of murdering Wallace, to keep him out of that game."

"What do you mean?" demanded Gibbons, instantly bristling.

"Just what I said," returned Paulsen calmly.

"What's it to you, anyway?"

"I've seen Wallace play; I'm not hankering to have him in against us any more than you are," said Paulsen.

"You're batty, Paulsen!" Gibbons exclaimed. "If he doesn't play, I would be at end myself; so where would you Pittsville people be any better off?"

Paulsen passed a hand across his mouth as if he might be concealing a smile, although his face was quite grave as he replied: "We shan't quarrel about that, Slim. It's a matter of individual opinion. At any rate, you don't want Wallace in the game with Pittsville, in order that you can have his place; and we don't want him playing against us, for no matter what reason. Between us, we might figure out a little scheme—still, Gibbons, I don't want to have the appearance of suggesting anything against the interests of your team," he added craftily.

Gibbons spoke up quickly: "If it were really against the interests of Cornwall, I wouldn't listen to it. But I know I can play as good a game as he, if not a better game, once I get fit. So come across with your little scheme."

"You're in too much of a hurry," Paulsen smiled back at him. "The thing only just occurred to me. I haven't had time to figure it out well enough yet; and you know as well as I do that no rough stuff is going to get past Wallace and Charley Rourke. Whatever it is has got to be pretty clever."

"That's right enough," admitted Gibbons, plainly disappointed.

"Can I bank on you for a little help, in case I need you?"

"Not if any one's going to get wise to my part in it," replied Gibbons promptly and emphatically.

Again Paulsen passed his great hand across his lips, and again his face was grave as he spoke: "I'll protect you, right enough. No one can get wise to your part in it, as you'll see for yourself when I tell you what I want you to do. Fact is, the way I see it now, I may not want you to do anything; but if I should need you, it'll be the simplest thing imaginable."

"What is it?"

"I tell you, I've got to think it out carefully. It'll require a lot of figuring. Time you were in bed, if you're in training at all. I'll work it all out to-night, and drop you a special-delivery letter in the morning about it. I suppose you'll have sense enough to destroy the letter."

"I'm not going to take any chances."

"I thought not," said Paulsen, rising. "You'll have a letter from me to-morrow morning. I'm pulling out of here on the first train. But I'll be back the night before the Pittsville game, and you can get a chance to drop me a quiet word as to what you think about it."

"I know beforehand what I think about it," declared Gibbons, with a grin, "if it'll get Wallace out of the game without putting me in bad."

"That's exactly what it will do," Paulsen said, and walked to the door to let Gibbons out.

CHAPTER IV.

ALL SEALED UP.

ON the night before the Pittsville game, which was to be played this year on the Cornwall field, Paulsen registered again at the hotel. He smiled graciously at Miss Heaton as he passed her newspaper stand in the lobby, and

went straight to his room. His first act was to telephone Slim Gibbons at his fraternity house, giving the noncommittal name of Jones. But when Gibbons came to the phone, he introduced the subject in such a way that Gibbons must know who was speaking. "Did you get my letter a week ago Sunday morning?" he asked.

"Oh, this is you, eh?" said Gibbons cordially. "Sure I got it."

"What do you think of the idea?"

"Finest young scheme ever hatched," replied Gibbons.

"And I can bank on you to put it through?"

"You certainly can; only you won't need any help from me. He won't last the first four plays at that rate."

"Sh-h," Paulsen warned him; "this is over the telephone!"

Gibbons took the tip and hung up. Paulsen went down to the hotel lobby, found it practically deserted, and took occasion to renew his acquaintance with Miss Heaton. "How's Wallace?" he asked her teasingly.

"Frightened to death he can't make good in Mr. Gibbons' place," she said. "Really, I feel very sorry for him—his first big game, and all that, with Mr. Gibbons' reputation to uphold, and the whole varsity censuring the coaches for putting him in the place of Gibbons."

"I know just how he must feel," Paulsen said, summoning to his aid a tender note of sympathy. "I've been there myself. I'm a Cornwall man; used to play quarter years and years ago."

"Really?" She looked at him with a new light of admiration in her eyes.

"Really," Paulsen declared. "Ask any old-timer. I'm pulling hard for Cornwall to-day, and if Wallace doesn't play up to form, we're going to be licked—everlastingly swamped. And say, if you feel as sorry for Wallace as you say you do, why don't you buckle in and help him out a little?"

"But how can I help him? What can I do?"

Paulsen looked round the lobby and saw that no one was within earshot. "Know anything about this game of football?" he asked her finally.

"Of course I do. I know as much about it as any one can who has never played. I see every big game; I shall be there to-morrow."

"Then you know what signals are?"

"Certainly I do. I've worked them out lots of times for fun."

"Then listen sharp, little sister. It cost me considerable money and more trouble, but I'm a loyal Cornwall man and I'd give a year's salary any old time to see the old varsity lick Pitt; so I don't begrudge what I've done. Fact is, I've"—here he leaned far over the newspaper counter, and whispered—"I've got the signals Pittsville's going to play with to-morrow. I bribed the janitor of their clubhouse to let me install a dictograph in their blackboard room when the coach gave out their signals, and I've got every blessed one of them."

"Gracious!" gasped Miss Heaton.

"Exactly," Paulsen hurried on. "But now I've got 'em, I don't hardly know how to pass 'em on without revealing myself. See the point? If I go ahead and give 'em straight out to Captain Karlson, or to Charley Rourke, it's sure to get back to Pittsville how I got hold of 'em, and I don't want to get that poor janitor in trouble. So I thought maybe you'd take the job off my hands. It'll help me and the varsity, and, above all, it'll help Wallace. All you've got to do is to hand him this, and tell him that a friend got hold of the signals and wanted him to have 'em. But, above all, don't mention my name. Are you game, little sister?"

"But it seems so perfectly incredible that you actually have got their signals," she said, a peculiar light in her eyes.

He laughed jovially. "A man can do anything when he's got money enough and motive enough. I've got both; I'd rather see old Cornwall trample on Pittsville to-morrow than inherit a million dollars. That's why I'm doing this. But all the same, I don't want my name known. Of course, if you don't want Wallace to have the benefit of them, when you know how much they will help him, I shall figure out another way of giving them to the team."

"Oh, but I do want to help him," she said, instantly putting out her hand. "Please give them to me."

Paulsen beamed upon her. "That's the kind of a girl I thought you were. I ought to claim a little personal reward for this favor I'm doing you, but—but I'll leave Wallace to claim that. Here they are, little sister, all sealed up in this envelope. Wallace ought to be eternally good to you for this."

The envelope changed hands, and Paulsen hurried away. Miss Heaton's eyes narrowed as she watched him go. "Friend of Slim Gibbons, eh?" she said to herself, as she thrust the envelope into the back of her cash drawer.

CHAPTER V.

AT THEIR FINGER TIPS.

THE first half of the great game ended with a goose egg apiece. But toward the last of it the Cornwall team had been on the run, with the ball far in their territory most of the time. They had recovered from their shocking slump against State College, and although their offense was mediocre, nevertheless their defensive game, especially when they were in the shadow of their own goal posts, was of championship caliber, owing principally to the play of Jimmy Wallace.

His football instinct, his nose for the ball and for trick plays, was something uncanny. Time after time, he dived through and stopped the ball with a

loss, until finally Pittsville confined itself to line rushing. The rest of the men seemed tacitly to acknowledge his leadership in defense, followed him, backed him up admirably.

For the first three or four minutes of play, the Pittsville quarter back seemed to watch Wallace with more than ordinary intentness; and, after plays, there crept into his eyes an expression of bafflement, as if things were not happening which he expected to happen. It took him just about four minutes to realize that that which he had expected was not going to materialize; and thereafter he played as if he had expected nothing.

But Slim Gibbons, waiting under his blanket on the side lines, could not so easily readjust himself. He had expected that Wallace would be hauled out of the game, thanks to Paulsen's clever scheme, before he had been in six plays; and here Wallace was playing straight through the first and second periods, playing a star game, far and away the best of the Cornwall men, amply vindicating Charley Rourke's choice of him at right end, amply proving his superiority to Slim Gibbons.

Gibbons nervously bit his nails and bottled up the flood of his jealous rage against Wallace, bracing himself for the final stroke of the joint campaign against Wallace. After digesting Paulsen's letter to him, Slim had been certain that he himself would not be called upon to take any part. But the unexpected had happened. Now he must make his play.

Slim preceded the team into the dressing room and awaited his opportunity. The head coach could not have given him a better opening than that which cropped out in the coach's usual vitriolic comment to the team upon their play in the first half.

"They're going to smash you fellows eternally now," he said quietly. "They've got you on the run now; you

couldn't score on 'em if they let you have the ball all the time. Best you can do is to hold 'em. Make it a tie with this bunch and I'll be satisfied. You're all doing as well as could be expected from a prep-school team, and that's about all you amount to this year. You know that as well as I do. Wallace is the only man playing anything near varsity style. I give you credit for one thing—you're wise enough to follow him and back him up. That's all."

This was Gibbons' opportunity. "No wonder Wallace can play a star game!" he burst out vehemently. "He's got their signals. He knows every play before it starts. No wonder he can stop the ball for a loss every other play."

Gibbons' startling announcement was greeted only by a desultory laugh of derision from one or two of the fagged-out men. The possession of their opponents' signals was a charge so manifestly absurd that they didn't even take the trouble to consider it seriously.

"You couldn't have made the team, Slim, even if you did have 'em," the burly right guard jibed him.

"Laugh all you want to," Gibbons retorted angrily. "It's straight goods. I know it for a fact; I've got a straight tip. Look at him, will you? See how he's squirming, and see if you don't believe me."

As a matter of fact, the charge had hit Wallace rather hard; and keyed up as he was, he could not have dissembled if he had wanted to. Moreover, Charley Rourke had watched him rather keenly while the others were laughing at Gibbons; and the head coach was convinced that there was something in this charge. "What about this, Wallace?" he demanded, in no gentle tone. "Have you got hold of their signals?"

"Just what do you mean by that?" Wallace asked.

"Exactly what I say. Do you know their signals?" The head coach was thundering now.

"No, Charley, I certainly do not know their signals," Wallace replied.

"He lies!" shouted Slim Gibbons. "He's got 'em, and I know it."

By this time every one of the twenty-odd men in the room was sitting upright and staring from Gibbons to Wallace. "No wonder he can play a star game," sneered Davis, the right tackle, who had never liked Wallace since the State College game. "Who couldn't, with the opponents' signals?"

"Slim, what do you know about this?" asked Charley Rourke. "You've been talkin' a lot and not sayin' much so far. If you've got anything to say, come out and say it. Where'd you get your tip?"

"Bell boy in the hotel told me that a Pittsville man gave 'em to Milly Heaton; and if she got hold of 'em, you know which one of us would get 'em from her, don't you?" Gibbons asked, with fine sarcasm.

"You leave her out of this, Gibbons," Wallace shot at him. "What passes between us is nobody's business but ours."

"Did she give you the signals, Wallace?" asked Charley Rourke. "Answer yes or no, or I'll kick you off the team for the rest of the game."

"She gave me an envelope in which she said were the signals. I don't know anything about it; I didn't even look at 'em."

"That's a beaut of a tale to stuff us with!" cried Davis. "I see you or any one else having the signals and not studying 'em up."

"Got 'em with you now, Wallace?" demanded Rourke.

"I should say that was my affair. She gave them to me; the man who gave them to her said they were for me. I took them, not to hurt any one's feelings. But I've never looked at them from that minute to this. If I play football, I'll play the game right."

"Hand 'em over, Wallace!" com-

manded Charley Rourke. His voice was trembling with rage and excitement. For him, it meant the renewal or refusal of his coaching contract, whether Cornwall defeated their great rivals that day. Till now, he had foreseen defeat, or a tie at best; and had braced himself to meet it. But now that he saw sure victory in their grasp, with the possession of Pittsville's baffling signals, he was as a man beside himself; he forgot everything except what it meant to him for the Cornwall team to have the signals, and he would have taken them from Wallace by sheer physical force, if he had to.

"What do you want with them, Charley?" countered Wallace.

"To light his cigar with, of course," said Davis ironically.

"Come across with the signals, and see if some of the rest of us can't play a star game, too," said another.

"I make a move," said a third, "that we get the whole varsity to boycott Milly Heaton for playing a favorite like that; and where'd she be if the varsity didn't buy from her?"

There was truth in this. Without the trade of the varsity men, Milly's sales would fall about nine-tenths. Wallace could not be stubborn in the face of that threat. "She didn't mean any partiality by giving them to me," he spoke up. "She told me to do what I wanted to with them. She gave them to me merely because she happened to know me better than she does any of the rest of you."

"If that's true," growled Rourke, "come across with the signals. And if you are lying about that, keep your signals. But I won't have any man on the team who hogs every advantage so he himself can play a grand-stand game, and leave his team in the lurch. Take your choice, and take it quick, Wallace."

If he had had only himself to consider, Wallace would probably still

have withheld that sealed envelope. But he perceived at once how costly it might be for Milly Heaton. He turned on Rourke wrathfully, and through him addressed every man in the room.

"I'm sick and ashamed of the whole bunch of you," he said. "If you call it playing football to have the other side's signals in a dishonest way, then take them and much good may they do you. Here they are, in a sealed envelope just as I got them. And if you study them, and take advantage of them, I'll quit the game right here. If I play football, I'll play the game to the end; and this is the end of the game. I shan't show myself on the field for the next half if you go out there with those signals at your finger tips. Now you take your choice."

Wallace strode to his locker, fumbled with his coat, took the sealed envelope, and shied it across the room to the head coach; and Rourke ripped it open with unconcealed eagerness and obvious purpose.

"I reckon Slim can put up as good a game at end as you," said Davis, "now that he's got the signals."

"All right, then," said Wallace more quietly, watching Rourke's eager eyes take in the signals. "I might as well change my clothes right now."

Thus Slim Gibbons got his opportunity in the Pittsville game. But to look at him, one could not have guessed that he had finally realized the ambition of a year past; one might almost have judged that he was awaiting the hangman, or worse. For suddenly it dawned upon him how ingeniously Paulsen had entrapped him and the whole team.

But Gibbons said nothing, for explanation would be a confession of his own guilt, and he had to protect himself. No one noticed his queer appearance, for no one had eyes or mind for anything but the signals. Thus the Cornwall team went to the second half,

eager, confident, anxious for the one-sided battle in which they would know beforehand their opponent's every move. Wallace, left behind by his own choice, delayed changing to street clothes long enough to see the game start again, to see Slim Gibbons charge down the field under the kick-off, to hear the deafening applause from the grand stands as the popular hero beat the ball, threw the Pittsville man in his tracks, and made it first down on Pittsville's fifteen-yard line. Wallace could even fancy that he heard a vast, concerted sigh of relief as the packed grand stand settled back, much as if each man of the multitude were saying to himself or to a neighbor: "Thank heavens, Slim's in the game. Now we'll see something doing."

And the grand stand did see something doing, but not Wallace; for he hurried back to change his clothes and join Milly Heaton in the bleachers.

CHAPTER VI.

SOME QUESTIONS ANSWERED.

WITH an imprecation that would have made Captain Kidd blush, Charley Rourke burst in upon Wallace as he was unlacing his shoes. From the labyrinth of epithet, Wallace finally gathered that the head coach was charging him with some heinous crime.

"I don't quite get you, Charley," said Wallace, looking up calmly. "What's the fuss about?"

"What've you done to those signals?" Rourke thundered.

"Nothing. I've never even looked at them. Why?"

"Why? Why?" Rourke bellowed, standing over Wallace and trembling with rage. "You double-dyed, blankety-blank traitor, you've done us up, you've smeared us, you've robbed us of the game."

"What happened?" Wallace was finally becoming curious.

"Touchdown. They've got a touchdown from their first play! That's all that's happened. It'll be one a minute from now on."

"How's that? Can't the bunch stop them if they know beforehand——"

"Aw, dry up. You did it on purpose. You had it in for us, and faked the signals."

"Tell me what happened," Wallace requested once more.

"According to the signals you gave us," snarled Rourke, "their quarter called for a forward pass from kick formation. Everybody played for their ends; and their quarter went through between tackle and guard, and ran the length of the field for a touchdown before any one knew where the ball was."

"Well," said Wallace indifferently, "if your bunch hadn't crammed the signals, they'd have watched the ball and stopped 'em. What d'you come squealing to me for? You know the kind of football you want to play; go ahead and play it." Wallace took off a shoe and threw it contemptuously into his locker. He couldn't understand the situation, and didn't try to; he had wiped his hands of the whole business when he passed over the signals.

"You'll be lynched when this game is over!" cried Rourke.

"How so? What've I got to do with it?"

"You faked the signals. You did it purposely to show us up."

"I tell you I never even looked at the signals. I gave them to you just as I got them. When would I have time to fake the signals? Are they in my handwriting?"

"Is that straight goods, Wallace?" demanded Rourke, beginning to be convinced by Wallace's demeanor.

"You can prove it by Miss Heaton if you want to. She'll know the handwriting on the envelope I gave you; and you know yourself that envelope was sealed when you got it."

Hartigan, the end coach, burst in with a groan. "Three points more for the robbers," he announced. "They signaled left half through left guard. Quarter dropped back and booted her over clean as a whistle while our bunch backed up the guard."

Rourke swore. "What are we going to do about it?"

"The bunch is getting wise. Karlson's called for time and is talkin' to 'em. They'll probably forget the signals and play a straight game from now on. But ten to nothing—what can they do? Say, Wallace, you'd better make yourself scarce around here; if that bunch once gets hold of you——"

"I think I'll stay," said Wallace. "Maybe you'll be wanting to put me in at end the beginning of next period." He reached for his shoe and began to readjust it.

Charley Rourke's sudden anger beat itself out against Wallace's coolness; perceiving that anger netted him nothing, he got himself under restraint. "What's the history of that envelope?" he asked. "Where did Milly Heaton get it?"

"She told me that an old Cornwall man gave it to her to be passed on to a member of our team. She knows me better than she does any of the others, and so——"

"Who was it?" Rourke interrupted. "What was his name?"

"She didn't want to tell, and I didn't press the point. I wasn't particularly interested in the signals. I preferred to play without knowing them."

Rourke winced a little. "What sort of looking man was he?" he asked.

"I didn't ask anything about him. I merely took the envelope she gave me because she wanted me to, and stuck it in my pocket, and forgot it."

"Do you know where I can get hold of her? Somebody's playing us for simps, and I want to find out who it is."

"She's in section No. 8, first row. If you want to talk with her, I'll take you to her. Come along."

Rourke and Hartigan followed Wallace out, and along the boarding in front of the bleachers until they came to where Milly sat. The teams had lined up again for a scrimmage, but neither of the coaches looked at them now.

"Whatever's happening out there?" cried Miss Heaton despairingly, as soon as the three stopped before her. "Why did you take Mr. Wallace out?" she asked, turning directly to the head coach.

"Because he refused to play," said Rourke grimly. "A little question of that envelope you gave him. Somebody's been faking us, and we want to know who. How did you get hold of it, Miss Heaton?"

Milly went white. "Somebody's faking you," she repeated, visibly alarmed, and looking at Wallace with an indescribable expression. "How so?"

Wallace told her briefly how he had been forced to give up the signals to the team.

"The question is," Rourke spoke up before she could talk, "who is the man who gave you those signals? If you don't know his name, describe him to me."

"And—and it's those fake signals," she said, "that gave Pittsville those ten points just now?"

"It certainly is," said Rourke.

"They wouldn't have given Pittsville the ten points," Wallace corrected him dryly, "if you hadn't studied them."

"Don't rub it in, Wallace," Rourke requested him, and prompted Miss Heaton to answer his question.

"It's my fault," she said, in a voice that choked. "I—I faked the signals myself. I gave Mr. Wallace the wrong envelope."

"You—you what?" Rourke asked; and Wallace could only stare.

"I—I never thought it would work out this way," she stammered. "I—I did it only to—because I was afraid that——"

"What?" raged Rourke. "Why did you do it? Why did you change the signals, and give the wrong ones to Wallace?"

Although he was completely baffled by the mystery, Wallace was deeply moved by sympathy for the girl, seeing how she writhed under the lash of Rourke's angry tongue. "Don't worry too much about it, Milly," he spoke up. "It's as much their fault as it is yours. If they had left those signals alone, as they should have done——"

"Oh, all right, Wallace," Rourke growled. "I grant that; but let's get to the bottom of this. What about it, Miss Heaton?"

She was calmer now. "The truth is, I suspected the man who gave them to me, because I knew he was a friend of Slim Gibbons. I saw them together the night after the State College game; Mr. Gibbons went up to his room and stayed there half an hour. And I happen to know that Mr. Gibbons hasn't any love for Mr. Wallace.

"So, as I say, I suspected some trick or other that would get Mr. Wallace in bad. This man Paulsen's story sounded too extravagant; besides, I think he's a Pittsville man at heart, because he always asked for the Philadelphia papers. And I didn't want to worry Mr. Wallace by telling him that he might expect treachery on his own team. So I simply solved the problem by substituting another sheet of paper for the one the man Paulsen had given me. I wrote down an old set of signals, so that, in case Mr. Wallace did look at them, which I didn't think he would, there would be no chance of their getting him in wrong."

"Then why have given them to me at all?" Wallace asked.

"So Paulsen would think his plan

had succeeded, and not try another one."

"Where is the original envelope?" Rourke asked, in a queer tone.

"I have it here," she said, reaching into the pocket of her heavy coat. "I was going to give it to Mr. Wallace after the game, and explain things."

Rourke took it grimly. "Well, Miss Heaton, you've managed to knock us out of a victory to-day. You certainly gummed things up for the Cornwall team."

"Excuse me, Rourke, but I must object to that statement," Wallace said. "If you hadn't——"

"But it's not too late yet, is it?" Milly asked. "If you would put Mr. Wallace in again——"

"He couldn't go in again anyway, now we've taken him out, until the end of this period," Rourke said.

"But there's hope yet," she returned. "The Cornwall men seem to be holding them now. Pittsville is only ten points ahead. If they can stick it out until the end of the period——"

This drew their attention to the game again. Cornwall had discovered the deception; they could not fail to do so after the first three or four plays. They had forgotten the signals which they had crammed during the intermission, and were playing straight football; and although they were far down in their own territory, they seemed to be making a stand.

"Wallace refused once to play," Rourke reminded the girl.

"That was because I thought we had the real signals," said Wallace. "Now they're playing football again, I'll go out if you want me to."

Miss Heaton spoke up impulsively, with a stifled sob in her voice: "I wish that you could half imagine how I feel about this. In spite of what you say, it's my fault if Cornwall is defeated; and I should never dare look any one in the face again."

Wallace comprehended, as his eyes met hers squarely, that she was making a direct appeal to him, quite as if she were confident that he could go into the game in the last period and overcome that big lead that Pittsville had piled up.

"It can't be done," he said as to himself, half unconsciously, and, regretting instantly what he had said, turned quickly away so that he might not see the pain in her eyes; for he knew, more than any one, what it meant to her to see Cornwall defeated now.

CHAPTER VII.

RIGHT DOWN TO FACTS.

GOING in for the last period, Wallace feared that the team, in the belief that he had purposely faked the signals, would be against him to a man. But Gibbons was worse than useless toward the end of the third period, so that the team, fighting desperately to hold their opponents and forgetting for the moment personal animosities in the battle, welcomed any one who could bolster up the end and save them from an overwhelming score against them.

The period started with Cornwall in possession of the ball on their fifteen-yard line, fourth down and six to gain. They elected to kick, of course. The kick, badly judged and carried by a side wind, went out of bounds in mid-field. There followed an exchange of kicks, which ended by Wallace's recovering the ball on a muff on Pittsville's twenty-yard line, directly in front of the goal. In the next play Cosgrove, Cornwall's full back, had booted it over for three points. Easy as his own part was, Cosgrove got the credit for it in the cheers that greeted the play. The spectators were down on Wallace from the start for having displaced their favorite; and no one took note of the fact that it was Wallace who had made the play a certainty.

Afraid to try again their kicking tactics, with Wallace fresh again and fast as a sprinter, Pittsville took to straight football, and for the next ten minutes hammered the Cornwall line from tackle to tackle, shoving them down time and again to the shadow of their goal posts, only to be held there with a defense that became impregnable in the critical moment. Then, with the time short and the game sewed up by a lead of seven points, they abandoned offensive tactics and held to their advantage.

The ball was given to Cornwall on their own twenty-yard line. Cosgrove was thrown for a loss on a straight buck; quarter tried a delayed pass and netted three yards, then called for a fake forward pass to Wallace. Wallace got clear and signaled for the ball; but Cosgrove wouldn't change his mind, carried it through and gained a yard. Wallace ran down the kick that followed and held the runner to a ten-yard gain. Playing still defensive, Pittsville kicked on their first down; Cornwall's quarter blocked it and recovered the ball; and then the same tactics continued as before.

"Give me a chance, Sandy," Wallace panted to the quarter, as they untangled themselves from the first scrimmage. It was second down, eight to gain, on Pittsville's forty-yard line; and not over two minutes to play.

"Aw, what's the use," returned the quarter wearily; and aloud, as if he didn't care what the Pittsville men heard: "You robbed us of the game in the first place; so why get excited about it now?"

"Just one chance," begged Wallace, almost choking with despair; for now he realized what the spirit of the team was.

"Oh, all right," returned the quarter, in disgust. "Anything goes now." He signaled Wallace around the opposite end, taking no pains to conceal the fact;

for now that the situation was hopeless, he didn't seem to care much what happened.

The Pittsville team, with ample warning of the fact, moved over to kill the play as soon as it was started; for this play was too simple. But in their eager confidence they had betrayed their defense play a fraction of a second too soon and Wallace took advantage of it. Instead of tearing on after his interference, when he had taken the ball, he turned back with the lightninglike twist that only his small size made possible. And while Pittsville, to a man, was wrecking the useless interference, Wallace dodged back around his own end, with the field to the goal quite clear except for their hovering full back. He, caught off his guard, was no match for the slippery little end; and within five seconds the grand stands were echoing to a thunder of cheers for the touchdown, while the disgruntled Pittsville team were still looking for the ball.

Wallace, still hugging the ball in a sort of grateful frenzy behind Pittsville's goal line, thrilled excusably to this belated, but no less wonderful, recognition of him. No matter what had gone before, he felt himself vindicated. True, Cornwall could not win, for the whistle was even then piping for time. But they needed only one point to tie, and in the circumstances a tie was almost as good as a victory; and Cosgrove could scarcely fail to make that one point by kicking the goal.

Wallace held the ball for the try, shut his eyes and clinched his teeth, as Cosgrove's foot swished past his head. Then he heard a second impact, which, in the deep hush that marks a tense and breathless multitude, resounded like a gunshot. He forced himself to open his eyes and look. The ball hit the upright, hovered for a sickening moment, and bounded back into the field.

Thus Cornwall went down to defeat by a score of ten to nine; and the sour looks of his teammates told Wallace whom they held accountable for their defeat. Defeated as they were, they couldn't even give him credit for the points he had won. They could think of nothing but the faked-up signals; they looked upon him as a pariah, as one to be shunned and detested.

Wallace strode on to the gate, looking neither to right nor to left, his head down, seeing nothing and hearing nothing—nothing, at least, until he passed the place where Miss Heaton sat. She called to him, her voice sharp with command. He crossed over to speak with her. "I'm awfully sorry——" he began, though he did not avoid her eyes.

"They hate you," she said. "They think you're to blame for the defeat. It's wrong of them." Her hands clenched and her eyes were bright with tears. "They can't even give you credit for what you did."

"Let 'em think what they want to," Wallace said.

"But I shan't let them think that," she protested. "I'm going to tell them the truth. I don't care what it costs me; they must respect you; they simply must give you the credit—— Captain Karlson, come here a moment, please!" She lifted her clear voice more in entreaty, this time, than in command.

Karlson, leaving the field at the head of his team, looked sharply from Wallace to Miss Heaton, hesitated a moment, and then came over.

"I want to tell you," said the girl, as if she were in a great hurry to get the disagreeable confession over and done with, "I want to tell you that it was I who faked those signals. It was I, and not Mr. Wallace. You have no right to blame him——"

"Hold on there a minute," Charley

Rourke's heavy voice broke in, as he came running from the gate.

The team, to a man, came up closer, and gathered about Karlson, while Rourke spoke. "The whole business comes right back to Slim Gibbons," he said to them all. "I suspected him after I got more facts, and made him confess when I hauled him out of the game."

"What'd he got to do with it?" Karlson growled.

"Trick of his to get Wallace hauled out of the game earlier. Made it up with Carter, the old Pittsville man, who posed to Miss Heaton as Paulsen, and a Cornwall man," Rourke explained.

"But how could Carter and Gibbons get Wallace out of it?" Davis asked, with a sour glance at Wallace.

"Cinch. Wallace was to have the signals and study them up. No one else was to have them. Carter worked out a set with the Pittsville quarter, so that Wallace couldn't get wise too soon, not till he'd been drawn in wrong after the first six or eight plays and made a fool of himself so consistently that I'd have to pull him out of the game. Then Gibbons was going in and get his letter for to-day's game."

"Then why didn't it work out that way?" queried Karlson, much as if he did not yet believe it.

"Simply because Wallace was man enough not to look at the signals. Carter—or Paulsen—suspected that he might not, and that led him up to the bigger game that Gibbons didn't even suspect. Carter was out for a Pittsville victory. He feared that, signals or no signals, Wallace might defeat Pittsville. His sole object was to get Wallace out of the game. Carter did not consider Gibbons at all dangerous. Gibbons charged you with having the signals, and all he expected then was that I'd pull you out for unfair play. But Carter figured it out exactly as it happened, that you'd have to turn the sig-

nals over to us; and so he would get us all, instead of Wallace alone. Carter's signals were fakes, just as much as those Miss Heaton substituted."

Karlson turned to Rourke, his big face livid in spite of his fatigue. "Do you mean to say, Charley, that Slim Gibbons sat by, saw us cramming those fake signals, knew they were faked, and let us do it?"

"He certainly did; said he was afraid to confess and took a chance."

"Where is he?" Davis growled. "Say, he won't last long——"

"Hold your horses, Davis," Rourke put in. "He's not much worse than we are, when you come right down to it. Besides, he's cleared out; scared to death of what you'll do to him. I think Slim Gibbons has left this vicinity for good; said he was going to."

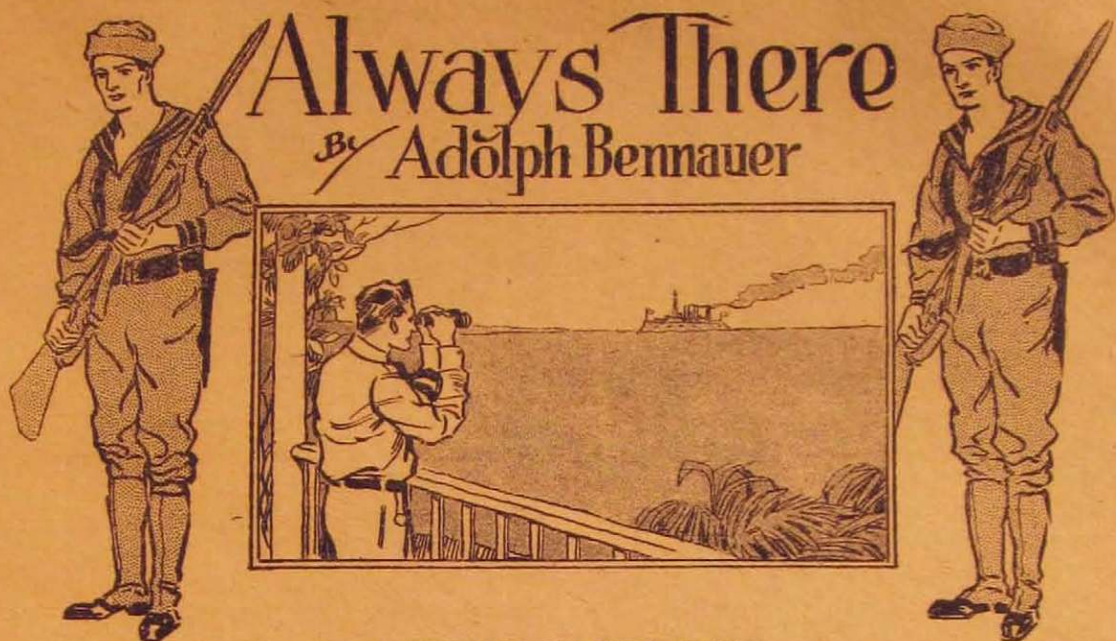
"He had better!" said Davis truculently.

"Fact is," Rourke went on, "Wallace, here, is the only man in the bunch, and that includes me. I admit it. And if you men amount to anything, you'll admit it, too!"

A little abashed, the men looked at Wallace, who stood with his back to the boarding, his arms folded indifferently. Then, as with one accord, they gathered round him and lifted their voices in three hearty cheers.

The hard, defiant expression left Wallace's face. He felt a light touch on his shoulder, and turned to see Miss Heaton smiling at him, speechless with emotion, but with shining eyes. Then Karlson and Davis tore him away, set him on their shoulders, and started for the clubhouse, with the team and the substitutes surging about them.

From this post of honor, Wallace looked back and saw Miss Heaton on her feet, waving at him. He turned away quickly, and blinked his eyes. "It certainly was fine of her!" he said to himself, as they passed through the gate.



(COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE)

CHAPTER I.

A FAIR PROPOSITION.

A FORLORN and striking figure he appeared as he strode along the sunlit beach. He was a tall man, heavily molded and of an erect, military bearing, so bronzed in complexion that he might have been of any nationality. He was barefooted and without a hat, his entire raiment consisting of a pair of wrinkled canvas trousers and a white cotton undershirt. At first glance he appeared to be a disreputable variety of beach comber, but a second inspection would have disproved this. There was something in his attitude that hinted at breeding.

The day was one of tropic splendor. At the man's left lay the Pacific, serene and vast and sparkling. To his right the Guatemalan coast line rose gradually, merging from the white strip of shingle into a broad tract of luxurious vegetation and culminating in the blue, crenelated sky line of the Sierra Ma-

dres, thirty miles away. Straight ahead of him and distant not more than three miles nestled the town of Champerico, gleaming like a diamond in an emerald setting. Save for a few small boats, the harbor was deserted. The world seemed to be taking its siesta.

At the edge of the town, the man paused, glancing about him with appreciative eyes. "A lotus land!" he said. "A man with a little capital could come here and live like a king! What do you say, Widmer? Shall it be Champerico?"

Glancing casually about him, his eyes came to rest upon a house about half a mile away. It was a rambling, balconied, whitewashed adobe structure, half concealed in a grove of green, spidery palms. Very picturesque and romantic it appeared, hinting at moonlight nights and serenades, and the man, gazing, could not help feeling a responsive thrill. As he gazed, however, he perceived another detail in the picture that rendered it more prosaic and up to date. This was a rather

obsolete type of touring car that had been stricken while in the very act of entering the gate.

"One touch of auto trouble makes the whole world kin!" Widmer grinned, his eyes suddenly lighting. "I wonder, now, if the don wouldn't appreciate a little assistance?"

Unmindful of his personal appearance, he turned and started toward the house. As he approached, he saw that the automobile held a man and woman, both of whom had now alighted, the man being strenuously engaged in cranking the machine. Just before Widmer arrived upon the scene, the solution to the trouble was discovered. The man looked into the gasoline tank and found that it was empty. "Bah!" he exclaimed. From the girl beside him—for she was little more than a girl—Widmer caught a distinct titter.

The next moment he had joined them. "I'll give you a hand, sir, and we'll run her in," he suggested pleasantly in Spanish.

The two turned upon him simultaneously, surprise their dominant emotion, for they had not noticed him approaching. At first meeting Widmer felt no particular liking for the man. He was about fifty years of age, small, wiry, with a Vandyke beard and alert, beady eyes. It was those eyes that prompted Widmer's aversion, for they held a certain shifty light that he had encountered before and knew how to interpret. But the girl! Surely she must have been the belle of Guatemala. She was not more than eighteen, a dark, beautiful creature, with a wealth of blue-black hair, a full white throat, and softly glowing eyes. Widmer, who had seen no woman of any sort for weeks, stepped behind the car in confusion, suddenly and supremely conscious of his unconventional appearance.

His embarrassment was relieved by the voice of the girl's companion: "I

thank you, señor. I shall be very glad to have your assistance."

He joined Widmer at the rear, and together they pushed the antiquated vehicle through the gate and up the smooth, pebbled drive.

"There!" The little man straightened himself, gave a twirl to his long, black mustache, and gazed upon Widmer with a peculiar, searching expression. "I thank you, señor. And now allow me to introduce myself. I am Miguel Carrajos, a tobacco planter. This is the Señorita Teresa Barrasca, my niece. And you, señor, I take it, are an American?"

The next instant he gave a start of surprise, for Widmer's attitude suddenly underwent a most astonishing change. He drew himself up to his full height, his eyes flashing. "American?" he repeated quickly. "Is every man who is born and bred in the United States an American? Call me Widmer, if you please, and let it go at that."

There was an instant of strained and awkward silence. The man and girl started at him, astonished as much by his words as by his sudden exhibition of temper. But while the girl's eyes expressed only a vague wonder, the man's held a keener, knowing light. After his first shock of surprise he glanced at the stranger with a new interest. Beneath Widmer's vagabond appearance he seemed to glimpse a quality that caused his previous air of familiarity to change to one of respect.

He bowed apologetically. "I beg pardon, señor; I did not understand. Your personal affairs shall be respected. But if you are intending to remain in Champerico for a time I have a business proposition to offer you."

He threw out his chest, like a peacock about to strut, and impaled Widmer with his black, beady eyes. "My country is at present just recovering

from the effects of a revolution. Champerico is still under martial law and the soldiers are so bold as to plunder property indiscriminately. This house, being guarded by myself and my trusty servants, has thus far escaped their ravages, but I have another residence somewhat out from town which is occupied now only by some of my peones. Should the soldiers decide to pillage this place, as they sooner or later will, I should suffer greatly. Under your protection, however, señor, my property would be safe. Therefore, if you will go to live in this house, what food and clothing you desire shall be yours, you shall be supplied with horses and a carriage, and you shall receive, at the end of a month, one hundred pesos. Is it not a fair proposition?"

Fair? For a moment Widmer was too taken aback to reply. He had to look hard at the man to make sure that he was not jesting. But the eyes of the little Guatemalan held anything but humor. In fact, they sparkled with a most avaricious light, a light that, in any other circumstances, would have caused Widmer's previous suspicions to strengthen. But he was too excited to notice such things now. Besides the material benefits he would gain by this offer, he was thinking of the girl. The prospect of meeting that radiant creature on her own social level was too great to be ignored.

He stepped forward quickly, his heart pounding, and held out his hand. "Done!" he said. "I don't know whose side the favor is on, and I don't care. I'll accept the proposition at its face value."

CHAPTER II.

AT ANY HAZARD.

TWENTY-FOUR hours later Widmer was transformed from a common beach comber into a Guatemalan tobacco planter of means. The house to which he had been assigned,

though not quite so pretentious as that of his host, was one of the finest in Champerico. It stood on the crest of a hill, overlooking sea and town, and, save for the element of loneliness, came fully up to his expectations. He found himself possessed of more good clothes than he could wear, a larder supplied with the choicest of wines and food, and a handsome barouche and spanking team of bays. Truly, Señor Carrajos had carried out his promise to the letter.

In return for all this Widmer had to do nothing but pose as a gentleman of means and claim that the property was under his protection. Protection, indeed! It was not likely that the soldiers would have injured the building itself, and, beyond the furnishings that Señor Carrajos had given him from his own house, he could discover nothing that required protection save six large cases of tobacco in the cellar. Again and again did he rack his brains for a motive for the planter's action, for that there was a motive behind it all he was confident. Señor Carrajos did not look to him like a man who did things without a reason. But the more he pondered the more puzzled he became, until finally, deciding that this was no concern of his, anyway, he gave up guessing and proceeded to enjoy his good fortune.

Widmer did this in the most approved fashion. When he was not dining or driving he was sitting upon his shaded veranda, a cigar between his lips and a sparkling glass at his side, gazing down upon the sea and town below. One day, while he was thus engaged, he was attracted by a cloud of smoke on the southern horizon. Watching it intently, he made it out to be a United States gunboat, several of which, since the revolution in Mexico, had been ordered to patrol the Central American coast line. Immediately his attitude changed. He sprang erect

and menaced the oncoming vessel with his fist.

"That for you!" he said, his eyes alight with a fierce exultation. "I've kotowed to you for the last time, you big, conceited bully! I'm a citizen of the world now!"

No matter how much Widmer might be enjoying himself up there on the hill, however, he could never quite get his thoughts away from the broad, rambling ranch house below. A pair of black, glowing eyes and scarlet lips haunted him through the day and night. Now that the girl and himself were on a common plane, he forgot his previous embarrassment and became obsessed by an insatiable longing to be with her. One day, a week after his arrival, being unable to endure the suspense any longer, he attired himself in a suit of neat-fitting flannels, ordered out his barouche, and started boldly for the planter's residence.

As he drew near he caught sight of Señor Carrajos' automobile swinging in through the gate. The don himself was at the wheel, and in the tonneau and the seat beside him sat four uniformed soldiers of the republic. Wondering vaguely what the trouble could be, Widmer joined them at the veranda.

"*Buenas dias, señor!*" the little planter called cheerily. "It is at a most opportune time that you have come to visit me. His excellency, the president, has received information that I am plotting against the government—I, Miguel Carrajos, señor, one of Guatemala's most loyal citizens—and he has ordered that my property shall be searched. It is very good humor, eh, señor? Come, you shall enjoy the fun."

With a resumption of his former hearty laugh, he turned and bowed the soldiers into the house. Widmer, with a sudden suspicion for which he could not account, followed him. He was no novice in the art of house searching.

For years that had been in his line of duty. But never, in all his experience, had he known so thorough a search as he witnessed now. No door did they encounter that was not opened, no floor or wall that was not sounded, no nook or cranny that was not explored to its innermost recesses.

Just what they were searching for, of course, Widmer did not know, and he did not feel as if he were privileged to ask, but that the article occupied a goodly portion of space was made evident by the very nature of the search. In the end, as the planter had predicted, the investigation came to naught.

The officer in charge shrugged his shoulders resignedly. "There seems to be nothing here, Señor Carrajos," he admitted; "but you have other property, I believe. There is the house on the hill."

The little planter's eyes lighted with a peculiar triumph. "Ah, yes, my dear comandante, I have other property, true. But unfortunately for your purpose it is immune. The house on the hill is at present occupied by my friend here, Señor Widmer, a born American citizen."

There could be no mistaking the satisfaction with which he pronounced these words. While Widmer stood there, struggling between anger and indignation, the soldiers turned and stared at him. Quite a respectful stare it was, albeit tinged with a great surprise. The officer in charge removed his cap and bowed. "In that case, of course," he stated quietly, "there will be no further search. Any house that is occupied by a citizen of the United States is sacred. Toward that country we feel only the closest friendship and the deepest respect. Señores, I bid you good day!"

That was all. He took his position at the head of his men, and the little company filed back to town. They left Widmer standing there, staring after

them like a man in a trance. His cheeks were flushed, his eyes snapped. He felt duped, exploited, betrayed. So this was why Señor Carrajos had been so generous with him! He had been merely bargaining for the protection of his American nationality, a nationality which he had hoped would forever be kept secret. It came over him suddenly that he was merely the tool of this contemptible little scoundrel, a hired accomplice engaged in some gross and illegal enterprise.

He was just about to give expression to his thoughts when Carrajos interrupted him: "*Buenos, señor!* You are an admirable assistant. I do not think those fellows will bother us again. Eh?"

His black, beady eyes were fairly aglow with cunning and elation, and Widmer, gazing at him, found his former suspicions increasing to abhorrence and disgust. His hostility toward the man mounted to the boiling point. But he had no idea of backing out of the affair. His interest in it now had increased to such an extent that he was determined to see it through at any hazard. And, even as he stood there, his brain, alive with conjectures, hit upon a solution that staggered him.

It was with difficulty that he retained his poise. "You are, indeed, most fortunate, señor," he said pointedly. "But, if you will excuse me now, I shall return. There are some stupid affairs of my own, you know, that simply must be attended to."

Widmer seemed obsessed by a consuming eagerness and curiosity. Having reached his house, he hurried immediately to his cellar, perturbed by a sudden fear that the object he sought might be gone. But the six large cases of tobacco were still there, and, seizing an ax, he pried one of them open. Instantly he stepped backward, giving vent to a single, suppressed exclamation. For a long time he stood there, staring, panting beneath the stress of

his conflicting emotions. Then he seemed to come to a sudden decision. With quick skill he hammered the lid of the box on again, ascended to his rooms, and secured a pair of binoculars. As he stepped out upon the veranda his cheeks were glowing, his heart was thumping wildly.

"She ought to be coming back by this time," he said, sweeping the horizon.

But the sea lay about him as bare as a ballroom. Giving an exclamation of impatience, he was about to turn back into the house when he caught sight of a small, dirty lugger, anchored some distance below town. There should have been nothing strange in its appearance, for such craft came and went continually, but Widmer was now in a mood where he suspected anything and everything that he could not immediately account for. Sweeping her with the glass, he perceived no movement upon her decks. To all appearances, she was deserted. But this merely heightened his suspicions.

"A vessel that lies idle in the daytime must carry on her work at night," he declared grimly. "I think she'll bear watching."

CHAPTER III.

SEEN AND UNDERSTOOD.

IT was in the early afternoon of the next day that, as he sat on his veranda, Widmer was greeted by a distinct surprise. On the road below him he discerned approaching the antiquated automobile of Señor Carrajos. He wondered what business the planter could have with him now, for, since the events of the preceding day, he had lost all desire for further acquaintance. But the next instant he discovered that Carrajos was not alone. In the seat beside him was the Señorita Teresa herself, looking more radiantly beautiful than ever. In a flutter of excitement Widmer hurried inside to make himself presentable.

"A hot day, señor," said the planter, as he dragged himself, puffing and perspiring, from his seat. "We thought to find it cooler up here on the hill."

Widmer, engaged in the very pleasant occupation of assisting the girl, merely nodded. "The house is yours, my friend. If you will come up on the veranda, I will have refreshments served immediately."

Though he spoke casually, he was, in reality, keenly alert. Despite Carrajos' explanation and the presence of the girl, he suspected some ulterior motive in this visit.

They had not been on the veranda half an hour when Señor Carrajos, glancing casually toward the harbor, indicated the mysterious lugger with a nod. "By the way," he remarked, with a characteristic twirl of his mustache, "the vessel that is to take my tobacco came down last night, señor. I shall set my men at work loading her today. Most of the tobacco is already at the wharves, but I have a small portion up here. You may have noticed it—the six cases in the cellar."

His tone was quiet, almost indifferent, but as the black, beady eyes met Widmer's they held a certain challenge, and it was only because he had been expecting this challenge that Widmer found himself able to meet it. His heart beat so loudly that he was compelled to drum on the table top to still it.

When he spoke, however, his voice was comparatively calm: "Yes, I noticed it. I guessed it was tobacco. And which way does it go, señor—south?"

The planter rose to the bait guilelessly. "No; north. There is a firm in Mazatlan whom I am supplying regularly. But, see! Here come my men."

Rising excitedly, he indicated an antediluvian oxcart that was toiling laboriously up the hill. Widmer rose

with him, his recent air of satisfaction becoming replaced suddenly by one of keenest excitement. In the midst of his dilemma he turned upon the girl, to find her gazing at him, her eyes alight with understanding and a mute appeal. That appeal it was that restored his own balance. With lips grimly set, he faced forward again, sweeping the sea with his sharp eyes, and as he did so he could barely refrain from crying out. For there, hull up on the northern horizon, was the same gray gunboat he had observed a few days before.

Perspiration sprang out upon Widmer's forehead, his hands trembled. How soon would she arrive? How near would she come? How could he get away without arousing suspicion? But his reflections were cut short by an exclamation from his companion. "How slow an ox team is! It will be half an hour before those fellows get here. What do you say, señor, to a game of cards?"

Widmer could have shouted for joy. "Capital! I'll get the cards myself."

Almost before he had finished speaking he was away. But he did not immediately carry out his errand. Instead, he rushed to his room, secured a large American flag with which Señor Carrajos had provided him, and climbed through an opening onto the roof. The gunboat had drawn nearer now, so near that those on board could discern him easily with glasses. With practiced skill he unfurled the flag, stepped to the edge of the adobe roof, and began waving it in a manner that would have aroused the interest even of the uninitiated.

That his signals were seen and understood by those on board the gunboat was made evident a moment later. A triangular flag broke from her masthead, her funnel smoke thickened, and her bow wave became a regular cascade. With an exultant whoop, Wid-

mer laid down the flag and hurried below.

A moment later, cards in hand, he had joined his companions. "Well, what shall it be?" he asked cheerily, making no effort to conceal his elation. "Poker, pinochle, bridge, or——"

But Señor Carrajos, who was staring intently seaward, interrupted him. "I see we have a visitor, Señor Widmer," he said, frowning; "an American gunboat. I am afraid the card game will have to be postponed. I have certain interests which might be imperiled if I remain away. Come, Teresa, we must be going."

He turned as he spoke, and started to leave the veranda. But he had not taken three steps before he paused. Squarely in his path stood Widmer, an automatic pistol in his hand, his attitude one of grim determination. "I'm sorry," he said, "but that privilege I must deny you, Señor Carrajos; you will please consider yourself my prisoner."

CHAPTER IV.

ALWAYS THE SAME.

THERE was a simultaneous gasp from the girl and Carrajos, but while the eyes of the girl held only open astonishment, those of the man lighted suddenly with the fear of a trapped animal. He caught the table edge in a palsied grasp, his face white, his teeth achatter. "Your—your prisoner? Señor, you are joking! Miguel Carrajos has never harmed you. Why, then, should you wish to detain him?"

Widmer smiled. "You are a poor pretender, my friend," he said. "Your safest course is open confession. I suspected your real vocation from the day I first saw you, and later events have confirmed it beyond a doubt. You are interfering in the Mexican revolution where Guatemala would remain neutral. You are a filibuster, sir, engaged in furnishing munitions of war to that

arch rebel, Villa. I can prove this by the six oblong cases in the cellar. They are to be shipped to Mazatlan, and they contain, not tobacco, but rifles."

There was a quick gasp from the girl, but that was all. Miguel Carrajos merely stood there and stared impotently into the barrel of the automatic, his beady eyes aflame, his hands twitching convulsively. In the end he laughed, but not pleasantly. "Even so! But that is a matter between myself and President Carranza, of Mexico, my fellow. Where do you come in?"

Widmer did not answer him immediately. He sent a brief, searching glance over his shoulder. The gunboat had come abreast of the town now and was already turning her prow shoreward. The oxcart, containing four persons, was halfway up the hill.

"I come in," he said, "as one of those directly injured. When you were aiding Villa you were conspiring, not only against the soldiers of Carranza, but against the American troops under Pershing, as well. For that, as a born American citizen, I demand reparation."

His voice had risen a little when he finished, his cheeks glowed with more than their ordinary color. Carrajos, reading beneath the voice and the color, became suddenly as vindictive as a wasp. "And who are you to talk of patriotism?" he jeered. "You are an exile, an outcast, a fugitive from American justice, perhaps. You are probably as much in danger from that gunboat as I am. Stand aside, you fool, and let me pass!"

Widmer, however, stood firm. The sudden tightening of his lips argued that Carrajos' shot had struck pretty near home; but, instead of causing him any embarrassment, it seemed merely to add to his determination. All trace of his former hypocrisy had vanished now. He stood before them like a man

redeemed, his head erect, his eyes shining.

"Fugitive, I may have been," he declared tensely, "and a deserter, too! But, thank Heaven, I am such no longer! A month ago I held the rank of lieutenant aboard the United States gunboat *Challenge*, the vessel which I have just now signaled to stop. But my captain and I got into a quarrel over a pair of black eyes and too much Spanish port, and in my frenzy I knocked him down. As a consequence, I rendered myself liable to court-martial and dishonorable discharge from the navy. Rather than endure this disgrace, however, I slipped overboard one night when we were abreast of Ocos and swam ashore. My country had wronged me, I thought, and I vowed never to return to her again. But when my rage had cooled and I discovered your infernal plot against her I thought otherwise. I discovered that to be an American once is to be an American all the time. The spirit is always there. Now I shall never rest content until I have turned you and your contraband articles over to the authorities. My own punishment I shall submit to gladly."

His concluding sentences rang out clearly, aglow with the joy of a man who, once lost, has found himself again. But Señor Carrajos did not seem to share in his enthusiasm. All the time Widmer was speaking he had kept his eyes on the gunboat. The vessel had come to anchor now, and a swarm of white-jacketed marines were pouring over the side. The planter's eyes suddenly acquired a desperate light. As he stood, he was between a chair and the table, with a hand laid supportingly upon each. At the precise moment that the American finished speaking he leaned upon his supports, brought up his foot with the rapidity of lightning, and sent the blue automatic pistol flying off the veranda.

"Hi! Manuel! Carlos!" he shouted to the approaching peones, and attempted to follow the pistol.

Though taken altogether by surprise, Widmer recovered himself instantly. Carrajos had not gained the veranda rail before he was upon him. Then the two went at it hammer and tongs. Though Widmer was the bigger man, his antagonist was as slippery as an eel and so vicious as to use his teeth as well as his limbs. The American would have cherished no fear for the outcome, however, had the two been alone. But, even as they fought, he saw that Carrajos' shouts had reached his men and they were coming up the hill on the run. The marines, though likewise en route, had hardly come to the outskirts of the town. It was practically impossible for Widmer to perform the double task of holding to his prisoner and warding off his assailants until they arrived, and he soon saw that his little coup was likely to be a disappointment. Still grimly he fought on.

As to the Señorita Teresa, Widmer was vaguely conscious that she was standing, white-faced and silent, beside the table. Just before the peones reached the house, however, he heard her give a quick gasp, saw her dart to the veranda rail, and leap lightly over. He surmised naturally that her move was one of flight, and, though he could not blame her for it, he felt slightly piqued at her for her desertion.

But he had sterner things to think of just then than regret. Encouraged possibly by the nearness of his followers, Carrajos made another attempt to wrench himself free. By a serpentine twist he managed to jerk his body forward and throw it halfway across the veranda rail. Though Widmer held to him tightly, the move destroyed the balance of both of them. The American was conscious of a sudden

descent, of a violent blow upon the head, and then—darkness.

CHAPTER V.

NOT TO BE OUTDONE.

WHEN Widmer came to himself again he was lying on the lawn with his head pillowed upon something soft. An aroma of heliotrope was in the air; tender hands were bathing his forehead; he heard a gentle voice. He was not surprised, therefore, that when he opened his eyes he should find his head resting upon the lap of the Señorita Teresa.

"Oh," cried the girl quickly, "I thought, señor, that the fall had killed you!"

Shyly she removed his head from her lap and laid it upon the grass. But, once conscious, Widmer's strength returned quickly. He sat up rather dizzily and looked about him, and simultaneously he gave a start of surprise. Roundabout stood a group of white-jacketed marines, at rest upon their rifles, grinning. In their midst, held firmly by the arms, were the four peones who had accompanied the ox-cart, and on the grass ten feet away lay the form of Miguel Carrajos, whom two of the marines were industriously engaged in bringing to. Completing his gaze, Widmer saw another figure beside him, the figure of an officer, at sight of whom his face suddenly flushed and his hand mechanically went up in salute.

"You—you've got them, Captain Deming?" he asked. "They must have led you a merry chase! I think they ran away when I fell off the veranda."

There was a second of awkward silence. "On the contrary," returned Captain Deming quietly, "it was the Señorita Teresa who got them. When we arrived we found you and Señor Carrajos unconscious upon the grass and the lady holding up the peones with

an automatic pistol. She has been kind enough to give us all the particulars of her uncle's plot."

Widmer turned quickly and glanced at the girl. Though her face was flaming, she did not look away, but met his gaze bravely, and what he read in her eyes started his heart to pounding and set his brain on fire. For a moment sheer joy held him spellbound. Then, in a flash, he appeared to remember. His dream faded, his eyes clouded, his lips curled into a bitter smile. Slowly he arose and faced his superior officer.

"If the lady has told you all, sir," he stated grimly, "there is no need of my explaining further. But I realize that there is another matter for which I must account which does not concern Señor Carrajos. I have prepared myself for this accounting for some time past. I am ready to go aboard now, sir, as your prisoner."

There was another silence, a silence prolonged and acute. The two men stood there, staring at each other, each as splendid an example of the young American naval officer as our country affords. The countenance of Captain Deming was the first to relax. His gray eyes softened, his bronzed cheeks acquired a tinge of color. He came forward and lowered his voice.

"This matter that you speak of, Lieutenant Widmer, was a personal affair, was it not? There is no need for making it official unless I choose to do so. For the sake of your country you have just now sacrificed your liberty and placed yourself in danger of disgrace. Am I, as captain of my vessel, to be outdone in patriotism by one of my officers? I'd be pretty much of a cad if I weren't willing to make some sort of a sacrifice, too."

As one gentleman to another, he held out his hand. Widmer, reading the mind of his captain as he would have read his own, forgave as readily as he had been forgiven. His own hand went

out and gripped the other's firmly. "Captain Deming," he began brokenly, "if ever you need——"

But his commander cut him short with a laugh. "Pshaw! I think the affair has furnished a lesson for both of us, Widmer. And now I must be getting these fellows aboard the vessel. As to yourself," he glanced at the Señorita Teresa, and his eyes twinkled,

"I don't think we shall require your presence until the trial comes off. Will you come aboard or remain ashore?"

Widmer looked at the girl, and in her flushed cheeks and glowing, downcast eyes, he seemed to find his answer. When he faced Captain Deming again his own eyes were shining. "I think I'll stay ashore, sir," he said, "and report later."



COLORS UNFURLED

By Everett Earle Stanard

BY heat and fire and smoke of the battle,
Fray o' the mountainside;
By grumble and rumble and roar and rattle,
Many are tested and tried.
They fight the fight in view of us all,
High up where the light is free;
Their colors unfurled proclaim to the world
What manner of men they be.

Not in the glare and roar and rattle,
Fray o' the mountainside;
Not in the gleam of the visible battle
Are all of us tested and tried.
But all men fight in a secret place
The silent battles of life;
The struggle and fight for sweetness and light,
For children and home and wife.

And I know not which is the greater battle,
Fray o' the mountainside;
Or secret rumble and terrible rattle
By which men's hearts are tried.
But even the hidden battle is seen,
All men who fight to be free,
Proclaim to the world with colors unfurled
What manner of men they be!

A Bainbridge of Bangor Story ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦



By
Burt L Standish ~

WITH her brother Roy, who was threatened with consumption, due to a reckless life, Grace Winslow, daughter of the senior member of the firm of Winslow & Addison, lumber barons, was staying at Camp Balsam, on Clear Pond. Really she had come up into the Maine woods to escape the unwelcome attentions of Danforth Addison, son of her father's partner. One day Grace got lost in a gloomy part of the great woods known as Haunted Land, so named from a legend to the effect that here Tommy Hatchet, an Indian, had killed his wife and Wytopitlock Baptiste, with whom she had run away, and then died on the spot himself. The story was that the spirits of all three haunted the place and reenacted the tragedy. As Grace thought of this, she heard wild yells and screams. Looking around in terror, she saw a powerfully built, grim, and bearded man sitting on a log, smoking a pipe and quietly watching her. Expressing his contempt for the sounds, he guided her back to the camp, which

was run by Louie le Barge and Anne, his squaw wife, whose brother, Seely Booker, was employed there. Grace made her rescuer stay to supper. He interested and puzzled her. She did not know as yet that he was Bob Bainbridge, of Bangor, returning to the lumber game after several years' disappearance. Bainbridge had been a big man in Bangor and a terror to the Lumber Trust and all crooks, but he lost interest in life when his wife died. But now he was back and was behind the Northern West Branch Company, an independent concern which was building a sluiceway through Haunted Land to get its logs from Made Pond to the Kennebec—the only way out for them, as Winslow & Addison controlled the Penobscot.

After supper the camp was unexpectedly visited by Danforth Addison, Johnny Orz, the W. & A. manager, Andy Pick, a W. & A. spy, and "Cam" McDougal, a crooked timber boss who had been discharged by Bainbridge. Bainbridge frankly admitted his identity and his responsibility for the sluice-

way scheme. In a rage, Addison declared that Winslow & Addison would use every means to wreck the plan and crush the man behind it. McDougal attempted to strike Bob, but Bainbridge threw the bully's arm out of joint—afterward throwing it back and apologizing to Grace for being the cause of such a scene in her camp. When he left, those in the room knew that they were dealing with a big man. Grace felt it, and she looked at Addison with increased disgust. Bainbridge spent the night alone in Haunted Land. He wanted to investigate those mysterious sounds; to find out who made them and why. He found no explanation, however, and was returning to the N. W. B. camp at Made Pond, when suddenly he came on the body of a dead man, with an Indian arrow through his heart. The man was Nick Webb, whom Bainbridge had ordered discharged for smuggling whisky to the men. Bob reported his discovery to Condon, his camp manager, and said he suspected that the killing of Webb with an Indian arrow and the yells and screams in the woods were all part of a plan to intimidate the superstitious French Canadians employed by the N. W. B. With Bill Spratt, an old guide, Parson Hall, a quaint character, Dowd, one of his men, Bainbridge set out to give Webb a decent burial. Reaching the spot, he was surprised to find Addison, Pick, McDougal, and Seely Booker looking down at the body. Raising his finger and pointing, Pick accused Bainbridge of the murder.

Addison showed his gleaming teeth in an unpleasant smile. "You're in deep, Mr. Bainbridge!" he exulted. "We've got the goods that will make you come to terms—or land you in court, charged with murder! If Winslow & Addison demand your arrest, the high sheriff of the county won't lose much time about nabbing you and putting the irons on your wrists."

CHAPTER XVI.

The Man of Nimble Wits.

[T was not easy to tell what effect the words of Danforth Addison produced upon Bainbridge. Even at a short distance, the dull light partly veiled the expression of his face, and his eyes were shrouded in the deeper shadow beneath the lopping brim of the old felt hat that he wore. For some seconds he stood without speaking, apparently turning Addison's threatening statement over in his mind.

Dowd and Hall were somewhat uneasy. Bill Spratt was grinding his gums together, his under jaw working from side to side, for he was boiling with wrath and almost bursting with a desire to tell the son of old Dig Addison just what he thought of him. The self-restraint of Bainbridge was something the indignant guide could not quite understand.

Presently Bob spoke. His voice was calm and smooth and pitched a trifle lower than usual, if anything. It was not apparent that he had been greatly impressed or disturbed by Addison's threat. Nevertheless, he asked: "And if I come to terms, what will happen? Let's have a clear understanding. I don't propose to be fooled. You can't double cross me, Addison. You've got to speak out flatly, so that there'll be no misunderstanding of your meaning. What are the terms you refer to?"

"You know; I don't have to tell you," answered Addison. "You are the man behind this crazy scheme to construct a sluiceway for the purpose of getting logs out of the woods and into the Kennebec. Only for you such a thing never would have been dreamed of."

"Go on."

"We'll never allow it to go through, but it'll be easier for us if it's dropped. You've got so much pull with the N. W. B. people that you can make them drop it."

"And if I do that this Webb affair will be dropped, too? Is that the idea? Is that what you're suggesting? I tell you I've got to have it straight from you here and now. No vague, uncertain stuff. Come across with your proposition."

Addison believed Bainbridge was weakening. If so, then it must be that Bob had killed Wade and was fearful of being brought to trial for the crime. Up to this point, in spite of the accusation he had made, a doubt had lingered in Danforth's mind. Now the doubt disappeared. Webb had followed Bainbridge into Haunted Land with the revengeful intention of killing him there if he could find the favorable opportunity for the black deed. Aware of the deadly purpose of the shiftless wretch, Bainbridge had struck first. In a way, it was self-defense; but, with Winslow & Addison arrayed against him, the man who had committed the act was afraid to face it through before a jury.

"I've got you, my troublesome bird!" thought Addison, his exultation leaping to a high point. "At one time you may have deserved your reputation of being a man nobody could beat, but you haven't the nerve you had in those days, and luck has given me a club to hammer you flat with. It'll be a big satisfaction to know that I'm the first man who ever did it."

Had he been less exultant, less positive in his conviction that Bob was really alarmed and weakening, he might have been more cautious. His failure to realize the fact that he was up against a man whose cleverness he could not match with his far less nimble wits led his tongue to blunder like a person stumbling in pitchy darkness.

"Nobody'll ever bother much about what has happened to Webb unless somebody with plenty of influence takes the matter up and pushes it," he said. "Even if it becomes known that he

was killed here in such a mysterious way, who's going to take trouble and spend valuable time to solve the mystery and bring the one who killed him to trial?"

"Of course you understand," said Bob, "that I'm not admitting that I had anything whatever to do with the affair?"

"Oh, of course," said Addison wisely and sneeringly. "You don't have to admit that."

"But you are quite positive that I did it?"

"There's circumstantial evidence that makes me absolutely positive."

"And if I pledge myself to see that the projected log sluice is never built through these woods, you'll do—what? I tell you that you've got to come out flat with it if you want to make a bargain with me."

"I'll see that the matter is hushed up. Money will do that." He gave a faint but significant nod toward his companions. "You won't have to worry about being arrested and put on trial. You can go your way and leave it to me."

Then Bainbridge nearly knocked Addison over with the words that were shot from his lips: "I want every person here to take notice and remember what that man has just said. Not only has he proposed to condone a crime, but he has proposed to enter into a conspiracy to conceal it. He has proposed to make himself an accessory after the fact. In order to gain an advantage of importance over business rivals, he has stated that he would pay hush money to seal the lips of those who knew about the crime. Addison, you're a bungling dub!"

Enlightened concerning the reason for Bainbridge's restraint and delighted by the trap into which Danforth Addison had been led, Bill Spratt burst into a jeering chuckle. "Baked beans an' frizzled flapjacks!" he cried. "Addie

sartin made a runnin' high dive an' went under all outer sight. Will he ever come up?"

McDougal swore. "Yer talked too much, Mr. Addison," growled the lumberman, tenderly feeling of his lame shoulder while he glared at Bob. "I've found out that you don't never want to talk to him; ther way to do is hit him quick before ye ever say a word. That's ther way I'll do next time."

Andy Pick's mouth worked nervously and queerly, but no words came forth. Hands on his thin hips, Seely Booker remained silent also, his immobile face giving no hint of his thoughts.

Addison gulped and sought to pull himself together. "You—you may think that you're pretty clever, Bainbridge," he faltered; "but you'll find out that your cleverness won't do you much good when Winslow & Addison get after you. I—I was only trying to lead you on, anyhow. I never intended to make a bargain with you. If you had agreed, it would have been additional proof that you murdered this poor fellow, and it would have been used against you. Anyway, I think there's proof enough to lay you by the heels."

"But you'll never try to use it," returned Bob, with an air of absolute certainty. "Your protestation of your purpose comes late and has the cracked ring of a poor lie."

Then Danforth Addison gave way to a fit of wrathful chagrin that made him almost incoherent as he snarled and raged at the man who had outwitted him.

"Nice, sweet-tempered baby!" commented Spratt. "If he was to bite somebody now, they'd have the rab-bies sure. I don't wonder Miss Winslow wouldn't have him in the camp last night an' made him pound his ear in a hammock out on the veranda."

"I'll get you, Bainbridge; I'll get

you!" shouted Addison. "You can't make a fool of me!"

"If the remark warn't so gosh-darned mildewed an' mothett," muttered Spratt, "I'd tell him that natur' had done that job a'ready. Mebbe he's goin' to choke."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE DEADLY ARROW.

AS Addison and his companions had found the body of Nick Webb and were in possession of it, Bainbridge and his friends willingly and gladly left them to do whatever they chose to do with the dead man. With Bob again in the lead, they turned their faces toward Made Pond, although Spratt kept looking over his shoulder until the woods and the shadows had wholly blotted out the quartet that was watching them take their departure.

"Even Andy Pick didn't darst try to shoot anybody in ther back," said the guide. "Mebbe he would if he'd bin alone, but there was too many witnesses to see."

Before they had proceeded far, Hall, unable longer to repress his desire to warble, began to sing a familiar hymn. This time Bainbridge did not stop him, for he no longer felt that there was any reason for not wishing to attract attention to their presence in Haunted Land, and Hall appeared to find great relief and comfort in droning the hymn in the most lugubrious manner imaginable.

Spratt, however, was irritated. "I'd rather hear a passle o' cats squallin' in the night," he declared. "Why anybody with a voice like that should wanten murder the peaceful silence is more'n I can guess."

Although the singer heard the remark, he continued through to the end of the hymn. Then he addressed the guide. "William Spratt," he said, "you're a lost soul, steeped in sin and

wandering in darkness. I shall pray for you."

"Huh!" grunted Bill. "Go ahead, old boy."

They were still within the limits of Haunted Land when Bainbridge called a halt. "We'll hold a council of war, you and I, Bill," he said. "We've got plenty of time, and there's no need to rush. I want to smoke, and I'd like to know what you think about some things we'll talk over."

"Smokin's easy an' agreeable," said Spratt; "but thinkin' thoughts alwus was like work fer me."

They sat down beneath a huge tree, against which Bainbridge leaned. Hall and Noisy, not having been invited to take part in the "council," seated themselves on a small fallen tree a short distance away.

Having filled his old black pipe and lighted it, the guide began to chuckle.

"I didn't see what you was up to when you took Addie's sass so sorter quiet an' onresentful," he admitted. "An' that's proof that I ain't got no hair-trigger thinker. I didn't see what you was leadin' him into. He didn't nuther. By golly, he near went right out from under his hat when you slapped him with that condonin'-crime and excessory-after-the-fact stuff. He thought he had you down on your mar-rerbones an' pleadin'. It set him back worse'n losin' a jack pot with an ace full in his fist."

"I've formed a poor opinion of Dan Addison's reasoning power and judgment," said Bainbridge. "He's not inherited much of his father's foxy cunning, although he's just as unscrupulous. He ought to realize that getting me out of the way isn't going to stop the N. W. B. people from building the sluiceway. I'm only one individual, and, though I originated the scheme, it has gone beyond my control now."

"You're an individual that's goin' to have gobs o' trouble with gentle Ad-

die, if he can make it fer ye. He'll hate ye like pisen arter this, an' try ter do ye a nasty turn outer pure spite. Keep your weather eye peeled, says I."

"What I want to get the right slant on," Bob stated, "is the part Andy Pick is playing in this performance. Of course he found the body of Webb and led the others to it."

"Likely co-rect. Addison stated that Pick was the one that see it."

"It's my theory that Pick knew where it was before they came anywhere near the spot."

"You don't think, do ye," asked Spratt softly, "that Andy was the party that give Webb his ticket?"

"I haven't made up my mind definitely, but I'll admit that I've asked myself if it might not be possible."

"Anything's possible, Mr. Bainbridge, but why should he go for to kill Nick Webb—with a bow an' arrer?"

"Remember what you told me about Pick over at Made Pond a short while ago—about how he was the only person who gummed this strip of woods, and how he claimed to have seen and heard the most bloodcurdling spooky things here?"

"Yep."

"Of course he was lying about the spook stuff. If he had ever heard or seen such things, he's such a coward that nobody could get him within miles of this section."

"But you've heard an' seen queer things here yerself."

"Which Andy Pick himself may be responsible for."

"By golly!" said the guide. "Mebbe. But what'd he ever be cuttin' such didos for? Not just to keep other gummers away. He wouldn't kill a man he didn't have northin' ag'inst just to scare folks off. I can't b'lieve that, bad as he is, Mr. Bainbridge."

"I'll allow that I'm foggy concerning the motive behind this fake-ghost stuff," confessed Bob. "My original idea was

that the W. & A. people had become wise to our sluiceway plan, and had hired somebody to do the ghost business in hopes that our workmen would refuse to do a stroke here. It seemed childish, but I couldn't think of anything else that might be behind it. What I heard last night at Camp Balsam knocked that theory out of my head. Now my suspicion has fallen on Pick. But I'll admit that, having gummed the territory over last winter, he'd be foolish to go to such trouble merely to keep other gummers away. If he's behind the spook business, he's got another and bigger reason. What is it?"

"Gosh!" said Spratt. "If you don't stop, you'll set me to tryin' to think, an' that'll give my head a cramp."

Spratt's whimsical manner caused Bainbridge to smile. "Well, we'll get off that line now, Bill; the connection's too poor for us to do much intelligent talking over it. Didn't you say that Grace Winslow refused to permit Danforth Addison to sleep in Camp Balsam last night?"

"Yep; an' all his cooin' round her didn't make no dif'rence. She was unfeelin' enough to insist that he'd have ter snooze on the veranda, even if the skeets loved him so much thet they ett him up alive."

"She's afraid of him."

"Not prezactly afraid mebbe, but I guess she woukd'n't trust him no further'n she could fling a bull moose by the left hind laig."

"Wise girl!"

"Oh, she knows a thing or two, even if she is almost too good lookin' to have brains. Just bein' with her brother to take keer o' him wasn't her only reason for comin' up here inter the woods an' not lettin' nobody know, 'ceptin' her own immjyate fam'ly, just where she was gone to. Louie le Barge's got two ears, an' of course he's heard her an' her brother talkin' it over some. Louie let slip enough to wise me to it that she

wanted to keep away from Addie, who was botherin' her extensive because she'd handed him the mitten after bein' engaged to him, or near engaged. It 'pears that her own dad wasn't never high pleased with the prospect o' havin' Addie for a son-in-law, even if he was the spring-off of Kirk Winslow's pardner in business crime. Mr. Winslow figgered it that his daughter could do better than to let Addie put the halter on her, and it was him that had the camp at Clear Pond fixed up. Arter she left he give out the impression that she'd gone West to look the Rocky Mountains over, an' if he'd known of Dig Addison's plan Dan Addison'd never got up here an' found her."

This was merely a confirmation of what Bainbridge had already suspected or deduced from what he had heard and seen. It had been apparent that Grace Winslow was chagrined and annoyed by the unexpected appearance of Danforth Addison at Camp Balsam, and, in spite of her undoubted courage, Bob, believed she was afraid of her former suitor.

"It's too bad that he found her," he said. "He may make it so disagreeable for her that she'll have to leave Camp Balsam and get out of the woods. I have a feeling that she isn't safe there."

"Well, Le Barge can be trusted, an' he'll try to look out fer her. Kirk Winslow knew Louie was all right, an' that's why he hired him."

"How about Booker?"

The guide removed his smelly pipe from his mouth and wrinkled his nose. "Seely's an Injun, but they're like other human critters; sometimes they're all right, sometimes they ain't. Just now he's traipsin' around with Dan Addison, which ain't good for him if Addie's brung in a cargo o' forty rod. Seely likes the juice, but he tries to keep away from it, havin' the sense to know it's bad for him. If Addie was

to get him loaded an' pass him a supply o' sperrits fermenti, Seely'd keep slewed fer ten days, an' wouldn't be no use to help look after the girl."

"Perhaps the fact that Miss Winslow's the daughter of Danforth's business partner will hold Danforth in check."

"Mebbe, mebbe; but I wouldn't reckon on it too extensive. He's got his old man's notion for takin' what he wants, no matter who it b'longs to."

Spratt cocked an inquiring eye toward Bob, his pipe slanting upward at an angle from the corner of his mouth. He had a desire to say something personal, and it was not his custom to smother such a desire, even with a man like Bainbridge, for whom he had the greatest deference. "I don't marvel that you're ruther consarned about the girl," he stated. "She's the kind you hear about, but don't often see about."

"My interest in her," declared Bob quietly, "is the interest that any man might have in a woman in danger. Otherwise I have no interest in any living woman."

It was an implied rebuke that made Spratt suddenly feel a little ashamed of himself, knowing, as he did, how tremendously crushed Bainbridge had been by the death of his wife, and how, following that bereavement, he had shut himself off from the moving world; had practically disappeared and become a solitary hermit in the Northern wilds.

Even now, after more than a year of hermit life, and even though fate had drawn him into the activity of a timberland business struggle, he was decidedly different from the ever-cheerful, clean-cut Bainbridge of old, who had been almost scrupulously careful of his personal appearance when such a thing was possible. His ragged beard and his soiled and worn old clothes made it evident that he still cared not at all how others might look upon him.

Perhaps, when the time came that the sluiceway was built and successfully put into operation, he would again vanish into the wilderness, there to remain for years to come, with only the birds and beasts and untamed creatures of the woods for companions. It was not hard to imagine him, in his natural human desire to talk to somebody, pouring out the sorrow of his heart to his wild neighbors and friends.

Not only did Bill Spratt feel rebuked for verging upon familiarity in such a way, he was suddenly whelmed with sympathy for his companion, and would have given anything he possessed had he known of some delicate way to express that sympathy. He cleared his throat with a rasping sound. "Well," he said, "we owe thanks to Addie an' his bunch for savin' us the trouble o' plantin' Nick. Wonder what they'll do with him."

Bob shifted his position and dropped upon one elbow. "I haven't——" he began.

The twanging sound of a bowstring was heard in Haunted Land. Something struck the tree against which Bainbridge had been leaning a moment before. The quivering, feathered shaft of an arrow stood forth from the trunk of the tree in which its head was buried. And it most certainly would have pierced Bob Bainbridge's throat had he been still sitting with his back against the tree.

CHAPTER XVIII.

UNACCOUNTABLE VANISHING.

THAT inscrutable fate whose shielding or guiding touch we sometimes feel and recognize had saved Bainbridge from almost certain death. He had changed his position at precisely the proper instant to make ineffective the accurate and deadly aim of the unseen bowman. He saw the trembling arrow in the tree. Spratt saw it.

"Hey!" exclaimed the startled guide. "Looker that! Cornbread an' merlasses! The critter just missed ye!"

Seizing his rifle, Bob leaped up. Spratt scrambled to his feet, shooting iron in hand, his piercing eyes searching the shadows. "Look out!" he warned. "The sneakin' whelp may let another one fly!"

Bob knew the direction from which the arrow had come. He could see no living thing in those shadows, but the would-be assassin must be there somewhere. Crouching and springing to one side to get the cover of a clump of underbrush, Bainbridge ran forward. Spratt did the same, and, although somewhat slow to grasp the meaning of what had happened, Noisy Dowd and Hall followed them.

"Plunk him if ye see hide or hair o' him!" urged the guide fiercely. "That's ther way to fix that kind of a ghost."

Bob had no intention of letting the murderous unknown get away, should he see him. While he did not relish the idea of shooting a human being, he was now roused to the point of doing so rather than to let the wretch escape. It would be more than justifiable; it would be a duty in order to protect others from the homicidal miscreant.

Even Spratt had no keener or quicker eye than Bainbridge. Yet, hurrying with recklessness toward the spot from which the arrow must have been sped, Bob looked in vain for a human figure or some moving shadow seeking to flit away into the deeper shadows. Save for himself and his associates, the immediate woods seemed to be as utterly empty of life as ever.

"Where is the gosh-blamed skul-lion?" panted the guide. "Can't ye see northin' of him? He's just gotter be right round here somewhere."

Bob stopped and glanced back. If he proceeded farther, he would pass beyond view of the tree beneath which they had sat. He had reached the far-

thermost point from which any human being could have shot the arrow with him in sight. Even here, it seemed, it must have been difficult to single him out in the gloom beneath the tree. "Right around here, Bill," he said in a low tone. "Look sharp. We must beat every bit of possible cover. We must get him."

"I'll get him if I clap a blinker on him," returned Spratt, his rifle ready for instant use, his finger on the trigger.

Dowd and Hall drew near, both searching every place of cover they approached.

"Beware of the darts of the wicked," said Hall. "Take heed lest ye be overcome by sinners. If I ever lay hands on that arrow shooter, I'm going to take him all apart just for my own private amusement."

"Shut up!" snapped Noisy. "Ketch him! Don't talk!"

But although they spent nearly a full hour searching in every place of concealment they could perceive, not a sign or a trace of the bowman did they find. At last Bill Spratt stopped and stood looking at Bainbridge, his face expressive of mingled wonderment, disgust, and shame. "It bears all natur'!" he almost snarled. "It's somethin' there ain't no understandin' of. Why, we ain't even found a track that we didn't make our own selves! Mr. Bainbridge, it's outer human reason."

Bob was equally mystified and chagrined, but, unlike the guide, he was not in the least inclined to admit, even to himself, that there was anything even remotely supernatural about it. In some way that was now unaccountable the person who had tried to kill Bainbridge, and who was unquestionably the one who had slain Nick Webb, had succeeded in hiding from them as effectually as if he were indeed a disembodied spirit.

Noisy drew near, wiping perspiration

from his amazed face and shaking his head, although he had no comment to make. On the contrary, Hall expressed his disappointment and wrath over the escape of the murderous unknown in language that was both violent and shocking.

"There are times," he said, "when a man, unless he's more than merely mortal, has simply got to pull open the safety valve and let off steam. I hope I'll be forgiven, but I know I'd blow up if I couldn't rip it off a little."

"The wretch must have fled the instant he fired the arrow," said Bob. "He was able to get away in the shadows without being seen by us."

"But where's his tracks?" demanded Spratt. "I got an eye for tracks that's just about as good as Seely Booker's, an' I ain't been able to find any that we didn't make."

Now Bainbridge likewise had a clever eye for signs made by the feet of human beings or animals, and he also had failed to discover even the faintest footmark that the unknown had left behind him. And it seemed impossible that any human being could have fled at top speed through those woods without leaving some such sign for the practiced woodsman to perceive.

"Gosh!" muttered Bill Spratt. "Ain't it a funny feelin' to have your hair rare up and stand on its hind laigs?"

Even Bill was awed by the seeming uncanniness of the affair. If a man like him could be frightened, how much more terrified would the superstitious French Canadians be should they have an experience of a similar nature. Bainbridge realized, far better than he had before this, that the mysterious occurrences that were transpiring in Haunted Land might bring about great and undesirable delay in the construction of the projected log sluice. It was becoming imperative that the mystery should be solved and the perpetrator of the chicanery, who had not

stopped short of shedding human blood, should be brought to punishment.

"He skedaddled somehow without leaving any signs that we've been able to detect," said Bob. "I don't know how he did it, but I'm going to know some time. That's a piece of business that I've made up my mind to put through."

"An' you alwus uster put through anything you sut out to do," stated Spratt, "so I guess you won't slump through on this—unless it really is the shindiggery of a spook."

"Don't be an idiot, Bill!" exclaimed Bainbridge, with a touch of exasperation.

"Mebbe it's nateral," mumbled the guide humbly.

"The creature left one token at least behind him; one thing for us to examine."

"You mean—the arrer?"

"Yes."

"That's so. Let's get the 'tarnal thing an' look it over. I ruther guess I can tell whuther it's a real Injun arrer or not."

"Come on," said Bob. "There's the tree we were sitting under." He led the way back to the tree, the others following in subdued silence.

But when they arrived at the tree, they looked vainly for the arrow. It was not there. All that they found was the small gash in the tree trunk where the barbed head of the arrow had pierced the thick bark.

CHAPTER XIX.

COMPLETELY BAFFLED.

SPEECHLESS, they stood staring at the little wound in the bark of the tree. Again Bill Spratt's toothless jaws were working, his grim chin moving from side to side. Hall's breath made a whistling sound in his thin nostrils. The eyes of Noisy Dowd were bulging.

Bainbridge alone, although surprised, seemed collected and thoughtful.

"Sassafrass an' swamp root!" came in a hoarse whisper from the lips of the guide. "The thing was there! I see it with my two eyes."

"It was there," affirmed Bainbridge calmly. "The gash in the bark is something that couldn't be effaced by the one who took the arrow. That mark proves that there was no phantom stuff about the arrow."

"It's the doings of an emissary of Satan himself!" said Hall, his nasal voice unsteady. "The powers of sin and darkness are combined against us. Perhaps the armor of righteousness will protect us, but I'll confess that I feel like seeking safety by fleeing, even though no man pursueth."

"The critter come here for the arrer while we was lookin' fer him out yander," declared Spratt. "If he ain't got wings, he had ter leave tracks. Stand still, ev'rybody, an' let me squint the ground over."

Stepping lightly himself, he "squinted," bending low and moving his body from side to side, his eyes searching every inch of the ground in the immediate vicinity of the tree. But not even on the spot beneath the tree where it seemed that the person who had removed the arrow must have stood could he discover the faintest sign of what he sought.

Seeing that the guide was baffled, Bainbridge also searched for strange tracks, but found none. In all his experience Bob had never been in a situation more irritating to him because of mysterious and seemingly unexplainable features. He was heartily ashamed of his inability to find something that would enable him to form a deduction of a satisfying sort.

"By golly!" exclaimed Spratt at last. "I'm stumped! It beats me!"

"It is yet a long distance to Made Pond, brothers," reminded Hall, "and

I fain would be journeying. The idea that darkness might descend upon us before we should reach that sanctuary of safety pleases me not at all."

"Let's get up and get," urged Dowd.

"Look here, you two," said Bainbridge, "you were picked by Condon because he thought you could keep your mouths shut. Now are you going back and spill things?"

"Brother Bainbridge," said Hall, with some resentment, "it's apparent that Mr. Condon knows us far better than you do."

"That's right," growled Noisy.

"Very well," said Bob; "don't talk when you get back to the pond. If you were to talk, you'd soon have half the Frenchmen quitting or refusing to work in these woods. That's just what the individual who is working these claptrap stunts wants. Probably he hopes to scare the others into quitting, too, when they come here and give him a chance to show them some of his skulduggery."

"All I ask is that I may not be sent here myself," said Hall.

"Count me in on that," muttered Noisy.

"There'll be enough other work for both of you. But I'm going to catch this spook and put him on exhibition. When I do that, in case you have talked, even to your most confidential friends, the laugh will be on you, and you'll feel like crawling into a hole somewhere. Now we'll hike."

The others were glad enough to get away. Even Bill Spratt breathed easier when the region that was called Haunted Land was left behind them, and after that Hall and Dowd turned more than once to look back, feeling that they might still be followed by an enemy, human or otherwise, bent upon doing them harm.

It was drawing toward sunset when they approached Made Pond again. From a distance they heard the screech

of the mill saw and the chugging of the hoisting engine; for Condon was working the men overtime and paying them double wages for it. The same as when they departed, they avoided approaching the laborers who were handling and piling the sawed lumber on the top of the bluff, and came down to the pond by a course that enabled them to arrive there without attracting particular notice.

Through the treetops and above them the western sky was burning red, and the reflection of it, flung upon the bits of water of the pond from which the crowding logs had been removed, gave that water the color of blood. All signs seemed to foretell another day of parching heat, and one could only guess when the baking spell, unusually protracted for this time of the year, would break. Already the forest had taken on a limpness, almost a touch of seariness, and seemed to be gasping for rain. What it needed was a regular downpour, a storm of several days' duration, that would fill the ground with moisture. That would imbue the wilderness with a fresh spirit of life and gladness.

Smoke was rising from the angle-bent cap of stove-piping that rose above the cookhouse end of the long building, telling that Ling and his assistants were busy there preparing the evening meal for the workmen, who probably would eat it by lamplight. Then, having satisfied their lusty appetites, the laborers would spend a little time to smoke, and turn in soon; for the man who works or plays hard in the big woods finds it no easy thing to keep his eyes open long after a hearty supper. Sleep he must have, and enough of it, and when he is properly protected from winged-insect pests his slumber is almost always sound, dreamless, and refreshing.

They were drawing near the long building when a figure that caused

Bainbridge to catch his breath in surprise appeared in the doorway. A second later Grace Winslow came hurrying toward them, her tanned face aglow with relief.

"Oh," she exclaimed, "I'm glad to see you back, Mr. Bainbridge! I'm glad that you're alive and safe. I would have tried to follow you and warn you, but Mr. Condon wouldn't let me. He was sure that you could take care of yourself."

CHAPTER XX.

ABOUT MEN WHO CONSPIRED.

BOB gazed at her in wonderment. He had not dreamed of seeing her here at Made Pond. Her words seemed to denote that she had known of some particular danger that had menaced him, and had made a great effort to reach him and put him on guard. Had her knowledge to do with anything that had happened in Haunted Land? he asked himself. Was it possible that she had somehow learned something that would serve to help in clearing up the mystery?

"Miss Winslow," he said, taking off his battered hat, "this is a surprise. How did you get here?"

"Walked. There wasn't any other way. It wasn't nearly as far as I tramped through the woods yesterday."

"Who came with you?"

"Nobody."

"Evidently getting lost hasn't made you afraid."

"Not so much that I would hesitate when I knew you were in danger. I owe you something for what you did for me. I always pay my debts." She was quite grave and sincere. Her ways were frank and straightforward. Her brown eyes were eyes to believe in, eyes to trust.

Bob was about to question her when Condon came striding swiftly in their direction, uttering a hail and waving his hand. He nodded his head to the

girl as he came up. "I told you, Miss Winslow, that Bob Bainbridge could take care of Number One," he said. "He knew where he was goin', and I knew he'd keep his lookers skinned so that there couldn't nobody or nothin' get near enough to take a crack at him."

Bob smiled. "We've had some lively and interesting adventures, Hank. And somebody—or something—did take a crack at me, but missed."

Grace uttered a little cry. "I knew! I told you, Mr. Condon!"

"Let's not talk here," said Condon quickly. "Let's go inter my shanty. Won't need Hall and Dowd, will we? No? All right, boys, you can go. And clams never talk too much."

"We're the clammiest clams you ever saw, Brother Condon," Hall assured him.

"Absolutely," confirmed Noisy.

Condon's shanty, not far from the mill, was an insignificant little slab shack, containing one room only, which was a combined living room, sleeping room, and office. At one end of the room was a bunk of single width, on which, however, there was a comfortable mattress and proper bedclothes; for it was the custom of the N. W. B. Company to furnish every employee with a decent bed and provide him with food no living man could kick at.

Near the bed was a washstand made from a long orange crate, stood on end. It supported a tin washbasin, in which now stood a metal pail that was filled with water. A piece of cotton cloth served as a curtain for the open front of the crate. Above the crate, on the wall beside a cheesecloth-screened window, was a cheap, square mirror. On a shelf beneath the mirror was Condon's shaving outfit.

There was only one real "boughten" chair in the room, and that was a wide, stout, high-backed affair with arms and having a cushion that was merely some

old garments folded to fit the seat. The other chairs were of the homemade sawbuck variety. The armchair stood beside a large, rough table, on which were scattered letters, papers, maps, timber surveys, and reports. Condon insisted that Miss Winslow should take that chair. He urged Bob and Spratt to sit down also.

"Now, first thing," he said, "I want to hear from you, Mr. Bainbridge. You got my curiosity all haired up. I want to know what you meant by sayin' that somebody or something took a crack at you and missed. Of course, if any of the details would be shocking or unpleasant for Miss Winslow, you can leave them out. But enlighten me on that one point, if you don't mind doin' so."

"You may as well have the whole story," said Bob. "When we arrived at the spot where I had found the dead man we discovered that another party was there ahead of us. The members of that party were Danforth Addison, McDougal, Pick, and Seely Booker, and Addison promptly proceeded to accuse me of murder."

"Rather interesting," commented Condon. "Promises to be a story worth harking to. Reel it off."

Bainbridge did so in as few words as possible, while Condon and the girl listened with rapt attention. Spratt refrained from interpolating any remarks whatever, although he felt a strong yearning to throw a few high lights on Bob's rather bald narrative, especially in reference to the mysterious affair of the arrow and the unseen bowman.

"Say!" said Condon when Bob had finished. "Much more of that sort of business ain't going to be good for us. I could see by the look of Hall and Dowd that somethin' had shook 'em up. It takes somethin' staggering to ruffle Noisy's nerves, too. What's your explanation of the way it was done?"

"I regret to say that I haven't any explanation now, but I'm going to have one that will explain. This is the first time I've found it imperative to catch a spook, but I'm going to catch this one."

"You must be careful, Mr. Bainbridge—you must!" exclaimed Grace Winslow earnestly. "You have enemies who will hesitate at no dastardly deed to destroy you. I know. That is what brought me here to-day. I heard them talking—Danforth Addison, Johnny Orz, and that dreadful creature, Pick. I saw them with their heads together outside the camp, near the edge of the woods, and I could tell by their actions that they were arranging something wicked. So I slipped out of the camp by the back door, and crept through the woods until I was as near to them as I could possibly get without being seen. They were talking in low tones, and I could get only a word or two now and then, but what I heard was enough to convince me that they were plotting to kill you. It was Pick who was urging that it should be done, and Danforth Addison—*Danforth Addison!*—listened and agreed to the monstrous proposal."

"Where was Seely Booker?" questioned Bob quickly. "You didn't mention him as one of the party."

"He was not. They didn't take him into their confidence. Oh, no! Seely wouldn't have a hand in such dreadful business. He's Anne's brother. He's law-abiding and loyal."

She was quite as earnest in her defense of the Indian as she had been in her expressed horror of Addison, the man she had once fancied she cared for enough to become his wife. Merely to speak the name of Addison now seemed repugnant to her, and doubtless the thought that she had trusted and admired him at one time, possibly had fancied she really loved him, filled her

with a sensation of humiliation and shame. Like many another clever rascal, he had been able to mask his true character midst the artificiality of modern city life; but, once in the big woods and afar from the restraint of being constantly beneath the eyes of hundreds who knew him, hundreds upon whom he wished to impress the conviction that he was a person of high moral rectitude and superior importance, his real nature was asserting itself.

"But Booker was with them when Addison accused me of murder in Haunted Land," said Bob.

"Because," asserted Grace, "after hearing them plotting, I told him what I thought they were up to, and asked him to get in with them, stick to them, warn you, if possible, balk their dreadful scheme."

"I was doubtful about Booker," confessed Bainbridge. "You are a good advocate for him. If you have made no error in your estimate of him, I'm glad he was with them; for he may learn or hear something that will aid me in defense if they really try to make legal trouble for me by pushing this ridiculous murder charge."

"They won't do that," said Condon.

"I'm not so sure," returned Bob. "It could be done, and it might be done just to get me away from here for a short time while I was being taken before a judge for examination. Miss Winslow, just what did you hear when you listened in the woods near Camp Balsam?"

"Pick was whispering, and I couldn't get his words, but I could see him, and he made gestures that were horribly significant and expressive. It was like a person creeping upon something and shooting at it. Then Orz nodded and said to Addison: 'Andy's right; Bainbridge must be put out of the way, and that's the way to do it.' Then Addison told him to speak lower, and after that

I caught only the words 'dead man,' 'ambush,' 'mustn't fail,' and 'must be done quick.' Perhaps I might have understood more if my heart hadn't made such a pounding noise. It seemed loud enough for them to hear it."

"How long was this arter I quit off with Addie an' pulled my freight?" asked Spratt.

"Not long. Andy Pick showed up within fifteen minutes after you left. He came in a great hurry, and got Addison and Orz out by the edge of the woods for that talk."

"Where was McDougal at the time?" questioned Bainbridge.

"Sitting on the veranda, nursing his lame arm. I had given him some liniment for his shoulder. He was ugly and sullen. I think he was sort of keeping watch while the others consulted."

"Orz wasn't with the party when we encountered them in Haunted Land."

"No. He stayed at Clear Pond to watch a crew of men who had appeared on the eastern shore and were doing something over there."

"Our pipe layers,"—said Condon, "with Bates, the engineer, in charge of the bunch. Orz can watch his head off."

Bainbridge seemed to be turning something over in his mind. "'Dead man,' 'ambush,'" he thought. "It's possible they were speaking about Nick Webb, not me. Webb was dead, and he had been ambushed. I have a theory that Pick knew all about that when he returned to Camp Balsam. He may have told Addison and Orz, and perhaps they were afraid to take McDougal in on it. Then, when the bunch started out, McDougal was taken along, so that he could testify afterward that they came upon Webb by accident, as it may have seemed to him. They were willing that Booker should be with them, too, so that he could also say that they stumbled upon the murdered

man in an accidental manner. All this is more or less in the way of guesswork, but it may be an accurate and correct deduction, nevertheless."

"Sounds reasonable," allowed Condon.

"'Mustn't fail' and 'must be done quick' may have meant that they mustn't fail to put the onus of the crime on me and must be in a hurry about doing so," said Bob.

"But Johnny Orz said that you 'must be put out of the way,'" reminded the girl.

"Surely they could put me out of the way most effectually if they could get me tried and convicted of murder," returned Bainbridge, giving her the faintest of smiles. "I'm not seeking to depreciate in the slightest what you have endeavored to do for me, Miss Winslow, and I want you to know that it will be a long time before I forget it. It was a brave thing for you to hurry here, alone and unprotected, through the woods in order to warn me."

At this a flood of warm color flowed into her cheeks. "I had to slip away secretly," she stated. "If Louie le Barge had suspected he might have raised a fuss. My brother was having his regular daily nap, and I pinned a note on his breast, telling him where I was going and that I might not even be able to get back to-night. I knew there was an old, overgrown road that would bring me close to this pond, if I could find and follow it. I found it, but a mile from here I came upon a big crew of men who were at work clearing out the road. They didn't see me, and I struck into the woods and circled round them."

"Our swampers," said Condon, "getting the road into condition so we can skid the pipin' up along the line to Clear Pond. Though they wouldn't trouble you, mebbe it was just as well you didn't let 'em see ye. A girl, all

alone in these woods, would be bound to stir up some excitement."

Bill Spratt had been covertly watching Grace Winslow. He had weighed the motive that had impelled her to make that lone venture through the forest. He had taken note of her flush following Bob's frank praise and statement that he would not forget what she had done.

"Well," thought the guide shrewdly, "mebbe he's the sort that won't never tie up a second time, and mebbe he ain't got no more int'rest in her'n he would have if she was hombly as a hedge fence; but I'll bate my last year's Mack-inaw that, having seen a real man what is a man that makes Dan Addison look like a wart on a hackmatack tree, she's gone under, head over heels. She may not know now just how hard she's smit, but she ain't no fool, and it's goin' to dawn on her mighty violent an' upsettin' that she's gone an' let herself fall in love with Robert Bainbridge, esquier. An' when a girl like her knows she's done a thing like that, she just lays herself out to collar the man an' lead him to the hitchin' post. They have ways of workin' that trick that makes it seem like they ain't never thought of no such thing, but they get there with both feet. If Bob Bainbridge con-tinners to want to play a lone hand an' play it safe, it won't be long before he'll have to take ag'in to the unknown an' oninhabited forest depths, an' forget to leave his address behind. That's sartin as juniper tea makes good spring med'cine."

CHAPTER XXI.

WHEN THE WHISTLE DID NOT BLOW.

GRACE had supper that night by lamplight after the laborers had finished eating in the dining room of the long building. Bob Bainbridge and Hank Condon ate at the same time.

"Of course," Bob told her, "we can

take you back to Camp Balsam to-night, if you want to go. I'll get Spratt, and we'll take lanterns. It would be a foolish thing to try if we weren't sure of the ground, and it won't be easy or pleasant, anyhow. Still, with our knowledge of the territory, and with a compass, it can be done."

She rested her elbow on the table and supported her chin with her hand. "I—I know I must be a perfect nuisance and awfully in the way here," she said, "but I just don't see how I ever could keep my feet under me to tramp all that distance through the woods again to-night. I didn't know I was so tired. I don't understand it, for I never am really tired—much; but somehow I seem to be all in. It must have come from the excitement, the anxiety. But if you think that I——"

Condon heaved a protesting growl. "What's the matter with her stayin' here if she wants to, Mr. Bainbridge?" he demanded, glaring at Bob. "I guess she'll be safe, all right. I guess we can put her up and look out for her. She can have my shack, and there's a bar to the door and there's a gun, and if she gets scart she can holler, and that'll bring us humping it hotfoot to see what's the matter. She is tired; she shows it. And it'd be plumb inhuman to make her hoof it back to Clear Pond to-night, besides bein' a fool thing to try."

"I proposed it merely because I thought she might feel that she had to go," said Bob, Condon's indignation compelling him to grin. "I was thinking that her brother might have fits over——"

"Oh, he's had them already," Grace said, laughing softly. "Poor Roy! He has fits over everything I do that he doesn't approve of, and he certainly would disapprove of me coming here on any pretext. But he's entirely safe at Camp Balsam, and I don't believe

it'll do him any great harm to stay there without me to-night. He's become altogether too lacking in self-reliance. He's been petted and humored all his life, and his illness has caused him to show how much such treatment has hurt him. I've merely been waiting for him to get a little better before forcing him to show more manhood and to depend on himself to a greater extent."

So it was settled that she was to spend the night at Made Pond.

After supper was over the two men escorted her back to Condon's shack. At the door, she paused to listen. From the little shanties where some of the laborers slept, beyond the long building, the sound of a violin and some one singing to the accompaniment came through the breezeless darkness. The singer had a surprisingly clear and melodious voice, and the words of the old song reached them plainly:

I's comin'! I's comin'! Mah head is bendin' low!

I hear those angel voices callin' old Black Joe.

"The boys is pullin' off a little grand operry to-night before turning in," said Condon, with a laugh. "Mebbe they'll all turn to and gargle before long. But they won't keep it up long, Miss Winslow, so your rest won't be disturbed any to speak of in that fashion."

"I wouldn't mind it at all," she returned, "if they were to sing half the night."

"But I would," he declared quickly. "They're hired to work, and they got to get their sleep, and plenty of it."

There was a brief period of silence, broken only by the peeping of hundreds of frogs around the margin of the pond and by an occasional laugh, faintly heard, coming from the direction of the shanties. Then suddenly one voice started the famous Maine rivermen's song, to be joined almost immediately, it seemed, by twenty others:

The river's on the rise and the drive is on the run,

We're sluicing down the logs, and mebbe it is fun.

We're on the jump all day, and mebbe half the night,

And when we get our grub we only snatch a bite;

For bed we have the ground, and it's rotten cold and wet,

But there's better times to come, so what's the use to fret!

So what's the use to fret, my boys, oh, what's the use to fret!

When our logging days are over, we'll whoop 'er up, you bet!

There's lots o' gals in Bangor, and likewise lots o' rum,

So whoop 'er up, my boys, for the rousin' time to come.

The roaring chorus made the woods echo far across the pond. The tune, as well as the words of the song, gave an impression of rollicking, half-savage recklessness; of daring men who found excitement and joy in the hardships they endured while compelling the forces of nature to aid them in the service of their employers, the lumber barons; of men who would unhesitatingly risk limb and life for their monthly wage, all the while looking forward to a time of roistering when they would squander in a few hours perhaps what they had earned in weeks of lusty toil—not infrequently all that they had earned during an entire season.

"Fools!" said Condon.

"Daring, big-hearted children," said Bainbridge.

"Anybody that should call one of 'em a child to his face would have a fight on his hands," Condon declared. "I guess you know, as well as me, how sudden they are to resent it if they think anybody's sorter looking down on 'em from aloft, so to speak. I'll step inside and light up for you, Miss Winslow."

When Condon had lighted the swinging oil lamp in the shack Grace entered, and Bob stepped just within the door

for a moment, closing it behind him to keep out the mosquitoes.

"I hope you'll sleep well, Miss Winslow," Bainbridge said. "I'll see you back to Camp Balsam as soon as you wish in the morning. As Condon has said, you're quite safe here. Put up the bar to the door when we leave you, and——"

The door was flung violently open. Danforth Addison came in, followed by Johnny Orz and Seely Booker. Addison's face was heavy with wrath.

"I've come to take you back to your camp, Grace," he announced, ignoring Bainbridge and Condon.

She had paled a little, but she faced him resolutely, defiantly. "You could have saved yourself the trouble, Mr. Addison. I am not going back there to-night." Her voice was quiet but determined.

"Oh, yes you are!" he told her. "You can't stay here. I won't allow it."

"You!" she exclaimed scornfully. "You won't allow it! You haven't anything to say about it."

"I have! You can't refuse to recognize my right, which, finding you here, is a duty to your father, if nothing else. I shall protect you."

"Protect me! You! I need none of your protection. Besides, I am in no danger whatever. I'm sure that I'm much safer here than I would be at Camp Balsam to-night."

"Safer here! Safer in a camp of tough lumberjacks and rowdies! You're crazy, Grace. You don't know what you're talking about. You've got to come out of this with me, and come now. I shall compel——"

"You won't compel her to do anything at all, Addison," Bainbridge cut in upon him. "She has given you your answer, and you'll take it—and get! It's your move. Move!"

Danforth Addison turned on the speaker a look of deepest malignity. The hatred within his heart was de-

picted in his eyes and his face. His lips curled back from his white and even teeth. His expression was wolfish.

"You had better let this young lady alone, Bob Bainbridge!" he snapped. "You're in trouble enough already, but you'll get in still deeper if you try any tricks with Kirk Winslow's daughter."

"A common, tricky scoundrel like you," Bob answered him, "thinks every other man must be full of the same sort of low dodges. Miss Winslow has your number. Her father will have it, too, before long. Don't you think you'd better be on your way before you're given a start?"

"Which is going to happen in about a minute," growled Hank Condon.

"Don't try any rough stuff with me!" snarled Addison. "You can't bulldoze me, not even here in your own squattery. When I go, Miss Winslow goes with me. Orz backs me up in that, and Booker, too."

"Sure we do," affirmed Johnny Orz nervously. But the Indian remained silent.

Standing near one of the screened windows, Condon held up a silver whistle. "When I blow this," he told Addison, "anywhere from fifty to a hundred timber terriers will come on the jump, all eager to fall on the neck of anybody I point out to 'em. They'll handle you with a great deal of gentleness—I don't think! I'm gettin' ready to let her blow."

"And keep your hand away from your pocket, Dan Addison!" Bainbridge warned sharply. "I don't want to break your wrist with a bullet, but I assure you that I'm watching you, and I know that I can pull a pocket gun twice as quick as you can."

Orz edged away from the immediate vicinity of Addison. "Better not, Danforth," he said quickly. "They're on their own territory, and I know what'll happen to us if something starts here."

"Wise little Johnny," sneered Condon. "He's not itching to swing from a limb."

"They wouldn't dare touch me," declared Danforth. "I'm the son of Digby Addison."

"They'd touch you some and ask your name after they'd finished the job," said Condon. "They have a way of being hasty and heedless in their doings. Do you go or does she blow?" He was ready to put the whistle to his lips.

"We'd better go, Mr. Addison," urged Orz. "What can we do against such odds?"

Danforth made one final appeal to the girl. "Come, Grace!" he besought her. "Let me take you back to the camp."

"I wouldn't dream of it," she said. "And I want you to keep away from Camp Balsam hereafter. Away from me, too. I've found out just what you are, and you're worse than I ever imagined you could be."

"Bainbridge has been lying about me!" he snarled. "You've believed his lies. But when you see him under arrest, when you learn what sort of a man——"

"Last warnin'!" came from Condon. "She blows!"

"Hold on!" begged Orz. "We're going—we're going right now. Come, Mr. Addison. If you wait another second, I'll leave you here."

"You're a quitter," said Danforth. "If I had any backing—— All right, I'll go, Condon. I'm coming back, though, and it will be different when I do. As for Bainbridge, he's close to the end of his rope. He knows what I mean. Let him tell you about it. He'll be sure to add some lying details, but——" He stopped and turned toward the door, for Johnny Orz had run out of the shack and left him. "Come on, Booker," he commanded.

"I stay," said the Indian. "In the

morning I take Miss Winslow to Camp Balsam. I stay, and she is safe, anyhow."

"But don't let that encourage you to linger anywhere within miles of Made Pond, Addison," cautioned Condon. "I may send some of the boys out a little later to look around for prowlers. If any such are seen in the dark, they'll certain get hurt bad. Touch the high spots, Addison. Good night, and good riddance to bad rubbish. Please close the door after him, Seely. That's right. Thank you."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE HUSH BEFORE THE STORM.

SAVE for the usual hustling activity of the N. W. B. laborers, it appeared that very little worth recording took place at Made Pond or anywhere around there for more than a week. The work of laying the piping to bring water down from Clear Pond to the sluiceway was carried on steadily and rapidly by one crew of men, while another crew was hard at it building the sluice itself. In seven days they had constructed it from the top of the bluff to within a short distance of the border of Haunted Land.

"It's too all-fired quiet," Condon told himself and Bainbridge more than once. "Somethin's going to bust loose with a crack before long. I feel it in my bones."

All the while Bob had been doing his level best to keep his promise to capture the spook and clear up the mystery of Haunted Land. In that time there was not a single night that he did not pass in the black and silent woods of awesome repute. But in order to carry his determination into execution, as well as for his own protection from the unknown assassin, he thought it wise to enter and depart from that region secretly; therefore he nearly always did so under cover of darkness.

One whole day he lay hidden near the locality where he had first heard the dreadful shrieks and shouts, and within sight of the spot where he had found and examined the puzzling footprints.

He seemed to have wasted his time. Nothing happened in the deserted woods; the silence and desolation remained unbroken. "I know what the trouble is," Bob told Condon one day, laughing shortly. "The ghost doesn't know that I'm there. He's the sort of a h'ant that one has to advertise himself to in order to start a séance. He never performs unless he's sure that he has an audience."

"Well, he'll have one in another day or two," Condon returned, "and then I suppose he'll begin cutting up didos that'll make half the crew quit. I wish you could nail him before we get to buildin' her through that black timber."

"You don't wish it any more than I do," declared Bainbridge; "for, besides falling down on my promise, I'll own up that there's something about those woods that is beginning to get my goat. The lack of life, the crushing silence, the impression that there is something horrible and uncanny hovering close at hand—well, it's threatening me with a case of nerves, and I never was bothered with anything like that. Why, the very atmosphere there seems to weigh down upon a person after a time. I've told myself that it's nothing but imagination, and that's what it must be; yet I'm getting so I can't rid myself of it."

"I don't wonder much," confessed Condon. "I don't know anybody else that'd care to creep in there in the dark and set up all night watchin' for a critter that's a sneakin' assassin, even if he ain't a ghost. Doing that, and keepin' it up, ought to give you the wagglegoggles."

Twice during that week Bob visited Clear Pond and presented himself at Camp Balsam. He found Grace Wins-

low at the camp each time, and he was a bit puzzled to detect an odd change in her. Somehow she was not like the frank, straightforward, high-spirited girl she had seemed to be. Not that there was a particle of slyness or conscious deception about her, but she seemed to have grown somewhat shy and timid and reserved, and he noted that whenever he appeared she flushed amazingly and then became almost deathly pale for a short time. Nor could she seem to talk with him with freedom and without restraint, though it was apparent that she made an effort to do so.

And, like that, she interested him even more than she had at first; for he was a strong man, and his were the fine instincts of such a man, whose sympathies are always moved by a wish to give protection to one of the opposite sex who may seem to need it. There's a whole lot in that stuff about the sturdy oak and the clinging vine.

Danforth Addison and Johnny Orz had disappeared from that region after their unsuccessful visit to Made Pond, but Bob believed that Grace must be in constant dread of Addison's return; for he had vowed that he would come back, and there had been an open threat in his vow. But she professed that she was not afraid of him.

"Seely is staying here all the time now," she said, "and he'll see that nothing happens to me. Louie would fight for me, too. Besides that, I know how to shoot, and I keep a loaded weapon within reach. But really Danforth wouldn't dare do me any actual harm. He would fear the wrath of Kirk Winslow."

Bob did not mention Andy Pick. Seemingly the gummer had taken himself away also; for none of the N. W. B. laborers had seen him, and Roy Winslow, when questioned, stated that Pick had not shown himself again at Camp Balsam. Bainbridge wondered

if the absence of the gummer accounted for lack of further ghostly demonstrations in Haunted Land.

Roy seemed to be as fretful and peevish as ever, although Bob almost believed that he could see a physical improvement in him. It was during Bainbridge's second visit of the week to Camp Balsam that something caused Grace to leave him alone for a short time with her brother on the veranda.

Suddenly Roy said: "I don't see why Dan Addison doesn't come back. He said he would. He said he didn't propose to let your crowd put through the scheme of running a log sluice with water taken from this pond. And I know that you've got your pipe line almost laid and are nearly ready to turn the water on now. I've been watching your men over there on the east shore. You've got a lot of them, all that can work there, and they've been hustling making the water gate for the pipe line. Addison will be too late if he doesn't get a move on."

Bob smiled. "He'll never stop us, my boy. We'll operate that sluice, just as we've planned to do, even if I have to hire an armed patrol at my own expense to guard every foot of the pipe line and sluiceway."

"Well, if he comes back there'll be a little excitement around here, anyhow. I'll be glad of that. I'm going crazy for the want of it. Specially since sister's got so queer and dreamy. She isn't a bit like herself. She won't even talk to me any more unless I just force her to. And she doesn't want to be doing things the way she used to. Half the time she acts like she's in a trance. Sometimes I have to speak to her two or three times before she even hears me. I wonder if she's going to be sick."

Bainbridge made no response. For, of a sudden, a most disturbing idea had entered his mind. It did not seem possible, and yet—what was it Bill

Spratt had said to him about Grace Winslow?

When the girl came back to the veranda it was Bob who was changed and constrained. His manner had altered, and he was distant to the point of aloofness. Within three minutes he rose abruptly, saying that he must get back to Made Pond.

A while later, sitting on an old log in the woods, he thought it over. Again he told himself that it was impossible, that there was no sense in it; but something seemed to whisper to him that it was true, and the possibility, instead of pleasing him, filled him with deep regret. "If it is so," he thought presently, "I can't see how I am to blame. It's all wrong. I'm sorry, but I can't see her any more. I shall keep away from her."

Then he arose and went on his way toward Made Pond. From the mill Condon saw him coming, and hurried out to meet him. "Barker, our mail carrier, is just back from Kittston a little while ago," said the foreman. "He says there's seven or eight lads hangin' round there that he never saw in these parts before, and he knows 'most ev'rybody that ever put his nose into this shank of the woods. They 'peared to be just loafing round and doing nothin', Barker said. Tough-looking gang, too. They eyed him up a lot."

"We should worry about seven or eight tough-looking customers," said Bob, laughing.

"Mebbe there's plenty more to foller, or perhaps they're round about somewhere right now. We don't want to be took by surprise."

"I haven't yet brought myself fully to believe that W. & A. will try any militant maneuvers against us. They might against a weaker crowd that could be frightened. Oh, I haven't forgotten Dan Addison's threats, but he's a hothead, and he'd have to have the backing of his father's company."

"Now listen here, Mr. Bainbridge; Barker was tipped off, warned."

"Warned?"

"Yes."

"By whom?"

"Boggs."

"The storekeeper?"

"Uh-huh! Boggs watched for his chance, and whispered inter Barker's ear. 'Look out for squalls over your way pretty soon'—that was what he said. He wouldn't darst come right out and say it, and that he darst whisper it to Barker comes pretty nigh provin' that we better give heed."

Bob was thoughtful for a moment. "Of course there may be something in it," he said presently. "The W. & A. crowd is unscrupulous enough to do anything that they think they can get away with. But there's a law——"

"Don't talk about law in the same breath with them!" exclaimed Condon.

"Hank," said Bob, "I have an idea that the spook of Haunted Land is off on a vacation, so I think I'll take a little scout over Kittston way to-morrow and see if I can find out if there really is anything brewing for us."

CHAPTER XXIII.

IN THE GRIP OF MENACE.

IN spite of Condon's apprehension that Bainbridge would get into trouble at Kittston, Bob persisted in his determination to go there, and to go alone. He declined even to take Spratt along, although the guide had complained during the past week that it didn't seem right for him to be "drawin' down" merely for sitting around Made Pond and eating three "squares" a day.

"I'll play this hand without any help, Hank," Bob told the disturbed foreman. "I'm not worrying over anything half a dozen timber thugs will do to me in Kittston. They'll be careful there, and, if any of them should try to follow me when I leave, it will be a

simpler matter for me to do a fade-out by my lonesome in the woods than it would be if I had somebody along to bother about. Don't fret."

"Oh, have your own way!" Condon grumbled. "I know you will, anyhow; you alwus do."

From Made Pond to Kittston, as the crow flies, it was five miles at least; but anybody who tried to make the shortest possible cut through the woods would be forced to tramp much farther than that because of necessary detours to get round swamps and impenetrable jungles. The usual way to travel from Made Pond to Kittston was to go up the inlet from the river until the river was reached and then follow the path of the log drivers down the western bank of the river. That way, however, it was said to be more than ten miles.

Bainbridge chose the shorter route, striking out early the following day. Instead of his heavy oil-grain boots, he wore stout moccasins, which he had been wearing during his recent nightly visits to Haunted Land. Not only were they lighter and easier to the feet, especially in warm weather, but they enabled him to slip through the woods with greater silence.

He took his time, for he felt that there was no reason to hurry, and needless haste in the big woods is a folly that experienced woodsmen rarely perpetrate. Nevertheless, although they may appear to be merely swinging along at a lazy jog, they get over the ground in a way that soon tires any greenhorn who tries to follow them.

It was past mid-forenoon when Bainbridge drew near Kittston, a place of one house, a combined general store and post office, and a big square building that had been erected to take care of logging crews going in in the fall and coming out in the late spring. At this point on the river had been constructed the Koomoobes Dam, projected for the purpose of holding a

supply of water that would be of great value in running logs late in the spring. It was the back flow from this dam that had filled Made Pond.

Following round the side of a hill, Bob stopped suddenly; for he was looking down on two men a short distance below him, who were talking earnestly. They were rough-looking chaps, and Bainbridge did not know either of them. As he stood there, he could hear something of what they were saying.

"Don't you believe it!" came from the shorter one. "Nothin' in it, Sam."

"I tell ye, Dave," returned the taller of the two, "I see ther stuff with my two eyes! He carries some of it round on him, an', when he thinks nobody's lookin', he takes it out an' goggles over it. It's real gold quartz. The yaller shows in it."

Dave laughed ridiculingly. "Gold yer gran'mother!" he scoffed. "Tell it to ther bats!"

"But there's been gold found in this State."

"Never enough of it to pay a Chinaman to work it. Suckers have tried to do it, an' lost out ev'ry time."

Then a crow, passing overhead, saw Bainbridge and uttered a hoarse "Har-rr!" of alarm. One of the men glanced upward and perceived Bob also.

Instantly he grabbed his companion's arm and drew his notice to the unintentional eavesdropper. The latter smiled as the pair quickly slipped into the woods and hurried away.

"No need to fear me," he muttered. "I'm not interested in Maine gold mines. I agree with Dave that there ain't no such animal."

Still taking his time, he descended the hill and followed the men, who had apparently made for Kittston. He could hear the dam ribs roaring, and in a short time he came forth into a clearing, with Kittston before him.

The three buildings of the place all faced to the south, and Bob approached

from the north, with the dam on his left. Above the dam a crew of men were at work on a boom, from which logs were being methodically sent into a current that carried them through an open gate of the dam and down the river below. The drivers were attending strictly to their business, and none of them seemed to pay the slightest attention to Bainbridge.

As Bob approached Boggs' store, a squatty, single-story building, the sounds of a harmonica came to his ears. Somebody was playing a lively dance tune on the mouth instrument. Suddenly from the front of the store there rose a burst of wild, hoarse, Gargantuan laughter, followed by shouts of applause from several throats. That was enough to denote that somebody or something was providing great amusement for a gathering of men who were not at work. Of course they might be rivermen of another company waiting their turn to send logs over the dam; then again they might not.

Bainbridge did not pause or hesitate until he had passed the side of the store and arrived at a spot where he could see what was going on.

Besides Boggs, who stood in the open doorway, there were nine persons in front of the store. Some were standing; one sat on the steps; three were seated on the empty boxes. One of the latter was the musician, a pock-marked French Canadian. The man on the steps was Cameron McDougal, looking sullen and ugly; plainly he had not joined in the raucous merriment of the others. Behind McDougal, Boggs, in his shirt sleeves, was scowling a little, his teeth set on the stem of his old pipe.

The cause of the burst of laughter Bainbridge had heard was a singularly grotesque and hideous creature; a being who, in many ways, bore a remarkable resemblance to a gorilla. Not over five feet in height, he had short, bowed

legs and wonderfully long, muscular arms. His clawlike hands, however, although plainly very strong, were so small that they did not seem to belong to his powerful arms. On the contrary, his feet seemed somewhat too large. At this moment they were bare of any covering. The toes were long and singularly prehensile in appearance. The soles of those peculiar feet looked as if they were calloused and hard as leather.

Set on a thick, corded neck, the head of this creature—it seemed almost bordering upon libel to call him a man—was shaped much like that of a gorilla. There was the same massive, undershot jaw, the same retreating head above the bushy eyebrows, and scarcely any forehead at all. The eyes were beady and black and restless. A growth of coarse, bristling, black hair extended down the back of his neck and disappeared beneath the tattered old shirt that he was wearing. That shirt was open in front, exposing a powerful, hairy breast. His old trousers were frayed and tattered below the knees.

At the moment of Bob's advent upon the scene this travesty upon humanity was standing in a crouching attitude, his dangling hands almost touching the ground, his blinking eyes fastened in a half-furious, half-pleading way upon the face of a big man who confronted him, holding a long, thick hickory switch in his hand. "Perform again, you human monkey," the man with the switch was saying. "Give us another dance on yer hands or I'll let ye have a taste o' this."

In a voice that was a mingled whine and growl, the threatened creature protested: "Lot tired. Don't like it. Do more bimeby. Wait."

"Oh, no!" said the big man. "Not much! We know your tricks, Muggsy. Give ye the chance an' you'll run away. Up on to your cute little front paws,

and at it again. Start the orchestra, Tardieu."

The pock-marked French Canadian began playing again upon his harmonica. The ape-man hesitated, his lips curling back from his tusklike teeth. But when the big man made a menacing movement with the switch, the creature promptly stood upon his hands, his bowed legs in the air. In that position, he began to dance grotesquely, yet with amazing ease and lightness, keeping surprising time to the music.

Only for a moment did he dance thus, however. Suddenly he came upright upon his feet once more, snarling: "All done! No more dance now! I won't!"

The hickory switch whistled through the air as the big man leaped forward, shouting: "Won't yer? I'll make ye dance!" And the switch cut the ape-man's hairy, bare ankles.

Uttering a shrill scream of rage, the creature sprang away. In a twinkling he caught up a stone, half the size of a man's fist, and hurled it at his tormentor. The aim was accurate. The stone struck the big man in the stomach and doubled him up. Had it been a little larger, it must have stretched him on the ground.

Another man gave a shout: "Hi! Nab him, boys! Don't let the dratted monkey get away! Let me get my hooks onto him, and I'll fix him for — Wull, looker that!"

His ejaculation of astonishment was caused by the action of the threatened creature, who had suddenly scuttled up the perpendicular corner of the store, like a climbing cat, and swung over the narrow eaves to the roof. Then he ran to the peak, where he crouched, jabbering furiously and glaring down at the upstaring group below.

The man who had been hit by the stone straightened up, one hand on his stomach, his features knotted with rage. "Bring me a gun!" he roared.

"I'll fix ther beast! Here, gimme that rifle!"

But Bainbridge, on whom the demand had been made, turned the muzzle of the weapon upon the furious man. "Keep away, Hansen!" he commanded. "You've lost your head. You're not going to shoot that poor wretch whom you've been tormenting. It would be murder. You're entirely to blame for what happened."

Hansen stared. "Blow me!" he cried. "It's somebody I've seen before, I guess."

"It's Bob Bainbridge!" shouted Cameron McDougal.

There was a hush. All eyes were fixed upon Bainbridge. McDougal was on his feet, but he made no move to leave the steps. A wondering grin spread over the viciously brutal face of Hansen. "Well, well!" he exclaimed. "So it is! I didn't know him at first with all them whiskers. He busted a boom for me once on a time, when he claimed I was blockin' the river an' keepin' him from runnin' his own logs down. I declare I'm glad to see him again!"

"There'll be others," said another man in the group.

"Sartin as apples make cider," agreed Hansen. "An' he's walked right inter Kittston an' saved them the trouble of goin' to see him. Somebody better let them know about that."

At this moment, however, the sound of many running feet was heard, and round the store from either side came pouring a mass of men, hard-looking characters, practically every one of them. They were at least half a hundred strong, and they surrounded Bainbridge, cutting off every way of retreat. The last to appear were Danforth Addison and Johnny Orz.

"There he is, Mr. Addison," Orz cried. "Dardley and Schenk were right when they said he was coming here. He's come. We've got him!"

"Yes, we've got him!" exulted Dan Addison. "He's walked into a nice little trap that nobody thought of setting for him, and he won't get away!"

TO BE CONTINUED.

The succeeding chapters of this novel, beginning with Chapter XXIV., following an interesting sketch of all that has gone before, introduced for new readers, will appear in the next number of TOP-NOTCH, dated and out November 1st. It began in the September 15th issue. Back numbers may be obtained from news dealers or the publishers.

Where You Can't Catch Cold

IF you want to avoid all likelihood of catching cold in future, you had better turn explorer and trot off to the arctic regions. There sneezes are unknown, and a cough would probably scare a polar bear out of its life.

Although the clothes of explorers in those regions are often saturated with perspiration, and are a mass of ice when they retire for the night, and despite the fact that they often have to sleep out in the open in their sleeping bags, and that this is their only means of thawing themselves, their health does not suffer in the least.

Then there is the classical, and somewhat mythical, instance of the St. Kilda cold. On the rocky island, lying some forty miles beyond the Western Hebrides, there are about one hundred inhabitants, access to whom is practically impossible during eight months out of the twelve, owing to the stormy seas. Oddly enough, however, whenever a steamer touches at this island, all the inhabitants, including the very infants—so runs the legend—are seized with violent sneezing fits, which develop into colds.

Exposure is not the direct cause of colds. It simply acts on a lowered vitality. The only safeguard is continued exposure.

When is an Old Maid?



By
Edgar White

OF course I struck him, and I'd do it again!" exclaimed Phil Caxton, whose arms were held by two men who ran between Caxton and the monocled Harold Douglas, the target of the blow.

"There, there, old man!" said Victor Grove, who had charge of Caxton's right arm. "Don't be so rough. He only said she was an old maid. That wasn't treason to the government. Some old maids are nice."

"He's an infernal cad!" cried the flushed Caxton. "A man that will mention——"

"Tut! Tut! Let's get back to the game and forget him."

The affair occurred on the golf links at Forest Highlands. Douglas had motored out with some friends, and, while crossing the field, had passed near where Caxton was making a drive. Then some whim prompted him to say: "Saw that gay old maid of yours over in town to-day, Phil."

Like a flash Caxton straightened up and struck him. The players ran to the fracas, and to the query of "Doc"

Halstead, Caxton replied as first quoted.

The woman in the case was Helen Halstead, the pretty niece of Doc Halstead. She was light-haired, blue-eyed, and lively. She was a sort of protégée of Phil Caxton's. Phil, who lived with his aunt out at Forest Highlands, often called of an evening and took Helen for a ride in his car. As he was on the downward side of forty, with frost touching his hair, he regarded Helen as little more than a child. In the few months he had lived out at the Highlands, he noted that she did not seem to have any young men companions. He imagined that she must be a little lonely, and that was why he drove over for her at intervals and took her out in the car. Sometimes her aunt would accompany them and at other times Caxton's relative would go. But more frequently the aunt couldn't go and Caxton and Helen would go by themselves. He taught her how to run the machine, and, when she became used to it, he let her go to the garage and get it whenever she wanted to.

Caxton, down in town, was a very

busy man, and, aside from his aunt and Helen, he had no associations with the other sex. He liked Helen in a sort of fatherly way, but that was all. She seemed so young and fresh alongside a commercial veteran like himself that it never occurred to him that the interest between them could be more than platonic.

As he thought over Douglas' "insulting" remarks, Caxton began to feel as if he himself were not altogether free from blame. When a man of middle age is seen with a feminine friend pretty regularly he should expect some more or less good-natured banter. So Caxton reasoned the way to prevent embarrassment to Helen was to stop driving around with her, and let her associate with some one he considered more suited to her years. The incident on the golf links that afternoon, bad as it had been, would have some value as a warning of the plight into which he was getting Helen. Of course, the fellows out there would say nothing about it, and there would be no likelihood of the affair ever reaching Helen's ears.

When Caxton got home that evening he found Helen seated in the auto waiting for him. She was attired in a loose-fitting gray suit, open at the neck, and with her gloved hands on the steering wheel she looked wonderfully healthy, competent, and distressingly pretty.

"Jump in," she said. "I've been waiting ever so long for you." She flung open the front door of the car for him. She had cranked the engine when she saw him coming.

It was a terrible temptation, but after what happened that afternoon Caxton knew it would not do. He took off his hat and ran his hand through his hair as he approached. "Miss Helen," he said gravely, "I—I have some work to look after down in town this evening. Suppose you take Doc Halstead or your aunt out riding instead?"

She looked at him with swift suspicion. "There's a carnival at Maitland," she told him. "I thought you'd enjoy driving over to see it."

"So I would," he declared earnestly; "but I—I—you see I just have to——"

"Very well," she said, and got out of the car.

"Now, please don't be angry, Miss Helen," he said hastily. "Drive over for your folks and take them out—they'd enjoy it."

"If you don't want to go, that ends it," she returned coldly, her head high in the air, as off she started afoot for her home. He was tempted to run after her and surrender, but on reflection he knew that their breaking off was bound to occur sooner or later, and that this was the way it would be. As he looked at her moving away so proudly, yet so deeply hurt, his heart sank with the realization that the one real happiness of life had gone out. But it had to be. He was forty and getting gray. Even now the fellows in the office were referring to him as "the old man." For him to keep on running about with a pretty, vivacious girl like Helen would only cause other and perhaps more disagreeable incidents than the one with that "cad" Douglas.

II.

ALTHOUGH Caxton, in his course of self-abnegation, reasoned that he was a "has-been" and would soon be on the shelf, he knew he was as good and as strong a man as ever he was, and that he did not look his age by five or six years. He had never sown his wild oats, and there were no lines of dissipation on his thoughtful face. Early manhood had brought to him the care of invalid parents and later he had helped to rear some younger brothers and a niece or two. Middle age found him the head of a fairly prosperous business, and the idol of an aunt who

lived with him. Aunt Becky and the Halsteads had become good friends since the Caxtons moved into the neighborhood, and particularly Aunt Becky was fond of Helen and watched with interest what she regarded as the growing intimacy between the young lady and her favorite nephew.

Caxton had supposed that the affair on the links was closed. It was a startling awakening when Victor Grove told him that Douglas was preparing to bring a civil action for personal injuries to his nose, doctor's bills, and "public humiliation."

"How much does he want?" asked Caxton, with a whimsical smile.

"Not much," answered Grove. "Just a hundred thousand dollars."

Caxton jumped out of his chair. The smile was gone. "The man's crazy!" he cried. "He knows I can't raise any amount like that!"

"I wouldn't give him a darned nickel," advised Grove. "You can beat him at the trial."

"But that girl," protested Caxton; "they'll have her name in the papers. Perhaps the rascal will subpoena her as a witness just to mortify her."

"I expect he'll talk about doing that very thing for the purpose of scaring you to come across with an offer of ten thousand to compromise," said Grove. "I wouldn't give him a cent until I had the last say-so from the highest court in the State."

Nevertheless, Caxton hurriedly got together cash and securities to the amount of twenty thousand dollars and went around to Douglas' office. The man with a one-hundred-thousand-dollar injury put up his monocle and scrutinized his caller. Douglas was tall and thin, and had what people call "an intellectual countenance." But all his intellect ran to cynicism. "Ah," he said, "it's Mr. Caxton! Won't you have a chair?"

Caxton went directly to the issue.

"I understand you're about to file a suit for one hundred thousand dollars against me, Mr. Douglas," he said.

"Yes," returned Douglas calmly; "I believe my lawyers are drawing up some papers of that description."

"That's ridiculous!"

"Yes; but not any more ridiculous than to hit a man in the face for nothing. I didn't say anything to justify such——"

"Well, passing that," remarked Caxton impatiently, "how much will you take to settle this thing?"

"A hundred thousand dollars."

Caxton frowned. "You know all-fired well, Douglas, that you don't expect the jury to give you a twentieth of that!"

"Then why not wait and see what the jury will do?" logically asked the prospective plaintiff.

"Because a trial will necessitate most unpleasant notoriety to a modest, refined young woman. It will nearly kill her."

"I presume it would be embarrassing," conceded Douglas thoughtfully, "but it wouldn't be any more so than for a fellow to get a lick on the nose in the presence of a——"

"Let that be, Douglas! I'll give you ten thousand dollars cash not to file that suit. I have the money right here with me. What do you say?"

"No."

"Fifteen thousand?"

"No."

"Twenty thousand?"

"I tell you, Mr. Caxton, that this is a waste of time. The only settlement I have authorized my lawyers to consider is one hundred thousand cash—the amount to be named in the pleadings."

"You're an infernal scoundrel!" cried Caxton hotly.

Douglas adjusted his optical aid and calmly scribbled something on a paper. Then he casually observed:

"For that we'll put in an additional fifty thousand dollars for slander. I've written the words down on this paper—see?"

Caxton hesitated as if considering whether to twist his adversary's neck or punch his head again. Fearing his rage would get the better of him, he abruptly left the office.

If he could have raised the one hundred thousand dollars without depriving his aunt of her home and seriously crippling his business, Caxton might have done so. But his better judgment rebelled against his going to the limit in his efforts to compromise, even at the cost of some humiliation to Helen.

He wrestled with the problem several days; then decided to lay the matter directly before her in order that she might know what he had done to prevent the inevitable, and be fortified against it. Since the day she had walked away from him with her chin in the air he had not seen her. Remembrance of that unpleasant event made his present task doubly embarrassing. Then he had offended by refusing to go riding with her; now he was coming as an apologist for his failure to raise enough money to save her from a mortifying publicity in the newspapers and the courts. Certainly there could be no hope of any good results from such an interview; yet he saw no other way. Perhaps if she knew that he had done what he could, she would not hate him quite so much.

III.

FOR the sake of his peace of mind Caxton hoped he would not find Helen looking so neat and trim as when he last saw her. That picture of her had remained fixed in his memory, the sparkling blue eyes, the cunning ringlets of light hair under the broad-brimmed hat, the gloved hands on the

steering wheel of his machine—she was all this and more, and she was there waiting—waiting for him!

Aunt Dinah, wearing a red bandanna over her kinky locks, greeted him: "Why, Mas' Caxton! Ain't seed yo' for de longes' time! Yo' been po'ly? Ain't lookin' so well, somehow. Workin' too ha'd, Ah reckon. Mis' Helen? Sho'! Ah'll sen' de chile right down to yo'. Jus' step into de settin' room—lemme take yo' hat."

Helen presently appeared, and Caxton's heart sank into his boots. If she were pretty in her loose-fitting gray suit, she was lovely in her house gown, with its rolling collar and short sleeves, allowing the white, round arms freedom of movement. Her light hair wasn't mussed up as he hoped, but waved seductively over two shell-like ears, and was caught up in a bright braid behind. There was the bloom of health on her face and in the eyes—not sparkling as he knew them—but of steady, unfathomable blue. She did not offer him her hand, but casually indicated a chair.

In all his life Caxton never felt greater embarrassment. The wonderful charm and beauty of the girl, her reserved, but entirely composed, manner, made him feel like something that crawls.

While he was struggling to pull himself together and nerve himself to explain to her as briefly as possible the disagreeable situation, and to offer suggestions that might make it easier for her, there persistently intruded the thought of his forty odd years, his graying hair, and his general air of antiquity, while across on the other side of the room sat, as he saw it, youth in its flower, coldly waiting to hear why he had dared to come into her presence.

He began falteringly and with disconnected sentences, hiding things here

and there, blunderingly trying to keep out what he had done to protect her, but letting enough in to indicate the nature of the suit he would have to defend, and why it had been impossible for him to keep it out of court.

"He has subpoenaed me as a witness," remarked Helen quietly.

"The villain! He's simply done that to make it as embarrassing as possible."

"No; it's to prove you were not justified in striking him. He says that he spoke of me as an old maid——"

"I never told you what he said," protested the amazed Caxton.

"No; but I heard. He spoke of me as an old maid and you struck him."

If Caxton had not been so excited he would have observed a tender note in the voice that would have interested him, but all he could think of was the infamous expression Douglas had used. "To be sure I did!" he admitted. "And I'd do it again. The idea of his lying like——"

"He didn't lie."

"Wha—what did you say?"

"When does a girl get to be an old maid?" asked Helen.

It was like throwing him in a pond without a life preserver. "Why, I—I never thought. I guess when she's 'long about thirty—I don't know. Of course you are not——"

"Of course I am," replied Helen, with determination. "I'm thirty-three!"

She looked at him steadily out of those deep blue eyes, which said, if eyes ever talked: "What are you going to do about it, sir?"

Caxton stood up. Helen also rose, but kept her eyes on him. "Why, Helen," he said, involuntarily moving toward her, "if that's the case"—he was close enough to reach her, but she did not move back—"then I'm not—I'm not——"

"Too old?" she asked, laughing.

"Nobody said you were. You're just a—a——"

Whether the smothered word was goose or gander or something else was never put in the record, but with the understanding that followed the compact, Caxton was surprised to note that every vestige of fright over the one-hundred-thousand-dollar case had flown, and Helen clinched that view in these words: "Let him go on with his trial if he wants to; it would be lots of fun—the way things are now."

On Its Reputation

MR. NEWRYCH, thinking that a motor car was essential to his position, decided to obtain one at a certain place recommended by one of his friends.

"I want a good, reliable car," he said to the manager on his arrival the next day.

"Yes, sir; we have the best in the trade."

"I want the best on the road," commented Mr. Newrych.

"There it is!" exclaimed the manager, pointing to a certain car. "I should be pleased to take you for a trial spin in it," he added.

"All right," said Mr. Newrych; and they started.

Everything went all right for about a mile, and then the machine gradually slowed down until finally they stopped. The manager jumped out and made an examination.

"Wonderful, wonderful!" he exclaimed.

"What is the matter?" asked Mr. Newrych.

"Why, there's no blessed engine on this car!"

"Then what in the world has it been going on?"

"Simply its reputation, sir—simply its reputation!" proudly replied the manager.



The Uncurried West

By

James French Dorrance

(COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE)

CHAPTER I.

A DOUBTING THOMAS.



ALL day, while the westbound limited click-clacked across the level sweeps of Nebraska, he rode the observation platform at the rear of the heavy train. As the hours passed and the miles were flung back to the east, a frown deepened upon his tight-skinned face. His grumblings, which at first had been quite unintelligible, began to take audible form, the burden of their complaint being, "I knew it! I knew it!"

He was a man of featherweight body, with a head that, by comparison, seemed abnormal. One glance at his garb and paraphernalia proclaimed him a "round-tripper" of the summer-tourist class. He was dressed "according to Hoyle"—the Hoyle of the railroad folders—a Norfolk suit beneath his duster, a soft-collared shirt, a peaked cap with jockey visor. He carried everything that had ever been recommended as useful on a transcontinental journey and some precautionary equipment that was evidently self-inspired. One shoulder

strap held a small camera, another crisscrossed his chest to suspend a long spyglass.

He sat upon his own folding camp stool, a sure defense against the platform "hogs" that appealed to at least one of his more experienced fellow travelers. His eyes were protected by goggles; at his feet, neatly rolled, was a steamer shawl, which, with the thermometer frolicking at one hundred degrees above, seemed slightly incongruous, although not more so than the miles of snow fences which the railroad permits to stand on the windward side of the track throughout the long summer.

Nor was this all. Beside his privately owned folding stool sat a black box of mystery, lacking the slightest external hint of its contents. Across his knees rested a rifle case, its open flap indicating the first step of preparedness, but nothing to show whether it was carried for defense against train robbers or with the idea of pot-shooting big game. Upon this leather-clad armament lay a "journal" in which he made occasional brief notations.

The mystery of the black box ex-

ploded when a white-clad figure appeared in the door of the club car and there issued from an ebony face, "First call for luncheon in the dining car!" The box held a compact lunch, complete even to a small thermos bottle of tea. The overequipped passenger need miss no scenic detail by waiting his turn in the dining-car line.

Later in the afternoon other facts concerning him became evident by deduction. The twang of the questions he put to the rear brakeman stamped his home range—Holyoke or Newton Center, or perhaps Augusta, Maine. His general eagerness, the innumerable picture post cards which he addressed and stamped, his careful study of map and time-table assured those who were watching him that it was his first trip West.

But for the answer to his "I told you so"—set forth by the repeated and complaining "I knew it!"—we had to wait.

The show-down came after darkness had fallen to make the electric-lighted club car more attractive than the dusty rear platform. His chair was next to the one I occupied. Suddenly he turned, and, without preface, put a question: "Isn't it disappointing?"

There was an eagerness to my "What disappoints!" born of the sort of thrill that comes when one is about to fit in the last chunk of a jig-saw puzzle.

"The West," he returned gloomily.

"That depends on what you expected to find," I ventured, recalling the incased gun and the spyglass, which might have been handed down in his family from the days when New Englanders sailed clipper ships.

"It's not at all like. I'm telling you, stranger—not at all like."

"Like what?" He seemed to have an ingrowing mind, and the question was necessary.

"Like the magazines and the movies paint it."

With that he was off for a flying

start. The pent-up flood of his observation-platform repression was loosened. His voice raised oratorically until the attention of the whole car was caught and the intensity of his arraignment held it. "I knew it," he began. "In my heart and soul, I knew it before I started, but I just had to come and see for myself. Now that I've seen, I'm going to show them up, those deceiving authors and actors."

Discovering that he had general attention, he paused to send a searching glance along the aisle between the padded chairs, perhaps in search of agents of deceit, then hurried on: "Just hark back a moment to the West they put on printed pages and picture on the screen. Wild and woolly, isn't it? Cowboys and girls dash up to every station on prancing cayuses to meet every train, don't they? Ropes swish out with snakelike hiss and towns are shot up pronto, aren't they? The boys wear chaps—whatever they may be—and the girls carry six guns on every hip; isn't it so in the magazines and movies? Buckboards and horse strings, longhorns and free range chuck wagons and wranglers, outlaws and sheriffs, wily squaws and scalp-trimmed bucks—oh, I've read and squinted until I'm up to snuff on the West they say that is."

"Maybe the West was like that once," protested a fellow tourist, who perhaps had a friend who wrote ranch stories or had been introduced to some cow lady of the pictures.

The incensed one sniffed. "That's not the point, my friend. They write and picture in the present tense. They'd have us believe that their fake West *is*, not *was*. But it isn't, as you'd very well know if you'd watched the passing scenes to-day as closely as I have.

"Did we see a single chap, either with hair on or off?" he demanded fiercely. "We did not. Was there any dashing up to the station to meet the

train? Yes, if flivvers can be said to dash, but I noticed that every gas wagon was tame enough to wear a license tag. Cowgirls? I saw one, but she wore a sunbonnet instead of a tilted sombrero, and a calico wrapper was over her hips, not a gun. Besides she was milking the cow, not roping it. Maybe they do call the lot a corral, but it looked mighty like a barnyard to me. Has there been any shooting up, any rope swishing or sign of Indians? There has not. All these years we've been swallowing fakes, for the West is just as quiet and unromantic as the East, and when I get home I'm going to show up all——"

While he had been unburdening himself of his huge complaint, the limited had paused a moment at a station near the Nebraska-Wyoming line. He had been interrupted by the entrance of two new passengers—tall, upstanding youths with leather-tanned faces—and no wonder. Both wore chaps "with fur on," differing only in that one pair was white, the other black. Both had revolvers riding in holsters at their hips. Their shirts were of flannel and open at the neck. Their headgear, which they quickly removed on noting the presence of women, must have had the Stetson brand inside. There was the metallic jingle of spur rowels as their high-heeled boots trod the soft carpet of the aisle to two chairs near us.

"Is this yesterday or to-day?" I asked the recent protestant, when he had ceased to gasp.

His recovery had that attribute of promptness that is generally the exclusive property of the hero of the piece. "Wait and see," he advised. A moment later he caught the eye of one of the newcomers, and with tourist assurance leaned into the aisle to speak with him. "What company do you boys play with?" he asked, disarming possible resentment with his ingenuous smile.

The cow-puncher looked startled a

moment, then smiled good-naturedly. "The Lazy B chuck wagon feeds us at the present time."

"I mean what motion-picture company are you acting for? Don't mind my asking, please, for I'm a fan. It's more than a pleasure to meet a couple of heroes of the film."

Nonplused and obviously embarrassed, the range man looked at his stirrup brother for support. The other laughed. "The stranger thinks you're a grease-paint puncher, Buck, but he don't look as if he was meaning for to insult you," he said. "Don't get het up none—not in one of Mr. Pullman's plush wagons."

Thus admonished, the white-chapped puncher explained: "We're regular guys, stranger, Larry and me. The most we've got to do with pictures is to shove two-bit pieces to the ticket lady and pass inside to a seat in the orchestra. If the show ain't too plumb awful Western and we don't get too thirsty, like as not we stay hobbled there until they run off the last reel."

The tourist's face was a study in its struggle between incredulity that was obvious and what probably was a well-founded fear of doubting the spoken word of one who looked so thoroughly competent.

"But—but——" he stammered. "I thought your sort didn't really—the chaps and spurs and guns, you know—were only in magazine imagination. Are you—you the only specimens of your sort—relics of the West that was? I don't mean to be impertinent, you know, but we've seen none like you in a long day's travel."

The puncher in the black chaps laughed immoderately. "Oh, Buck, just wait till I spill this to the bunch. You're a specimen of the West that was, which must mean that you're a ghost or something. You're a relic what ought to get a wikiup to show yourself in and charge admission."

"You're in it, too," retorted Buck. "He's talking about both of us." He returned to the tourist, his manner pityingly mild. "Don't you ever believe we're either specimens or relics, pardner. And as for being in the only class—just have the conductor scribble 'stop-over' on the back of your long ticket and dismount at Cheyenne. You'll find a bunch of us curios rounded up there for the cussedest celebration ever was in the West what is."

After imparting this advice, Buck ignored the inquisitive one. He and his "side kick" continued to discuss their chances in the drawing of outlaw mounts for the week's bucking contest in which they were entered.

"Would it be safe, do you think?" The Easterner turned another of his indefinite queries my way.

"To prod him with more questions?" I returned. "Wouldn't advise that."

"I mean would it be safe to stop over in Cheyenne and see if there really are wild-and-woolly others?"

"Am falling off there myself," I said, and left him counting the risks while I went ahead to my section to collect my traps and tip the porter.

CHAPTER II.

GREEN MEMORIES.

AT half past twelve in the morning, the limited ground to a stop before an impressive Union Station in Cheyenne, and a dozen of us, including the tourist who had not believed, left the train. There was an unwonted bustle about the brightly lighted streets of the Wyoming capital. They were wider awake than the corner of Broadway and Forty-second Street, New York, ever is at that hour, except on presidential-election night.

And just as we reached the platform there was a rush of cayuses to meet the train. The riders wore chaps and sombreros. Some of them playfully

shot up the platform with blank cartridges. A rope "swished out with snakelike hiss" and settled over the shoulders of Buck of the Lazy B, which means that the brand of the outfit is the letter "B" reposing on its side. It served to draw him to the embrace of puncher friends.

"Am I awake or am I dreaming?" I heard the tourist inquire of nobody in particular as he started off after a porter he had subsidized to help with his multitudinous baggage. If he wasn't awake, Cheyenne soon attended to that little detail for him, the lid being off and the key to the capital city thrown away.

The reason for all the excitement? Just fifty years ago the tracklayers of the Union Pacific Railway reached Cheyenne on their titanic task of linking up the continent with twin bands of steel. To commemorate fittingly the golden jubilee, this week in late July had been set aside and invitations sent to the men and women of a score of States in whom the fires of the West still burned. That the response had been enthusiastic was shown when one tried to register for hotel room. Although the week's program had not yet opened, the overflow was being cared for in the homes which had been thrown open with wide-handed hospitality.

Through acquaintances made on earlier visits, when writing "The Fighting Point," "By Right of Range," and "Roped Rivers," an unoccupied cot was located in the palatial hostelry conducted by Harry Hines, himself of the West western. It occupied a corner of one of the parlors, and I was admonished to go to sleep "standing up"—in other words, with everything on, as a precaution against an early-morning descent of fair guests.

The awakening was upon a city alive with the romanticism of the West. The downtown blocks, the hotel lobbies, and cafés teemed with cowboys, soldiers,

Indians, and tenderfeet. Even the sheepman was among those present, taking his part in the riot of color and action. Nor did he draw a sniff of resentment, for, now that fences criss-cross the range, the old feud between "woolly" and "longhorn" has ended forever.

After breakfast I stepped out of the front door of the Plains Hotel plump into a striking instance of the West up to date. An automobile was feeling its way through the crowded thoroughfare, at the wheel an Indian in full regalia from a war bonnet of eagle feathers to doeskin shirt with its decorations of elk teeth. Some one in the crowd identified him as Young Sitting Bull, the deaf-mute son of the departed Sioux chief famous for his participation in the Custer and other massacres.

With a touch upon my elbow, I turned to the tourist who had been the chief object of interest on the run from Chicago. "Isn't it great?" he began, with his usual question. "They've been trying to make me believe that the West isn't any more, but look about you, man; look about you!"

I was curious as to how Innocence Abroad had fared during the night. "Did you find a bed?" I asked.

"Sh-h—sh-h!" He raised a cautioning finger. "I curled up around a roulette wheel that had run down for the night."

"And dreamed you had broken the bank, I suppose?" I inquired, the incongruity of the combination forcing a laugh.

Just then Kit Carson's original bus, battle-scarred and bullet-drilled, trundled along, the driver vociferously defending its right to a full share of highway against the outnumbering force of twin-six chauffeurs. He proved to be an old friend of Wind River days, and as a traffic block halted him I caught his eye.

"Well, Red, you old tarantular, I ad-

mire to see you!" he called. "Get aboard, son, get aboard!"

The invitation was accepted eagerly, for this venerable, historic vehicle was a most fitting transport to Frontier Park, where the celebration centered. A widespread camp had been thrown out around the park. There were white-topped prairie schooners, buckboards, and camp wagons in numbers sufficient to prove that the West is not yet entirely committed to "gas" as a means of locomotion. But for every one of these there were a dozen automobiles, many of which came into Cheyenne by the red-white-and-blue marked Lincoln Highway, which promises to be such a factor in the final uniting of East and West.

Over in the southwest corner of the park, where stood the camp of Sioux from the Pine Ridge Reservation, more redskin-owned and driven autos were parked. Roped to wheels and chassis projections were thin-legged ponies which would be ridden by war-togged owners in the sports that were to fill the following days of this gala occasion. Pipe on Head, Running Hawk, and Bald Eagle, the prize riders of the tribe, swaggered around, feeling their importance, while their squaws curried and rubbed to a glossy polish the coats of their favorite mounts, unless they were hunting missing grease cups under the machines.

There at the park that first day, Wyoming and her neighboring States gave indubitable evidence that memories of the frontier will never be permitted to die. This was when their first citizens solemnly dedicated the original blockhouse home of Jim Baker, the pathfinder and scout who first settled in the Snake River Valley in the early sixties. It was the very cabin of logs which he threw together a few years after he had guided an expedition under General Albert Sidney Johnson to suppress the Mormon insurrec-

tion of 1857. To it he took his Indian wife and raised a "flock" of half-breed children, of whom all who live are respected citizens of the State their stalwart father helped to establish.

"May we never forget Jim Baker and the type he personifies!" urged the present governor of the commonwealth in a voice that was husky with feeling.

"Not us—never!" roared back a strapping cowman, echoing the sentiment of the head-bare crowd.

And they never will, you may be sure. Plans are already made for the unveiling next year of a statue before one of the public buildings to "Jimmy the Kid" Willoughby. It is not likely that you would ever guess his claim to Cheyenne immortality. He was the greatest of all cowboys, and up to the time of his death last year the broncho that could throw him had not been foaled.

CHAPTER III.

SCRATCHING THEM DEEP.

ALTHOUGH automobiles raced special trains from Denver to Cheyenne and speed wagons circled the track in exciting contests, horses and steers were the real attraction of "Frontier Days." Repeatedly was it demonstrated that the West has not forgotten how to stick a saddle or to rope and tie a "beef," no matter how prolific the crop of automobiles and widespread the barbed-wire fencing.

That the breed of the plains stock has greatly improved since the introduction of the Morgan strain was strongly emphasized by the many beautiful mounts on exhibition, clasped by the legs of gayly caparisoned riders. The improvement showed, too, in the running time of the speed races and the relays which were participated in by both men and women.

But when it came to the bucking contests, in which the punchers had oppor-

tunity really to show their skill, the Morgan stock remained in the corral, for there never will be harder fighting specimens of "a dose of pepper on four lightning legs" than the rawboned cayuse bandits of the range.

The nomenclature of these "buckers" was as typical of the lights and shadows, the sense of humor, the ironical strain of character in the continuing West as anything heard at Cheyenne. Could greater descriptive heights be reached than in the christening of Hell to Pay, Yellow Fever, I Be Damn, Wild Cat, Vampire, Tragedy, and Ragged Top? There was irony in the fact that Peaceful Gus, Rocking-chair, and Chain Foot were as wicked performers as passed through the chute. Local pride dropped out in the naming of Laramie Plains Red Bird and K. C. Roan—the K. C., of course, standing for Kansas City. The announcement of the man with the megaphone that Shorty Somebody or other would try to ride Ima Nutt carried one back to the Seventh Avenue editorial offices, but whether or not the handsome filly was named in honor of the brief but popular TOP-NOTCH laugh maker unfortunately was not made plain. That the christeners are up to the minute was evidenced by the entry of a "Henry Ford," a "Miss Ragtime Liz," and an "Aëroplane."

It seems possible that the picturesque sobriquet, to which punchers used to be so prone, is passing. Most of the contestants entered under their regular names, though it may be that this was due to the fact that they were "out in company" and that they have characteristic "nicks" when called on the home ranch. At that, "Sleepy" Armstrong waked up sufficiently to win third place in the wild-horse race; "Little Mex" won the boy's cow-pony event; "King" Merritt was 2:08 in the steer-bulldogging contest; "Stub" Farlow was the swiftest stage driver; and

"Bugger Red" withstood the bucking of "Wild-cat Enoca."

And the cowgirls! They did everything on horseback that their puncher brothers did, playing with death with as much sang-froid and far more grace. Every one of them came from a State that has already accepted equal suffrage, and they asked no favors because of sex.

What fiction heroines they would have made—every mother's daughter of them. "Prairie Rose" Henderson, Ruth Pardon, "Babe" Tucker, Mildred Douglas, Lila Smith, Lily Allen—any one of them might have ridden right into the rôle of honor in a long novel or serial without even combing her hair. They looked like varied prairie flowers and showed in their nerve-tingling stunts all the grit and sand any reader could expect.

The only concession made to the fair riders—and they did not ask that; it was set down in the rules and regulations by the men managers—was that in the relay races they were not required to change saddles, as were the men. Nor did the names of their horses seem to bother them any more than did the outlaw spirit of the beasts. There was one filly named "Morning-glory," but the girl who drew "Squaw-killer" did not hesitate to mount, while "Grizzly" and "Watch Me" were as popular as "Tipperary."

The selection of mounts for the bucking contests was as much a lottery as the army draft. From out of a hat each of the riders drew a slip on which was written the name of the "outlaw" he was to ride in the next day's contest. This drawing was something of a ceremony and prolific of characteristic comment.

"Here's a boy I'll have to scratch deep!"

"That dinged old sunfisher, eh? Watch me rowl him?"

"Always did love Vampires!" cried

another on drawing the horse of that name.

There gathered about the chute through which the animals were sent into the arena each day a group of old-timers who were living over the days when they used to thrill the grand-stand multitude. Their legs, still pronouncedly bowed, were wobbly, and their fingers, which had never "pinched leather"—otherwise held to saddle—no longer possessed the steel to grip a rein, but the fires of spirit still blazed in their eyes, and you could tell by looking at them that they would "swap their shirts" for the chance to show again.

With every entrance came reels of excitement. The outlaw was blindfolded under strenuous protest, sometimes not until teeth had been planted in twitching ears. A saddle was thrown across an unwilling back and double cinched for the struggle that was to come. Then the contestant vaulted into the saddle, and the contest for mastery began with gun-fire promptness, the "buster's" defiance announced with the "Yee-whoop-ee!" of the get-away and answered by the squealing and bawling of the mad beast as it made its first frantic rush to run from under.

Then followed spasms of twisting, turning, and bucking in circles. The beasts sunfished, spread-eagled, and swapped ends with an energy that made the grand stand bat its fifty thousand eyes. But these men were real riders, and in only four instances throughout the five days the contest series ran were the beasts able to mix it up too fast for the busters. One rider was catapulted against the fence by some new twist from a broncho bag of tracks and carried out unconscious, but to a quick recovery. The cinch of another's saddle gave way suddenly, and he soared, to come down standing with the saddle still gripped between his powerful knees.

But when it came to riding the hus-

band of the cow, the story is entirely different. It was merely a case of how long a puny human could play the bur, for none succeeded in riding to a finish—not even Ed Eddie, who managed to stick on some of the worst buckers without aid of saddle, hackamore, or rope.

CHAPTER IV.

TOO GAME TO QUIT.

THAT writers of ranch and plains fiction were prone to overdraw the gameness of Western heroes and heroines was one of the most positive arraignments of the New Englander who was getting his first glimpse of the West from the observation platform. He was no "conscientious objector" if he saw what I saw on the third and fourth "Frontier Days," and did not straight-away reverse his opinion.

There was the cowgirl from Oklahoma, for instance, who was astride "Squaw-killer," jockeying for a clean start in the half-mile race. The mount of a saddle sister grew unduly fractious as the starter struggled for a fair alignment and sent both its heels in the direction of the horse so drastically named. One hoof caught the Oklahoma girl squarely on the ankle, almost breaking it and cutting a jagged gash in her flesh.

"You'd better quit, girlie," urged her parent, a grizzled veteran of the West, who was handling her mount.

"Quit? Why, dad!" she chided, as though woefully disappointed in him. "When did any of us ever quit as long as we had sit-up left?"

Although her face was white with the pain of the wound, the girl set her teeth, remounted, and rode out the race to a place position. Then, without a word, she let them help her off the horse and lead her behind the grand stand, where, out of sight of admiring friends and neighbors, she quietly collapsed into a dead faint.

Then there was Henry Walters, ex-champion buster, who sustained a deep cut in the leg from another vicious horse. There was no time for stitches, as he was due to ride "Henry Ford" in the bucking contest.

"Hush that noise!" he said to the ambulance surgeon who protested further immediate activity on his part was essential. "The needle, Watson!"

Dissatisfied with the doctor's half-way measures, he took the hypodermic into his own hands, and, smiling grimly, shot the cocaine into the flesh about the wound to make the pain of it endurable. Then he vaulted into the saddle and made "Henry" quit in disgust at his inability to get rid of his burden.

The honor of providing the master thrill of the week of action, however, belonged to Ray Overlay, a Southwestern stockman, who proved himself superlatively too game to quit. So striking was his exhibition of grit that a fiction writer well might have hesitated to invent a similar situation for fear of offending the probabilities. Yet thousands saw the actuality and acclaimed him an idol of genuine sportsmanship.

Steer roping for the world's championship held the arena and the tense attention of the vast Friday afternoon throng. Overlay, mounted on a wiry cow pony which knew its business thoroughly, drew a heavy, red longhorn, which he roped with skillful dispatch. There was a terrific throw when a thousand pounds of horse and twelve hundredweight of beef, running in opposite directions, arrived at the end of the rope. The heavier steer, clumsy on its legs, went down to a stunning fall, while the horse held its feet. Unwilling to lose a single precious second in making the tie, the Oklahoman threw himself recklessly from the saddle. He struck the ground with a shuddering impact, and the somersault which followed was so grotesque that the grand stand shook with laughter.

This was quickly stilled by realization that the roper had been hurt.

Gaining his feet in a dazed sort of way, Overlay started for the steer, but with the first step his right leg crumpled under him and he pitched forward on his face. It seemed that he had scarcely struck the turf of buffalo grass, however, when he began to crawl forward, still headed toward his prospective victim, the broken limb trailing with pain that must have been excruciating. A dozen yards he went on "threes," his face chalk white where it was not streaked with dust and crimson from a scalp wound added for good measure. Then, with superhuman effort, he gained his one "straight stick" and hobbled the rest of the distance.

With one last heave he flung himself in among the upturned hoofs which were beginning to flay the air as life returned to the prostrate animal. He had drawn three of the legs together with the rope, and was reaching for the fourth, with every prospect of breaking the world's time record for roping and hog-tying a steer, when a merciful unconsciousness called a halt on the agony. The red-coated beast floundered a full minute before freeing its feet, then flung Overlay aside and galloped to the farthest corner of the field.

The funereal hush which fell upon the crowd as the stretcher bearers carried him to the hospital wagon is not likely to prove prophetic. E. Ray Overlay is suffering *only* from a compound fracture of the leg, while all the West pays tribute to his indomitable courage.

CHAPTER V.

NEW WORLD'S CHAMPIONS.

IT took until late Saturday afternoon to decide the several world's wild West championships, so carefully had the "Frontier Days" schedule been arranged to bring out the contestants'

last ounce of endeavor. In most of the six championship contests the score was so close that the issue was in doubt until the last steer was "bulldogged," the last heat run.

Here is the honor roll of the new heroes of the plains:

World's Champion Bronchobuster—Samuel Brownell, Wyoming.

Woman Roughrider—Mrs. Edward Wright, New Mexico.

Steer Bulldogger—Edward Eddie, Oklahoma.

Cowgirl Relay Racer—Ruth Pardon, Tonappish, Washington.

Trick and Fancy Rider—Harry Walters, Colorado.

Trick and Fancy Roper—Samuel Garrett, Oklahoma.

The Sioux Indians, from the mid-State reservation, were not permitted to figure in the championships, but were given cash prizes and trophies which until further notice will be hung out at Pine Ridge tepees against all red-skin comers. Perhaps you will believe that there is, after all, something in a name when the facts are set forth that Mrs. Running Horse carried off the honors in the squaw race, while Madame Never Comes Back was a poor third. Pipe on Head, Running Hawk, and Bald Eagle were the principal contenders among the bucks.

When the cheering was over the break-up of the twenty-first and greatest annual round-up began. Ponies were spurred into trails over which the departing sun was casting long shadows. The several companies of "yellow legs" from Fort A. D. Russell, four miles out across the prairie, galloped back to barracks and stables over the perfect boulevard. The prairie schooners, some of them actually ox-drawn, trundled toward new camping places. Flivvers were laboriously cranked and other cars self-started into the Lincoln Highway, where they headed "back East" or farther West.

Perhaps Cheyenne will throw away the key and dislodge the lid again next year; the new-crowned champions may be called upon to return and defend their titles. It all depends upon the war, the grim shadow of which crossed the golden jubilee in several places. The cavalymen from Fort Russell, for instance, who took part in each day's program, are about to leave for France, and half of the net receipts have been paid over to the Red Cross.

But whether or no there comes a temporary break in Cheyenne's chain of remembrance, the West is still red-blooded and disinclined to "pull leather." Its sons have not lost their knack with the rope, its daughters still have grit. Each year sees fewer acres of free range and the breed of cattle is slowly changing for the better, but it is still a far-flung land of romance and mystery.

It was on the way to the station to take the train for San Francisco that I again encountered the Easterner who had doubted the West. He was entirely responsible for the reunion, as I never would have known him under the transformation which his six days in Wyoming had wrought. Gone was the duster, the Norfolk suit, and the peaked cap. In their stead he wore the woolliest chaps my eyes have ever rested on; his shirt was red and open at the neck; his hat a sombrero with acrelike brim. He had been on the point of entering a photograph gallery as I came along, but turned back to halt me. "Hello, pard!" he called.

The greeting proved that his transformation was not altogether a matter of raiment. "I take it all back," he went on, "all the aspersion I cast on the magazines and movies for the West they painted. They are mostly right, and I was altogether wrong. The West is and always will be. And after seeing that chap Overlay rush his broken

leg after that steer—well, they can't draw their heroes out of the picture with grit lines."

After agreeing with him, I remarked his change of costume and asked the reason.

"These range duds sort of suit me, don't you think?" he asked, looking at the reflection of himself in the show window. "I'm going to have a picture taken to send to the folks at home. Remember those Lazy B boys whose untimely arrival halted my spiel in the club car and whose advice put me off at Cheyenne? I've met up with them here, and I'm going to join their outfit. They've promised to teach me the punching game, and it'll be good for what ails me. This is the life!"

He Almost Forgot

PROFESSOR GIGLAMPZ dropped in at his friend the doctor's the other night. He was breathing heavily and seemed to be in a great hurry.

"Ah, professor," said the doctor, "come in. Let me take your coat and hat. Been taking a sharp walk, I suppose, after the day's work? How's the great book getting on—the monograph on 'Biological Researches Among the Neolithic Tribes of Northern Nigeria?'"

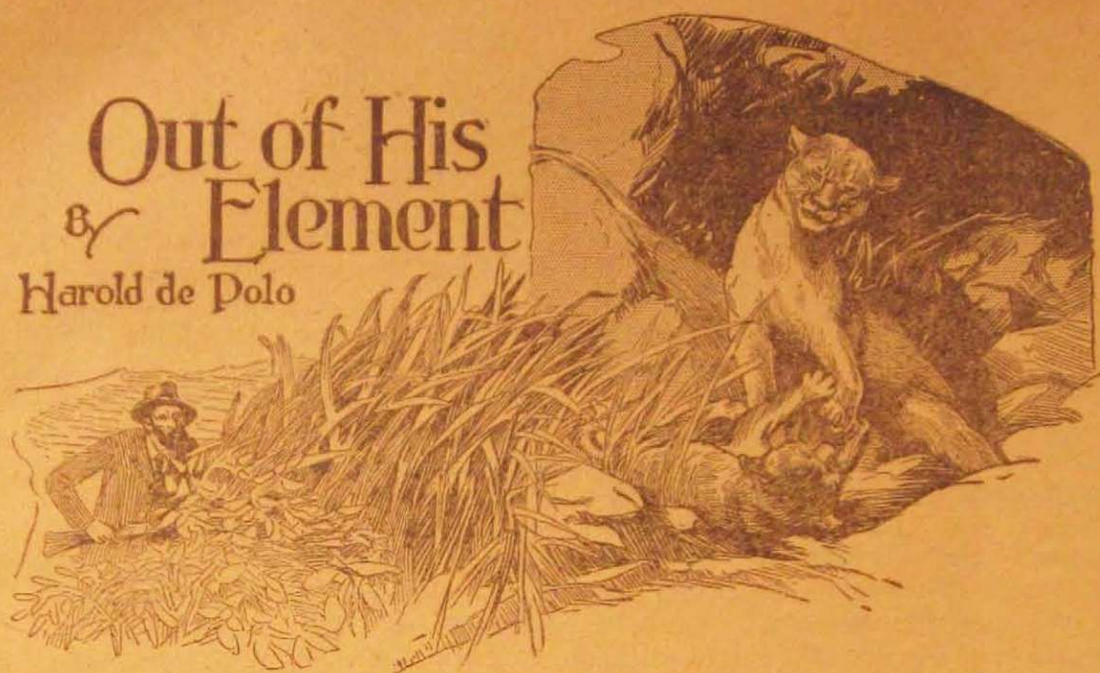
Once started on the topic nearest his heart, the professor dropped into an easy-chair and talked for hours. A box of cigars was produced, and it was about midnight before the guest rose to leave.

"Well, good night, professor," said the doctor. "Give my regards to all at home. They're all well, I suppose?"

"My goodness!" cried the professor, clapping his hand to his brow. "That reminds me. I knew I came to see you about something. My wife's nearly dead of ptomaine poisoning!"

Out of His & Element

Harold de Polo



THE lives of the wild kindred are tempestuous, and this applies to the furred and the feathered and the finned. As a rule, they are born in danger, they live in danger, and when they die it is because that same danger has overtaken them. A peaceful, serene existence, where the days slip idly by, is unknown to them. They must fight and kill to live, and they must watch and fight in order not to be killed.

It is the same with one and all. Each one, from the smallest to the largest, has an enemy or enemies able to master them. Yes, their lives are fraught with trouble, but it is the law of the wild, and they expect nothing else. However, it is of the life of Red Panther we are telling—Red Panther, who without doubt had as goodly a share of trouble in his varied career as any of the furred or the feathered or the finned.

His very entrance into the world was amid trouble. When he and his little brother were born, inside the dark, deep cave in a crag of rock high on the mountain, his father was outside giving bat-

tle to a grizzly bear with whom a long feud had been carried on. And so, the first noise that came to his little ears was one of strife, the first sight that came to his eyes was one of battle. Moreover, his sire, holding the vantage point, sent the bear retreating down the mountain with a sadly torn nose, and peace prevailed for the moment; yet Red Panther always had a dim recollection of knowing trouble before anything else.

Later, during the days when he was forced to lie still in the black cave and wait for his mother to come and feed him, things were none too easy. It was a hard, lean, grilling year, and the creatures of the forest were hard pressed to obtain sufficient food to sustain life in their bodies. Consequently Red Panther and his little brother spent many weary hours, many hungry hours, waiting in the dark lair for their parent to return and give them the milk that would dispel their hunger.

Still later, through the period when the mother and father took the two little whelps out to learn their first lessons of the hunt, the youngsters had

no easy time of it. They had to lie in wait, silent, rigid, ever ready, for hours and hours that in the end would bring them nothing.

Then, too, there were various prowlers who were always on the lookout for such a tender and dainty morsel as a young panther cub, ready to snatch them on the first bit of carelessness exhibited by either parent. Red Panther, therefore, had to be constantly on guard, and he had it firmly instilled in him that when he was alone in the cave he was not to so much as breathe aloud.

Red Panther managed, however, to get through the very early days of his cubdom without serious mishap, although many times danger had lurked close to him. Always he had used his brain; watching, learning, remembering, wisely realizing that he was seeing things that would hold him in good stead in after life; things that were, in fact, the very foundation of his existence.

Consequently there were few cubs with a quicker eye, with a shrewder brain, with a more nimble body. He tracked and brought down his kill with such marvelous wile and valiancy as to cause a proud flutter in the hearts of his parents. Indeed, there were few, if any, of his age who could equal him. And then, just as he was about to pass over the critical weeks, where his parents' help was so sadly needed in order to render him fit to stand completely on his own feet, trouble and tragedy visited him with what might truly be termed a vengeance.

II.

RED PANTHER and his brother were out one day on the hunt with their father. The other youngster, growing bold, insisted on occasionally darting off to follow what he thought a scent that he alone had discovered, but Red Panther, knowing full well that

it was wise to stay close to his parent, made no such mistake. The father was sorely tried to keep sight of the truant cub, and several times he had to cuff him severely. Still he persisted on making little excursions of his own, and it was on one of these that he met his fate.

Quickly, almost before he knew it, a pair of fierce, starving lynx, made desperate by hunger, pounced upon him and tore him to shreds while he was making a single, pitiful cry. Ordinarily they would have refrained from attacking a panther cub, but it was a lean, hard year and the situation was serious.

Red Panther always remembered the roar of rage that issued from the throat of his sire when he discovered the death of his offspring; remembered the maddened leap he gave as he rushed through the forest to the fray. It was a wild, lightninglike, bloody battle—the game panther, bent on revenge, fighting against two-to-one odds with a fury and a strength that almost made it seem as if he would come off the victor. But finally the inevitable happened.

Red Panther, through the trees, saw the two lynx tear down his father and sever the jugular vein with wicked slashes. For a time he stayed crouched behind a pine, wide-eyed, and knowing that to show himself would mean instant, useless death. Then, when the fierce pair had walked off, he slunk silently and carefully from his hiding and made his way back to the lair where his mother was waiting.

For a few brief days after this first tragedy, he lived what was to him a peaceful, gorgeous existence. With his mother, he prowled about the forest on the hunt, enjoying fairly good luck and meeting with no danger to speak of. The days seemed well-nigh perfect.

He was now progressing both mentally and physically with surprising strides. His body was lithe and graceful, with perfectly proportioned mus-

cles that were as lean and hard as steel; his head was that of a fighter, with alert ears, sharp eyes, dangerous fangs, and a tenaciously punishing jaw. He was nearly half again as large as any of his age, and his fur seemed to have a darkish, reddish tinge that would make him stand out against his ilk anywhere. Yes, Red Panther was as nearly a perfect specimen of his kind as one would ever see.

III.

THEN Black Mogridge entered his life. Red Panther, playing before the lair with his mother, suddenly had that instinctive feeling of danger close by. Springing to his feet at the same time that his mother drew back, he caught a glimpse of a tall, ugly, black-bearded giant of a man ascending the tortuous trail to the den. Then, before his mother could retreat or resort to strategy, there was a flash of red fire, a crackling noise, and the big panther beside him toppled over with a shriek, lying still and inert—dead. Red Panther, as the man-creature came forward with a fierce cry of triumph and a wicked, grim leer, ran for the cave.

There was a hoarse laugh from outside as the little cub flattened himself against the farthest wall of the deep cave. Then, after the man had ascertained that there was no other mode of exit from the den, there followed the extremely disagreeable process—to Red Panther, at least—known as "smoking out."

He caught a glimpse of flames licking the entrance; then they died down, and thick, pungent, choking smoke filled the lair. He shut his eyes and firmly closed his mouth, yet he coughed and sputtered as the smoke came thicker. He fought it stoically, bravely, but soon he had to give it up. And, with a valiant snarl and bared fangs, he hurled his little body through the opening.

A stout club, wielded by the brutal hand of Black Mogridge, met him squarely between the eyes, and he went down in a heap. Coming to, he felt his hind legs roped together, and saw that the man was in the act of doing the same to his front ones. Still he was game. With a snarl, he pulled his right paw loose, bared his claws, and with all the power of his sturdy body behind him he slashed out like lightning for that black-haired, ugly face, and drew his claws along the cheek and laid open the flesh to the bone. But then, with an imprecation, the man struck him a terrific blow that stretched him out, unconscious and nearly dead.

Each bore the scars for life. The man a jagged, red tear along his cheek that made his face even uglier and fiercer; the panther a deep, rough gash, where the hair never grew again, directly across his head. So began Red Panther's slavery under Black Mogridge, the renowned animal trainer.

IV.

RED PANTHER, from the day of his captivity, began a life that was to torture him. Black Mogridge was a hard and cruel man; a still harder trainer and still more cruel one; a human of the breed who really seem to delight in wreaking their vengeance on helpless animals. Without provocation he cuffed the little whelp, kicked him, clubbed him, lashed him; and, did the youngster so much as snarl his anger or glare at him balefully after these beatings, a still worse one was his portion.

Having the unquenchable fighting blood in his veins, Red Panther always battled the man back, although he realized that it did no good. Every chance that he got he slashed out with his claws or snapped with his teeth. Down he would go beneath a heavy club, and, weakened though he was, he would be up and after Mogridge

almost instantly. Down he would go again—and up again. So it would continue, time after time, day after day, until he was beaten and scarred, but never broken.

Then, when he was a little older, his master placed soft, bulky things on his paws and made him stand on his hind feet and flail the air with his front ones. Every time he bit or snarled he was whipped unmercifully and given no food; every time he parried a blow and endeavored to deliver one in the same style, he was gruffly complimented, not beaten, and given a plentiful meal.

Finally, realizing that he was completely mastered—at least for the time being—he gave in to Black Mogridge and stood up on his hind legs and boxed. For months it was all he did. Soon, indeed, he became highly proficient at the business, even eliciting words of admiration from Mogridge.

Still, through it all, the deep, intense hatred for the man never abated, never left him. Several times he made attempts on the man's life. Always, of course, he was subdued, for Black Mogridge was constantly on guard.

After a good half year of this daily training, Red Panther one night found himself brought out, in a larger cage than the one he had previously called his own, and thrust in the bright, dazzling light before rows upon rows of people. At first he was a trifle stunned; a trifle puzzled as to what it all meant. But then, when his master entered the cage, ordered him to put up his paws, placed the gloves on him and commenced to spar, he realized that he was but meant to do his daily task.

Then, for perhaps a year, this was Red Panther's almost nightly work; sometimes daily and nightly. He went through it all, while before the crowd, with absolute perfection; in fact, he almost liked it. Nevertheless, whenever he got the chance—or thought he

had—he made another try for the throat of Black Mogridge. Always, though, the man got the better of him, sending him down with a club and occasionally following it up with a light slash from the knife he always carried. Between them was that friction, that undying hatred that would never be forgotten, for it was just as strong on both sides. Without doubt Red Panther remembered the death of his mother and that first wicked blow; without doubt Black Mogridge remembered the cause of that livid, repulsive scar.

V.

BLACK MOGRIDGE was a heavy gambler. His band of trained animals were a profitable thing, for he was a man who knew animals and knew how to train them, though his methods were usually unnecessarily brutal. However, with a large sum of money in his possession, there always came to him the idea of doubling or trebling it, and the quickest way to him seemed a turn at the black and red wheel.

Nine times out of ten he lost, for he went ahead in a mad, wild way. Therefore he was frequently hard put to it to find enough money to make the next town. The addition of "Red Panther, the Only Boxing Panther in the World," had meant much to him financially. Nevertheless, he one day found himself in a particularly tight place—a place where he simply had to get money or go completely under. It was impossible to borrow it; therefore he did something which he knew would hurt him financially in the future, but which would save him for the time being—he sold Red Panther to a traveling circus, for he was the only animal that would fetch the necessary price.

And so it was that Red Panther left the slavery of Black Mogridge—at least for the first time.

A sequel to this story will appear in the next issue of TOP-NOTCH.



With Red Men and Magic

By
Ralph Boston



(COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE)

CHAPTER I.

PROFESSIONAL TROUBLES.

CARL MEPHISTO was walking along a country road, his battered suit case in one hand and his bag of tricks over his shoulder, when he paused suddenly and exclaimed: "A-ha!" Drawn up at the roadside, near the edge of a wood, were two automobiles of the kind known as flivvers. There was a look of dilapidation about the flivvers, but Mephisto had once been a chauffeur, and none knew better than he that a rusty hood often conceals a very capable motor. Anyhow, he was weary of the road, and not in a discriminating mood.

The cars seemed deserted. Mephisto laid his burdens on the running board of one of the machines, climbed into the tonneau, pushed aside a bag of baseball bats, and, with a sigh of content, stretched himself out on the padded seat. He would wait and rest until the owners of the cars returned, and then he would beg a ride to the next town. He dozed complacently, his feet elevated to the back of the front seat, the silence, the warm morning, and the lush

fragrance of the countryside all conspiring to make him forget his night in a straw stack, the breakfast he had missed, and his other troubles.

Carl Mephisto, in real life, was Carl Smedders. But Smedders was no name for an artist in sleight-of-hand. Smedders would do for a chauffeur, but it was nothing to conjure with as a magician. The Smedders was dropped for Mephisto when Carl became an "Uncle Tommer" and juggled trunks and properties, and barked like a bloodhound when Eliza crossed the ice, and came out in black clothes between the acts and took ribbons, cannon balls, and rabbits out of a borrowed hat, and held a shovelful of blue fire in the wings when Little Eva was shown welcoming Uncle Tom at the pearly gates.

Carl remained Mephisto, even now, when a provincial sheriff had levied on the tent and the "props," and the company had disbanded and gone its individual and separate ways, with or without money from home, and with or without personal belongings involved in the writ of attachment. Carl was unfortunate in having no home from which to secure a remittance, but he was fortunate in dodging away from

the sheriff with the suit case and bag of tricks.

The stranding of the company had come to pass on the preceding Saturday. Now it was Saturday again, and for a whole week Carl had worn out shoe leather on country roads and in country towns, looking for some one, any one, who had a steady job for a man who could cover a cupful of bran with a handkerchief, wave a wand, say "Presto!" and turn the bran into a bunch of tissue-paper flowers.

No one seemed to want a magician, however. He had done a few tricks for meals, off and on, but the fare had been slim and barely sufficient to keep him going. True, he had been offered substantial remuneration for juggling cordwood into stove lengths with a bucksaw, and for exercising his legerdemain at the steering wheels of cars of various makes, and he had refused firmly.

When a man has mastered an art—he reasoned—he should take pride in it and not abase his gift to ignoble ends. That the art was powerless to conjure a porterhouse steak out of an aching void made no difference with Carl Mephisto. If he starved to death, and if his emaciated frame was found crumpled up in some highway, clutched in his hands would be that useless bag of tricks—to which he had proved faithful to the end. All very fine if one looks at it in the proper spirit.

Suddenly Carl dropped his feet from the back of the front seat and sat up, all ears, in the seat behind. What was it he heard from the depths of the wood? An eerie note was being struck somewhere in the sylvan shadows. It was like the distant beat of a drum—*tum, tum-tum, tum, tum-tum*. So unusual was the sound that Carl decided to investigate it. He got out of the car and started into the woods, but halted and turned back for the green felt bag. Chances could be taken with

the old suit case, but not with his stock in trade.

Bag in hand, he cautiously made his way among the trees, guided by the *tum, tum-tum*, whose mysterious, staccato beat grew louder and louder in his ears. At last he came to the edge of a glade and halted, with a chill in his blood and a buckling of his nerves. A lot of Indians had a white man bound to a sapling, and while one banged a tom-tom with his fist, the rest of the redskins hopped a war dance around the helpless victim. Carl Mephisto caught his breath and would have taken to his heels, had not a weird discovery held him chained to the spot.

He knew the white man. His name was Hannibal Bisbee. In an old high hat and black frock coat he had played the rôle of Lawyer Marks in the late lamented Uncle Tom company.

Bisbee was a melancholy person, and consequently just right for a comedy part. He had one object in life. Everybody in the company had known about that. His wild, soulful yearning was to distinguish himself in his home town, to cut a dash in his native place, and shine as a person of worth and ability who could do things if he set his mind to it. And Bisbee had tried for a year to compel the admiration of his home-folks, only to have his budding ambition nipped by the frosts of fate.

He had apprenticed himself to an aeronaut, with the idea of startling his friends and neighbors by making balloon ascensions during home-coming week in Derryville. But, two days before the balloon was to be moved to Derryville, it had taken fire while being inflated, and was completely destroyed.

After the failure of the balloon idea, Bisbee learned that a street-carnival company was to fill a fall engagement in Derryville under the patronage of a local lodge of Elks. Forthwith he joined the carnival aggregation and practiced a high dive for several weeks.

So proficient did he become that he could fall backward off a fifty-foot platform and drop in the exact center of a reservoir of water, ten feet square. This performance was warranted to make some splash in Derryville. But it never did. The day before the company was to unload at Derryville, Bisbee was kicked by an ostrich that formed one of the carnival's attractions. While the celebration was on in his home town, Bisbee lay in a hospital twenty miles away and bemoaned his hard luck.

A dozen times he tried to reach Derryville in some rôle or other that would compel the town's attention, and a dozen times he was double-crossed by fate almost at the corporation limits of his native place. It would have been discouraging to a man less purposeful than Hannibal Bisbee, or to one with an object less inspiring. Topsy it was who had discovered that object. She had passed the mighty secret on to St. Clair, and he had confided it to Legree, and then Legree had peddled it to all the rest of the company. Everybody knew then that Bisbee was in love; and that he had a rival named Golshaw; and that Golshaw, as manager of the Derryville White Stockings, was the apple of Derryville's eye; and that Bisbee's case was hopeless, unless he could do something that would enable his personal splendor to compete with Golshaw's.

The Uncle Tommers were to play Derryville, thus affording Bisbee another of his numerous chances to back Golshaw out of the king row; but the company had gone on the rocks, and again the Bisbee fortunes had become the sport of adversity. And of what adversity! Carl Mephisto shuddered as he stood at the edge of the glade, thought of Bisbee's past, and watched the red men hop-hopping around to the eerie banging of the tom-tom. All the Indians wore baseball uniforms, the

white letters on their blue flannel shirts spelling "Apaches." Eight were dancing around Bisbee, each with an armful of firewood. When a point in the moving circle came directly in front of Bisbee, a fagot was hurled upon the rapidly growing pile at Bisbee's feet. Mephisto was convulsed with horror. It was necessary to do something for Bisbee. But what?

Mephisto had an active mind. He knew that Indians are superstitious. Why not work upon that weakness in an attempt to save Bisbee? Reaching into the bag of tricks, Mephisto brought out of it a long and slender sword. Dropping the bag, he gave a loud yell and leaped clear of the bushes, sword in hand.

He won the instant attention of the Indians and their captive. The red fist hung in the air above the tom-tom, and the fagot bearers halted in their tracks, straightened, and whirled to an about face. Poor Bisbee lifted his drooping head.

Before them all stood Carl Mephisto, a valiant figure, his long sword shining in the morning sun. The Indian at the tom-tom threw aside that particular instrument of torture and jumped to his feet. Eight bundles of firewood dropped on the ground. Nine red men started toward Carl Mephisto with war whoops, then halted suddenly, bunched together, and stared in amazement. Mephisto had struck a pose, had thrown back his head, and was calmly swallowing the sword.

Out in the road an automobile could be heard approaching, honking and departing. Another Indian, also in uniform, pushed through the brush.

"Was that the machine, Moon Gazer?" called Bisbee, a thrill of wildness in his voice.

"Ai," answered Moon Gazer; "squaw and paleface make um shoot past in buzz wagon. Ai, me-see um."

"Why didn't you stop them? Why didn't you send them here?"

"Ugh!" grunted Moon Gazer, his startled eyes on Mephisto. "Me too busy watching paleface eat um long knife. Wow! Injun git plenty fun this grass."

Then Bisbee barked something at Mephisto that almost spoiled the sword trick: "Say, Carl, what in Sam Hill do you mean? What's the idea of butting in here like this?"

Mephisto withdrew the sword in haste and peered at Bisbee in bewilderment. The whilom Lawyer Marks pulled himself loose from the sapling, disgustingly kicked the fagots away from his feet, walked into the midst of the red men, and leaned wearily on the shoulder of one of them.

"Why," murmured Mephisto, "I thought you were going to be burned at the stake. I was going to do a trick with the sword, get the Indians interested, then chop through your ropes, and make a run of it with you. I——"

"A steak or a chop, boys!" exclaimed Bisbee. "And all he did was to cook our goose! Whoever heard of such blooming luck?"

"Heap tough!" said the red men.

CHAPTER II.

WITH HIS PLUME ON STRAIGHT.

THE idea was complex, although the explanation was simple. In Blossburg, six miles from Derryville, Bisbee had unexpectedly met Nick Pender, captain of the White Stockings. Pender had told Bisbee that Golshaw, in his roadster, was to leave Derryville for Blossburg at ten o'clock that morning, to secure an ex-league pitcher for the afternoon game with the roving Apaches. Miss Hattie Ray was to accompany Golshaw, just for the ride.

Now, Nick Pender had gone to Blossburg to sound out the ex-league pitcher, Scanlon by name, and see if

he could be secured for the afternoon engagement. Scanlon had resisted the offers of the captain of the White Stockings, and the latter had called Golshaw on the telephone. Scanlon was planning to leave Blossburg on the eleven a. m. train, and Golshaw had phoned that he would pick up Miss Ray and be right over.

Bisbee did not want the ex-league pitcher in the game against the Apaches. He might help the White Stockings defeat the red men. Bisbee, naturally, was wildly eager to defeat his rival's team. In order to delay Golshaw and keep him from reaching Blossburg until the eleven o'clock train had departed with Scanlon, Bisbee had staged that little play in the timber.

Moon Gazer had been sent to watch the road. When Golshaw and Miss Ray came by, he was to halt them and beg them to intercede with his redskin teammates for the life of Bisbee. The moment the manager of the White Stockings and his companion left the roadster, they were to be delayed until the local had left Blossburg. But Carl Mephisto, in his ignorance, had interfered with the plan and set it at naught. Moon Gazer, his attention divided between the road and the queer proceedings of Mephisto, had allowed the Golshaw car to pass without a hail. So Scanlon would very likely be secured to pitch against the Apaches. This meant that the Indians were in for the hardest kind of a battle.

Mephisto was inclined to argue the case in his own defense. "Golshaw was in a hurry," he said, "and do you think for a minute, Bisbee, that he'd have stopped to save anybody, let alone you? Why, man, to have you eliminated by the Indians would probably have filled Golshaw with happiness. If he had stopped for Moon Gazer at all, at the report that you were in danger he would have shifted his gears into 'high,' and rushed on toward Blossburg at top

speed. There was nothing clever about that idea of yours."

"Listen," returned Bisbee earnestly; "he would not have dared run away and abandon me. Hattie"—he caught his breath on that loved name—"was with him. Golshaw could not have shown the white feather with Hattie beside him. Don't you see?"

"And Hattie—is she——"

"Yes, yes," cut in Bisbee wildly, "she's the young lady of my dreams, Carl!" He laid his hands on his heart and looked skyward soulfully. "She's the belle of Derryville, and has a hundred thousand dollars in her own right! She finances the White Stockings, and Golshaw must have been taking her with him to Blossburg to pay over a good big retainer to Scanlon! And now—now," mourned Bisbee, in great dejection, "the deal will be put through, and the Apaches will lose. As manager of a losing ball team," he asked sorrowfully, "how can I hope for a smile, for a kind word, from Hattie Ray?"

Mephisto gave it up. Bisbee seemed to be milling around without much rhyme or reason. Perhaps Bisbee could win a smile and a kind word from Miss Ray by defeating the ball team which she was financing and Golshaw was managing, but it looked dubious to Mephisto.

"Success!" exclaimed Bisbee. "That's all a lady thinks about when she considers a gentleman seriously. If I read the signs aright, Golshaw will have all the success this afternoon."

"Better that," declared Mephisto, "than for you to show up with an Indian ball team and defeat the nine of your own town. Being in love with a lady, Hannibal, appears to play the deuce with a gentleman's reason."

"Oh, you don't understand, you don't understand!"

"No; I guess I don't. Certainly I don't understand how you happen to

be connected with these red ball players. When did it happen, and how?"

This explanation also was simple. The former manager of the Apaches had run away with all the money, in debt to the players for two months' salary all around, and owing a three days' board bill. At this zoölogical moment—to quote Bisbee—the late Lawyer Marks arrived in Blossburg with discouragement in his heart and a hundred good dollars in his pocket. How he had saved the hundred from the wreck of the Uncle Tom company he did not explain; but he had it—and that was the main thing—when he fell in with the forlorn Apaches. Saturday the roving redskins were scheduled to play Golshaw's nine in Derryville. When Bisbee learned that, he went to the rescue of the Apaches and became their manager.

The club owned the two flivvers. The defaulting manager had failed to take one of them, and had preferred to dig out of Blossburg on a midnight train. The cars were necessary, as the Apaches toured the country in them. Bisbee had planned to swoop down on Derryville with his savages, meet Golshaw in the diamond lists, and battle for the favor of his lady. Then he had met Nick Pender, and had learned of Golshaw's attempt to secure Scanlon to pitch against the Apaches.

Medicine Chief, the regular pitcher for the Indians, had heard of Scanlon and was afraid of him. Tall Timber, the substitute pitcher, was also afraid of Scanlon. Both pitchers had refused to play in Derryville if Scanlon was in the opposing line-up. From this information, Mephisto learned how necessary it had been to eliminate Scanlon. It seemed therefore as if there was to be no game in Derryville that afternoon.

Bisbee hardly had finished his explanations, however, when the superstitious notions of the Indians allowed the

prospects to brighten. "Heap big medicine!" said Moon Gazer, addressing Mephisto in awe. "You eat um long knife some more, huh?"

Mephisto not only performed with the sword, but went through his whole bag of tricks. The red men looked at each other in bewilderment, grunted wonderingly, and then withdrew by themselves and held a powwow. Mephisto and Bisbee watched from a distance. "You have made a hit with that bunch of wild ones, Carl," averred Bisbee. "I've an idea that something promising is to come out of that performance of yours."

"Are all the players Apaches?" Mephisto inquired.

"There's only one Apache in the lot, and that's Eagle Feather—the chap with the flannel band around his forehead and the plume sticking up out of it from behind. He plays center field. Every man in that crowd has his little eccentricities. Take Eagle Feather, for instance. He's a phenom in the middle suburbs so long as his plume is on straight, but if anything happens to the red band or the feather, it's a case of up-sticks until he gets his headgear adjusted. Half a Day, the stocky lad over there, is our catcher. He nails 'em, too, as Big Medicine or Tall Timber puts 'em across. But he's badly gun shy. If any one happens to shoot, during a game, Half a Day drops everything and runs for his life.

"Then there's Man in a Hurry, our shortstop," Bisbee went on. "A black cat is warranted to make him take to the woods. If two players on the team happen to have their off days in the same game, Medicine Chief, our twirler, goes all to pieces; and when the Chief gets rattled, Lone Wolf, the captain and first sacker, invariably halts the game for a medicine dance. They are an eccentric combination of Poor Los, all right, but if nothing rubs their superstition the wrong way, the things

they can do to a league ball are a caution. Ah!" Bisbee broke off suddenly. "Here comes Big Thunder, left fielder and silver-tongued orator of the clan. He has a chance to orate, and can't let it get past him."

Big Thunder had picked a red blanket off the ground from beside the tom-tom, and looped it gracefully about his uniform and over his right shoulder. He strode forward with dignity, and halted close to Mephisto and Bisbee, and facing them.

"White brothers," he said, "the braves of the diamond have counseled. The palefaces are like sands on the seashore, or like leaves of the forest in summer. Once the red men were many, but now they are infrequent, and only here and there. We ball players come from our distant lodges into the paleface country. We are stout-hearted when the medicine is good. When it is bad our hearts are weak. Scanlon is bad medicine. Our pitchers say so. With Scanlon against them, our pitchers cannot wind up. They cannot throw the ball. They become like children afraid of the shadows. But if Sword Swallower stays with us, all will be well. He has fine medicine. Our pitchers will be strong. They will pitch against Scanlon. The paleface batters will not be able to hit them. We want Sword Swallower and his medicine. I have spoken."

Hope was shining in Bisbee's face. "You hear that, Carl?" he asked. "How about a job with the Apaches? These boys have an idea that, if luck goes against them, you can catch their salaries out of the air. Don't say no," begged Bisbee. "You know how often I have tried to reach Derryville with a specialty that would make the town sit up and take notice, and how I have been backcapped, foiled, and double-crossed. Now, at last, I have the best chance yet. Surely you can't refuse!

All my future happiness swings in the balance."

"What do I get for being head medicine man for this redskin nine, Hannibal?" queried Mephisto, anxious to help Bisbee, yet keeping an eye on the main chance.

"Twenty a week, your transportation, board and lodging," answered Bisbee promptly.

"Done!" said Mephisto.

And right there the joyous war whoops of the Indians rent the air, and the triumphant echoes faded to silence in the distant woodland.

CHAPTER III.

SOME METHOD IN IT.

MEPHISTO'S first job as medicine man came within five minutes after a start had been made for Derryville in the flivvers. The leading machine balked, sputtered, and came to a halt. Lone Wolf, captain of the nine, handed Mephisto the tom-tom and ordered him to exorcise the evil spirit that was playing hob with the flivver's works.

Mephisto's old trade of chauffeur helped him in the emergency. But to tinker with the car like a mechanic when he was supposed to remedy such troubles with the tom-tom and an incantation would have been fatal to his supposed powers. He managed to combine the occult with the practical. After he had opened the hood, he banged the tom-tom and talked to the motor; then he touched the carburetor, jumped back, banged, talked, and touched the carburetor again. Finally he closed the hood and calmly climbed into the car.

"Good work, old scout!" said Bisbee, with a chuckle, as the machine started off.

Three miles out of Derryville, the third baseman, Young Man Who Sits by the Fire, suddenly remembered that

he had a Charley horse. He rose up in the tonneau of the second machine and brought both cars to a stop with a yell. He wanted a treatment at once; in fact, he wouldn't go any farther toward Derryville until the company's medicine man had put him in his old fighting trim.

"I can see where I'm going to earn that twenty a week," muttered Mephisto, getting out of the car.

The third baseman had started something. Nearly every man in the nine suddenly discovered that he had a trouble that called for a little conjuring. A cold lunch was served in the midst of the incantations, and when the Apaches finally resumed their journey toward Derryville they had barely time to reach the ball grounds for the game.

When they drew within sight of the town, a roadster passed them, a man and woman on the seats, and a husky fellow in gray uniform on the running board. "Uhg!" grunted Medicine Chief. "Scanlon!"

Bisbee was breathing hard. "Hattie!" he murmured. "And she never once looked in my direction!"

"You'll have her looking at you, all right, before the afternoon is over," said Mephisto.

"I wonder if Uncle Jasper will be at the game?" went on Bisbee, apparently catching at one straw of hope as another failed him.

"I didn't know you had an Uncle Jasper," returned Mephisto.

"He is my only relative, Carl," Bisbee continued. "He owns half of Derryville. I lived with him until he ordered me out of the house, and told me never to darken his doors again until I had distinguished myself somehow and proved that I amounted to something. Oh, how I have tried to get back here with a balloon ascension, a high dive, and an Uncle Tom company, just to show the old gentleman what I could

do if I set my mind to it! Now I have my chance."

Mephisto was surprised. "I thought Golshaw was the secret of your struggle to get back?" he said.

"Miss Ray, primarily," corrected Bisbee, "but Golshaw and Uncle Jasper incidentally. My reasons for wishing to distinguish myself in my home town are comprehensive, but the principal reason of them all is Hattie."

From rising ground they gazed off over the village roofs and steeples. A hungry, pathetic light gleamed in Bisbee's eyes. He held out his arms to Derryville. "At last," he exclaimed, "I'm coming back! I never realized before how lonesome I was for the old town. There's Uncle Jasper's mill by the river, and Uncle Jasper's business block, and Uncle Jasper's cement works, and Uncle Jasper's bank, and creamery, and row of tenement houses, and—and—Carl," and Bisbee turned to his friend, "isn't it worth the effort of a man's life to make good in such a town?"

"It's worth a bigger effort to make good with Uncle Jasper, seems to me," answered Mephisto.

"What Uncle Jasper doesn't own belongs to Hattie," said Bisbee; and Mephisto grew thoughtful and wondered if, after all, there might not be considerable method in the madness of ex-Lawyer Marks.

CHAPTER IV.

TO MAKE IT INTERESTING.

THE Apaches had a way of charging the players' gate and spilling themselves over a diamond that was calculated to send thrills through grand stand and bleachers, and chills along the backbones of the opposing team. They went to the fray like braves to the warpath, filling the air with blood-curdling yells. At Derryville, Mephisto

led the rush, making big medicine with the tom-tom.

Bisbee had counted on making a dramatic reappearance in the town. The stage was set for just that sort of thing. He galloped across the sward, fearless in the midst of his howling aborigines. Presently he was to show his authority by lifting his hand. Instantly the bedlam would stop. But proceedings went otherwise, that afternoon, on the Derryville grounds. Chaské, alias Jim Waterbury, right field, swung a bag of bats in front of Bisbee and fouled his course. Bisbee stood on his head on the third sack; and all his old friends and neighbors greeted the extempore performance with wild applause. Bisbee picked himself up, dusted his clothes, and looked to see if Miss Ray was present. She was. His chagrin was touching, but he manfully lifted a hand and brought the yelling to a stop.

Scanlon, warming up his mighty right wing, turned to grin at the Apaches. It took more than a lot of war whoops to throw fear into his professional heart. Golshaw drew Bisbee aside and talked with him for a moment. When their brief conversation was finished, Mephisto was surprised to see the two rivals shake hands. Laying aside the tom-tom, Mephisto walked over to Bisbee and inquired about that unexpected show of amity.

"We've struck a bargain, Carl," said Bisbee, in a quiver of happiness. "If the Apaches win, Golshaw retires from the field in my favor; if the White Stockings win, then I retire."

"Naturally," returned Mephisto, picking a boutonniere out of the air casually and pinning it to his lapel. "One ball team has to retire in favor of the other when the game's finished."

"You don't understand! If the Apaches win, then Golshaw retires as an aspirant for the hand of Miss Ray;

and if the locals are the victors, then vice versa with me."

"I don't like the looks of Scanlon," whispered Mephisto. "Let us hope it won't be vice versa with you."

"Not a chance," averred Bisbee, with confidence. "You have saved the day for the red nine with your bag of tricks. Just watch these Indians, that's all."

Medicine Chief was to pitch for the Apaches. He began tossing the ball to Half a Day with every show of calmness and confidence. Out on the diamond the snappy way the red men passed the ball around certainly darkened the skies of hope for Golshaw.

The whistle blew. The White Stockings went out and the Apaches came in. The umpire announced the batteries, peeled a white ball out of the box, and flipped it to Scanlon. Then Scanlon proceeded to strike out Half a Day, Man in a Hurry, and Lone Wolf with a steadiness and ease that caused grand stand and bleachers to grow wild.

As Lone Wolf came over to the bench to drop his bat, he looked ominously at Mephisto. "You no make um right kind of medicine," he growled, in a voice that made Mephisto's hair crinkle. "Why you let um strike out our men, huh? You do heap better or catch um heap trouble."

Then, for the first time, Mephisto realized the responsibilities of his position. But luck was on his side. Medicine Chief fanned the first three to face him, and the contest began to look like a real game. Lone Wolf smiled and shook hands with Mephisto as Moon Gazer picked up a club and took his position at the plate. "Heap fine!" he said. "Mebbyso you give um Apaches two runs this inning, huh?"

"I believe I'll make it two," answered Mephisto, after a moment's reflection.

"Whoop-a-la!" exulted the captain, and went down to the coaching line as Moon Gazer singled and went to first

like a comet. Chaské sacrificed. Medicine Chief hit three times at nothing more substantial than thin air, and Young Man Who Sits by the Fire lifted a mighty one 'way out in the distant gardens, brought Moon Gazer home, and made a happy round of the bases.

"I guess that will be all for this round, Lone Wolf," remarked Mephisto.

"Two next time, huh?" the captain demanded.

"I'll think about it," said Mephisto. "Just to make things interesting, and give the crowd an idea they're getting their money's worth, I believe I'll let the White Stockings bag a couple."

Eagle Feather went down on a pop-up, gathered in by Scanlon. Then Nick Pender got to Medicine Chief for two bases, and Bangs, next man up, likewise doubled. Pender came home. Lone Wolf and Medicine Chief looked toward Mephisto and made trouble signs. Mephisto pounded reassuringly on the tom-tom, and the next three White Stockings were struck out, flied out, and put out at first. During the work necessary to accomplish these outs, however, Bangs stole home. With the score two-and, the diamond proceedings looked more and more like a real ball game.

Mephisto had been guessing remarkably well. The Indians, of course, saw no guesswork in it at all. Before they went to bat in the first half of the third, Lone Wolf demanded three runs of Mephisto. "Injun make um Sword Swallower eat bat all same long knife you no give um three runs," the captain threatened, and held an ash club over the official medicine man's head.

"Just for that," said Mephisto, reaching up to pull four bits in silver out of the end of the club, "you'll not get a thing this round. Don't get ornery with me, Wolf, or worse things than that will happen to the Apaches."

Lone Wolf was cowed. Mephisto

may have seemed calm, but in reality he was scared blue. Not until the captain of the Apaches had turned scowling away, did he dare to draw a long breath. According to forecast, the Poor Los drew a goose egg in their half; but the White Stockings did no better in the half that followed. Lone Wolf happened around and humbly thanked Mephisto for holding the locals in that handsome manner. Mephisto waved his hand magnanimously, and told him he was always glad to do what he could for a friend who showed a proper spirit.

The game rocked along in a nip-and-tuck fashion until the last half of the seventh inning. Then the White Stockings captured three runs, and for the first time led in the scoring. The blackboard on the fence, at the beginning of the eighth, looked like this: Apaches, 6; W. S., 7. The red men threw dark looks at Mephisto, but had reached a point where they were afraid to do any threatening or make any demands. The eighth went by without a run for either side. Now, if the White Stockings could hold the Apaches for the first half of the last inning, all Derryville could rejoice in a victory.

CHAPTER V.

HANDY TO HAVE AROUND.

EAGLE FEATHER, first up, got a hit. Then Big Thunder got another. Right here, with two on bases, Half a Day came to bat. A fearful, almost an agonizing, silence settled over the spectators. The Indians seemed to be pounding Scanlon all over the lot. The prospect now had a hopeless look for the locals.

Then a boy, over on the bleachers, ate the last peanut out of a bag, inflated the bag, and struck it with his open hand. The result closely approximated the explosion of a firearm, and in the stillness echoed loudly across the dia-

mond. Half a Day, with a horrified yell, dropped his bat and started like a deer for the distant fence. Some of the Apaches started after him, but the pursuit was useless. Fear lent wings to Half a Day's feet, and he was over the fence and away before any of his teammates could come anywhere near him. Tall Timber, the reserve pitcher, went in to bat in Half a Day's place. He fanned; and Eagle Feather and Big Thunder still roosted on the bases.

Man in a Hurry was the next Apache to grab a club and confront Scanlon. Golshaw leaned over the grand-stand railing and made a gesture to a man on the bottom row of the bleachers. This man unobtrusively emptied the contents of a gunny sack into the ball field. A black cat darted across the diamond. A frantic cry escaped Man in a Hurry, and he dropped his club to watch the somber streak fade into the outfield. Before Man in a Hurry could recover, Scanlon had put three pretty ones over. "Striker out!" boomed the umpire. Eagle Feather and Big Thunder still roosted on the bases.

Medicine Chief became rattled. He began prancing up and down in front of the players' bench, and saying things in Ute, or Piute, or whatever it was. The effect on Lone Wolf, the next man up, was distressing. He sounded a call for a medicine dance. The umpire gave him two minutes to face the local pitcher. Bisbee came out of the obscurity in which he had temporarily wrapped himself and begged his red captain to go on with the game. But Lone Wolf would not listen.

Eagle Feather might have romped in, during the excitement, and at least have tied the score, but the White Stocking on third plucked the plume from his red headband, and Eagle Feather was out of it. With two minutes gone, Scanlon tossed three balls over the plate and Lone Wolf was declared out. The game was lost to the Apaches.

And what of Bisbee? He felt as if he had lost the world. His one consuming desire was to get out of Derryville by the shortest route, and never show himself in the town again. Carl Mephisto also had a consuming desire, and it was to get away somewhere by himself until he knew just how the Indians were going to take their defeat. He was hustling around the end of the bleachers when he collided with Bisbee. They moved on together, only to find themselves suddenly confronted by Golshaw. "Don't be in a rush," said the manager of the White Stockings. "I want a word with you, Bisbee."

"And I want a word with you," flared Mephisto. "You had the kid burst that paper bag; and you had a hireling drop the black cat on the diamond; and by your orders your third sacker snatched the feather out of the headdress of our base runner. Don't tell me all that wasn't a frame-up!"

Golshaw, judging by his appearance, was not in a triumphant mood. He had in his hand a copy of the *Derryville Evening Times*, just from the press. He turned on Mephisto sadly, guiltily. "Pender found out all about the eccentricities of your red nine while he was in Blossburg," Golshaw admitted. "So I planned, at the critical moment, to start the boox to working. Well, what of it?"

"What of it!" cried Bisbee wrathfully. "Well, it wasn't square. It cancels our agreement. I don't have to retire from the field in your favor."

"Read that, Bisbee," said Golshaw, pushing the newspaper under Bisbee's eyes and indicating an item in the column of society news. "Read that, and I guess our agreement won't make much difference to either of us."

Mephisto read the item over Bisbee's shoulder. It was a small item, but staggering. It announced that Miss Harriet Ray was engaged to marry Mr. Crittenden Bolt, of the well-known firm

of Bolt & Blue, haberdashers, Des Moines. Bisbee reeled as from a blow between the eyes.

"I never dreamed of such a thing," averred Golshaw, "nobody in town ever dreamed of it. I shall resign as manager of the White Stockings and leave this part of the country forever!"

He put out his hand, and the two rivals of other days buried the hatchet then and there. They had no ground for differences, now.

"Well, here you are!"

It was a rasping voice, and Bisbee and Mephisto whirled around. A thin, middle-aged gentleman with gray side whiskers was the speaker. His small, sparkling eyes were fixed on Bisbee, who fell back, apparently overcome. "Unc-uncle Jasper!" he gasped.

"Yes, Uncle Jasper," was the crisp response. "At last, Hannibal, you have done something worth while. For the first time in years I have been interested in a ball game." He took off his straw hat and displayed the battered brim and the loose crown. "In my excitement, I destroyed this two-dollar hat," he went on. "I never dreamed that I could forget myself so far. Hannibal, I enjoyed the game, and for the first time in twenty years I have laughed heartily. Come back to the old home, boy. You gave me this pleasant afternoon, and I wish to reward you."

"Reward me?" asked Bisbee.

"Exactly! Our butter maker wants an assistant, and you can go to work in the creamery to-morrow at sixty a month."

"Uncle!" shouted Bisbee, frantic with delight.

"Excuse me!" exclaimed Mephisto, and started off at a run.

Lone Wolf, with all the Apaches at his heels, suddenly appeared in the offing. They were on Mephisto's trail, and he knew it. Although Mephisto ran his best, yet he was overtaken and

cornered in an angle of the ball-ground fence.

"You think um Injun mad, huh?" queried Lone Wolf. "Naw. Half a Day heap fool; Man in a Hurry heap fool; all Injun nine heap fools. We hold um council, decide we want um Sword Swallower for manager. You come with us, huh? We got plenty game to play, plenty money in sight."

For the first time that afternoon Mephisto had guessed wrong. He experienced a feeling of immense relief. With Hannibal Bisbee reconciled to fate, once more on good terms with Uncle Jasper, and hooked up with the creamery as assistant butter maker,

Mephisto could accept the job of managing the Apaches without supplanting anybody.

"Lone Wolf has a good heart," spoke up Big Thunder. "He speaks with an honest tongue, white brother. The palefaces are many and the Indians are getting scarce. You are big medicine. With my own eyes I have seen you take cigars out of an empty hat. Also eggs out of an empty bag. You will be handy to have around. Will you take the job on a fifty-fifty basis?"

"I'll go you," said Carl Mephisto.

"It is well, my brother," remarked Big Thunder.

Lone Wolf banged the tom-tom and the compact was sealed.



PARADOXICAL PETE

By Terrell Love Holliday

ARISE, my countrymen! To arms!
Indignity must cease.

Is manhood shackled by the charms
Of craven, shameless peace?"

In such a strain, bloodthirsty Pete,
From morning until night,
In offices, upon the street,
Declared we ought to fight.

One evening Peter shouted: "Hark!
The time for talk is past.
With lead we'll back the war dog's bark.
I've got him up at last."

Selective service! Pete was called,
And, unencumbered, fit,
He had the chance for which he'd bawled—
To do his meager bit.

"Conscription is a crime," said he.
"This number-drawing plan
Is foolish! Why, they've drafted *me*!
I'm not a fighting man!"



(A COMPLETE NOVELETTE)

CHAPTER I.

UNSOLICITED INFORMATION.

EVEN before his visitor said a word, Silas Macomber suspected the nature of his errand. Although Petersboro was more than fifty miles from New York, it was not the first time that the head of the Macomber machine shops had been honored by a call from a representative of the police department of the great metropolis, and recollection of those other experiences brought a grim, almost hostile, expression now to his rugged features.

"Well, sir," he demanded sharply, "what can I do for you?"

"You can't do anything for me, Mr. Macomber." Lieutenant Kenney grinned. "The shoe is on the other foot. I am here to do you a good turn—to put you wise to the fact that you have an ex-convict on your pay roll."

"Indeed!" said Macomber, with a trace of a sneer. "An ex-convict, eh?"

Dear me, how very interesting! Which—who is he?"

"He's down on your books as Richard Royce, sir. I've just made inquiry. That's his right name, too. The nervy beggar hasn't even taken an alias, as most of them find it convenient to do. He has a job as a shop hand in the assembling department. It isn't a position of great responsibility, of course, but just the same I thought it better to open your eyes to the fellow's record. He has been out of Sing Sing less than six months. Did a three-year stretch for grand larceny—a matter of five hundred dollars that he helped himself to from his employer's safe."

"You are sure that he was justly convicted?" Macomber inquired.

"Unquestionably, sir," Kenney replied. "As a matter of fact, he was caught with the goods on him and pleaded guilty in court. It was that, and the fact that it was his first offense, which enabled him to get off with such a light sentence." The detective paused.

"Of course you didn't know that he was a jailbird when you hired him?"

"No, I didn't know that. He came here the other day, looking for work, and I took him on without asking any questions." A glint came to the manufacturer's eyes. "I am much obliged, however, for the information."

"Don't mention it," returned the officer. "You see, I happened to be out here on another matter, and I accidentally encountered him on the street, coming jauntily along to work with his dinner pail in his hand. The instant I set eyes on him I recognized him, and I says to myself here's where I settle the hash of that bird."

"You have a personal prejudice against him?"

"Not at all. The fellow never did me any harm. But duty is duty, and of course it wouldn't do to see a crook filling an honest man's job and not give his employer a friendly tip."

Macomber sat for several seconds in silence, regarding his visitor with a steady scrutiny which caused the latter to feel somewhat uncomfortable.

"You look like a pretty decent sort of chap," the manufacturer remarked presently. "So did most of the other central-office men who have been here from time to time on errands of a similar character. I'm blessed if I can understand it."

"Understand what, sir?" the detective asked, frowning.

"Why some of you policemen should be so keen on keeping a man down; why you should see fit to go out of your way to prevent a poor fellow who has made one mistake from having another chance."

The central-office man shrugged his shoulders. "I didn't go out of my way. I told you that I ran into this fellow Royce by accident. In the circumstances I deemed it my duty to warn you. Of course, if you want to keep him in your employ, knowing what you

do about him, Mr. Macomber, that's your own funeral and doesn't make any difference to me. Most employers would be mighty grateful, though, for being put wise."

Macomber laughed. "I am going to tell you something, Kenney, that may surprise you. This young man you speak of isn't the only ex-convict who is working here for me at the present moment. Scattered among my help there are fifteen others."

"Fifteen!"

"Yes. Some of them have been on my pay roll for several years and have climbed from the bottom of the ladder to positions of responsibility. All of them are doing their work conscientiously, giving me honest value for every dollar I pay them. I gave them a chance here because I believe in the principle of live and let live, and never in one single instance have I had cause to regret my decision."

The policeman's face lighted up. "Oh, yes!" he exclaimed. "I remember you now. I've heard this shop spoken of at headquarters. You're the gentleman who has been stirring up such a fuss about the way our prisons are run. You would like to see the jailbirds served ice cream seven days a week and have a morris chair in every cell. A chap with a penitentiary diploma is more welcome here than a college graduate." He got up from his chair. "I apologize for having bothered you, sir. If I'd recalled who you were at first I'd have known better than to waste my time coming here to give you the tip about young Royce."

"You can be sure that what you have told me about him is not going to prejudice me against him," the owner of the machine shops declared, frowning at the other's irony.

"Of course not. It's more likely that I've given him a boost instead of a knock," was the sneering response. "I suppose now that you know that

he's a jailbird he stands an excellent chance of promotion. Sixteen jail graduates working here, eh? Suffering cats! If I were in your shoes, Mr. Macomber, I'd be mighty careful not to keep anything of value in the office safe. With that bunch around——"

He broke off suddenly as his gaze rested on a small safe in a corner. "Ah, I see that you're well protected in that respect. You have one of the new phono-lock safes here. A very wise precaution in the circumstances."

Macomber scowled. "If you imagine that I installed that particular type of safe because I do not trust my employees, you are very much mistaken," he declared angrily. "The owner of the patent happens to be a friend of mine, and that was my only reason for selecting that model. There isn't a man working for me, no matter what his past, in whose integrity I haven't the most implicit confidence."

"Of course!" sneered Kenney. "But just the same you're fortunate in having a safe here that has a phono-lock instead of the ordinary kind of combination. Even an ex-convict, you know, may turn out to be a crook."

And with this bit of sarcasm he took his leave.

CHAPTER II.

THE TURNING POINT.

CECILIE MACOMBER, visiting her father at his office a little later, found him in no very pleasant frame of mind.

"I am somewhat upset, my dear, by an interview I had half an hour ago with a detective from New York," the old man explained when the girl inquired what had disturbed him. "Those confounded man hunters always get me stirred up when they come here to hound my employees, and this fellow was particularly disagreeable."

Cecilie frowned sympathetically. "Which one of our men was he inter-

ested in, dad?" she asked, an anxious expression on her pretty face.

"No one that you know, my dear. A nice-looking young fellow who came here the other day seeking a job. I hired him myself, and put him to work in one of the shops. He looked to me like a chap who had seen better days, but there was nothing about him to suggest a prison past. It was a great surprise to me when that policeman told me that he had been in trouble. But, of course, that isn't going to count against him here."

"Certainly not," the girl agreed. Then, after a meditative pause: "I would like to meet him, dad. Won't you please send for him?"

Her father was not at all surprised at her request, nor did he misinterpret her motive. Cecilie, in spite of her youth, was as ardent and sincere a worker as he in the cause of prison reform and social uplift. She took a warm personal interest in the careers of all the employees, but particularly in those who had come to the factory with the shadow of the penitentiary hanging over them.

Macomber pressed a button on his desk. "Go to the assembling shop," he said to the clerk who responded, "and tell McPherson to send young Royce to me."

The young man in overalls who came presently in compliance with this summons certainly did not bear the appearance of one whose reputation was scarred. Honesty and fearlessness seemed to be stamped on his smooth-shaven, prepossessing countenance. His clear blue eyes met his employer's gaze unflinching. "You sent for me, sir?" he inquired.

"I wanted to find out how you were getting along," Macomber explained in a kindly tone. "How do you like your work?"

"First rate, thank you. I'm afraid I am still a little awkward. I'm not—

er—I had never in my life handled a post drill until I came here. I think I can conscientiously say that I am getting a little better at it each day. In fact, I have the foreman's word for that."

His employer nodded approvingly. "You'll soon get the hang of things. There's no reason why in time you shouldn't make an expert mechanic. Just put all your mind into your work and don't let—er—anything else bother you. By the way, a man from New York came here to see me a little while ago—a police officer named Kenney."

The young workman started. "I—to see you about me?" he faltered.

"Yes. But don't be alarmed, Royce. We judge men in this shop by what they are, not by what they have been. Don't worry about it at all. I mentioned the matter merely to let you know that you have nothing to be afraid of here."

"Thank you, sir. Is that all you wished to see me about?"

"That is all, Royce, except that while you are here I would like you to meet my daughter."

Cecile, who had remained in the background until now, came forward and offered her hand to the new employee—an act which brought a rush of color to his face. "I am very glad that you have come to work for my father, Mr. Royce," she said pleasantly. "I am sure you will get along all right."

Royce was about to make some response when Sears, the managing clerk, came into the room. "I beg your pardon for disturbing you, Mr. Macomber," he apologized, "but here's a message from one of our important customers in South America that probably needs immediate attention. Unfortunately it is written in Spanish, and—Carter being away, sick—there is nobody here who can translate it."

"You'll have to send out and try to get hold of somebody," said Macomber,

frowning in perplexity at the document the managing clerk had handed him. "Send to New York, if necessary. Confound it! Why can't those people conduct their correspondence in plain United States?"

"If I can be of any service to you, sir," Royce volunteered, "I can translate Spanish."

"You can, eh? Where did you pick that up?"

"At business college."

"A business-college graduate, are you? Why didn't you mention that to me the other day? I might have found a place for you in the office instead of in the shop."

"I didn't suppose there was any chance of that," the young man explained, smiling. "I inquired of one of the clerks and was informed that there were no vacancies in the office. In the circumstances I was glad to get work—any kind of work—in the mechanical department."

Macomber stroked his chin reflectively. "Go out with Mr. Sears and run off a translation of this message on the typewriter," he ordered.

That incident proved to be the turning point in Royce's position. When he returned presently with his task satisfactorily performed he was offered a place in the office at twenty-five dollars a week. A few months later Macomber, who had been watching his work and behavior closely and with growing appreciation, called him into his room and asked him how he would like to become his private secretary at twice that salary.

"I should like it first rate, sir," Royce replied, with a wistful smile. "But—er—as my duties would be of a more or less confidential character, perhaps, before I accept the promotion I had better tell you something about—about that visit of Kenney's. I shouldn't like to say—"

"Not at all," his employer cut him

short. "There is no need to go into that matter, my boy. As I told you when you first came here, a man's past mistakes are not counted against him in this shop."

"But it is only fair that you should know——"

"Not a word," the kindly old man broke in, with a reassuring smile. "Not another word on that subject. In the words of my favorite poet, 'let the dead past bury its dead.' I'll have your desk moved into this room, and you start in on your new duties to-morrow morning."

CHAPTER III.

THE REAL REASON.

IN his new position Royce made himself so useful to his employer, displayed such rare initiative, and rapidly acquired such a comprehensive grasp of the details of the business, that gradually Macomber learned to lean on him more and more. Inside of a year he was drawing a bigger salary than any other employee and was treated by the clerks in the outer office with almost as much deference as the boss himself.

As a crowning mark of his confidence, Macomber took him to New York one day and introduced him to the manager of the Phono-lock Safe Company.

"I want you to make a record of Mr. Royce's voice," he told that official. "Although the small safe in my private office contains only my personal papers, I want him to have the power to open it in case of emergencies."

Royce, who had gone there in ignorance of what his companion had in mind, looked at him in astonishment. "Surely that is not necessary, sir," he protested in an undertone. "You have already given me the combination of the big safe in the outer office. If, as you say, the small safe in your room contains only your personal effects, and has nothing to do with the business,

why should I have the power to open it? In fact"—he hesitated—"while, of course, I deeply appreciate the compliment, I don't—I would rather not have the privilege."

"Why not, my boy?"

"Because it is just possible that something might be stolen, and in that event I—you would naturally suspect me. You know I made the same objection when you insisted on giving me the combination of the big safe, but as there were business reasons why I should accept that responsibility I allowed myself to be persuaded. This case, however, is different."

"You need not worry on that score," his employer reassured him. "There might be a chance of somebody getting hold of the combination of the big safe and robbing it, but with the phono-lock that would be absolutely impossible; wouldn't it, Mr. Deeming?"

"Absolutely impossible," the manager of the safe company echoed, smiling. "We positively guarantee that nobody but the persons whose voices are recorded on the steel disk can open one of our safes, except by violence. Even though a thief knew the countersign, it wouldn't do him any good. Only the original voice, or voices, from which the record was made would release the mechanism. Perhaps you are not acquainted with the principle on which the phono-lock works, Mr. Royce?"

"I have only a hazy idea of it," Royce admitted. "Do you mean to tell me that anybody who knew the countersign and was a clever mimic could not successfully imitate the voice of the owner?"

"It could not possibly be done," Deeming declared positively. "It is a scientific fact that no two human voices are exactly alike. They may sound identical to the untrained ear, but a careful comparison of the respective records of the vibrations always reveals marked differences. And the mechanism which operates our lock is con-

trolled entirely by the thin, wavy line which is practically a 'vocal signature' of the owner of the safe—a signature that could not be forged.

"In our recording department, to which I shall presently take you, Mr. Royce," he continued, "is an ingenious contrivance consisting of a tiny mirror on the needle of a phonograph. When the person whose voice is to control the combination speaks into this instrument the mirror throws a ray of light up or down with each vibration of the needle, and its movements are thus recorded on a photographic film unrolled before it at a certain speed. In this way we get a perfect record of the voice vibrations, which is later engraved on a steel disk and installed in the mechanism of the phono-lock.

"On the outside of the safe, as you are, of course, aware, is the mouthpiece of an ordinary telephone transmitter. Attached to its diaphragm is a delicate needle, the other end of which rests on the groove of the steel disk which bears the countersign. When this countersign is spoken into the safe by the same voice which made the record the vibrations of the needle coincide with the record on the disk and a continuous electric contact is made which, when completed, releases the mechanism and causes the massive door to swing on its hinges."

Royce nodded. "I see," he said. "And if any other voice but the right one were to speak into the transmitter, the vibrations, not being exactly the same, would fail to make the electric contact?"

"That's the idea." The manager laughed. "You understand now how groundless is your fear of being made the scapegoat of somebody else's dishonesty?"

"Yes, I guess I should be thoroughly protected," Royce assented. "I must confess that always, until now, I looked upon your lock as somewhat of a freak.

Not knowing exactly how it worked, I scarcely could believe that it was really and truly as safe as it was sound."

Macomber grinned at the little pun. "Now that the invention has been explained to you, my boy, you have no objection to sharing the combination with me?" he asked.

"Not if you really wish it, sir. But, if you'll pardon me for saying so, I still fail to see what is to be gained by it. What have I to do with your private affairs?"

"Nothing, of course. But if I were to die suddenly, or were to be stricken dumb, it would be necessary, as the combination now stands, to blow the safe open in order to get at its contents. Perhaps I am seeking to guard against those contingencies."

"But you told me the other day that Miss Macomber has the combination."

"Yes, that is so. My daughter's voice is on the disk." Macomber laughed. "Well, my boy, if you must have the real reason, it was Cecillie who suggested my taking this step." He glanced toward the manager of the safe company, who was engaged just then in talking with a subordinate. "She wants you to know how implicitly we trust you," he continued in an undertone, laying his hand on the young man's shoulder. "I keep several thousand dollars in negotiable securities locked in that safe, Royce. We want you to feel that we have such confidence in your integrity that we are not a bit afraid to give you access to them."

CHAPTER IV.

AGAINST EXPECTATIONS.

CECILIE'S suggestion that Royce's voice record be added to the combination of the phono-lock safe was by no means the first indication the girl had given of her great personal interest in her father's confidential man.

The development of their friendship had kept pace with Royce's rapid promotion at the machine shops. In cordial sympathy with her philanthropic work among the families of the men on her father's pay roll, he had eagerly volunteered his services and had soon made himself as indispensable to her in her sociological activities as he was to her father in the running of the business.

Already he was beginning to dream dreams in which his employer's attractive daughter played a star part, and for a time there was certainly nothing about Cecilie's attitude toward him to discourage him in his agreeable pastime of constructing aerial castles.

Then suddenly the girl's manner abruptly changed. She discontinued her frequent visits to the office which obviously had been largely inspired by his presence there, and whenever they met she treated him with such cold formality that a much less sensitive person than he could hardly have escaped the conclusion that he was being snubbed.

This sudden change in Miss Macomber's attitude naturally puzzled Royce greatly. He pondered over everything that he had done, seeking to find a reason for it, but finally gave it up in despair. Of course, he reflected, it was quite impossible for him to seek any explanation from the girl.

One evening, a few weeks after Royce's visit to the office of the safe company, a glum-looking, pale-faced young man in blue jumpers entered Macomber's private office.

At sight of him the head of the machine shops grinned. "In that outfit I can almost forget that you answer to the name of Reginald St. John Vandiveer," he remarked, chuckling. "Of course it never was really fair to hold that against you, but I couldn't help being prejudiced." He patted his vis-

itor encouragingly on the shoulder. "How do you like your job, my boy?"

Young Vandiveer scowled. "If you want a frank answer, I don't like it at all," he declared sullenly. "Surely that doesn't surprise you. It is hardly to be expected, I think, that a man brought up as I have been would enjoy putting in eight hours a day handling a beastly, greasy drill, in company with a lot of coarse, uneducated laborers. The work itself is degrading enough, but the associations are even worse. And the insults and abuse of that vulgar ruffian of a foreman are really a bit more than any gentleman could tolerate. How do I like the job!" He laughed bitterly. "Well, now, Mr. Macomber, that's what one might call rubbing it in."

A glint came to the elder man's eyes. "So you're going to quit, eh?" he asked. "You don't intend to stick it out?"

"Oh, I didn't say that. The Vandiveers are not the quitting sort. If you insist on my going through with this—er—this disagreeable experience before you will give your consent to my marrying Cecilie, I shall go through with it, no matter how painful and humiliating I may find it. Cecilie is well worth the sacrifice. But couldn't you be reasonable, sir, and change the conditions a bit? Give me a position of some sort here in the office, instead of outside in that beastly shop, and I'll soon satisfy you that I'm not afraid of hard work."

Macomber grinned and shook his head. "The man who marries my girl has got to take my place here some day," he said quietly. "He has got to have a thorough knowledge of the business, and the best place for him to acquire it is out there in the shops. If you're afraid of grease and grime, Reginald, and are ashamed to wear jumpers, I reckon you don't quite measure up to the specifications of the son-in-law I'm looking for."

"It isn't the grease and grime," Vandiveer protested, scowling; "or these confounded togs, either. It is the surroundings that I find so disgusting—the disagreeable company into which you have thrust me. Why, I understand—I can hardly believe it, but I have heard the same thing from several sources—that some of those wretches with whom I have to rub shoulders are actually criminals—rogues who have seen the inside of a prison. Is that really so, Mr. Macomber?"

The old man's face darkened. He glanced apprehensively toward Royce, who had sat at his desk throughout this conversation apparently engrossed in some business correspondence.

"We have no criminals or rogues working here, Vandiveer," Macomber said sharply. "Some of my people—several of them—have been in trouble. We don't hold that against them in this shop, any more than we hold it against you that you are afflicted with the name of Reginald St. John.

"There is one thing that we do hold against a man, however," he continued angrily. "It is a rigid rule of this concern that any person employed here who is proved guilty of making a slurring remark about the past of any of his fellow workers shall be instantly discharged. That rule goes for you, too, young man. I'll overlook your offense this time, but be careful that it does not occur again."

After Vandiveer had gone out, Macomber turned with a grin to Royce. "What do you think of my future son-in-law?" he asked.

The younger man hesitated. "If he is Miss Macomber's choice, I guess he must be all right," he answered diffidently. "She wouldn't—she usually shows good judgment."

"Cecilie likes him pretty well," his employer remarked, frowning. "But as a matter of fact he's more her

mother's choice than hers. He has been calling steadily at the house for the past few weeks, and he has made a great hit with Mrs. Macomber. What she sees in him I can't imagine. He has got a college education and a family tree, but apart from those fancy trimmings he looks to me like a total loss."

Royce could readily understand why the possession of a family tree would be a big point in Vandiveer's favor so far as Mrs. Macomber was concerned. That lady, he knew, was not at all in sympathy with her husband's and daughter's democratic views, and frowned on their sociological work. She was the leader of Petersboro's "upper ten," and the great fear of her life was that her daughter would make the mistake of "marrying beneath her."

"How does Miss Macomber feel about it?" Royce asked, somewhat anxiously. "Does she—has she—decided to marry him?"

"Well, they're not engaged yet," Cecilie's father answered. "Whether they will be or not will depend largely on how he makes out here. My daughter is in full sympathy with my plan to test his mettle by putting him to work in the shop. She believes he'll make good, but I have my doubts." The old man grinned. "As a matter of fact, I have a hunch that he'll quit cold before he's been working here a week."

Macomber was mistaken, however. To his great astonishment Vandiveer stuck resolutely to his humble job in the assembling shop, and before many weeks had passed the head of the concern got excellent reports concerning him from McPherson, the foreman.

"He's the biggest surprise that has ever been handed to me, sir," McPherson declared. "The first day he wasn't worth the room he took up, and was, in fact, if you'll excuse my saying so, a nuisance to have around. But the second day he came down and pitched into his work as if he had been used

to it all his life, and he has been going at that gait ever since.

"I can't say that he's the most cheerful worker on the premises," the foreman continued. "There's a scowl on his face all the time, and he never has a word to say to any of the other hands. Treats them all as though they was beneath his notice. But apart from that there's certainly no fault to be found with him."

CHAPTER V.

UNWILLING TO EXPLAIN.

FOR six months Vandiveer continued to make good. He disliked his work almost as much as he did his fellow workers, but one of his ancestors had battled and bled at Bunker Hill, and some of that hero's fighting blood flowed in this young chap's veins—enough of it to sustain him in his struggle to qualify as Macomber's son-in-law.

The old man shifted him from one department to another, so as to give him a varied experience in the mechanical end of the business, and, receiving favorable reports from all the foremen under whom he worked, finally admitted to his wife and daughter that he had made a mistake in his original estimate of Cecilie's suitor.

"I'm broad-minded enough to acknowledge when I'm wrong," Macomber told them. "There's much more to Reggie than I thought. I can't say that his disposition makes a hit with me, but then it's you that's marrying him, Cecilie, not I. So long as he has convinced me that he's no quitter and isn't afraid of hard work I'm satisfied to leave the rest to you and mother."

"Then they—we can formally announce the engagement?" Mrs. Macomber asked eagerly.

Her husband frowned meditatively. "Well, I wish you would wait a little longer before you take that step, my

dear," he requested. "Just a few months more. To-morrow I'm going to put Reginald to work in the office, so that I'll have a chance to watch him and see what kind of a head he has for business. You know, I'm getting to be an old man," he added smilingly, "and it probably won't be very long before it will be up to my son-in-law to run the shops."

"Nonsense, dad!" Cecilie protested. "You've many good years ahead of you yet. Why, you don't look a day over thirty-five, you ridiculous man! But when—when that time does come, I am confident that the business will be safe in Reginald's hands. He is really very shrewd—even though he doesn't look it. Besides, he will have Mr. Royce to help and advise him."

Macomber nodded. "With Royce's help he may make out all right," he said. Then, after a long pause: "If only you were marrying Royce, my dear, instead of that other chap! Then I would have no reason to fear that the business to which I've devoted the best years of my life would be run on the rocks." He regarded the girl wistfully from under his shaggy brows. "Do you know I had an idea at one time that you were becoming rather fond of Richard. Until——"

"The idea!" Mrs. Macomber cut in indignantly. "Cecilie marry that man! How could you suggest such a terrible thing, Silas? Why, you have admitted yourself that the fellow is an ex-convict."

"What difference does that make?" her husband rejoined, frowning. "So far as Cecilie and I are concerned, the young man's unfortunate past wouldn't count against him." He looked keenly at his daughter. "You wouldn't refuse him on those grounds, eh, my dear?"

The girl hesitated. "Why discuss the subject?" she returned evasively. "Mr. Royce has never asked me to marry him."

"And if he had?" Her father's keen eyes looked searchingly into hers.

"If he had, I—I am afraid I should have been compelled to refuse him, dad."

"Because of his past?"

Again Cecilie hesitated. "Yes—because of his past," she answered presently, a queer inflection in her tone.

Mrs. Macomber warmly expressed her approval, but her husband looked dumfounded.

"Great Scott!" he exclaimed. "And this from you, of all persons! After all my efforts to broaden your mind, to teach you to judge people by a more Christian standard of human values than most of the world employs, you turn out to be as narrow as the rest of them." The old man laughed bitterly. "So all your enthusiasm for uplift work has been a sham?"

Cecilie winced. "That is not so, father," she protested. "I am thoroughly sincere in my work. When I say that Mr. Royce's past would make a difference, I don't mean that the fact that he had been in jail would count against him."

"What, then?" Macomber inquired, with a puzzled frown.

Cecilie paused reflectively. "He—there is something I don't care to explain just now," she replied. And her father was unable to get any further information from her on the subject.

CHAPTER VI.

A POINT-BLANK REFUSAL.

VANDIVEER discarded his blue jumpers without regret the next morning, and began his final term of probation in the office of the Macomber machine shops. A third desk was installed in Macomber's own room and the new arrival was assigned to assist Royce in a clerical capacity and advised to keep his eyes and ears open

and absorb as much as he could of the latter's business methods.

Again his prospective son-in-law proved an agreeable surprise to Macomber. He soon made it apparent that he had a good head for business, and in several instances when his employer tested his judgment by consulting him in matters which came up for consideration, his responses satisfied the old man that he had initiative and clear-sightedness.

True, his demeanor toward the clerks in the outer office was overbearing, and his attitude toward Royce—whose well-meant efforts to teach him the ropes he haughtily resented—so insolent that Macomber on several occasions was compelled to remonstrate with him. Macomber, however, was hopeful that in time, and with Cecilie's assistance, these defects in his character might be toned down.

"I think he'll do, all right," the old man told his wife and daughter one evening. "To-morrow, as a final test, I am going to take him to New York and have a record of his voice made for the phono-lock safe."

"A final test?" Mrs. Macomber echoed, arching her eyebrows.

"A test of his trustworthiness," her husband explained. "I don't as a rule approve of leading men into temptation, but in this case, where our little girl's happiness is concerned, I consider the experiment justified."

Mrs. Macomber frowned. "Surely you don't question Reginald's integrity?" she asked indignantly. "That is absurd. It is an insult, Silas, even to suggest the possibility of his taking advantage of your confidence."

Her husband shrugged his shoulders. "I've got to be sure that he's an honest man before I trust our girl's future to him," he insisted. "He knows that there are over fifty thousand dollars' worth of negotiable securities in that safe. I took care to bring the fact to

his attention. I have been making inquiries, and I find that, in spite of the airs he gives himself and the bluff he throws, he is dependent almost entirely on the small salary I'm paying him. Of course I don't hold that against him. My son-in-law doesn't have to be a rich man. But he has got to be on the level."

"As if Reggie could be dishonest!" Mrs. Macomber murmured.

"Probably not," Macomber assented. "But if there should be a crooked streak in him it would be very likely to show itself if those fifty thousand dollars' worth of bonds were put within his reach. We shall see how he acts when he has the combination of the phonograph."

But Vandiveer was not put to that test. When Macomber told him of his intentions the next morning, without, of course, explaining the real motive behind the offer, he refused point-blank to have his voice recorded on the steel disk.

"What's the idea?" his prospective father-in-law inquired in astonishment.

Vandiveer shrugged his shoulders. "If I were to give you my reasons," he said, with a contemptuous glance toward Royce, "I am afraid I should be breaking one of the cardinal rules of this office. All I will say, therefore, Mr. Macomber, is that, although I have no doubt that you intend it as a compliment, my self-respect will not permit me to accept the honor."

With Mrs. Macomber, however, when he called at the house that evening, he was more explicit. "Of course your husband meant well enough," he told her, "but the idea of his asking me to share such a responsibility with a fellow who has worn prison stripes! Really that was going a bit too far. As a matter of fact, that upstart, Royce, has been getting on my nerves ever since I went to work in the office. To have to play second fiddle to a jail-

bird has gone decidedly against my grain."

"You have my sympathy, dear boy," returned Cecilie's mother, "I, too, have no liking for that man Royce. I always have predicted that Silas is going to be very sorry some day for giving him so much of his confidence."

CHAPTER VII.

A CHANGED OPINION.

A WEEK before Christmas, Mrs. Macomber again brought up the subject of the formal announcement of her daughter's engagement to Reginald Vandiveer.

"The poor boy has been on probation long enough," she told her husband. "It is preposterous and unfair to keep him waiting any longer. I am sure he is entitled to great credit for the patience he has shown in enduring your ridiculous tests. Now that you have satisfied yourself that he has business ability and is not afraid of hard work, what more can you reasonably ask? I would like to announce the engagement at the dinner table on Christmas Day. I am inviting quite a large party."

Macomber glanced inquiringly at his daughter. "How do you feel about it, little girl?" he asked.

Cecilie hesitated. "I don't think we had better announce the engagement just yet," she replied. "I'm not—I want a little more time, mother, to make up my mind."

"A little more time!" her mother echoed, with a rising inflection. "Good heavens! Surely, my child, after all the sacrifices the dear boy has made for you, all the hours of slavery he has endured in that horrid shop for your sake, you are not thinking of refusing him?"

The girl frowned dubiously. "I don't know, mother. In some respects Reginald has more than come up to my

expectations, but frankly there are several things about him which jar me. I appreciate the efforts he has made to please dad on my account, and for that reason and the fact that you are so keen on my marrying him, I am trying my best to see only his good points, but I—you mustn't ask me to decide just yet."

Her father looked at her shrewdly. "By the way," he remarked, "talking of Christmas dinner reminds me that I am thinking of asking young Royce to spend the day with us. He is all alone in Petersboro, you know, and——"

"You'll do no such thing, Silas," Mrs. Macomber cut in, an angry glint in her eyes. "You can turn your place of business into a refuge for ex-convicts if you wish. I have nothing to say about that. But I positively set my foot down when it comes to receiving any of your jailbird protégés in my home."

Her husband scowled, and Cecilie looked at her reproachfully. "Mr. Royce isn't——" the latter began; then abruptly checked herself. "Surely the Christmas season is hardly the time, mother, to entertain such prejudices," she protested.

"Christmas season or any other time, no man with a prison record is going to sit at my dinner table," Mrs. Macomber declared. "And of all the ex-convicts employed in your factory, Silas, I particularly dislike that man Royce. I don't believe that his reformation is sincere. I am sure that sooner or later you are going to regret bitterly the day that you put him in a position of such responsibility."

Macomber dismissed this prediction with a laugh. "A more trustworthy, high-minded young man than Dick Royce never lived," he declared loyally. "If you won't let me invite him here for Christmas I suppose that settles it. You're the boss of this shack, my dear." And with that the discussion ended.

Late in the afternoon of Christmas Eve, Cecilie came down to the factory in her electric runabout to call for her father. She found him alone in the office. Vandiveer had left town the day before to spend the holidays with his parents in Boston, and Royce's desk was also vacant.

"Dick went to New York to spend Christmas with some friends," Macomber explained, his keen eyes observing the girl's wistful glance toward the young man's unoccupied chair. "He had to catch a train and left early. If you had been here five minutes sooner you would have seen him. He's only just gone."

The old man went to the safe with the intention of taking out his Christmas gifts to his wife and daughter. A few seconds later Cecilie heard him give vent to an ejaculation of mingled astonishment and dismay. He was kneeling before the open safe, staring dazedly into its interior.

"What—is anything wrong?" the young woman asked anxiously.

Macomber laughed grimly as he got to his feet. "Who would have thought it!" he exclaimed. Then he turned quickly to his daughter. "You say your car is outside? Good! Let us hurry. There may yet be time to catch him at the station."

"Catch whom? Mr. Royce? Good heavens, dad—surely you don't suspect that——"

"I don't suspect—I know," Macomber cut in huskily. "The bracelet I bought for you, the necklace for your mother, and over fifty thousand dollars in negotiable securities are missing. Only Royce could have taken them. I would like to give him the benefit of any possible doubt, but unfortunately in this case there can't be any doubt. Great Scott! I would have given every dollar I possess sooner than have this happen."

They caught Royce at the railway

station just as he was about to board a train. He vehemently denied that he was guilty.

"I have never in my life opened that safe," he declared. "Although you intrusted me with the combination, I have never made use of it. I'll be hanged if I can understand this thing, Mr. Macomber, but I swear it wasn't my countersign that worked the lock."

His employer shook his head. "It is no use, Royce. I am positive that I locked the safe all right the last time I was at it, and the combination was in perfect working order when I opened it to-day, so it couldn't have been tampered with." He paused. "Perhaps I am partly to blame myself for having put temptation in your way. At all events, I am disposed to be lenient. If you will confess your wrongdoing and restore what you have stolen I shall not prosecute. It rests entirely with you whether you get a chance to make a fresh start or whether you—eat your Christmas dinner in a police-station cell."

Royce glanced wistfully at Cecile. "I'm sorry," he said quietly, "but if that's the only alternative, then I'm afraid it's the cell for me."

CHAPTER VIII.

A NEW TWIST IN THE CASE.

IN spite of Macomber's efforts to avoid publicity the news of Royce's arrest reached the New York press, and the Christmas Day issue of the morning papers contained a brief telegraph report of the incident.

Police Lieutenant Kenney, of the New York central office, read that report with interest, and, although the case was outside of his jurisdiction, decided to apply for a short leave of absence in order to give it his personal attention.

Early the next morning he visited the New York office of the Phono-lock

Safe Company, and had an interview with Deeming, the manager. The latter went minutely into the details of the construction of the device, unscrewing a plate from the interior of a safe in order to make his explanation of the mechanism perfectly clear. Then he showed the sworn reports of a hundred exhaustive tests which had satisfied a jury of experts that the lock could not be successfully tampered with, and thoroughly convinced the police officer that only the original of the voice or voices engraved on the steel disk could operate the mechanism of the combination.

"That settles it," said the detective, smiling, as he rose to leave. "As a matter of fact, Mr. Deeming, I was pretty well convinced before I came here. We have never had a case at headquarters where your safes had been tampered with, but I thought it best to make absolutely sure before I went any further in my present investigation."

Later that day he arrived in Petersboro and entered the office of the Macomber machine shops. "I have come to look into the robbery," he announced.

Macomber did not receive him very graciously. "I should have thought the local authorities could have handled the matter themselves, without calling in the New York police," he grumbled. "The case is a very plain one. Unfortunately there isn't any mystery about it." He stared hard at his visitor. "You're the detective who came here some time ago to warn me about young Royce, aren't you?" he continued, scowling. "I suppose you're feeling rather good over the unfortunate fellow's downfall?"

Kenney shrugged his shoulders. "Will you kindly open the safe for me?" he requested. "The first thing I would like to do is to examine the mechanism."

Macomber obediently went over to

the safe and spoke into the transmitter. "Amen—Amen," he enunciated softly, and at the final syllable there was a responsive click and the massive door swung open.

The police officer took a screw driver from his pocket, unscrewed a plate from the steel box which inclosed the mechanism, as Deeming had shown him, and proceeded to detach the metal disk on which the countersigns were recorded.

"Who else has the combination besides yourself and the man you accuse?" he asked, examining the thin, wavy lines on the steel through a lens.

"Only one other person—my daughter."

"And she, of course, is above suspicion?"

The old man scowled again. "That question is unnecessary as it is insulting," he rejoined hotly.

"I beg your pardon," the detective apologized. "A case of this sort has to be looked at from every angle." He again made a close examination of the disk with the aid of the glass. "You are sure there are only three countersigns?" he asked presently. "There seem to be four here."

"No, there are only three." Macomber's face suddenly lighted up. "Oh, I know what you mean. The fourth impression is another record of my own countersign—for use over the telephone."

"Ah, that sounds interesting!" exclaimed Kenney. "So you can open this safe without being on the spot?"

Macomber nodded. "It can be opened by putting the receiver of the telephone right in front of the transmitter on the lock," he explained. "At the time I bought the safe, Mr. Deeming, the manager, suggested that I might as well put in that additional countersign, as it might come in useful some time. He explained that the voice vibrations being different over the wire, an extra

record would be necessary in order to work the combination at long range. More because the novelty of the thing appealed to me than because I had any serious intention of making use of that rather freakish feature of the lock, I took his advice. But since we tried it at that time, I have never had any occasion to use it."

The detective looked at him keenly. "You are quite sure, Mr. Macomber, that you have never worked that combination over the telephone?" he asked.

"I have already told you that I have never had occasion to do so," was the impatient response.

Kenney lapsed into a thoughtful silence. "Where were you on the night before the robbery was discovered?" he asked presently.

"Part of the time at my club, and the rest at my home."

"You have a telephone at your house?"

"Of course. But really I fail to see the idea of this line of questioning, sir."

"It may lead to important results," the police lieutenant assured him, with an odd smile. "Did you use your telephone that night? Did you call up anybody?"

"To the best of my recollection I did not. But somebody called me up at the club—a young man employed here in the office. That, however, has nothing to do with this unfortunate case."

His visitor did not seem to be willing to take that for granted. "What was said over the wire?" he asked.

"Nothing of any importance. Vandiveer—that's the young man who telephoned—was going to Boston to be with his folks over the holidays. He called me up at nine o'clock to bid me good-by. I hardly know what made him do that, for he had already said good-by at the office before he left in the afternoon; but I guess he was feel-

ing pretty good. His voice sounded as if he had been taking in a little premature holiday cheer." The old man grinned. "I'm sure this information must be of great value to you."

"It may prove of more value than you imagine," Kenney rejoined. "Where is Vandiveer now?"

"He is in Boston. He intends to remain there until the end of the week."

"Will you be good enough to give me as accurate a report of your conversation with him over the wire as you can recall?" the detective requested.

Macomber complied, and observed with amusement that his visitor appeared somewhat disappointed by his recital.

"You are quite sure that was all that passed between you?" the detective asked.

"That was all, except that he wished me a happy Christmas, and I wished him the same," was the ironical response.

"Ah," exclaimed Kenney, after a pause, "that's a little better. One thing more, Mr. Macomber. Will you be good enough to give me the home address of your night watchman?—the man who was on duty last night."

On receipt of this information he departed, but a couple of hours later he again visited the office. His face now wore a complacent expression.

"Where was Vandiveer supposed to be when he telephoned you that evening?" he began abruptly.

"At the railway station. At least, I understood him to say that he was calling up from there while waiting for his train."

Kenney laughed. "He was misinforming you. He was here in this office at the time. I have interviewed your night watchman. He tells me that Mr. Reginald Vandiveer came back here about nine o'clock—the time you say he called you up at your club. Be-

ing employed here, and an intimate friend of your family, it was an easy matter for him to enter these premises without arousing the watchman's suspicion."

Macomber frowned. "What on earth was he doing here so long after closing hours?" he exclaimed.

"He told the watchman that he had come to get a Christmas present that he had left in his desk," said Kenney, with a grin. "But of course his real motive in coming here was to rob the safe."

"He rob my safe! Why, that is out of the question! He didn't have the combination. I had offered it to him, as a matter of fact, some time before, but he refused to have his voice put on the record."

The detective laughed. "Nevertheless he succeeded pretty well, Mr. Macomber—with your assistance."

"My assistance!" the old man cried angrily. "What nonsense is this? Are you daring to accuse me, sir, of being an accomplice to the robbery?"

"I am," Kenney replied. "I am not saying that you were a willing accomplice, but—Mr. Macomber, will you be good enough to repeat the exact response you made to Vandiveer when he wished you the compliments of the season over the telephone?"

"I wished him the same, but——"

"You said 'the same to you, my boy, and many of them,' didn't you? Those were the very words you used?"

"Of course," Macomber admitted, frowning. "That is the conventional response that anybody would have made in the circumstances. But what has that to do with the robbery of my safe?"

The other grinned mysteriously. "I'll wager a new hat that he made you repeat the sentence," he remarked. "He didn't seem to catch what you said the first time, eh?"

"Now that you speak of it, I believe

that did happen. But really, sir, I fail to comprehend——"

"I knew it!" the detective cut in, with a triumphant laugh. "Mr. Macomber, we are now going to conduct an interesting little experiment. Will you be good enough to go to the safe and speak those words into the transmitter? —'the same to you and many of them.'"

Macomber grudgingly complied. He became indignant when no perceptible result followed, and demanded to be informed if his visitor was trying to make a fool of him.

"Certainly not," Kenney reassured him. "Our experiment is not quite complete yet. Try it once more, please."

With a shrug, Macomber obediently started to repeat the sentence, but before he got to the last word he stopped short with a startled exclamation. As the word "many" left his lips there was a responsive click from within the mechanism of the safe, and the heavy door suddenly swung open.

"Good heavens!" he cried, aghast. "So the phono-lock is a failure—a fraud!"

"That is hardly fair," the detective protested. "The phono-lock was not to blame. It did all that its inventor claimed for it. It was its business to open when given the countersign by the right person, and you unintentionally and unconsciously uttered the magic words when you exchanged the compliments of the season over the telephone with Mr. Reginald St. John Vandiveer."

CHAPTER IX.

WITH GOOD REASON.

A LOOK of enlightenment came to Macomber's face. "I see," he said. "The word 'same,' combined with the first syllable of the word 'many,' made the first 'amen' of the combination."

"Exactly," Kenney assented. "And Vandiveer pretended not to hear you

the first time, and made you repeat your response—which gave him the second 'amen' and enabled him to help himself to the jewelry and bonds."

"Well, I'll be jiggered!" the old man exclaimed. "That rascal must be more clever than I gave him credit for to have thought of such a trick. I remember now telling him how I could open the safe over the phone."

"It was pretty slick work," the detective agreed. "He must have overheard the countersign many times when you were opening the safe, and then or later the idea came to him that the syllables of the password in their consecutive order were embodied in the conventional response that ninety-nine persons out of a hundred make when wished a merry Christmas or a happy New Year. After that, all he had to do was to wait for the proper season to arrive so that he could work his little game on you."

"A pretty safe game, too—or at least so he thought," the police lieutenant continued. "It was a trick that could be turned with a minimum of risk. He knew the watchman would tell later of his coming here after office hours, but he had a plausible excuse ready to account for his presence. At all events, he figured that you would have no reason to suspect him; that the blame would surely fall on young Royce."

Macomber nodded. "And he would surely have got away with it if it hadn't been for you, sir," he remarked gratefully. "By the way, I owe you an apology for what I said to you that day when you came to warn me of Royce's past. I accused you then, I believe, of taking a keen delight in hounding an unfortunate man. I see now that you are generous enough to give even an ex-convict a square deal when you find——"

A chuckle from Kenney interrupted him. "It is you that are entitled to

an apology," the latter declared. "I gave you a wrong tip that day. This young man Royce you are employing is not the man I took him for. So far as I am aware he has never in his life served a day in jail."

Cecilie happened to enter the office in time to hear this announcement. "Of course he hasn't, dad," she chimed in, an angry glint in her eyes. "Mr. Royce has been deceiving us. I have known that for some time."

"Deceiving us!" her father echoed blankly.

"He has been working here under false colors," the girl declared indignantly. "I don't believe his name is Dick Royce, and he isn't an ex-convict. I made that discovery several months ago, at the time I brought the warden of Sing Sing prison here to look over the plant. To my surprise Mr. Royce, as he calls himself, did not recognize our visitor. I could see from his manner that he had no idea of his identity. That aroused my suspicion. And presently I spoke to the warden about him, and he took a good look at him and told me that although he bore a resemblance to a man named Royce who had served three years in Sing Sing for grand larceny, he—the warden—was positive that he was not the same man. There were some marked differences between the two, the warden said, and later, when he got back to the prison, he looked up the records and verified his statement that the man we have known as Dick Royce was an impostor."

"That was what I meant, dad," the young woman continued, "when I told you that day that there was something about his past that I could never forgive. I didn't care to reveal his secret to you then because I have been hoping all along that sooner or later he would confess his deception. For the same reason I have never broached the subject to him."

"But why on earth should he have

done such an extraordinary thing?" asked Macomber, with a frown of bewilderment. "I'm hanged if I can understand why a man should voluntarily assume the rôle of an ex-convict when he——"

"The answer is very simple," Cecilie cut in, with a scornful laugh. "He has been acting a lie, of course, because he supposed it was to his material advantage to do so. He knew when he came to work here of the great interest that you take in men who are making an honest effort to redeem their past. He saw men with prison records in your employ promoted to positions of responsibility, and he made the mistake of assuming that an ex-convict who evinced a desire to reform stood a better chance here than a man who had never gone wrong. Don't you see, dad, it was nothing but a sordid scheme on his part to win quick advancement? He thought that if he could make us believe that he had a prison past his prospects would be much brighter."

"I can't see that your explanation is right, my dear," Macomber returned. "Royce may have let us think him an ex-convict, but he never told us that he was. Our information came in the first place from Lieutenant Kenney. Royce had nothing to do with that. And if he kept silent when I alluded to the subject, later, he may have had some other reason than you suggest."

Lieutenant Kenney smiled. "Of course he had," he asserted. "If he hadn't, I shouldn't be here now. It was because I knew the young man's story, knew that he had a mighty good reason for sailing under false colors, one that entitled him to a whole lot of credit, that when I read that he was in trouble I said to myself that it was up to me to come out here and see if I could do anything for him."

"I learned the truth about him a month or so after I called here to give

you the tip that he was a jailbird," the policeman continued. "That was an honest mistake on my part. He was down on the books here as Richard Royce, and he bore such a strong resemblance to his brother that my eyes deceived me."

"His brother!" Macomber and his daughter echoed simultaneously.

"The young man who is working here is Howard Royce," the detective explained. "It is his brother Richard who is the ex-convict. He assumed the other man's name because—well, perhaps we had better get him out of the lockup and let him tell you his own story. I have an idea, miss, that when you hear it you're going to forgive him."

CHAPTER X.

FROM A DIFFERENT STANDPOINT.

A WIRE to the Boston police resulted in the prompt arrest of Reginald St. John Vandiveer on the charge of grand larceny. As soon as that astonished young man learned the facts that would be produced in evidence against him he obligingly saved the authorities a lot of bother by waiving extradition proceedings and admitting his guilt.

He was in desperate financial straits, he confessed, and his creditors had been hounding him. In the circumstances, the artful trick he had discovered for working the combination of the phono-lock safe had looked like such an easy way out of his difficulties that he had been unable to resist the temptation. He had felt absolutely confident that Royce would be blamed for the theft, and that development, he admitted, would not have been altogether displeasing to him.

But several hours before this confession reached Petersboro, Macomber and his daughter sat in the office of the machine works listening to another

confession from the lips of Howard Royce.

"When my brother Dick came out of prison," the young man explained, "he found it very difficult to get a new start in life. You see, there are few places like this, where a man's past doesn't count against him, and everywhere he went he was hounded because of his one unfortunate error. Driven out of one job after another as soon as his employers learned that he had served a term in jail, the poor chap was well on the way to become a down-and-outer.

"Then the idea came to me that if I assumed his name I might in that way help him. I knew that I could stand the police badgering better than he could. And in appearance we are very much alike. So far, the plan has succeeded. For nearly a year now my brother, under another name, has been holding a good job in a Western city."

An exclamation came from Cecilie. "And you have been willing to make that sacrifice for your brother's sake!" she said softly.

Royce shrugged his shoulders. "It hasn't been much of a sacrifice, after all," he responded; "not nearly so bad as I expected. At first I was turned out of a couple of positions when our friends the police felt it to be their duty to whisper in the ears of my employers that they were giving a jailbird a chance to make an honest living. Then my lucky star directed my steps to this place, and since that day—well, I have had no cause to complain."

"But, Dick—I mean Howard," Macomber put in, "why on earth did you not tell us this before? Surely you could have trusted us with your secret?"

"Well, sir," Royce replied, "you can understand that I was not surprised when you told me that a police officer had called to see you about me. At first I was going to tell you the truth

then, but in a moment I decided to keep my own counsel and say nothing for a time. While you showed me that you did not hold a man's past record against him, I did not know how you would look at what I had done. You see, I was helping my brother to deceive his new employer, and you might not have thought that was right. Of course I knew my brother and the circumstances which led him to make his one misstep, but I could vouch for his innate honesty and knew he was sure to go straight. And so, all along, I have hesitated about letting you know, until something happened which—well, I just couldn't tell you at all then."

"What do you mean?" Macomber inquired. "What can have happened to keep you from confiding in us? You saw how I trusted you and promoted you. Out with it, man; what was the trouble?"

Royce raised his head and looked steadily at Cecilie; then he looked straight at Macomber.

"Well, sir," he said, "if I must tell you, it was on account of your daughter."

"On account of me!" Cecilie gasped. "What had I to do with it?"

"Everything in the world, Miss Macomber," Royce replied quietly. "You know that for some time we have not been as good friends as we used to be during my first few months here. You—well, your manner to me changed a lot. I couldn't tell why, but——"

"That was when I learned from the warden of Sing Sing that you had never been in his charge," Cecilie broke in. "I was angry with you because you had not told us the truth."

"I couldn't know that," Royce went on, "and the only thing I could think of was that Mr. Vandiveer was the cause; that he had said something or raised some objection to your being friendly with me. I felt that to tell you my story then would have put me

in a false light in your eyes; you might have thought I was trying to place myself on a level with the other chap."

"But you could have told me," Macomber insisted. "I——"

"I'm afraid I thought only of how your daughter would look at it," Royce interrupted. "That's all I cared about."

Tears were in Cecilie's eyes as she jumped up impulsively, her hands outstretched.

"Oh, Mr. Royce!" she said. "Can you ever forgive me for being so horrid to you? You know now that all you thought of me was wrong, don't you?"

"Some of it—yes," Royce replied, "but not all of it, I hope, by a long shot," he added significantly.

Cecilie blushed. "Dad," she said, turning to her father, "I'm going home now. I've got the car at the door. You won't want Mr. Royce any more to-day, will you?"

"Certainly not," her father answered. "Better take him out for a long spin and get all your differences straightened out, so that he can start work in the morning with a light heart."

"I'll see to that, father," Cecilie returned. "Come on, Howard."

And as the two left the room together the old man chuckled happily to himself.

No Self-starters There

IN a Western United States rural school recently the teacher, to relieve the tedium, knocked for silence and requested her pupils to propound some riddles. One of the rash scholars promptly asked:

"Why is this schoolroom like a motor car?" and in due time followed it with the answer: "Because everything depends on the crank up in front."

The interesting thing about this incident is that there are parts of the Western United States in which school children are not yet familiar with the self-starter.



OCTOBER 15th.—Cool, with occasional showers; moreover, the anniversary of a date of no little consequence in the annals of Dawson's Dells. Yes, it was just one year ago to-day that we citizens of D. D. gave a swell banquet—a sort of farewell dinner—to our esteemed fellow townsman, J. Adolphus Binger.

Now, there was this about J. Adolphus; he seemed to be ever laboring under the impression that he was a "twelve o'clock feller in a nine o'clock town." Well, maybe he was at that. He had been around quite a bit, especially down in the South Sea Isles, where he got hold of a number of well-paying coconut groves and had made a lot of money from his copra and trading with the natives. But if J. Adolphus thought he was just a little better than the rest of the herd in Dawson's Dells it wasn't because he had money, nor because of his big stock of copra down there in the South Seas; it was because he actually believed that he—individually—was just about the best little singer that ever gargled an impassioned love ditty or took the "dry-fog" vapor cure in the picturesque little village of Salso-Maggiore. Well, I guess maybe he had a pretty swell set of pipes at that; but, as I say, if any

of us citizens of Dawson's Dells ever heard J. Adolphus doing any heavy bragging, it was not about his boodle, but rather about how he could yodle. Some singer—that Binger; at least, to hear him tell it.

Well, one day he came in the grocery store with a telegram he'd just received in his hand. "Boys," he said, kind of important like, "it sort of looks like I'd have to be leaving you all soon."

"Why, how's that?" we all asked.

"Well, you know I hate to talk about myself, but you know as well as I do that I am some singer——"

"Oh, sure!"

"And this fact, so it appears from this telegram, has reached far beyond the peaceful environs of Dawson's Dells."

"How's that?" queried Speck Boner, our assistant depot master.

"They want me to come to New York—to sing!"

That sure made some commotion when he told us that; the news spread around town, and a big throng was on hand to listen, when finally he read the telegram out loud:

"J. ADOLPHUS BINGER, Dawson's Dells.

"We are forwarding contract, which please fill in at your own figures; we will pay your price. Wire us.

"METROPOLITAN OPERA COMPANY."

Now, when a man's got the goods right in his mitt to show, I guess there's no call to accuse him of stalling, is there? Hardly. And though we of Dawson's Dells were momentarily stunned by the stupendousness of the whole thing, we quickly rallied and extended our congratulations.

The singer himself, J. Adolphus Binger, took it all modestly enough. "You see," he said to us patronizingly, "as I figure it, the company—the Metropolitan Opera Company—has been sort of up against it this year. Personally, I think that Pasquale Amato and some of those old birds haven't been going good of late; the company has felt the need of new blood. Hence this telegram to me. Will I accept? Well, well; will I!"

The next night we gave a big spread for our talented and celebrated singer in the hall over the grocery store. All the élite of the town were there. J. Adolphus was on hand, all dressed up like a horse and looking very haughty. Well, there were speeches galore, and complimentary addresses; and just as we were about to sit down to the big eats Speck Boner came running up and handed our singer another telegram.

J. Adolphus took it, a smile playing about his lips. "I guess they want me to hurry up," he said.

He read the telegram, and his face went white, then crimson. He picked up his hat and bolted for the door, dropping the message in his haste.

"But the dinner!" exclaimed the committee in charge. "We're all ready to sit down to eat!"

Well, I can't repeat what J. Adolphus said in reply; it would be censored. Anyhow, he told them all where they could go to eat the dinner they'd prepared, and it wasn't to any frigid zone at that. As Binger disappeared through the door, Speck Boner picked up the telegram from the floor and read out loud:

"J. ADOLPHUS BINGER, Dawson's Dells.

"Error in transmitting; instead of Metropolitan Opera Company, read Metropolitan *Copro* Company——"

Our assistant depot master read no further; he turned to the throng. "That contract," he said simply, "wasn't to get Binger's services as a singer, but to get his nut food."

The crowd groaned.

"Aw, well," said Speck Boner, "let's eat!"

October 16th.—Still cool; rather quiet.

Why We Shave

IT is difficult to find any practical reason why male servants should be allowed to grow hair on the cheek, but not on the lip or chin; soldiers on the lip, but not on the cheek or chin; sailors, again, if on the lip, then compulsorily on both cheek and chin.

Shaving was practiced in the New World before that was discovered by Europeans, and the Mexican barbers shaved their customers with flakes of volcanic glass, each piece, as it lost its edge, being flung away, and a new one applied.

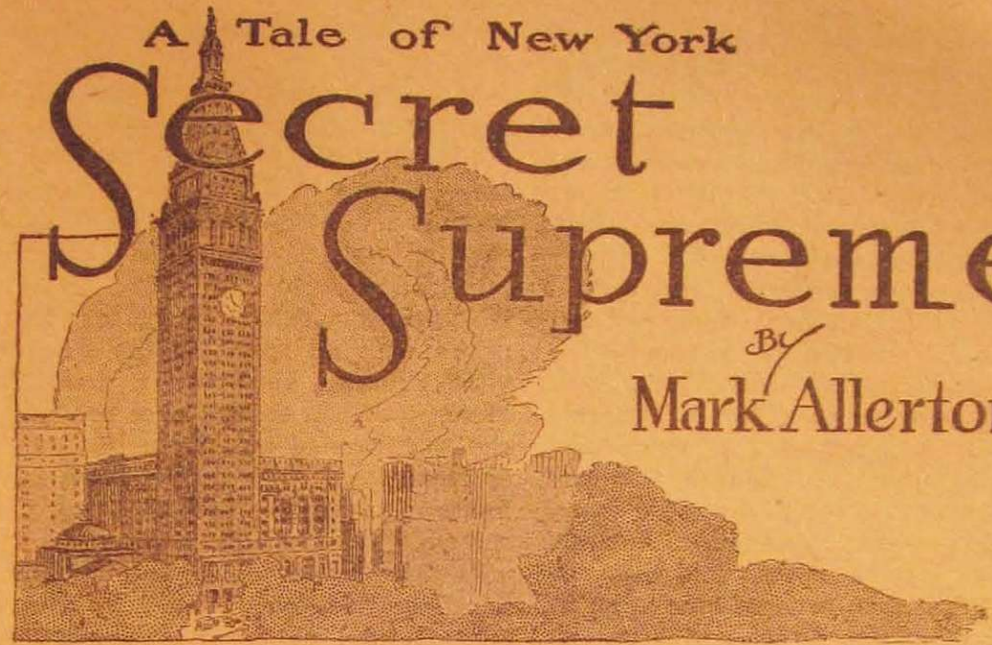
A curious instance of political significance in the mode of shaving may be remembered by some people. It was after the downfall of Napoleon III., when the French army ceased to be imperial, and became republican, that a general order was issued that all military chins were to be shaved and forthwith the familiar characteristic "imperial" disappeared from five hundred thousand chins.

For many years before the Crimean War the mustache in England was the distinguishing badge of the cavalry; it was prohibited in the infantry; and, as for the civilian who braved public opinion by sporting it, he was looked on either as an artist, an eccentric, or as wishing to pass for a hussar.

A Tale of New York

Secret Supreme

By
Mark Allerton



HALIFAX had known Elise ever since she was a little girl. It was a blow to him when she married Felix Raydon. It soon became evident that Raydon was not the man for her. He spent her money, and neglected her; even now he was living in an apartment in the city, leaving her out in the village of Bellport. One night Halifax called on Raydon to protest. There were hot words; Halifax struck him, and Raydon crumpled to the floor and lay still. As Halifax stood there, filled with horror, a key turned in the door and Doctor Bazarin, a dark-skinned man of Spanish or Italian birth, came in. He was a fashionable physician, whom Halifax had once met in Raydon's company. Halifax frankly related what had happened. Bazarin then made Halifax a peculiar proposition: If Halifax would come to work for him a week hence in his private hospital—obey him absolutely without question—Bazarin would get him out of his present fix. Halifax agreed, and, as ordered by the doctor, left the apartment at once. He re-

turned in a short time, however, as he had forgotten his stick and gloves. He found the apartment empty, and his stick and gloves gone. The elevator man said that he had not seen any one leave the apartment. A few days later Elise, much perturbed, called on Halifax. She said that her husband's creditors were swooping down on her, and she feared something terrible had happened. Halifax, filled with conflicting emotions, admitted having called on him and quarreled, but evaded telling her the truth. At the appointed time, he went to the address in the Bronx given him by Bazarin. It was a gloomy old house. A middle-aged woman, Mrs. Nicholls, admitted him; then left him to wait for Bazarin. On a desk, Halifax saw a paper with Raydon's name on it, and some strange figures. Suddenly, upstairs, he heard a peculiar cry. Rushing to the hall, he saw, at the head of the stairs, the swaying figure of a man being led by Mrs. Nicholls. It was Raydon!

Entering at that moment, Bazarin took Halifax back to the library, assuring him that what he thought he

had seen was an illusion. He took Halifax upstairs and showed him Raydon stretched on a couch, dead. Bazarin would not tell how Raydon's body came there; he would give no explanation of what Halifax had seen, or imagined he had seen. His brain reeling, Halifax accompanied the doctor to his Madison Avenue offices, where, Bazarin said, Halifax was to work, instead of in the Bronx. Later, on the street, Halifax met his friend, Jack Martin, a lawyer to whom he had sent Elise. In a friendly way, Martin questioned him about Raydon; it was evident that Martin had his suspicions. Halifax returned to Madison Avenue. Bazarin, plainly upset, told him to avoid Elise; then ordered him to go to the house in the Bronx and bring an instrument case to an address out in Hempstead, Long Island, where Bazarin was going on a hurry call. In the Bronx house Halifax again came on Mrs. Nicholls supporting the figure of a man—Raydon beyond a doubt. Halifax ran upstairs. The figure was now stretched on the floor. There seemed no doubt that Raydon was dead—but Halifax saw an arm twitch and move! Hoarsely he demanded an explanation from the woman.

"If you want to know the truth about what you have seen," she said harshly, "you must ask Doctor Bazarin. But remember my warning. There are some things better never known." There was a look of tragedy in her face, furrowed with lines, as she spoke. "And now go," she went on, "or another crime will be laid at your door."

CHAPTER VIII.

Bazarin Everywhere.

THERE was something in the manner of the woman that startled Halifax and compelled him to obey. "All right," he said, turning from the ghastly object at his feet. "But, cost

what it may, I intend to solve this dreadful riddle."

She did not speak, but merely raised her hand with a sudden gesture, and pointed to the door. With an involuntary shudder, Halifax hurried away, leaving her in the room, ill lighted by the flaring gas jet, alone with the material presence of Felix Raydon, dead—yet not dead. In the taxicab he drove with all speed to the Pennsylvania Station and took a train for Hempstead. It seemed ages before the cab that carried him from the station at Hempstead drew up outside a large house in one of the best streets of that suburb. The roadway was covered with straw to deaden the sound of traffic. The door was opened by a manservant, who answered Halifax's questions in a lowered voice.

"Yes," he said, "Doctor Bazarin is still here. Will you come in, please?"

He showed the visitor into the library. There Halifax paced up and down the room, awaiting the appearance of Bazarin. Suddenly the doctor stood before him. His face was exceedingly pale. His sunken eyes shone with a feverish brilliancy. When he spoke, his voice was unnaturally low. It was the calmness that precedes the storm.

"You are too late," he said, so softly that Halifax mistook his suppressed rage for a gentler emotion. "What has delayed you?"

"I knocked several times and got no reply," Halifax said, his voice rising as he spoke. "I had to get into your house the best way I could."

"Was Mrs. Nicholls not there?" he asked, with a change of tone.

"Yes, she was there. She was with Felix Raydon."

"Ah!" He paused. Then he stretched out his hand. "Give me my case."

"With Felix Raydon," Halifax re-

peated, "who is not dead at all. I saw him move."

"Lower your voice," commanded Bazarin, "if not for your sake, then out of respect for this household."

Then he came very close to Halifax, so that they stood glaring into each other's eyes.

"So that is what your promise is worth?" he said cuttingly. "You have been prying. Tell me what you have seen."

"I saw Raydon supported by your woman, Nicholls. Heaven knows what she was doing to him. He was fully dressed. Then she laid him on the ground. He moved his arm—twice."

Bazarin checked an exclamation. He was clearly agitated by what Halifax had told him. Taking his case, he made as though to leave the room abruptly, but the other stopped him.

"You must tell me what it means," Halifax cried. "I have the right to know. You are practicing some dreadful art on Raydon. You are trying to force me to be your accomplice by persuading me that I killed Raydon. It is not true. If Raydon is dead——"

He made an imperious gesture for silence. A lady on whose face were evidences of great grief had entered the room. When she saw that it was occupied, she turned away. Without giving Halifax a glance, Bazarin followed her into the hall, talking to her in a low, gentle voice.

For some time Halifax remained in the library, hesitating what to do. Then the servant who had let him in, entered. "Doctor Bazarin has gone, sir," he said.

He had balked Halifax again. He had determined to have done with the doctor there and then, but now he realized that if he wanted to discover his secret, he should have to return to Madison Avenue, and tackle him there. At the gate he felt a touch on his arm. By his side stood a big policeman. The

thought that he was there to arrest Halifax made his heart stand still. But his words were reassuring.

"Is it all over with the gentleman in there, sir?" he asked ingratiatingly.

"I don't know," Halifax replied hurriedly. "I think so. Somebody has died in that house, at any rate."

"Ah, that's him, right enough, then," said the man. "Well, it's just as well, for you couldn't have said that he had lived at all for several years, could you?"

Halifax's interest was aroused. "What was the matter with him?" he asked.

"Sort o' paralysis, I think," said the policeman, glad to get somebody to talk to. "He got hurt in a motor-car accident about five years ago. Picked up for dead, he was. I'm not sure but they was going to bury him, when Doctor Bazarin took the case up. You've heard of Doctor Bazarin, haven't you? Well, this was the case that made him. There was columns about it in the papers."

"What did Doctor Bazarin do?"

"Brought him back to life, as you might say. Although it wasn't much of a life, being wheeled about like a living corpse. Couldn't speak, could the poor gentleman, and they say that he couldn't eat, either. I only saw him once, for they never took him out. I had to go into the house once to tell them about a faker that was supposed to be collectin' for the heathen, and I saw him being carried across the hall. I thought sure he was a dead man at the time. And he was like that for five years."

The constable's words set Halifax thinking. The description he had given applied exactly to Felix Raydon. A living corpse—that was what Halifax had seen in the gloomy house in the Bronx.

He walked back to Madison Avenue, and when he arrived there he learned

that Doctor Bazarin had telephoned that he would not be back that night.

Halifax left the house next morning, not troubling to consider whether he was neglecting his duties or not, for all he could think of was the extraordinary power of Bazarin. He resolved to see Elise Raydon again, first, because he was uneasy in mind regarding her welfare, and, second, because he fancied that he might be able to elicit from her some information about Bazarin.

As soon as possible he went to Bellport, Long Island. He had some difficulty finding the house in which Mrs. Raydon lived. There was nobody about of whom to inquire, so, at last, he made up his mind to ring the bell of a house called the "Laurels," and ask there where "Osborne" was to be found.

He pushed open the little gate and pressed the electric bell. As he waited for some one to open the door, he saw, farther up the road, a man come out of a house and make his way quickly along the street. The man was Bazarin! His back was to Halifax, but there was no mistaking that imposing figure. The next moment he had disappeared round the corner.

"Osborne," said the woman who opened the door, was five houses up the road. Halifax thanked her and took his departure. The fifth house up the road was the house from which he had seen Bazarin go away!

His presence there alarmed Halifax. What had he been doing there? Halifax knew that he and Elise hated and feared each other. But what could a gentle, highly strung girl like Elise avail against Bazarin?

Halifax hastened to the door and rang the bell. There was no reply. He rang again and again, and then knocked loudly. The door of the next house opened, and a woman with a broom threw a suspicious glance at him.

"There ain't no one in that house," she volunteered at length.

"Does Mrs. Raydon not live here?" Halifax asked.

"She did, but she don't now."

"When did she leave?"

"I don't know for certain—two or three days ago."

"But is she coming back?"

"That I can't say."

"But the furniture is still in the house," Halifax urged, after a glance through the window near the door.

"What there is of it—yes."

The woman began sweeping the steps, keeping an eye on him as he tried in vain the handle of the door. A nameless dread made his heart heavy as he turned away. What had happened to Elise? Where had she gone? These again were questions that he should force Bazarin to answer. That he could answer them, Halifax had no doubt at all. He felt convinced that Bazarin was in some way connected with the disappearance of Elise, and it did not console him to know that the doctor was none too scrupulous in his methods. At the station he had to wait an unconscionably long time for a train back to New York, and as he stamped up and down the platform he made up his mind to see Martin as soon as possible after his arrival. There was a chance, he believed, that Elise had told Martin where she was going. The train got in a quarter of an hour late, but this did not deter Halifax from carrying out his program. Martin lived in a studio building on the West Side, and there Halifax drove at once. Martin's greeting, Halifax fancied, was less cordial than usual. He expressed a somewhat chilly pleasure at sight of the visitor, and asked what he could do for him. "I have just returned from Bellport," Halifax said. "I went to see Elise."

"Did you see her?" Martin asked, with some eagerness.

"No, I did not. I was told that she had gone. I came to ask you if you can tell me where she has gone." Martin rose from his chair and paced up and down the room.

"No, I cannot," he said. "I experienced the same surprise yesterday. Three days ago I wrote and asked her to call on me. I got no reply. Then I wired. And yesterday, after meeting you, I went down to Bellport to see what was the matter. The house was shut up. I have just posted a letter asking you to call on me. I thought you might clear the matter up."

Halifax shook his head. "I cannot understand it," he said. "Where can she be?"

"And what has prompted her to take so sudden a step?" demanded Martin. "Why has she not let me know? There are a hundred and one things I want to talk over with her."

He stopped pacing about and confronted Halifax. "Have you any idea at all what can have induced her to give us all the slip like this?" he asked insistently.

"None at all. Unless——"

"Unless what?"

"Nothing," Halifax said shortly. "At least, it's not worth mentioning."

"Out with it, man," Martin said testily. "Any suggestion is better than none."

"Well," the other answered, "unless it has something to do with Bazarin."

Martin banged his fist on his desk. "The identical thought that occurred to me!" he exclaimed. "When I saw Mrs. Raydon last she told me that you were going to work for Bazarin. She was most fearfully upset. I could see that she hated the man as though he were the devil himself. Do you know why?" he asked abruptly.

"No, I do not. I wish I did."

"Well," continued Martin. "When I went out to Bellport to call on Mrs.

Raydon, who do you think I should see coming into the station as I left it?"

"Bazarin!" Halifax cried, his heart leaping.

"The very man! How did you guess?"

"Because this morning I saw him coming out of Mrs. Raydon's house."

He narrated his experiences of the morning and the two occasions on which he had seen Bazarin. His excitement got the better of him, for he talked vehemently about Bazarin. Martin listened carefully while he spoke. His expression changed from one of surprise to one of deep concern.

"If you distrust Bazarin like this," he broke in at length, "why on earth do you not have done with him?"

His question brought Halifax to his senses. "How can I do that?" he grumbled. "He is the first man I have met for a very long time who was willing to pay for my services."

Martin came over to Halifax and laid his hand affectionately on his shoulder. "That is not the reason, old boy," he said kindly. "And you know it. You are keeping something back from me. When you care to tell me I shall be ready to listen, and if I can help you my services are at your command. I'm fond of you, Halifax," he added, in a queer voice. "I wish you'd let me be your friend."

"You are my friend!" the other cried impulsively. "The only friend I've got at present." He was silent for a moment, and then he said more quietly: "You are right, Martin. I am keeping something back from you—something so mysterious and horrible that I can scarcely bear to think of it. I cannot tell you now. Please Heaven, you will know everything very soon." He rose to his feet and caught Martin by the arm. "What we have got to do," he said, with all the impressiveness at his command, "is to find Elise Raydon. That she needs our help I am prepared

to swear. That she is in danger I know too well. I, too, am in danger, great danger. If anything should happen to me, Martin, look after Elise."

Martin's eyes seemed to read Halifax's soul. His expression softened. "I will, old boy," he said, and he gripped his friend's hand. "You can rely on me. But," he sighed, "I wish you could point to me the direction from which you fear this danger."

Halifax hesitated for a moment. Then he made up his mind. "If I do," he said, "will you give me your word of honor that you will keep it secret either until I give you permission to speak or until you are positively forced by circumstances to do so?"

"I give you my word of honor," Martin replied gravely.

Halifax opened his mouth to speak when there was a knock at the door.

"Come in!" cried Martin.

A clerk entered with a card in his hand. Martin glanced at the slip of pasteboard.

"Well, of all the——" he began. He handed Halifax the card.

On it was printed the name of Bazarin!

CHAPTER IX.

THE EYE OF SUSPICION.

MARTIN and Halifax stared at the card in puzzled amazement. "I'd better see him alone," said Martin. "Go into that room. I shall not tell him you are here."

Halifax passed quickly into the adjoining room, where two clerks sat writing at a desk. Martin shut the door, and he was left to his own thoughts. For nearly half an hour he sat there, wondering what Bazarin had to say to Martin. He was relieved when the door opened and Martin called his name.

"He's gone," he said slowly. He looked worried and ill at ease. "He is a most extraordinary man." He

paused, and Halifax waited impatiently for him to go on.

"He called to find out where Mrs. Raydon is."

"Did you tell him

"I told him all I know, which is nothing."

"What made him come to you?"

"I asked him that. He said that Mrs. Raydon told him I was acting for her."

"Then he has seen her?"

"Evidently. But when and how, I can't make out."

"Probably he lied."

"That is possible. But if Mrs. Raydon did not tell him, who did?"

"Not I, at any rate," Halifax declared. "I've never mentioned your name to him."

"Could he have followed you here this morning?" asked Martin.

"It is unlikely. I was driving and he was on foot. Besides, I don't think he saw me. But what does it matter?" Halifax cried. "Did he say what he wanted to see Elise for?"

"He said that he had a message for her."

"From whom?"

"From her husband!"

"What!" Halifax exclaimed, rising to his feet.

"Those were his words," replied Martin, watching the other closely. "I asked him where Raydon was, if he were alive or dead."

"Well?"

"He replied that he was under a solemn promise to Raydon to give his message to his wife alone, and that he could give no further information."

Halifax breathed more freely. It was at a time like that he realized how completely Bazarin had him in his power, how the dread of his guilt being discovered might leave him for a time, but only to come back in full force in times of danger.

"He was remarkably frank with me,"

said Martin musingly. "He said that he knew that Mrs. Raydon lacked money, and that he would like to be able to help her. He said that he was under an obligation to help her. Confound him!" cried Martin testily. "I believe he told me a pack of lies, and then I half think he was speaking the truth. If Bazarin is a dangerous man he is a clever man as well. It is a good thing I could tell him nothing, or he would have wormed all I knew out of me."

"Well, at any rate," Halifax said, "it's a good thing that he does not know where Elise is."

"But can we believe that? Perhaps his inquiries were intended to make us think so. You must know what my suspicions are. I suspect Bazarin of having something to do with Raydon's disappearance. From inquiries I have made, I have learned that Bazarin and Raydon were on terms of intimacy, if not of friendship. Bazarin had a key to Raydon's flat. He used to visit him frequently. Occasionally they were heard quarreling. I think—although I have only the vaguest grounds for the suspicion—that Bazarin supplied Raydon with money."

Halifax listened with growing shame. He was acting the hypocrite to the man who thought he was his ally. One word from him would have set Martin on the right track. Not only was he allowing suspicion to be cast on the wrong man, but he was standing in the way of redress to Elise. He berated himself for a blackguard and a coward.

"Now, everybody knows that Raydon was a scoundrel," went on Martin. "He was a flippant man of the world, a rake of the worst type. What interest in the world could a man like Bazarin have in such a man as Raydon? Why did he call on him so often? Over what topics did they quarrel? Once these questions are answered the

reason and cause of Raydon's disappearance will be made plain. I feel certain of that. And I am inclined to think that the reason of Mrs. Raydon's sudden *départure* will be explained also."

"We must find Mrs. Raydon," Halifax said gruffly.

"That may not be easy," responded Martin. "There is no use asking the aid of the police. Here is a man who is, we may say, in the habit of leaving his wife now and again. He tells you he is going to Canada or some place, and the next day he is not to be found in New York. The police would only smile if we told them that because of certain additional circumstances—I mean the appearance of the duns at Bellport, and so on—we suspected that he had left his wife forever, that he may be dead, murdered even."

"No," he went on, "we haven't enough to go on with yet. We must work away by ourselves for the present. What I shall do next is to find out all I can about Bazarin. I know Gourlay, the heart specialist. He is in Chicago just now. He'll be back in a day or two. I'll call and see him. He'll know all about Bazarin."

Halifax took his departure, and broke for the first time in his life one of his rules. He went into a café and drank hurriedly a couple of stiff high balls. When he got back to Madison Avenue, Doctor Bazarin was at lunch.

"Hello, Halifax!" he said. "I was beginning to think you had given me the slip. Take that chair and sit down. I want to talk to you."

Halifax obeyed and sat down at the table. It was impossible to tackle this man, whose moods were so disconcertingly variable. At the moment he looked worried, but his voice was kind, and before speaking he passed on to Halifax various dishes containing appetizing food.

"I, too, have taken a holiday," he be-

gan, with a faint smile. "I have been to Bellport," he announced abruptly.

"Indeed," was all Halifax could say.

"This is the second time I have gone out there to find Mrs. Raydon. The house is shut up. Do you know where she is?"

"No, I don't."

"I particularly wanted to see her about—about this business," Bazarin continued. "You see, we must allay any suspicion of—well, suspicions concerning the welfare of her husband."

The way in which he calmly assumed that Halifax was acting with him made the man's brain swim. And yet—was Halifax not acting with him?

"I don't believe she has got a penny piece in the world," went on Bazarin. "Raydon's affairs were most terribly involved. Now, before very long, we'll have Mrs. Raydon setting this lawyer fellow of hers to work to get a separation for her, and before we can say Jack Robinson they'll be finding out that it isn't a case of desertion, but of murder!"

He pushed aside his plate, and, folding his arms on the table, looked Halifax full in the face.

"Mrs. Raydon's disappearance is awkward—very. I did not calculate on it," he said. "If she were still here, I had invented a harmless fiction that she would have readily believed. Raydon was once useful to me, and I used to pay him a trifle now and again when he was more than usually hard up." As he said this, Bazarin caught up a knife, and pressed it on the table so viciously that the tablecloth was cut. "Mrs. Raydon knew that I paid him this money. She did not love me the better for it." And he smiled again. "Women are like that. They hate anybody who knows their husbands' secrets, of which they themselves are ignorant. Now, if I could see Mrs. Raydon, I could easily persuade her that her husband had intrusted me with the paying of these

occasional sums. I am sure I could. In that way we could get time."

"Time for what?" Halifax asked.

"For laying our plans. Look here, my dear Halifax"—Bazarin pushed back his chair and rose—"you are convinced that I am deceiving you in some way, seeking to get a hold over you, or something. I know you are. You want to settle this matter for yourself. But you are not able. Can't you realize that if you had half a chance you would have the rope round your neck in less than no time?"

"For Heaven's sake, Bazarin—"

"Oh, yes, you would. You have already told far too much that you should have kept silent about. You must let me save you. You cannot save yourself. Worse still, you will drag me into the business as well. In fact, I am inclined to think I am in it already."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that your friend, Martin, thinks that I killed Raydon—I!" Bazarin laughed, and Halifax shuddered at the sound.

"How do you know?"

"I called on him to-day. I called on him because I knew you had been there. In fact, I think you were hidden somewhere away in the office while I was there. Oh, you needn't look so surprised. I knew what you told Martin when you met him in Broadway. You practically told me all yourself. Then I saw you going to the office to-day. Then I made up my mind to see him also, to find out how much more you had given away."

Halifax stared at Bazarin, fascinated. Bazarin smiled again at the other's look of helplessness.

"I found that you had very cleverly set him on the wrong track. And yet it was not very clever to make me out the murderer, was it?" said the doctor, smiling.

"I did nothing of the kind."

"Not very chivalrous?"

"I tell you, I didn't. I——"

"Well, well, I dare say you didn't mean to. But we've got to put that idea out of your friend's head at all costs, or we'll have him paying a night visit to the Bronx just as you did."

Halifax sat silent. Fate seemed to be spinning a web round him from which extrication was impossible. Not only did Bazarin show him what a fool he was, but what a treacherous knave as well. His accusation and implied contempt shamed Halifax; he could not deny the truth of the assertion. If he had not wittingly pointed to Bazarin as the murderer of Raydon, he had at least sat still and acquiesced while the suspicion was put forward.

"Why do you do this for me?" Halifax burst out. "Why do you run this risk? What am I to you?"

"I have already told you. I do it because I hated Raydon and because I think I could like you—if you allowed me to," he added, with a smile. "But," he continued, "I must admit that when I took this matter up I never thought it would become so complicated an affair. I thought I could get rid of Raydon easily. I find it difficult. And it is you," he added sternly, "who are making it difficult."

"I?"

"Yes, you, with your foolish imaginings, your weak scruples, your inquisitiveness! Why didn't you let me alone," he cried angrily, "to finish what I had begun? You have the semblance of a man. Why don't you act like one?"

"Doctor Bazarin," Halifax exclaimed impetuously, "you ask me to trust you. You demand that I should trust you. Why don't you trust me? Why don't you tell me the meaning of what I saw at the house in the Bronx? What are you doing to Raydon?"

Such was the effect of his words that he thought Bazarin had taken leave of his senses. His massive face grew deadly pale, so that the veins in his

forehead, which rose into prominence when he was excited, shone blue on the white skin, and Halifax could see the muscles of his heavy jaw working. He came toward him, his fingers twitching convulsively, and it came into Halifax's mind that those fingers would be content only if they rested on his throat.

He took only one step forward, glaring at Halifax. What he saw on his face he knew not, but it made the doctor alter his tactics. When he spoke, his voice was soft, the voice of one who is rebuking a headstrong child.

"My dear Halifax," he said, but his voice shook a little, "you will know all in good time. Believe me, I am only doing what is necessary for your safety—yours and mine. Were I to tell you just now all you want to know, it might be disastrous for us both. It would, I feel sure, be fatal to you. For myself I do not mean to take the risk. Don't you see that you have already failed me in these few days? You must prove to me that I can trust you before I put myself in your hands. And now"—he turned away—"I must go to my patients."

But, as he left the room, Halifax felt that he had won his first victory.

CHAPTER X.

BY A LUCKY CHANCE.

HALIFAX began his search for Elise the next day. He laid his plans as carefully as possible. First of all he interviewed all those who were likely to hear of Elise's movements. For several days he spent all his spare time in making a round of calls on people whose curiosity about his own affairs was most distasteful to him. He had continually to be on his guard, and only his anxiety for Elise's safety made him continue these interviews until the list was exhausted.

He remembered that Elise had, in the old days, declared that she would like

to earn her living, and he was inclined to think that in the time of need she had either found, or was seeking, employment. But of what nature that employment might be he was entirely ignorant. Elise was one of those carefully educated girls who could well be anything in general, but who would find it difficult to be something in particular. It got into his head that she might have found a situation in a store, and accordingly he made all sorts of excuses to visit the big establishments around Broadway and Thirty-fourth Street.

But it was all in vain. Many were the pretty faces that he saw, but Elise's was not one of them. And on those faces he fancied, at times, that he saw the marks of weariness and disappointment, and even of tragedy, and then he would grow sick at heart with anxiety for Elise.

His work with Bazarin was not hard enough to make him forget these thoughts. He kept him at Madison Avenue, writing up his books, arranging his appointments, and making himself generally useful. It was so commonplace a routine, that at times it was not easy for him to believe that he had not dreamed the eventful incidents which had marked the beginning of his duties.

He called on Martin once, and found that the lawyer had little or nothing to report. He had no news of Elise, and was reticent concerning the inquiries he was making. Halifax knew now that he took him to be a blundering fellow, who was best kept in the dark when serious business was afoot. But he told him that he had seen Gourlay, the specialist, and had asked him about Bazarin. He had learned that Bazarin had an immense practice in neurotic diseases, and had been sensationally successful with one or two cases of paralysis, incipient and more fully developed.

This did not take them any further. About the house in the Bronx Martin was told that on a few rare occasions Bazarin had received there patients whom he wished to have under his own observation, but that latterly he had given up this part of his work, and Gourlay believed that nobody had been received there for several years.

This explained to some extent the lack of organization, and the neglected appearance which had struck Halifax about the Bronx establishment. But if Bazarin had given up receiving patients there, why did he continue to keep the place up? That he visited it very often Halifax felt certain, and never did he return after a long absence in his motor car but that Halifax searched his face for something that would tell him what was happening in the house that contained the man he had slain.

And then he would wonder if Raydon were still there. He did not dare ask Bazarin for fear he should renew the distrust in his mind. It seemed that he was beginning to take Halifax more into his confidence, and the secretary was shrewd enough to understand that in this way lay his best chance of ever learning the secret of the things he had seen. So far as lay in his power, he tried to make Bazarin believe that he had ceased to trouble about what he did not understand. When he talked to him it was of commonplace things, and it was not difficult to see that his change of attitude toward the doctor pleased him immensely.

Halifax felt strangely alone these days. He had been used to being surrounded by a host of friends, good fellows whom he met at his club, and their relatives and friends, to whose homes he was invited. He had drifted away from all these people. Even had his time been his own, as it used to be, he had not the inclination to meet his friends. Often his loneliness oppressed him.

One afternoon he set out for a walk, and his steps led him along Madison Avenue to Forty-second Street, and then eastward to Third Avenue. In an old shop in the latter street he found some pieces of blue china which interested him, and for some time he examined them, wishing that he had the means to purchase them and the opportunity to make use of them, did he possess them. When at length he turned away, he saw a figure that caused his heart to jump. It was the figure of Elise Raydon. Several parcels in her hand showed that she had been shopping. She was dressed in black, and it seemed to him that she looked forlorn and unhappy.

Halifax hurried after her, but she was walking quickly, and the crowd got in his way, so that it was some time before he could get alongside of her. More than one angry glance was cast after him as he shouldered his way through the throng. Once he thought he had missed her, for she was able to cross the street before the traffic coming along held him up, and when he had darted across after her she was nowhere to be seen. He strode on, his eyes sweeping the countenances of those he passed or overtook. Presently he saw her again. She was looking in at a shop window. In a moment he was at her side.

He did not speak; he did not know what to say. He just stood there looking down at her. She meant so much to him, and he had found her! For a moment she was unconscious of his presence. Then she looked up, and her expression changed from one of listlessness to one of fear.

"Elise!" he exclaimed; but she drew back from him, her color going and coming. "Elise, what is the matter? Why have you run away from us? I have been searching New York for you. And now, thank Heaven, I have found you!"

With a visible effort she was forcing herself to speak calmly to him. He could see that something was causing her to be profoundly moved.

"Yes, you have found me," she replied in a low voice, "and I am sorry."

"Sorry!"

"Yes, I must not see you. I left home so that you should not see me."

"But——"

"You must ask me no questions. You have said that you are a friend of mine, and you are, are you not?"

"A friend! Elise——"

"Well, you must obey me. You must do as I ask. For pity's sake, do as I ask."

"What, in Heaven's name, is the matter, Elise?"

"I cannot tell you. But, please, please leave me alone. Go away. Do not try to see me again."

Several people standing by cast curious glances at them, and he insisted on Elise walking with him a little up the street. She did so, hanging back at the time, and strangely ill at ease.

"What on earth does this mean, Elise?" he demanded. "Do you think that you are going to get rid of your friends like this? No; a thousand times, no! You can't quarrel with me, Elise, for it takes two to make a quarrel."

"You know I do not wish to quarrel with you, Jim," she said, her eyes filling with tears.

"Then why——"

"I cannot tell you. Oh, please, please don't ask me. Only go away, and quickly." She cast her eyes fearfully round. "I want to be left alone."

"And I tell you that I shall not leave you alone," he declared, with a clumsy attempt at joviality. "I can see very well that you need some one to look after you, and Jim Halifax is the man."

And then her manner changed. She drew herself up, and her eyes, as they met his, were full of determination. "I

cannot prevent you, Jim, from forcing yourself upon me," she said quietly, "but I hope you are enough of a friend to do as I ask. I want to go."

"But, Elise——"

"I mean it. I am sorry, Jim, but it is for my own sake I ask it." She paused a moment. "My own—and yours."

"But this is preposterous. You are not in danger——"

"So long as you are with me, I am." Her lips trembled. "The danger is a very real and grave one."

"Do you mean?"—he could hardly speak the word—"Bazarin?"

"Never mind," she replied, with a calm insistence. "Go back to Madison Avenue, and forget that you ever were a friend of mine. You may be of great use to me, but only if you never see me. Now go, Jim. Dear old Jim."

He looked away. There was a note of distress in her last words that made him afraid to look upon her face. He stood there, biting his lips and wondering what was to be done. And when he turned his eyes again, Elise was gone.

CHAPTER XI.

ENTER THE POLICE.

THE disappearance of Felix Raydon could not remain their secret forever, and the wonder is that they held it so long. Presently his acquaintances—not his friends, for such a man as he could have no friends—his acquaintances began to inquire after him, and, receiving no answer, vague rumors began to spread about.

Martin told Halifax of these, for he was in the world, while Halifax, to all intents and purposes, was out of it. Felix Raydon, it was whispered, had fled the country, leaving his debts behind him, and had set up another establishment in Paris. He was supposed to have been seen in many well-known re-

sorts—Halifax could not remember all the places where Raydon had been seen.

And the rumors grew and grew until they culminated in the bold statement that Raydon was dead. At first it was agreed that he had died in a den of iniquity in a foreign city somewhere; that he had been killed in a brawl; and, in the end, that he had been murdered before he left these shores.

A loud-voiced fellow called Grimshaw had started this rumor at the Unity Club. He declared that he had arranged to meet Raydon at Charing Cross Station, London, and to accompany him across the Channel, and Raydon had never turned up. And it had been in Raydon's interest to put in an appearance, since Grimshaw was going to lend him money. Halifax couldn't give in detail the strands of the slender web which this man wove into a clear case of murder. It was a palpably weak case; it abounded in suppositions; but it gained credence, and one morning a paragraph in a daily paper informed the public that the police had taken up the case.

Bazarin saw the paragraph almost as soon as Halifax, and came to him with the paper in his hand, and a curious gleam in his cold eyes.

"Here is something that may interest you," he said.

"Do you mean that about Raydon?" said Halifax. "I've read it."

"Out of the mouths of babes——" Bazarin quoted. "If it weren't for the fools these men would get no wiser. They suggest the improbable, which turns out to be the obvious. If Grimshaw had not promised to lend Raydon money, nobody would have listened to his theory."

"Then you heard the rumor?"

"Of course I heard it. Not even I am high enough up in my profession to disregard gossip. The latest scandal is often far more valuable knowledge than the latest pathological discovery."

"But why is the idea of Grimshaw's promise to lend money the important factor?"

"Because it is the improbable. Grimshaw never had any money to lend, which is the worst possible excuse for parsimony."

Halifax looked steadfastly at Bazarin, who met his glance with a careless smile.

"You take this very lightly," Halifax said sternly.

"I do," he replied. "Don't you?"

"It seems to me to be—the beginning of the end."

"And to me it seems the end," was the smiling rejoinder.

"Good heavens!" Halifax almost shouted. "You say that as if you were glad! Don't you realize——"

"I think so," he interrupted. "That is why I am always satisfied when I come to the end. A scientist insists on explanations, and no explanation is complete till an end is reached."

"But what is to be done?"

"The central-office detectives will answer that question. A great many things will be done. You and I will be approached with diffidence and respect and required to assist the authorities in their search for Raydon. That we shall do very willingly, for men in our position are always ready to coöperate in the interests of justice."

Bazarin threw himself in a chair and continued, speaking in a calm, insistent voice as though seeking to impress upon Halifax a lesson that he had to learn: "We must be careful to tell the truth. To lie successfully is one of the most difficult of arts. Truthfulness is called virtue, yet it always pays, and it is safe and easy. One must then tell the truth. Of course, it is impossible to tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Nobody does that save candid friends. You will tell inquirers of your visit to Raydon's flat, of your object, of the result of your object,

you remember," he said dreamily, "that you left because your words fell on deaf ears. Raydon was determined to leave the country and his wife. My own answers will be likewise truthful and obvious. When the visits of a medical man to his patient arouse suspicion will be an evil day for my profession. My dear fellow, when I said that this was the end, I meant that in a few days the mystery of Raydon's disappearance will be solved."

"What!"

"Yes, solved. It will be proved beyond doubt that he has given his wife and insistent creditors the slip. And when this solution has received the imprimatur of the central office and the press, you can walk abroad with your head in the air and a heart as light as it used to be. Come, cheer up; fortune is working for you." He sprang buoyantly to his feet. "You are as safe," he said, giving Halifax's arm a friendly squeeze as he made his way to the door, "as the treasury of the United States."

Halifax was not reassured. He remembered his return visit to the flat, his conversation with the hall porter. Bazarin saw that he was disturbed, and he came back to murmur in his ear:

"Before it can be proved that Raydon was murdered they must find his dead body."

Then he turned on his heel, leaving Halifax more than ever upset by his words.

Halifax sat down and tried to think the situation out. He knew that Bazarin's advice was good as far as it went, but, so it seemed to him, it did not go far enough. It was plain enough that concealment of Halifax's visit to Raydon's flat would immediately bring down suspicion on him. He had to tell the truth, but not the whole truth, and it was no easy matter to know at what point to leave off and where to take up

again the thread of his lamentable adventure.

The fact that the murder could not be proved till Raydon's body was discovered only served to increase Halifax's fears. The body was bound to be discovered sooner or later. If the police were to visit the dismal house in the Bronx it would be almost impossible to prevent discovery. And then a hundred frightful thoughts entered his mind. Was the body of Raydon still there? What was Bazarin doing with it? Was the strange and awful phenomenon he had witnessed still taking place?

Halifax became seized with an idea to find out those things for himself. But how? Bazarin gave him no opportunity to visit the house. That he himself went there regularly, Halifax was positive. And he believed that he went there in the afternoon, which was the only time Halifax had for himself. Nor did he suppose that even if he did visit the house he could again gain entrance. The woman Nicholls and her husband were formidable guardians, and would not be likely to leave an entrance unwatched for a second time. The more impossible it appeared for Halifax to satisfy his curiosity as to what that dreadful house contained, the more did he long to do so.

That evening Bazarin came to him in the library. He was dressed, as was his wont, with punctilious care. His manner was grave and reserved. Halifax had never seen a wise and prosperous physician look so wise and prosperous as he.

"A plain-clothes man from the central office will be here presently," he announced. "You will see him, of course."

Halifax for a moment was seized with a feeling of sick terror. Then Bazarin said sharply: "There is absolutely nothing to terrify you."

"How did they find out?" Halifax stammered.

"Find out what?"

"That we know anything about—Raydon?"

"Because I told them."

"You told them!"

"Yes; I have just rung up the central office and asked for some one to be sent along to call on me. I said that we had information that might be of use to them."

"Well, I'm hanged!"

The boldness, the effrontery of the man filled Halifax with something like admiration. It was not to be credited that any one could suspect Doctor Bazarin of being mixed up in a sordid crime.

"I congratulate you," Halifax said. "You are wonderful!"

A flicker of a smile crossed his face, but the other did not say any more for fear of offending him. Bazarin was not the man to appreciate being understood. Halifax was not so sure of himself. He paced the room once or twice in order to pull himself together. Then he came to a halt in front of Bazarin. "Will I pass muster?" he said.

The doctor glanced at him critically. "I think so. But why do you adopt a defiant air? Our visitor is not going to eat you. He will be far more ill at ease than you think. A little sympathy, the suggestion of distress, a dignified willingness to help, these are the suggestions your manner ought to convey."

He moved across to a cabinet, and, picking up a piece of rare and extremely ugly Staffordshire, examined it with the appreciation of a connoisseur. Halifax was watching him turning over in his hands the piece of china when a manservant entered and handed him a card.

Bazarin glanced at it. "Show him in," he said shortly. Then he glanced at Halifax, and the look in his eyes thrilled him to the marrow. There was the majesty of command that must be

obeyed, the fire of encouragement that made obedience a dearest joy.

"Our visitor," he said softly, then: "I wish I could make you appreciate, Halifax, that beauty has no standard, that in this combination of salmon pink and garish green there is a harmony that belongs only to old Staffordshire. I wish— Ah! How do you do, sir? Will you be seated?"

And Halifax found himself bowing to the quietly dressed man who was searching for Raydon's murderer. Detective Lieutenant Hibbert sat down and placed his hat on a chair beside him. He waited with an air of polite expectancy for Doctor Bazarin to speak. "I read this morning in the paper," began Bazarin, "that the central office is investigating the disappearance of Felix Raydon. It occurred to me that I might be able to give you some information of use to you. I think that Mr. Halifax and I were, perhaps, the last persons to speak to him before he left his flat. Mr. Halifax is my secretary."

"It is very kind of you, Doctor Bazarin, to come forward like this," said the officer. "To know that we are engaged on a job is enough to make most people affect a profound ignorance about it. And then they blame us because we so often fail."

Bazarin smiled faintly. "I appreciate your difficulties," he said, "because I am not ignorant of them. When I was a young man I did a lot of investigation work for the New Orleans police. I think I can claim some share in the solution of the Villefoot and Taverne Royale mysteries."

"So they told me at headquarters," said the man, with a glance of respectful admiration. "A very clever bit of work that was."

"Perhaps that is why my sympathies are all with you," continued Bazarin. "And, perhaps, because I know that if I give you all the information in my

power at this time you will leave me in peace later on. I am a very busy man, you know."

"I know, I know. As I said, you are very kind."

"First of all, have you formed any theory about Raydon's disappearance?"

"To tell the truth," replied Hibbert, "we have scarcely started on the case yet. We have very little to go on, you know. Men about town have been known before now to go away without leaving an address." And he smiled. "They have been forced into it."

Bazarin stopped with a quiet gesture the detective's words of repudiation. "Well, I knew Raydon as a patient, and as an occasional social companion. I met him at Newport several years ago. We were staying at the same hotel. One night he had a slight seizure and I examined him. I found him suffering from a somewhat unique cardiac affection, which interested me intensely, and I took many opportunities of watching its progress." Bazarin selected a cigarette from a silver box and lighted it. "Help yourself," he said, pushing the box toward the detective. "Well, on the afternoon of the seventh, I think it was, I met Raydon in upper Broadway. He told me that he was leaving for Europe the next day, or as soon as the ship on which he had engaged passage should sail. That evening I chanced to be near his apartment, and I made up my mind to call on him, and if possible to persuade him to allow me to examine him again before he went. I did call on him and found him and Mr. Halifax together. Mr. Halifax shortly after took his leave, and I remained about a quarter of an hour with Raydon. I did not examine him. He objected to what he described as my fussing round him. Moreover, he told me that he was expecting friends, and he was obviously anxious for me to go."

"These friends did not put in an appearance," observed the detective.

"No. Almost immediately, it must have been, after my departure, Mr. Halifax returned to the apartment for his walking stick, which he had left. He could get no reply to his knock, and, finding the door open, he entered. The apartment was empty. That is correct, is it not, Mr. Halifax?"

Halifax bowed. "Quite correct."

"You knew Mr. Raydon intimately?" Hibbert asked Halifax.

"I was well acquainted with him. His wife and I have known each other all our lives."

"You ought to know," said Bazarin, speaking confidentially, "that Raydon was a brute to his wife. On the few occasions when I met Mrs. Raydon I saw that she was unhappy. Mr. Halifax called on Raydon that evening to remonstrate with him."

"How did he take your remonstrance, Mr. Halifax?"

"He told me to mind my own business," Halifax replied.

"Did he mention that he was leaving the country?"

"He did. I tried to persuade him not to go."

"You wanted him to stay in New York?"

"I wanted him to stay with his wife. On several occasions he has gone away and left her without warning."

"Have you seen Mrs. Raydon since her husband's disappearance?"

"Yes, once or twice."

"When was the last occasion?"

Halifax hesitated. Bazarin was looking at him with a triumphant smile. The thought flashed through Halifax's brain that to get this information was the only reason why he had summoned the detective. He must have known that these questions would be asked. The detective's keen eyes were on Halifax, and he blurted out:

"About ten days ago. I met her on Third Avenue."

"Where is she living, may I ask?"

"I have no idea."

"You don't know where she is?"

"No, I don't, nor does anybody else so far as I am aware."

Mr. Hibbert stroked his mustache.

"What do you make of it?" asked Bazarin.

"Queer," muttered the detective.

"We must find Mrs. Raydon."

"Yes, you must find Mrs. Raydon," and there was a note of cruel eagerness in Bazarin's voice. Halifax knew that the man was rejoicing because the police were going to aid him in his search. "I don't see how in the slightest she can help you to find her husband," he blurted out.

"That remains to be seen." The detective glanced meaningfully at Bazarin, who nodded in reply.

A child could have read the minds of both men. The crafty look that passed between them revealed their thoughts. An icy hand seemed to grip Halifax's heart. A numb feeling of horror seized his limbs so that they trembled as with an ague. The detective suspected Elise of doing away with her husband! And what was worse, Bazarin was encouraging the suspicion. The flattering glances of understanding which he had thrown across to the detective made that man nod his head sagely.

"Great Heaven!" Halifax stammered. "You don't mean to suggest that——"

Again the detective looked toward Bazarin. "No, no, Mr. Halifax, of course not," he said hurriedly; "of course not."

"I am glad to hear it!" Halifax exclaimed bitterly. "I could imagine nothing more absurdly unjust and foolish."

"Well," interrupted Bazarin smoothly, "you have heard our story.

I don't think that we have omitted anything. If we can be of any further use to you we shall at all times be glad to hear from you. But, as you see, our knowledge of Raydon and his movements is of the slightest. He was—er—not altogether a desirable acquaintance. My interest in him was only of a professional nature."

"I understand. I am very much obliged, Doctor Bazarin, for your kindness. I will detain you no longer." The detective picked up his hat. "Good evening, sir. Good evening, Mr. Halifax. I am obliged to you, too."

Halifax ignored the outstretched hand. He hated the man with all his heart. "Good evening," he said curtly.

At that moment there was a commotion in the street. A hard, jarring sound as of an automobile brought to a sudden stop by the hasty application of the brakes met their ears, followed by a shout and a cry of pain. Bazarin went to the window and pulled the blinds.

"Somebody run over!" he exclaimed.

Halifax and the detective joined him at the window. A small group of people had hurriedly gathered round a taxicab, and from its midst was dragged the unconscious body of a youth and the remains of what had been a bicycle. The youth was laid gently on the pavement, while some one ran off for a policeman. The chauffeur stood, gesticulating frantically, on the fringe of the little group of people.

"I'll be off," said Hibbert, making for the door. "Maybe I can be of use."

But Bazarin was before him. Halifax watched him with amazement as he ran across the room. The eagerness of his pace was not that of a medical man on his way to render help to an injured fellow creature. His face shone with the delirious excitement that had seized him when he had entered Raydon's flat, and found on the

floor the body of its late occupant. Halifax followed him with beating heart.

In the twinkling of an eye Bazarin was in the street. He pushed his way unceremoniously through the crowd. Then he bent over the figure lying on the pavement. The policeman who had hurried up recognized Bazarin and took command.

"Stand back, there," he cried peremptorily, "and give the doctor room." Then he saw Hibbert and nodded to him. The chauffeur noticed this and addressed his protestations to the detective.

"He didn't have no light," he cried excitedly. "As sure as I'm standin' here, he didn't have no light. It wasn't my fault. He ain't dead, is he, mister?"

At that moment the policeman, having driven back the bystanders, turned his attention to the chauffeur and produced his notebook.

Bazarin straightened his back, and glanced round him.

"Come here, Halifax, and you, Hibbert," he said shortly. "Help me to carry this fellow into my house. Look sharp!"

Gently they raised the unconscious youth and bore him up the steps and into the hall.

"Into the library and on the sofa!" commanded Bazarin, and they obeyed.

"Ring up for an ambulance," he said, "and leave me—both of you."

Both Halifax and the detective hesitated, and Bazarin pointed angrily to the door. "Do you hear me?" he said, in a voice that commanded obedience. "Leave the room!"

They turned away in amazement. The telephone was in an alcove in the hall, and while Halifax searched for the number of the nearest hospital, Hibbert found his voice. "He's a corker, and no mistake," he said. "Not many doctors would bother themselves like this, let alone a chap of Bazarin's posi-

tion. But what does he want an ambulance for? The poor fellow's as dead as a doornail."

"Are you sure?" Halifax asked.

"Of course I am. He's dead and done for."

Halifax found the number, and with the receiver in his hand he paused. Bazarin's order for an ambulance to be called was a pretext to get them out of the room—of that Halifax felt certain. He gave the number and instructions and hung up.

"Let us wait in the drawing-room," he said to Hibbert. "Perhaps you are wrong. He may not be dead."

Halifax feared what was happening in the library, and what Bazarin might be doing. In the drawing-room Hibbert paced up and down, examining the paintings, and now and again throwing out a remark.

"Have you been here long, Mr. Halifax, may I ask?" he inquired.

"No, not long."

"It must be very interesting being here," he went on. "You must see all sorts of funny cases, and so on."

"I see none of the cases. I have nothing whatever to do with Doctor Bazarin's professional work."

"Then you aren't in the medical line yourself?"

"No."

"I have a son at the Roosevelt Hospital," volunteered Hibbert genially. "You see all sorts of queer cases there. You get used to it, I suppose. I've seen Harry tackle a street accident as calm as you like. It was on Central Park West, just in front of the Century Theater. Man killed, too. And here's Doctor Bazarin getting as excited as— But I suppose he's not used to accidents."

"No, he's not. They're not in his line," Halifax said hurriedly.

"Just as I thought. You see, it's all a matter of use. Now, this Raydon business— What's that?"

He broke off. A strange, choking, gasping sound met their ears. It seemed to come from the library. Halifax gripped the back of the chair he was holding so fiercely that his nails seemed to enter into the wood. For it was the same ominous sound as he had heard twice at the house in the Bronx.

"What did you hear?" he asked, and the words had scarcely escaped his lips when he heard the sound again. He could control himself no longer. Here might be an opportunity of solving the riddle that had perplexed him for so long.

"Wait here a moment," he said abruptly, and left the room, shutting the door after him.

The library door was also shut, but he knew that there was a screen inside the room and in front of the door. So he turned the handle quietly and entered the library.

Bazarin was leaning over the couch, and the man who had been run over was hid from his view. Nor could he see what Bazarin was doing. Suddenly the horrible sound, as if all the breath in a man's body was being forced out in painful explosions, broke out again. The sound came from the body on the couch! And then he saw a limb jerk itself out and as suddenly come back into position.

Bazarin moved aside a little, and Halifax caught a glimpse of the object of his attention. The man was pale as death, his eyes were fixed and staring, there was a ghastly blue wound on his forehead. It was the form of a dead man. But his limbs were twitching, his hands, hanging over the edge of the couch, moved now and again with odd, spasmodic jerks.

"He's not dead, after all," breathed a voice in Halifax's ear. It was Hibbert. He had crept in after him, and stood watching.

With a quick movement Bazarin

faced round. For a moment Halifax thought he was going to turn upon them with a torrent of abuse. His mouth was working with suppressed rage.

"You——" he began. Then he wheeled round. Evidently it was his intention to hide his passion from them. "Has the ambulance come?" he asked.

"Then he's not dead?" said Hibbert.

"Yes, he's dead."

"But——"

"He is dead, I tell you," repeated Bazarin. "Look for yourself."

Hibbert did so, and nodded wonderingly. Halifax glanced at Bazarin. His eyes were glowing with excitement. But it was his coat that attracted Halifax's attention. Down on the front had been spilled a quantity of fine brown snufflike powder.

CHAPTER XII.

THE PROBLEM OF ELISE.

WHEN Lieutenant Hibbert left Bazarin's house that night, Halifax could see that he was preoccupied. The strange incident of the evening had puzzled the detective. Halifax did not know what were his thoughts, for, on the few occasions on which he addressed him, he did so abruptly and in a strange manner.

Bazarin went out of his way to make much of the central-office man. When the cyclist had been taken away he pressed the detective to have a glass of wine. But Hibbert refused, a trifle curtly. Bazarin was quite at his ease, and, presently excusing himself, went away on the pretext of calling on a patient, and immediately after the detective also took his leave.

Halifax did not sleep much that night. When he dozed off it was to dream such horrors as made him wake up in terror. When he looked at his face in the mirror in the morning it

was pale and haggard, and there were heavy black lines round his eyes.

When he went downstairs he heard that Bazarin had left the house, and that he would not be back for two days. When, later on in the morning, no patients arrived, instead of the usual morning's flow of arrivals, Halifax surmised that Bazarin had planned his departure the night before, and had found time to cancel all his appointments by letter.

For a moment Halifax wondered why Bazarin had done this without telling him. It was part of his work to attend to such matters as the postponing of appointments. And then he thought it probable that the doctor had been none too pleased with his interference with him on the previous night, and that he wished to keep his doings secret from his secretary. It was all conjecture, and Halifax's brain was too tired to tackle any more mysteries.

While he was busying himself in the morning with his few duties, a telegram arrived for him. "Come and see me as soon as possible," it read, and it was signed "Martin."

The telegram aroused a hundred speculations in Halifax's mind, and he could scarcely wait till the hour when he might leave the house. At the earliest moment he hailed a cab and drove down to Martin's office.

Martin was out at lunch, and Halifax awaited his return with much impatience. When he came into the room, Halifax could see by his face that he had news for him. "I got your wire," he said. "And here I am."

"Is it you or your shadow?" he exclaimed. "Good Lord, man, you are wasting away!"

"I'm all right," the other replied tartly, for the sight of the healthy glow on Martin's cheeks, and his general air of prosperity and contentment, made him feel all the worse. There is nothing so annoying to a man who is

worried as to see another who is not.
"I'm all right. What is it?"

"I've run Mrs. Raydon to earth!"

"No!"

"Yes, I have. So you are not going to have it your own way, after all. More than that, I'm not going to lose her now that I have found her."

"I hope not," Halifax said. "Where is she? How did you find her? What is she doing?"

"Sit down, and light up, and I'll tell you all about it."

Martin set the example and lighted a cigar. He sat down at his desk, which he graced with his legs, and began: "When you told me that she had left Mrs. Oppenshaw's, I took the liberty of calling upon that lady. I found that Mrs. Raydon had taken with her a very few articles in a small bag, and that she possessed not more than five dollars."

"Well?" Halifax put in between his teeth, for Martin paused.

"Five dollars goes such a very short way that it seemed more than likely to me that Mrs. Raydon would try to get employment. She would not again, I thought, risk starving with a friend. While Mrs. Oppenshaw then undertook to find out as delicately as possible from those whom she knew to be Mrs. Raydon's friends if they knew where the lady was, I set myself the task of trying to find out where she might be seeking employment. I advertised."

"In what way?"

"In several papers I advertised for a lady companion."

"You did!"

"Yes. I described myself as a middle-aged lady, lonely, fond of bright, companionable society. I mentioned that I was about to travel abroad. I offered fifty dollars a month, all found. I flatter myself that the bait was attractive."

"And did Elise apply?" Halifax asked eagerly.

"No, she didn't. I had in all over three hundred applications from bright, companionable ladies of ages ranging from fifteen to fifty. About two hundred and fifty of them were clearly not written by Mrs. Raydon. I was not sure about the other fifty, for, of course, she was, I suspected, certain to take another name. I interviewed this fifty personally. My office during last week was like a matrimonial agency or a school for dramatic culture. It has been a joke, but a melancholy kind of joke. I had to explain to all these ladies that my client had been suited. Except in a few instances, it was a mean job."

"But tell me about Elise. I don't want to hear about these other people."

"Nobody ever does want to hear of the other people, Jim. Well, I'm coming to Mrs. Raydon. I read the other night in one of the evening papers, that seems to spot, as if by instinct, the true value of things—at least it did in this case—that a lady, while playing with two small children in Gramercy Park, slipped and injured her ankle. She fainted with the pain, and the children could not tell where they lived, so all three were taken to the hospital. I think the paragraph was headed, 'Boy of seven does not know his address,' or words to that effect. The paragraph stated that the woman was married, and went on to describe her, and somehow the description made me think of Mrs. Raydon. I called at the hospital the next morning and found that she had been discharged. After recovering from their fright, the children had remembered their address, and thither the lady had been sent. That was the next place to call. The house was one of those big, gloomy mansions, whose better days are buried in the past. There was a ticket above the door, 'Board and Lodging,' and a foreign manservant opened the door."

Halifax tried his best to possess him-

self in patience while Martin went on with the story, the recital of which he seemed to be enjoying.

"The lady of the house—her name is Stringer, and she looks it—was very pleasant to me at first. But when she discovered that I did not wish to take up my abode with her she cooled off. And when I mentioned the injured lady, she was positively offensive. She said a lot of things about being bothered with other people's troubles, which I did not listen to. I learned that the lady with the broken ankle had a few days previously entered into the excessively bright duties of looking after two brats—I've seen them—in return for her board and lodging and fifteen dollars a month. I needn't go into that, for I can see it hurts. It made me mad. I saw the lady—she was sitting up in the dingy parlor—and I nearly embraced Mrs. Stringer in my joy, for the lady was Mrs. Raydon!"

Halifax gripped the arm of his chair the tighter. "Go on," he muttered. "Go on."

"To relieve your mind, let me say at once that Mrs. Raydon has promised me on her word of honor to remain in the house till she is quite better, and she remains as a paying boarder. It took a devil of a lot of persuading." Martin grinned.

"And where is this house?" Halifax asked eagerly.

"That I cannot tell you."

"You cannot tell me!"

"No, in my turn I had to promise that."

"You mean to say that Elise made you promise not to tell me where she was living?"

"I do. In order that you may not flatter yourself unduly, I may add that the same restriction applies to everybody."

"But why?" Halifax demanded.

Martin grew serious. "That is what I want you to tell me, old boy," he

said. "I've had a long talk with Mrs. Raydon. She was not quite her usual self. She was overwrought and—and less restrained—and she, in a manner, let fall some words that she has hitherto been at pains to keep back. She has put into my mind the suspicion that not only is Bazarin an active enemy of hers, but that you are aiding and abetting him—not willfully maybe, but at least unconsciously."

"Good heavens, Martin! Do you mean to say that I would——"

"Wait a moment, old man." He rose and put his hands on Halifax's shoulders, looking into his eyes. "I want you to be absolutely open and aboveboard with me. You must be, do you understand? If not for your own sake, then for the sake of the girl who is suffering a Hades of terror and suspense. You can trust me. I give you my word that I shall respect your confidences. But I give you my word also that if you don't tell me all that is in your mind I'll find it out for myself, and, by the Lord Harry, I'll have no pity for you then."

Martin was a man of Halifax's own age. In the old days Halifax had found it not difficult to exercise a supremacy over him, but at the moment his personality dominated Doctor Bazarin's secretary.

"All that is in my mind," he repeated hoarsely.

"That is what I said. I'm sorry to say it, Jim, but you haven't played the game up to now. I'm convinced you haven't. Tell me about this Bazarin, for Heaven's sake, and let us get on the right track. If this business is not settled quickly——" He shrugged his shoulders.

"Yes. If it isn't?"

"Mrs. Raydon will die."

"You don't mean that, man? You don't mean it. Tell me you don't mean it!" Halifax gripped him by the arm and his hand shook.

"But I do. I am certain of it," Martin replied quietly. "The doctor whom I sent to her tells me that she is on the verge of mental collapse. This accident has been the culminating blow. You don't need to ask me what it is I am afraid of."

Halifax moistened his lips with his tongue. "But I know nothing that will set her mind at rest," he said. "I know next to nothing of Bazarin. The little I know is mere suspicion. I am myself trying to find out more."

"What are you trying to find out?" Martin had cast aside the easy and flip-pant manner with which he had told Halifax he had found Elise. That had been part of his plan to set him at ease, to coax his confidence. Now he spoke sternly.

"I shall tell you when I have found it out. For pity's sake, Martin," Halifax pleaded, "let me do this part of the work by myself."

"I will not."

He spoke quietly, so quietly that Halifax glanced at him in surprise. His face was pale with the force of his determination. It was the face of a man who has set himself a task to do that he will die rather than leave undone.

Suddenly a gust of jealousy swept through Halifax's brain. He flushed crimson with anger, and, banging his fist on the desk, he shouted:

"I see through you now. You—you are in love with Elise! You want to win——"

"Silence!" Still Martin's voice was quiet, but imperious. "If I happened to be in love with Elise—as you are—I should do anything—anything in the world—to save her one hour's anxiety such as she is enduring at present, Jim." His voice became soft. "You are not yourself, or you would never have said this. I am not in love with Elise Raydon. You hear?" For Halifax was standing as if thinking of something else. "I am not in love with

her. But you are, and you always will be, and if you play the coward now you will regret it as long as you live."

He was silent. Halifax turned from him to hide his agitation. Gazing into the fire, he said grimly and determinedly: "Martin!"

"Yes, Jim?"

"You said you would do anything—anything in the world, didn't you?"

"I did," he replied firmly.

"You said also that you would respect my confidences."

"Yes, on my word of honor, I will."

"Well, you needn't do that. You can give me away if it will do Elise any good. After what I am going to tell you, you must act as seems best for Elise. You will promise me that?"

"I do promise you." A note of wonder, almost of fear, crept into his voice.

"Very well." Halifax suddenly faced him. For a moment the room seemed to be going round him. Then he said firmly:

"I did it, Jack—I killed Felix Raydon."

Martin gazed at his friend, horrified, without speaking. "Say something!" Halifax cried. "For Heaven's sake, speak! Did you hear me? I killed him! Now, what are you going to do?" Halifax laughed hysterically. The sound of his own laughter filled him with horror. "Speak, Martin, what are you going to do?"

CHAPTER XIII.

SEEKING THE WAY.

MARTIN stepped forward a little, and Halifax, even in his excitement, could see that he was trembling somewhat. "Come, Jim," he said, and his voice shook, "you don't know what you are saying. You are—you are not yourself. Sit down, old man, and let me——"

"And I declare to you," Halifax said as calmly as he could, "that I am tell-

ing you the truth. I killed Felix Raydon. I called on him, as you know, and you know also why I called on him. He provoked me beyond endurance, and I struck him. It wasn't much of a blow, Jack," he went on, pleading with the man who stood staring at him, with blanched face. "I didn't mean to kill him. But he fell—and then—I knew——"

There was a long silence, and Martin's horrified eyes seemed to burn into Halifax's very soul. Then he sank down at his desk and covered his face with his hands. His distress had the effect of pulling the other together. Halifax's compassion for him made him forget himself. "Jack," he said, shaking Martin by the shoulders, "Jack, please don't go on like that. It doesn't matter. I mean I can stand it. If you give me up to the police I shall understand. It's for her sake, isn't it? Jack, I beg of you, speak to me."

Martin raised his eyes to Halifax, and in that moment his friend knew, if he had never really known before, how good a friend Martin was to him. There was an agony of apprehension in Martin's eyes. "Give you up!" he breathed. "My God!"

And Halifax knew that he was safe. Strangely enough, he was not satisfied. He had unburdened himself of his dread secret, and now he wanted something to happen—something that would relieve the tension of his mind. Martin's weakness, somehow, gave him a feeling of strength.

"Then you are not going to give me up," and Halifax smiled as he spoke. "He deserved it, you know, although I didn't mean it. He was a scoundrel." He paused a moment, and then added quizzically: "I didn't mean to hit so hard."

"Don't, man; don't speak of it."

"But we must speak of it now, old boy, mustn't we? You are now an accessory after the fact, or whatever you

call it, aren't you? You made me speak, you know. We're both in the soup. Come." He shook him again. "Curse me or tell me to get out or call a policeman. Do something, or, by Heaven, I shall do something myself! Don't you understand how I feel; how I have felt all these weeks?"

"All these weeks!" he repeated. Then, "Jim," he said, "where is it?"

"It?"

"Raydon?"

"At Bazarin's house, in the Bronx."

"In Bazarin's house." He started up. "What do you mean?"

And then Halifax told him all. How he had returned to the flat to find the body of Raydon gone and Bazarin, too; how he had discovered Raydon dead or alive in the house in the Bronx; how he had heard mysterious sounds and seen sights which made him shiver to describe. "He is still there for all I know," he concluded. "I meant to find out more for myself, but you forced me to tell you all to-day. What Bazarin is doing, Heaven knows! What evil trick he is playing is a mystery to me."

TO BE CONTINUED.

The succeeding chapters of this novel, beginning with Chapter XIV., following an interesting sketch of all that has gone before, introduced for new readers, will appear in the next issue of **TOP-NOTCH**, dated and out November 1st. It began in the October 1st issue. Back numbers may be obtained from news dealers or the publishers.

Speaking of Brains

YES, said the newspaper reporter, "I always carry my notes in my hat."

"I see," replied Fogg; "news in a nutshell."

Not in His Duties

BOSS: "I wanted to speak to you, Mr. Lovum, about your attentions to Miss Sweett during office hours. I engaged you as billing clerk only; no cooing mentioned. That will be all for the present."

Top-Notch Talk

By the Editor

FOR INSTANCE, "THE OLD, OLD CALL."

THAT is the title of a story in the next issue of TOP-NOTCH, but it serves very well for the title of the little talk that I have for you just now. The tale is from the pen of a man who has distinguished himself as a writer of stories about the war—Britten Austin. His has been the art of looking into the hearts of fighters, and finding there, whatever side they might be battling for, the human qualities that make the whole race akin. These qualities are the ones that draw the writer and editor irresistibly toward the vast conflict as a background or a motif for fiction tales that take on the feeling of these world-stirring, world-enlightening times. Men in the street stop each other and ask what it's all leading to? One favorite conundrum is: After the war, is man in the aggregate going to slip back into his old indifference toward man in the aggregate?

Here is a favorite riddle, which the commuter may put to himself while running for a train: After citizens are through dying for their countries, are the countries going to concern themselves more—through the laws—with the things that make it possible for citizens to live. The newspaper headlines of the day answer the questions with their reality. Some of our wide-awake magazine writers are seeing in these answers good suggestions for stories. They are enterprising writers who are given to peeping beyond the visible hori-

zon and putting what they see into stories. Some wide-awake ones are content to spin their yarns of what is on the visible horizon; of what the war is throwing up to the eye.

We like to get hold of both types of war stories for TOP-NOTCH, and when they are up to the standard in story strength, we take them and print them for the entertainment of our readers. They must have that quality first of all—the quality of entertainment. But if there should underlie something more, we are not frightened. If you've got a cracking good story to offer, don't be afraid of sending it to TOP-NOTCH, even if it has a little way with it that is worth while, even if it does cause you to smile when some people think that with more propriety you might frown.



SOMETHING MOMENTOUS."

This is the leading novel of the next issue—author, Eugene A. Clancy—and one of those war tales that gaze ahead. It had a forward look at the time it was written; but who knows that at this moment it is doing anything more than telling what has happened? Magazines, you know, are printed quite a long time in advance of the date they bear. Well, this "Something Momentous" has a lot to do with the adventures of the renowned Camera Chap, Frank Hawley, and adventures that are bound up dramatically with the events that are thrilling all the conti-

nents. It is the biggest task in picture taking ever undertaken by the Camera Chap or any other chap.

Sport Stories.—One of these is a novelette of unusual length—a good long read for you. It is a medley of magic and track running called "Magic Grips." Charles T. Jordan is the author. The baseball story of the next issue is a clever bit by that old-time TOP-NOTCH favorite, Harold C. Burr. "Not for Keeps" is the title. There are some laughs in this, as well as some serious moments. "When the Loser Scored" is the title of a sport tale which William Wallace Cook contributes to the next number; one of the brightest stories in the issue. Do athletes who in their palmy days meet with a reverse—a serious one—ever come back? Some people hold that they do not. Read what Chief Bender, of the Philadelphia Nationals, has to say about it in relation to ball players. He has given a decidedly interesting talk to J. C. Kofoed.

Splendid Tale of the Navy.—Here is one to take you captive. It is by H. A. Lamb, and is called "Mystic Lights." Some sport in this, too, come to think. A bully boat race with jackies as the contestants.

Shorter Stories.—There is a big lot of them—too many to mention in detail. But they are as good a lot all round as we have managed to get hold of for some time. Among the authors of them are Ralph Cummins, of picture-play story distinction; Howard Dwight Smiley, Ima Nutt, Harold de Polo, with Mark Allerton and Burt L. Standish coming in strong with two big serial novels.



Points for California.

A LETTER in rebuttal—to use a lawyer's term—has been received from Mr. F. A. Schliemann, of Sparks, Nevada, in regard to certain statements about California made in this magazine

by Miss Hoover, who gave us an interesting account of her motor-cycle trip. In the course of his letter, Mr. Schliemann says:

Will you permit an old-time reader to come again? I come more in praise than anything else. I consider the September 1st issue especially good. "A Bit of All Right," and the serials by the Dorrances and Cook deserve especial praise, to my notion. Would it be possible to get a continuation of the Boltwood stories? Or has Boltwood gone "Somewhere in France," so his biographer can get no more data on him?

Now, in regard to my former letter: If Miss Hoover will tell where those "deserts" were, or through what counties she passed that "one hundred miles" without meeting aught but vultures skimming the sky, or a chance lizard panting in the heat, I am willing to let all the rest of the questions go.

I know there are people living in California, called Californians sometimes, who like to refer to the Sacramento Valley and northern California as sterile and desert, which is very far from the truth. There are some three million acres of arable land in the Sacramento Valley alone. An eight-million-dollar rice crop, a ten-million-dollar bean crop, a bumper fruit crop, a shipment of six thousand cars of oranges will give you some idea of its fertility.

Were it not for the wide range of TOP-NOTCH readers, I would simply have laughed at the letter and let it go. I have seen TOP-NOTCH everywhere—on the professor's table, and on the roustabout's bunk, and any one, not knowing better, reading that letter would believe there was a good-sized desert in northern California.

I shall always hold my opinion about Western courtesy. I hold no brief for whisky, nor do I want to. When I lived in Palo Alto, the great majority of the students were the flower of noble manhood and glorious womanhood, but I have seen students who were "under the influence" without losing their courteous manner.

Now, Mr. Editor, I do not want to dictate to you about the magazine. You are doing fine as it is.

But if you will give us a continuation of Boltwood, and correct that desert idea, I would be willing to crawl in my shell and let some one else do the writing.

No, Boltwood is not out of it. He is going to turn up in the course of time in one of the best stories that Mr.

Patten has ever written. The author is now at work upon it.



Reality Taps Romance.

TO James French Dorrance, the popular author, we are indebted for a newspaper clipping which chimes in with the little story about Cheyenne's Frontier week, which we publish in this issue under title of "The Uncurried West." Mr. Dorrance writes from Carpinteria, Santa Barbara County, California, and says:

The inclosed clipping tells us that one of the women who participated in Cheyenne's Frontier Week has already paid the penalty of the strenuous life. Thought it might interest you.

Am leaving for a week in the motion-picture camps around Los Angeles to work up some material for the picture-play serial Mrs. Dorrance and I are going to try for TOP-NOTCH.

Considerable has been said in these pages about the habit reality has shown of imitating romance. It is becoming scandalous. No sooner does an author think up some remarkable event and give it a fictional setting than along comes real life and palms it off as its own. Nothing can be done about it, of course. No copyright holds against reality. Here is the clipping:

DENVER, Col., Aug. 27.—"Well, I rode her!" were the dying words of Mrs. Ed. Wright, champion woman roughrider of the world, when she was picked up at Union Park here, after being thrown by a wild horse during a field-day celebration for the benefit of Colorado National Guardsmen, encamped here.

Mrs. Wright died before she reached a hospital.

Too proud to admit before a crowded grand stand that she did not dare to ride the broncho, the woman mounted Gentle Annie amid great cheering by the cowboys, who had taunted her when she first declined to ride the animal. Mrs. Wright succeeded in subduing her mount from its furious bucking, but Gentle Annie started on a wild gallop toward a corral. Before the cowboys, who immediately started in pursuit, could catch the fleeing horse, the animal plunged through

a wire fence, stumbled and slid along the ground with Mrs. Wright still in the saddle. A part of the saddle caught in the fence, and the broncho raised its heels in the air, and then fell to the ground again. As it rose it stepped on the woman's face, crushing her skull.

Editor of TOP-NOTCH MAGAZINE.

DEAR SIR: I have just finished "Out of the Past," by Edison Marshall, and it sure was great. Get him to work on another one of those stories, and to use the same characters. "Sport or Plunder?" is fine. Keep Burt L. on baseball stories.

Hubert la Due and Hugh Kahler do not contribute very much; at least, I have not seen their names mentioned once in your talks, although they are fine for short stories.

Why not cut out the novelettes and give us good, long novels every month? I prefer lumberjack tales.

My favorite authors are Standish, Cook, and Marshall. I am, yours truly,

Chicago, Ill.

J. H. DEAN.



Something Different.

THIS spirited letter comes to us from Mr. J. R. Larsen, of Santaquin, Utah:

I told the news dealer if he did not get my copy of the T. N. that I would walk to New York after it. Well, anyway, I have been a steady reader since seeing a copy for the first time—January, 1916. It contained the story, "Ranch Magic," showing the picture of the mule. I thought to myself: There's something different. It sure was, and I have found a different and better class of stories than are found in other magazines I have read.

I have no special favorites among your writers; they are all good. But I am going to kick about "Rogues of the Round-up," by Herbert Coolidge, when he mentioned the Salt Lake City stampede as being loaded. I can't see on what ground he has that to say about the stampede at Salt Lake. The stampedes are held every year at the State Fair Grounds at Salt Lake City in connection with the annual State Fair, under a committee selected by the State, and this committee is composed of fair-minded men. I am sure all other Utah readers of T. N. will agree with me.

I think those "Little Stories from TOP-NOTCH Readers" a good addition to your magazine, as long as they are actual experi-

ences. Also your "Talks" are interesting. I would like to see a story written by one of your excellent writers about the West, using Utah as the scene of action.

It is some time since we received a story laid in Utah that seemed up to the standard. As to the West in general, you will find in this issue some good tales colored with the life of that region. TOP-NOTCH aims to keep up the name it has made for printing good Western stories. Mr. Larsen said several things in his letter, and one of them was: "There's something different." We are striving to produce a magazine that will evoke that remark from every one who reads it. To break away from the hackneyed, the outworn, in fiction is one of the chief aims of TOP-NOTCH writers and editors.

Editor of TOP-NOTCH MAGAZINE.

DEAR SIR: I have read many magazines, but never one with such a fine assortment of stories as yours.

My favorite writers are Standish, Kahler, Holden, and La Due.

"Why Not?" written by Holden, was a clever story, which I thoroughly enjoyed. Well, "Mr. Trout's Mistake" was a great one, only it made one feel sorry when he was caught.

I hope you will give us more track and swimming tales, for they surely are good. Yours for a continuance of good stories.

H. HAMILTON.

C. N. Hotel, Dauphin, Manitoba, Canada.

Editor of TOP-NOTCH MAGAZINE.

DEAR SIR: Just want to tell you that old T.-N. is the best out, and that is going some.

I started reading T. N. last year, and was so pleased with it that I sent in a subscription the first of the year.

Please don't leave the jokes out, as they cheer you up.

Say, can't you get Rod Hazzard and Boltwood of Yale back on the job? I surely do miss them.

I like all the authors, but some better than others. My favorites are Burt L. Standish, the Dorrances, Ralph Boston, Ima Nutt, J. Allan Dunn, W. W. Cook, and Frank X. Finnegan.

I never tire of sport stories, and I think "Sport or Plunder?" was the best I have ever read. J. Allan Dunn brings you back

to nature with his animal stories. Hoping to see this in print, I am, a loyal Top-Notcher,

STANLEIGH H. JONES.

West Fourteenth Street, Norfolk, Va.



T. N. in the Navy.

IT is gratifying to those who work to make TOP-NOTCH an attractive magazine that nowhere does it meet with greater favor than in the United States navy. Our mail is rich with testimonials from the sailors of Uncle Sam. Now and then we print one; for instance, this, from A. J. Teveliet, of the U. S. S. *Illinois*:

I have been a reader of your magazine for the last five years, and have always liked it. I purchased one yesterday at a news stand, and all around me were sailors with a T. N. under their arm. It seems to be a favorite magazine with the sailors. I hope to see a good sea yarn.

It is a pleasure to announce that in the next issue there will be a good sea yarn, and that our friend on the *Illinois* will find it when he opens his copy of T. N. We are always reaching after sea yarns that we think will pass the muster of our friends in the navy all over the world; but we regret that our reaching in this direction is not often repaid with the kind of stories that we deem good enough to use.



A Boost from Canada.

BOUQUETS are frequently tossed to us from across the Canadian border, and we always like to get them. Here is one from a reader who signs himself "J. C., Winnipeg:"

I have been a reader of your magazine for a number of years. I have read nearly every other magazine on the market, and cannot find anything to compare with TOP-NOTCH. I believe it is the most interesting magazine from start to finish that any person could wish for. It is a credit to you, Mr. Editor, to be able to get hold of such good authors as you do. Send along a few more detective stories like "Red Diamond," by Bertram Lebhar, and for glory's sake give us another by William Wallace Cook. I wish

every success to good old Top-Notch. Am looking forward to some more Northwest Mounted Police stories.

Well, you will get some more Northwest Mounted Police stories, and get them very soon. We have three daisies in the safe—one by Roland Ashford Phillips, one by William Wallace Cook, one by Ethel and James Dorrance. The one by the Dorrances is a serial novel, and will be started in the issue of November 15th.

Editor of TOP-NOTCH MAGAZINE.

DEAR SIR: Just a line from this part of the country, as I never see any of our TOP-NOTCH readers writing to you. Your novellette, "Against the Red Board," is the best story I have ever read relative to railroad life. It contained real, live action. Shimm, the author, must certainly have been a "brakie" in his time to write such fiction. I would like to see more of his work.

Your sport stories are great, especially your intercollegiate college sports. Let us hear more of Rod Hazzard and Roger Boltwood.

Roland Ashford Phillips, William Wallace Cook, Burt L. Standish, and the Dorrances, not saying anything of Ralph Boston, have got any other magazine staff beaten a mile, but I wish you would chloroform that Ima Nutt for about six months. Wishing success to TOP-NOTCH, I am,
HARRISBURG, Pa.

HOBURG.



Another for Ima Nutt

FROM the San Francisco headquarters of the United States Marine Corps, Western Recruiting Division, we have this criticism of Miss Ima Nutt's story, "Pinked in Time," the critic being

William W. Briare, sergeant of marines:

I have been a reader of the TOP-NOTCH for the last five years, and cannot find words to praise it enough. This is my first appearance in the "Talk" pages, and I come in with a criticism of Mr. Ima Nutt's story entitled "Pinked in Time."

Mr. Nutt is "all wrong." Never is a man examined before his eyes, ears, and teeth are examined. Does it sound reasonable to you that a man should be made to strip and be thoroughly examined by the doctor before his eyes are examined? Should there be a fault in his eyes the doctor would be out a lot of valuable time and work. A man has his eyes tested before he ever goes before the doctor. There are too many others waiting to be examined, and all the time is valuable to the examining crew.

A man is never given a card to show that he is not a slacker on color blindness, as he might be of value to some branch where color blindness will not interfere with his duties. In ordinary service the doctors do not go to such extremes as having a man pick out pink. He is told to pick out all shades of red, and that takes in pink. A man very seldom falls down on the combination that Ima mentions. Colors confused are green and brown or red and blue. I have assisted the examining surgeon for some months, so I think that I am safe in making these remarks. I would advise Mr. Nutt to call around and see some of the stations and see if I am not right.

All the TOP-NOTCH stories are simply great, and the bunch here are always looking for more. Please advise Ima that his stories are all O. K., but he can't "Tell it to the marines" in any story like "Pinked in Time."

Luckily Sergeant Briare's criticism is gentle, which does him great credit, for it is plain he does not even know that the writer he has "panned" is a *miss*.



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raw peanuts
You like them
roasted

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