TWICE-A-MONTH 15 CENTS

Top-Notch Magazine

NOV. 1, 1919

The Brunswick

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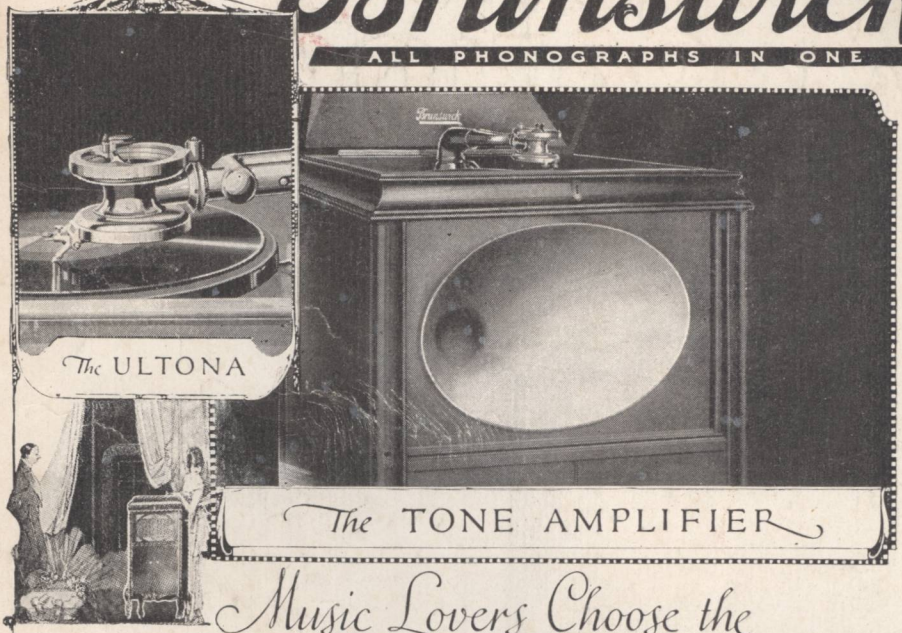

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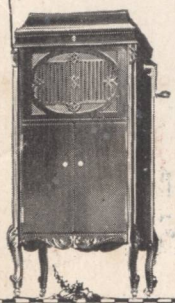

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VOL. XL NOVEMBER 1, 1919 NUMBER 3

TOP-NOTCH

TWICE-A-MONTH MAGAZINE

CONTENTS

COMPLETE NOVEL

THE MYSTIC THREE, ... *Roland Ashford Phillips* . 1
Drama of the mine, with Spokane, Washington, as the hub of the wheel of events.

NOVELETTES

RIDING TO NEWS HOUNDS, ... *Patrick and Terence Casey* 69
There was one who couldn't seem to keep up with the pack; but—— Tale of journalism on the Pacific coast.

STAR WITNESSES, ... *William Wallace Cook* . 118
A none-too-serious adventure in the Arizona desert.

SHORTER STORIES

THE DOLEFUL DROMEDARY, . . . *Ross D. Whytock* . . 56
A good laugh from the land of the Sphinx.

SOMETHING STIRRING, ... *Burt L. Standish* . . 62
As an in-and-outer in big-league baseball, Larry Brown makes his bow.

JUGGLING WITH JUGS, ... *C. S. Montanye* . . . 86
Mr. Archibald Catfitz, of Proone Villa, forsakes inventing, and tries his hand at a real job.

CODE OF THE SEA, ... *Frank Richardson Pierce* 152
Motor shipping into a big proposition.

TAILS YOU LOSE! . . . . . *Archie Martin* . . . 168
When two men agree to stop smoking.

SERIAL NOVELS

THE HEART OF WONDERLAND, . . . *Stanley Shaw* . . 91
In Five Parts—Part II.
Powerful story of the snowbound North.

THE PLAYER AND THE MAN, . . . *John L. Swope* . . . 170
In Two Parts—Part I.
Football and a varsity conflict.

SPECIAL ARTICLE

JUST A MOMENT, ... *Henry Wilton Thomas* . 113
The new sunburst.

TID-BITS—VERSE AND PROSE

RIGHT AWAY, ... *Marjorie Charles Driscoll* . 55
Message to Uncle Sam.

OVER THE MOON, ... *Jo Lemon* 61
The old cow's record in danger.

PIGSKIN DAYS, ... *Arthur E. Scott* . . . 90
When the football fan is happy.

IN THE EVERGLADES, ... *Anonymous* 117
Strange tale of a lost people in Florida.

TOP-NOTCH TALK, ... *Editor and Readers* . . 188
Romance and Reality.

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TOP-NOTCH MAGAZINE

VOL. XL Published November 1, 1919 No. 3

(A COMPLETE NOVEL)

CHAPTER I.

WITH A STRING ATTACHED.

SPOKANE is a fond mother, magnificently and physically two-faced. Her two-facedness results from her peculiar strategic position. She faces eastward across the narrow panhandle of Idaho and smiles upon her mining treasure house, bulging with millions. She faces westward over wide valleys, rich in grain and fruit, the bread basket of America. Her mothership of both her sons—the miner and the farmer—are above criticism.

According to Kane Wallace, who had gained his schooling in the mystic Cœur d'Alenes, the metropolis of the inland empire smiled more fondly upon the miner. That was his personal opinion, however, and the farmer son would be quick to dispute it. Still, every mother will have her favorite, stoutly as she will deny it, and Wallace avowed that Ma Spokane beamed a trifle more warmly upon the man with a pick than upon the man with a hoe.

The eternal springtime of the great Northwest had dealt kindly with Wallace for six and twenty years; had bronzed his cheeks and tempered his

muscles and put the sparkle of sunlight into his blue eyes. Even the eighteen months in France with the valiant Ninety-first and his days of glorious sight-seeing in the East had not weaned him from his native hills. He had been inordinately proud of the Pine Tree insignia on his left shoulder—the distinguishing mark of the Wild West division—and thrilled mightily at their war cry of "Powder River! Let 'er buck!"

Wallace's father had trekked across the continent in a slow-moving, ox-drawn prairie schooner, following the perilous trail blazed by Lewis and Clark, and sought his El Dorado in the Cœur d'Alenes when the town was merely a trading post on the Spokane River and Dutch Jake's place was the wildest, hell-roaring establishment on the slopes of the Cascades. Wallace junior opened his eyes to the blue of Washington skies shortly after the big fire.

Wallace the elder had sought for gold and found it, but like so many of the pioneers he had failed to win the reward due him. Consequently Kane Wallace did not have an easy drift to tunnel, nor did he find his lode blocked out for him. Bitter experience had been a hard taskmaster. He learned the mining game from grass roots down, and added to his knowledge by working his way through a technical school. By the time his father had passed over the long trail, Wallace was an aspiring professional, eligible to write "M. E." after his name.

One Bill Hohenzollern had interfered considerably with Wallace's plans and prospects, for just before his native land had decided to shed its robe of neutrality, Wallace had found a promising position with a big mining corporation in the Sierra Nevada district and had been smitten by "own-your-home" fever. Naturally, as no home is complete without a lovable bit of femininity attached to it, Wallace had made arrangements accordingly. In the midst of those preparations and about the time Miss Kingdon and he were deciding upon the color of their library rug, the Berlin war lord decided to take a fall out of the American eagle, thereby handing a jolt to several million prospective bridegrooms.

Nevertheless, without a pang or regret, and with the knowledge that there was a big job to be done, and done in a workmanlike manner, Wallace shed his corduroys and laced boots for khaki and puttees. When he returned more than a year later and marched up Riverside Avenue with his regiment, while the bands blared and the Spokanites roared their approval, and one girl in particular alternately cried and smiled, Wallace was prepared to resume his engineering career where it had been interrupted.

Of course his former position had been filled by an older man, for the big interests did not propose to mark time while Wallace was somewhere in France juggling hand grenades and destroying machine-gun nests. Wallace bore no malice toward his former employers, even when he visited them the week following his discharge at Camp Lewis and learned from the general manager himself that there was no opening at the present time.

"Things are rather quiet," the manager had said, "and will continue to be for the next year."

"I'll enjoy the quiet," Wallace remarked as he left the office.

Being in daily companionship with Miss Kingdon, Wallace was not cast down at his enforced idleness. He felt he deserved a few weeks of rest in his home town and continued to view the future through rose-tinted glasses.

The time passed all too swiftly, and Wallace and Miss Kingdon had new trips mapped out each day. They picnicked with all the joyous abandon of school children at Indian Cañon, where some of the last of the Spokane tribe had pitched their wigwams and were willing to exchange beadwork and fiber baskets for silver. They motored out Apple Way, the magnificent, paved boulevard that crosses three States and reminded Wallace of the French highways; they penetrated as far as Fourth of July Cañon, where the rainbow trout were plentiful, and broiled their catch

over a pine-cone fire. Between times they enjoyed a plunge in the municipal swimming pool at Natatorium Park, and in the evenings danced in the big, open-air pavilion.

Wallace went alone to Kellogg, in the northern tip of the Idaho panhandle, to interview the manager of the great Snowshoe Mine, the largest silver and lead producer in the world; but there was no immediate opening for him. He stopped off long enough en route to say "Hello!" to the host of all acquaintances in the Cœur d'Alene district, to regale them with stories of the war, and listen to the talk and gossip of the various camps.

On a particularly bright and sunny morning when he appeared at the club-rooms of the Northwest Mining Association in the Hotel Spokane—the headquarters for all his fellow professionals at liberty and otherwise—to receive his mail and glance throught the technical journals, Wallace was hailed by Moran. Lee Moran was an enterprising chap who had gone in for fruit growing on a large scale in the vicinity of Walla Walla. Until the time for his orchards to show a profit, Moran assuaged the cruel anxieties of his principal creditors by permitting himself to become attached to the staff of the Spokane *Review*, where he covered the police news for the morning paper.

"Still at liberty, Wallace?" the reporter inquired. "Must have made a fortune in France; or maybe you're a Bolshevik."

"Just trying to get accustomed to civies," Wallace replied, dropping into an easy-chair that overlooked the busy traffic of Stevens Street. "What are you prowling around in the daylight for?"

"For business reasons," the other returned.

"Enough said. How's the prune market these days?"

"You ought to see my trees," Moran said eagerly. "They're one mass of pink and white bloom. I expect to have a bumper crop this year unless all signs fail. If you hang around long enough I can give you a job picking them," he added with a grin.

"Nothing doing. I've speared enough prunes in the last eighteen months. Trained on them, fought on them—and some of the unfortunates died on them. Tell you what, Moran," Wallace went on in mock seriousness, "I look for a big slump in the prune market when demobilization is complete. There will be something like four million chaps like myself to clamp the lid on the wrinkled critter. We had to swallow them in the army, which may account for the number of desertions; but when a man's a plain citizen again he'll boycott the aristocrat of the boarding-house breakfast."

Moran shrugged good-naturedly. "Huh, I don't think much of your predictions! If the bugs don't get my prunes the bourgeois will. Depend upon it!"

"More power to the bugs!" declared Wallace.

Moran fixed the engineer with a steady scrutiny. "Look here," he broke out, "all joking aside, it seems to me an A-number-one M. E. like yourself, particularly one of the Pine Tree brigade that chased the Fritzies to the Rhine and made the world safe for prohibition, ought to connect with a salary check. What's the trouble?"

"No trouble at all," returned Wallace. "I've had a couple of prospects in the British Columbia district and may accept them if nothing better turns up nearer home. The Cœur d'Alenes are my stamping grounds, you know, and I prefer to remain there."

"Don't blame you," said the other, "especially when there's an added attraction out on Fern Hill. And it is just because I had your interests at heart that I came here this morning. Took chances of getting a sunstroke just to introduce you to your prospective employer."

"Well, that's kind of you, Moran," Wallace declared, somewhat skeptical of the reporter's purpose. "Let me have the particulars."

"Don't know Runyon and Hart, do you?" Moran took up promptly. "Be-

lieve they came into the field after you went to Camp Lewis. They have taken over the Pend Oreille property."

Wallace nodded. "One of the best claims in the district," he said.

"I met Runyon at the Spokane Club dinner the other night, and he mentioned your name. From the little he let fall I guess he has been delving into your past performances. Quizzed me. I let him know right off that there wasn't a better engineer in the whole Cœur d'Alene field, and he'd be mighty lucky to get your services in view of the offers you were considering. He agreed with me and wanted to know where he could get in touch with you. I promised to bring you two together here at the club. Runyon said he would report here at ten o'clock."

"You're a dandy little press agent, Moran," Wallace said. "I'll try to live up to the reputation you built for me."

Fifteen minutes later Runyon appeared and Moran introduced the engineer; after that the reporter begged to be excused and departed.

Alone in the room Runyon surveyed Wallace with frankly appraising eyes. "I've been looking up your records, Wallace," he began shortly. "I believe you're just the man we need. Tied up with any one yet?"

"Not yet," the engineer replied.

"Good! My partner and I are operating the Pend Oreille. You are acquainted with the property, of course?"

"Yes, indeed. It was a heavy producer before I left. I was shift boss there one summer when the Colorado Company owned it."

"Mind coming over to my office?" Runyon asked. "I'd rather talk business there."

The men left the club and walked down toward Riverside. "I've been on a still hunt for the right kind of an engineer," Runyon declared. "Didn't want to advertise my wants for a very good reason. You'll understand presently."

In a small office on the twelfth floor of the imposing Old National Bank Building, Runyon dropped into a chair before his open desk. "Now," he began, when Wallace had seated himself, "we can get down to business. When were you up in the district last?"

"About a week ago."

"Hear anything relative to my property?"

Wallace pondered a moment. "Heard you were running only a day shift at present and that your production had fallen off considerably."

"Who told you that?" Runyon asked quickly.

"No one in particular," the engineer replied. "It was just some of the gossip I picked up."

"Oh!" Runyon relaxed in his chair. "Would you consider taking full charge of my property, as supervising engineer, at five thousand a year to begin with?" he asked suddenly.

"I would consider myself most fortunate indeed in accepting it," Wallace replied unhesitatingly.

"Then you're engaged," Runyon returned just as promptly. He turned to his desk and wrote out a check, signed it, and extended it toward Wallace. "Here's your first month's salary in advance."

Wallace accepted the check wonderingly. "This is very generous of you, Mr. Runyon," he declared, making no effort to conceal his surprise.

"Not at all! Your work begins right now—hard work. So long as the Pend Oreille continues on a dividend-paying basis, you'll continue to draw salary." Runyon smiled for the first time. "The fact is, Wallace," he went on, "the matter is up to you. Perhaps I should have stated, before making these arrangements, that there was a —well, a sort of an 'if' attached to our business agreement."

CHAPTER II.

DOOMED TO GET PINCHED.

WALLACE'S mounting enthusiasm received an abrupt setback. Experience had taught him that any proposition with a veiled "if" attached to it was rather dubious. "I'm afraid I don't understand," he began after a moment of reflection.

"Of course you don't," Runyon agreed. "I've tried my best to keep it under cover. I couldn't very well enlighten you, Wallace, until you were an employee of mine. Why? A precautionary measure. I know you'll never betray an employer's confidence."

"But where does the 'if' come in?" urged Wallace.

"If we can work the new vein we've opened, the Cœur d'Alene field is in for a sensation second to the one experienced when Dutch Jake's burro uncovered the Jackass Lode."

"Why can't it be worked?" inquired the engineer. "Are you waiting to buy in all the stock before——"

"There's no stock on the market," Runyon broke in. "Mr. Hart and I own every share of it. Put on your thinking cap, Wallace. You can answer this conundrum if you try right hard."

"How far down is this vein?" A faint glimmering of the truth crept into Wallace's active mind.

"Thirteenth level."

"Which direction does it run from the main shaft?"

"Northeast."

Wallace instantly visualized the lay of the land in the district referred to; then he smiled. "Your new vein extends beyond the boundary line of the claim," he announced. "Right?"

"Right," echoed Runyon. "Not a hard nut to crack, was it? And of course you know we are unable to proceed with our development work until we get control of the adjoining property. That's the 'if.'"

"Can't a lease be negotiated or royalty terms arranged?" the engineer wanted to know.

"That is what we are praying for —either one or the other. But it will have to be signed and sealed before the news leaks out. So far as I know, only my partner and myself are aware of the find. We made the discovery ourselves, cribbed up the drift, and said nothing about it. We propose to remain close-lipped until the adjoining property comes under our control. If our hopes do not materialize, the Pend Oreille will close down and stay closed, and you'll be out of a job along with a hundred others."

"Who owns the property?"

"That is what we've been trying to find out. Our cautious inquiries have not met with much success. In the first place the records at the county seat were destroyed by fire about a year ago. That was our first stumblingblock. And second, we dared not seem too anxious to find the legal owner, for fear of showing our hand. You know how wary the men are in this district. If we let out a whisper of the truth we'd be wrecked before leaving port. We have decided that all further investigations must be made through an apparently disinterested party. But to find a man we could trust wasn't the easiest thing to do. Then we got a line on you, Wallace. I'm sure we can trust you. I'm telling you the whole story. Now get busy and see what you can do."

"Have you a map of the district?" asked Wallace, his mind working at top speed.

Runyon unfolded one and spread it out upon his desk. The men bent over it. Runyon's own property was marked. Wallace studied the map closely, and the suspicions that were rife in his mind instantly were confirmed.

"The claim northeast of yours is a triangular bit of ground running along the slope of Dodd's Hill," the engineer said. "It contains about sixty acres. It never has been worked to any extent, although there are a dozen prospect holes in it. I remember now perfectly."

Runyon nodded. "That's it exactly. Don't think a bit of the earth has been disturbed for the last ten years. Our vein runs under it at the depth of about twelve hundred feet. To work it through our shaft is the most plausible method of operation. In order for the owner to reach the vein he would have to sink his own shaft to that level, install expensive machinery, and take big chances of having the vein pinch out before he got his money back. Now, we are willing to play fair and square with the owner of the claim, but we're

not going to be bled. I want the property on a fair royalty basis. I think that would be the best arrangement."

"There should be no difficulty," began Wallace. "Any sensible owner would understand."

Runyon smiled at the optimistic remark. "I don't suppose there is any use in my asking if you're acquainted with the Greeb Development Company?" he ventured. "You know the outfit, of course."

"I know them for a crowd of swindlers," Wallace declared. "Is the company still in existence?"

"Very much so. In fact since the war they have taken a new lease of life. In spite of an unsavory reputation and newspaper attacks and the war that is being waged against them by the Northwest Mining Association, the outfit continues to do business at the old stand. There is no telling how much wildcat stock they've unloaded in the rural districts, or how many independent mine owners, seeking capital, have been ruined by their scheming tactics. Greeb is a shrewd old bird; always on the job when a bit of money is needed, always comes out the big end of the horn, always pops up with a catlike grin and an option when a piece of property is wanted. He seems to have an uncanny way of knowing how the wind will blow to-morrow and setting his sails to carry him before it."

Wallace listened quietly to the arraignment. Greeb and his crowd were too well known in the Spokane district to invite comment. The engineer had hoped that the war and government bans had put a damper on the familiar tactics of the infamous crew. Apparently it seemed they had prospered under the adverse circumstances.

"Does Greeb figure in the matter we've just been discussing?" Wallace asked at length.

"I'm a little afraid he does," Runyon admitted. "His engineers have been browsing around my property for the last month. That is one of the reasons why I have kept in the background. If the Greeb bunch get their hands on the adjoining claim it's all off with us. They would put an exorbitant price on the property or demand an outrageous royalty."

"You won't need to worry over that possibility, Mr. Runyon," Wallace spoke up confidently. "I know the owner of the property you want, and I know it can be leased on the most favorable terms."

Runyon brightened instantly. "Who is it?"

"Miss Kingdon. The property was left to her a number of years ago by her father, an old mining man of this district."

"Are—are you sure of it?" the other queried.

"Absolutely! You see," Wallace explained, "the Kingdons are old friends of mine. Norma Kingdon and I went to Moscow College together. We expected to be married just before the war. Now that I must start all over again we've postponed the event until I can establish myself. I had forgotten all about the property until I consulted the map a few minutes ago. Mr. Kingdon located and proved up on the claim at least fifteen years ago. He called it The Silver Lining. He put all the money he had in it, sinking prospect holes."

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Runyon jubilantly. "This is luck indeed. If what you've told me is the truth there'll be no excuse now in muffling those wedding bells, Wallace. Your future is assured, and I fancy, with the royalty from the young lady's property, you two ought to be able to buy a few sticks of furniture."

Wallace was beaming. His world was tinted in rainbow hues at the present moment. "I'm to meet Miss Kingdon at noon," he said; "and if you say so I'll bring her here to the office right after lunch."

"The quicker the better," declared Runyon. "You don't suppose," he added anxiously, "that the young lady has disposed of the claim, do you?"

Wallace was brought up with a jolt. "Let's hope not. No; I'm sure she hasn't," he added with conviction. "Mr. Kingdon always thought the claim was

valuable and urged his daughter not to dispose of it unless absolutely necessary."

Runyon looked relieved. "In that case we've nothing to worry about. I'll depend upon you to bring Miss Kingdon here this afternoon, and we will draw up a royalty contract agreeable to both parties."

Wallace got up from his chair after a look at his watch. "It would apppear that Mr. Kingdon had a hunch of this good fortune when he christened his claim The Silver Lining," he remarked. "Miss Kingdon and her mother are not exactly destitute, now that the father and husband has passed out, but a royalty check every month will come in mighty handy. I'm glad that I'm to be the bearer of such good news."

Runyon followed the engineer to the office door. "I won't rest easy until I'm sure that Greeb's clutching fingers have not dipped into this treasure chest," he said.

"If they are in evidence," Wallace remarked grimly, "they're doomed to get pinched."

CHAPTER III.

IN BLACK AND WHITE.

AT noon exactly, Wallace was pacing anxiously through the great lounge of the Hotel Davenport, his eyes covering the many entrances. An orchestra was playing on the mezzanine floor, and the usual noonday crowd was moving in toward the several dining rooms. Davenport's was something more than a hotel—it was an institution, typifying the progress of the Northwest and the commercial and social advancement of the inland empire. Of all the pioneers whose life had been coupled inseparately with the development of the country, none was more interesting or romantic than the waffle-wagon proprietor who had in less than forty years become the genial host of the greatest inn west of the Rockies.

Wallace's roving eyes suddenly alighted upon Miss Kingdon as she entered by the Lincoln Street door. He bore down upon her, took her arm, and led her through the corridors to a booth in the Coffee Shop grill where a Dutch-costumed maid attended to their wants.

Norma Kingdon was a fair and adorable bit of womanhood, whose cheeks bloomed with the color of her State's far-famed apples, and whose eyes were as dancing bright as the waters of a mountain stream. Yet those selfsame sparkling orbs clouded a bit at sight of Wallace's somber countenance and the anxious manner in which he regarded her across the little table.

"Norma," he began suddenly, "have you disposed of that mining property in the Cœur d'Alenes—the claim your father left you?"

"Of course not," the girl replied.

"Thank heavens!" breathed Wallace with a jubilance that left the girl more than ever amazed. "A miracle has come to pass to-day, Norma," he ran on eagerly; "a couple of them in fact. I've landed an engineering berth with the Pend Oreille Mine, and you are destined to receive a shower of royalty checks."

Miss Kingdon opened her eyes widely; but before she could ask the questions that rushed to her lips, Wallace continued: "The Silver Lining—wasn't that the name of the claim? Open your ears, Miss Moneybags! Listen to what I have to say. There's a rich vein running twelve hundred feet below grass roots on that claim. Your father must have known it was there, but he didn't grub deep enough. Now you are to win the reward he should have had, and you'll need help in making out your income-tax reports."

"How did you find this out?" the girl asked.

Wallace told her, relating all the events of the morning, or as much of them as he considered would interest the girl.

"Is it so valuable as that?" she queried.

"Valuable? Well, rather! Mr. Runyon didn't predict exactly what your royalty would be, but if I'm any judge I'll wager it will amount to five thou-

sand a month—as much as I'll make in a year."

The girl sank back in her chair, overcome at the shower of riches that was about to descend upon her; and during that time Wallace managed to give an order to the waitress.

"I—I can't believe it!" Miss Kingdon broke out at length. "The old Silver Lining claim a bonanza!"

"As sure as you're sitting at this table," declared Wallace. "We had a bit of a scare at first," he went on. "Mr. Runyon couldn't trace the ownership of the claim because many of the county records had been destroyed in a fire. You've all the papers——"

"They're in the vault with the rest of father's things," the girl broke in.

"Good! You see Mr. Runyon was afraid that Greeb's fine hand would show somewhere in the matter. His engineers showed up one day and——"

"You mean Mr. Greeb of the Greeb Development Company?" the girl interrupted.

"Yes; the same old swindler. Funny that he should have been interested in the affair, isn't it? According to Runyon——" Wallace stopped short at the changed expression on the girl's countenance. "What is it, Norma?" he broke out quickly.

"I—I forgot," she stammered.

"Forgot what?" Wallace's heart began to sink. "For the love of Pete don't tell me you've sold the claim after all!"

"No; I haven't sold it. I wouldn't think of doing that."

"Then what is it?"

"Mr. Greeb wanted me to sell to him, but I refused. Then he wanted to buy the timber rights. I agreed to that."

"Timber rights?" echoed Wallace. "Why, there isn't enough timber on the claim to build a respectable cowshed."

"He offered me a thousand dollars for it just the same," the girl maintained. "So I accepted. There was no harm in that, was there?"

"Of course not. Only—only are you certain of what you signed?"

The girl nodded. "I read over the paper carefully—every word of it. It said distinctly that the Greeb Development Company was to purchase all the timber on the claim."

"Nothing more?" insisted Wallace.

"Nothing more."

Wallace was puzzled. There must be a joker somewhere, he figured. Greeb and his associates would not part with a thousand dollars for the privilege of cutting off a few scrawny cedars that dotted the slope of the mountain. "How long ago was this agreement signed?" he asked presently.

"About five months ago; the middle of January, I think."

"You've a copy of the agreement you signed?"

"Of course. It's at home."

"Well, after we eat I want a good look at it," Wallace said.

When the luncheon was brought to the table the engineer discovered that his appetite suddenly had deserted him. He was relieved when the check was paid and the two wended their way out of the hotel.

At the little bungalow on Fern Hill, high above the formal gardens of the Sacred Heart Hospital, where Miss Kingdon lived with her widowed mother, Wallace waited impatiently in the living room while the girl rummaged through her desk to find the agreement she had signed. She came upon it at last and bore it in triumph to the engineer.

Wallace glanced through the document and groaned. "Suffering cats, Norma!" he exclaimed. "This is an option to purchase The Silver Lining claim at any time within six months for one thousand dollars!"

"Purchase it?" the girl echoed weakly. "It—it can't be. I read it through carefully the day I signed."

"Well, it must have changed itself," said Wallace. "It is down here in black and white with your signature at the bottom."

"Let me see." Miss Kingdon took the paper from Wallace's fingers and read through the typewritten paragraphs. "Why—this isn't worded the

same as—as the one I looked over at Mr. Greeb's office," she broke out agitatedly. "It isn't the one I thought I was signing."

"It's a fine time to discover that," said Wallace. "When did you read it through last?"

"In Mr. Greeb's office."

"Oh, and you haven't taken the trouble to read it again since bringing it home?" persisted the engineer.

The girl shook her head. "Not until just now," she admitted. "I didn't think it was necessary. I didn't think the wording in the agreement could be changed after I had signed it."

"It wasn't," Wallace declared. "This is the paper you signed. There is no getting away from it, unless you want to admit the signature is a forgery."

"I know it isn't that," the girl answered, sinking miserably into a chair. "I—I don't know what to think," she faltered, dangerously near to tears.

CHAPTER IV.

UP AGAINST THE TRUTH.

WALLACE himself was too downcast to offer much sympathy. He walked across the room and stood for a moment looking out of the window at the town below. Then he turned back. "Greeb's been tipped off somehow," he declared. "He knew Runyon had to get that property. And now, if his company sees fit to exercise its right contained in the option, before the first of July, it is entitled to purchase the claim for the sum of one thousand dollars."

"But I shan't sell to them," the girl protested.

"You've agreed to—seemingly."

"I'll change my mind."

Wallace smiled. "Business isn't done that way, Norma," he rebuked her gently. "You've bound yourself in writing to accept that sum from the company at any time within six months."

"I didn't do anything of the kind," Miss Kingdon declared spiritedly. "It was the timber rights I sold, nothing more."

"Greeb has only to produce his copy of this agreement in court to establish his rights," said Wallace. "There's a screw loose somewhere. Of course Greeb has tricked you. We couldn't expect anything else from a scamp like him. Just how it was done is another matter."

The engineer looked over the contract again, reading it carefully from beginning to end. Then he uttered several uncomplimentary remarks under his breath. A faint glimmer of the truth pierced his mind. "Tell me exactly what happened the day you went to Greeb's office," he said.

"There was nothing unusual," Miss Kingdon returned. "I went to the office and met Mr. Greeb there. He had one of his clerks bring in the papers. I read them through and told him it was satisfactory. Then I signed and so did he, and another gentleman signed as a witness."

"Hold on a minute," protested Wallace. "After you read the agreement did you sign at once? Think carefully now!"

The girl was silent a moment as if trying to recall the details of the affair. "No," she said at length; "I didn't sign just then. Mr. Greeb took both copies of the agreement——"

"Took them out of the room?" Wallace broke in quickly.

"No; took them over to his desk."

"Was there any interruption during that time?"

"Yes; there was," Miss Kingdon admitted. "But it didn't amount to anything," she added hurriedly.

"You watched him all the time?"

"Yes. When he took the papers from me there was a disturbance in an adjoining room. Mr. Greeb looked angry and stepped to the door. I heard him speak sharply to some one. Then he returned, handed me a pen, and I signed. He signed immediately afterward and so did the witness."

A groan escaped Wallace. "And of course you didn't take the trouble to read the agreement again before you signed, did you?"

"Why, I had just finished reading it."

"Oh, no, you hadn't. The paper you read and the one you signed were two different agreements. Greeb worked an old ruse on you. That disturbance you heard was staged especially for the trick. Greeb had the papers in his hand when he went to the door ostensibly to quiet the noise. He was out of sight for a minute, and during that minute substituted the agreement you signed for the one you had just finished reading. He took a chance that you wouldn't read it again. The papers looked to be identical and probably were, except for the extra line conveying the option privilege."

The girl regarded Wallace blankly. "Do you think that was what happened?" she asked.

"Mighty sure of it! Couldn't make anything else out of it from what you've told me." Wallace shook his head mournfully. "And now your bright royalty prospects have gone glimmering. For a thousand dollars the Greeb outfit will get possession of a claim worth fifty times that sum—perhaps more."

Miss Kingdon's eyes began to fill up and her lips quivered. "Maybe Mr. Greeb will not—not take advantage of the option privilege," she ventured hopefully.

"About as much chance of that as there would be of Greeb passing by a dime on the sidewalk. No; Greeb knew the value of the claim and set his trap to get it. He didn't want the timber on the land any more than he would want the water rights, for the simple reason there's no such animal."

"Perhaps if I went down to see him ——" the girl began.

"Don't think of it!" protested Wallace. "I'll take up this bit of trouble where you left off. There must be a way to check Greeb's game if we work things properly. The Silver Lining is bound to turn right side out even if we have to take a bit of Greeb's hide along with it."

Wallace remained at the bungalow long enough to comfort the girl and cheer her up; then he departed. He swung aboard a Rockwood car and alighted at Riverside, deciding at the last moment to call on Runyon before paying a visit to the Greeb offices.

The engineer acquainted his new employer with the full details of the scheme that had been perpetrated against Miss Kingdon, and he agreed with Runyon that Greeb and his brood ought to be consigned to a region where brimstone is not imported.

"Afraid of something like this," said Runyon. "Thought it was too good to think of Miss Kingdon owning the claim."

"She does own it," said Wallace; "and until the claim passes along to this crowd of swindlers, it is up to us to get busy and block the transfer."

"Don't see what can be done," Runyon replied dismally. "Greeb knows we must have the property or close down operations, and you can bet a Liberty Bond against a plugged dime that he'll take over The Silver Lining before the first of the month. Then he'll sit tight and wait for me to call on him. The terms he'll ask will be exorbitant, of course."

"Looks as though I had a double-barreled problem to solve," declared Wallace. "Have to save the claim for Miss Kingdon and a job for myself. Well," he added cheerfully, "I've been up against harder things. I'll begin by paying a sociable visit to the head pirate."

"He'll give you the laugh," warned Runyon.

"All right; let him. I might slip in a few laughs myself. Anyway I'll let him know I'm on the trail. Sit tight, Runyon, and keep a merry ha, ha, of your own on tap."

"Wouldn't mention the fact that you're connected with the Pend Oreille," cautioned the other.

"Not so much as a whisper," replied Wallace.

After those few optimistic remarks the engineer took his leave and walked briskly down the street to the habitat of the big game.

The executive offices of the Greeb Development Company occupied the ground floor of a new building on Post

Street, not many doors above Main. It was furnished sumptuously throughout in mahogany and heavy curtains and soft rugs. It breathed an air of refinement and solidity, of which it possessed neither. A galaxy of offices opened off the main reception room.

In laying out the floor plans, Greeb doubtless had used past and bitter experience in placing his private office as far away as possible from those occupied by the lesser officials. Also it was fitted with a side door that permitted quick and silent egress. There were times when it would not be convenient, or safe, for him to leave the building by the usual main entrance. Particularly was this true when the reception room was occupied by fretful and belligerent customers who carried poorly balanced chips upon their shoulders.

It was off from the private office, as if to keep a watchful eye upon it, that the massive fire and burglar and element-proof safe was located. Behind its shining doors of armor-plate steel rested the secrets of the Greeb organization.

Herman Greeb, president of the company that bore his name, was a rotund, wheezy individual with a hairless cranium and owlish eyes that were magnified behind thick-lensed glasses. His cheeks were pink and florid, and his voice purringly persuasive. He affected a dress of somber black and topped it with a low collar buttoning in the back, an artful touch that lent him a ministerial air.

Greeb was the company, and the company was Greeb; that is to say the other partners in the business, of which there were two, were merely figureheads. Rufus Dayne and John Tedford had been privileged to invest in the stock of the organization and see their names engraved on the stationery of the firm as vice president and secretary; but Greeb himself was the master mind that guided the pirate ship through the shoals.

A visitor at the offices found it exceedingly easy to progress so far, but few could succeed in gaining the inner sanctum where Greeb himself basked unless one's business was of the utmost importance. However, since Wallace had a nodding acquaintance with the lesser spiders in the web, and his appearance was not alarming, he was permitted to step into the august presence of the master weaver.

Greeb looked up pleasantly enough to view the stalwart figure that filled one of the ornate chairs. "Good afternoon, Wallace," he said. "Don't think I've seen you since the welcome-home parade. Getting back in the old game again?"

"Trying to," said Wallace, getting set for his opening gun.

"That's good. Anything I can do to help you along?"

"My visit here this afternoon is for that purpose." There was a note in the engineer's voice that caused a slight frown to crease itself on Greeb's placid brow.

"Well?" inquired Greeb.

"It would appear that while some of us have been straightening out the tangle on the other side of the world, a few of the stay-at-homes have been practicing subterfuge on this side. To be more explicit, Greeb, I refer to the sleight-of-hand performance that was staged by yourself in the matter of The Silver Lining claim. No doubt you'll recall the instance."

Greeb eyed the engineer speculatively. "You refer to the option we have taken on the property?" he inquired.

"I refer to the juggling of papers," returned Wallace.

"I fail to understand——"

"Nonsense," Wallace broke in. "You understand perfectly. You've been looking for the storm to break any day, haven't you? We won't waste time reviewing the matter except to say that you tricked Miss Kingdon into signing an option when she was under the impression that she was merely disposing of the timber rights."

"I have no knowledge of any trick being perpetrated," Greeb declared. "I hold an option on the claim, and I intend to purchase it before that privilege expires."

"Talk sense, Greeb! No use in bluff-

ing. The pretended timber rights on Miss Kingdon's property aren't worth fifty dollars, and you know it. You used that bluff to get the young lady's signature to an option, staging a bit of by-play and shifting the contracts, taking a chance that she would fail to observe the few added lines in the substituted paper."

"Absurd!" spluttered Greeb.

"Just about as absurd as the peace treaty terms to the Germans," remarked Wallace. "It all depends upon the point of view. You've been engineering crooked deals for so many years that it has become second nature to you. You can look at a corkscrew and think it a ruler. You've managed to keep within the law by a finger-nail margin. It can't last much longer, Greeb. This district has had its fill of your dirty tactics, and if the law can't touch you something else will."

Greeb listened aghast at the arraignment. "This—this is intolerable!" he choked at length. "What do you mean by coming here to insult me? Clear out!"

"Oh, I'll clear out after I've had my say," Wallace returned, undisturbed at the other's threatening attitude. "And please don't reach for that bell."

CHAPTER V.

THE MARGIN OF SAFETY.

GREEB'S shaking finger, resting on the button that would have called assistance, hesitated. Why, he did not know; but it did. His owlish eyes were blazing. "Miss Kingdon signed that contract in good faith," he broke out, "and in good faith it will be carried out. Do you think The Silver Lining claim is worth more than a thousand dollars?"

"That isn't the question," said Wallace.

"Ah, but it is the question," Greeb shot back. "I know what perhaps you are just finding out. By knowing things in advance I make money. And because I am smarter than you I'm condemned. The Silver Lining is going to be worth a hundred thousand. The young lady has just learned of it and wants to back out. She's like——"

"Never mind expressing your opinion," Wallace interrupted. "You got away with a crooked deal. Why not confess it?"

The door opened suddenly and Tedford stepped into the room. At sight of Greeb's visitor he murmured an apology and started to withdraw.

"It's all right, Tedford," Greeb spoke up quickly. "Come right in. Wallace was just leaving."

Tedford, secretary of the company, advanced and placed a sheaf of papers upon the president's desk; then he turned and surveyed Wallace with a mildly curious look. He was a thin man, as tall as Wallace and not much older. During the moment of being under observation, the engineer recalled that Tedford's name was signed to The Silver Lining option as a witness.

"Wallace has just been calling me names because of the business dealing we had with Miss Kingdon," Greeb went on. "He is laboring under the impression that we tricked the lady into signing the option."

"Nonsense," Tedford said. "We only——"

"Never mind the arguments," protested Wallace. "I came here to-day to find out what you intend to do about it. Since it is evident you do not propose to cut the timber on the claim, perhaps you'll agree to accept the sum paid for the rights and turn over the paper Miss Kingdon signed."

Greeb laughed. "We don't do business that way. The agreement stands just as it is written."

"Our option runs until the first of the month," Tedford put in, "and some time before that date we are going to purchase the property."

"You'll avoid trouble by accepting my proposition," Wallace said quietly.

"And avoid a profit as well, eh?" jeered Greeb.

"That's final, is it?"

"Absolutely."

Wallace got up from his chair. "Just remember that I made the offer and came to you with it," he announced.

"Perhaps in the future you will come to me. You gentlemen have reached the end of your rope, and you're going to be brought up with a jerk. That isn't a threat," he added; "it is a prediction. Good afternoon."

When the engineer had gone and the door closed behind him, Tedford cleared his throat and glanced uneasily at Greeb. "What do you make of it all?" he asked.

"Make of it? Nothing." Greeb waved his hand airily as if to dismiss the affair. "Nothing but bluff. What can Wallace do? We've got our evidence in black and white. That's all there is to it."

"Do you suppose Miss Kingdon has just found out the truth regarding her property?"

"Undoubtedly. I saw Wallace and Runyon together this morning. Knew then something would be stirring. Runyon's told Wallace the fix he is in. Suppose they looked over the agreement Miss Kingdon signed and saw the little joker in it. I've been expecting to hear from her most any day, but I hardly figured that Wallace would take up the matter."

Both men laughed softly. Greeb got up and went to the vault, the door of which was partly open. He came back with a box of papers. Running through them he lifted out a particular document, perused it thoughtfully, and glanced at the signatures. "Here it is, Tedford," he said with a throaty chuckle. "It'll mean a neat little profit for us—thanks to my ingenuity," he added significantly.

Tedford continued to smile. "You've a remarkable gift along some lines," he replied. "I never would have thought of such a ruse."

"Probably not, probably not," commented Greeb impressively. "It keeps one guessing these days to make a fair living and stay within the law. I think, sometimes, if it wasn't for me, this company would be on the rocks."

"No doubt of it," Tedford agreed with an approving nod. "And—ah—while we were speaking of options," he went on, gently turning the conversation into another channel, "I was reminded that we have an important one expiring to-morrow."

"Ah, to be sure. I was thinking of that just before you came in. Let me see, the Bitter Root property, isn't it? And it must be purchased. We cannot neglect so golden an opportunity."

"The owners are not eager to dispose of it on the terms that were quoted," Tedford ventured.

"Of course they're not," said Greeb with a smile that expanded like oil upon water. "I knew what I was about when I took that option, Tedford. Why, that claim is worth all of two hundred thousand to-day."

"So I should judge," returned Tedford. "I wanted to discuss the matter with you. You know it is a cash transaction. We must have fifty thousand on hand to-morrow."

"Mm-mm!" Greeb murmured. "Too bad we have to take it up this time of the month. Our cash resources are a trifle low, aren't they? We have so many irons in the fire that—well, no matter, it must be arranged. We can use those Liberty Bonds for collateral. Ought to get forty thousand on them, hadn't we?"

Tedford wagged his head. Parenthetically it may be said that the government securities had been purchased under pressure after a committee of citizens had visited Greeb and convinced him that a subscription would be advisable.

"Then we have ten thousand on deposit at the Spokane National," Greeb went on reflectively. "That will complete the sum necessary. Our financial stringency will be merely temporary, of course. The moment we get ownership of the property we can borrow all we need upon it."

"Will you arrange the matter, or shall I relieve you of the details?" queried Tedford.

"I'll attend to it at once," said Greeb, glancing hurriedly at his watch.

"Wouldn't it be a good idea to take up Miss Kingdon's option at the same time?"

Greeb reached for his hat. "We'll put that off until next week. Haven't enough cash at the present moment. There's no hurry. We have The Silver Lining sewed up tight until the first."

Before the banks closed that afternoon, Greeb had gone through the formalities necessary to secure his loan, and with the forty thousand in currency of large denominations, in addition to the ten thousand drawn by check, returned to his office. Cash transactions were a hobby with Greeb. Experience had taught him that crisp bank notes and gold could work more miracles than checks.

While he was counting over the small-sized fortune and sealing it into a heavy envelope preparatory to placing it in the safe, Tedford entered. The secretary presented a glum countenance, and Greeb noticed that he closed the door behind him at once, a precaution that aroused instant speculation on the part of the president.

"What's the trouble, Tedford?" he inquired.

"I've had a bit of a scene while you were out," Tedford explained. "A visitor called to see you in a matter pertaining to some stock that had been purchased through our house."

"Well?"

"Wanted us to buy back the stuff. He grew very abusive when I informed him we were not in the market for it."

"Who was this person? Know him, did you?"

"I've forgotten his name. He was a young chap. Came from the East somewhere, I believe. Said he needed the money."

Greeb smiled tolerantly. "We all need it. I trust you handled him diplomatically, Tedford. Let him down easy, eh?"

"I tried my best; and after a long argument he left. But I'm afraid he'll be back again. He looked—looked dangerous to me, Greeb. Said the next time he called he'd see you in person or there'd be trouble."

The president regarded his associate with an amused look. "I'm surprised at you, Tedford," he said reproachfully. "Why, one would think it the first time anything of this nature has developed. Hasn't past experience taught you better? Suppose this chap does come back? Suppose he comes back a dozen times? What of it? You can tell him I'm out of town. Tell him that we do not make a practice of buying back stock. We are promoters, not brokers."

"The man looked dangerous," Tedford repeated, flashing a quick glance over his shoulder as if anticipating the visitor's reappearance.

"Nonsense!" scoffed Greeb. "You're acting like an old woman. Brace up! Don't let this small fry get your goat."

Tedford drew a bit of courage from the other's deportment and essayed a faint smile. "Never had anything hit me so hard before," he admitted. "If you could have seen the look in that chap's eyes when I told him we never bought back securities——"

Greeb went off in a guffaw of laughter. "You're certainly amusing. The look in his eyes! My, my, Tedford, you're getting quite poetical!"

As if to dismiss the matter for all time, Greeb picked up the envelope of currency from his desk and took it over to the safe. Tedford edged out of the door and went back to his own desk in the outer office, making sure as he advanced that the reception room was untenanted.

When Greeb had deposited the envelope in the safe along with the box of papers, he stepped back and closed the heavy door. It swung shut on noiseless hinges. Then for a moment, alone in the room, Greeb stood in deep contemplation. Presently a smile creased his lips and he opened the door of the safe again. The smile was still in evidence when he closed the door for the second time and twirled the polished dial that set the lock.

After shutting his desk, Greeb strolled out of his private office, and, without a word to any of his associates in the front offices, passed through

the empty reception room into the street. His car stood at the curb. He stepped into it and settled himself back of the steering wheel. Nor did he bestow more than a cursory glance upon the young man who watched him near by, watched him with eyes that were filled with hatred.

CHAPTER VI.

BLOOD FROM A TURNIP.

WHEN Wallace left the offices of the Greeb Development Company and walked thoughtfully toward Riverside, he collided with Moran who was hurrying in the direction of the *Review* offices.

"What've you got on for the next hour, Wallace?" the reporter asked abruptly.

"Nothing in particular," the engineer told him, having decided to plan out a campaign of his own during the afternoon before calling at the Kingdon bungalow. "Why?"

"Then come along with me. I've picked up a thread or two of a big story. Looks like a crackajack."

"Anything to do with prunes?" queried Wallace.

"Cut out the alleged-comedy stuff," warned Moran, as he gripped the other's shoulder and propelled him along the street. "I want you to meet my copy. Got him corraled in my apartment."

"Strong-arm tactics, eh?"

"Almost that. Say, if any of the sob sisters on the *Chronicle* got tipped off to my lead they'd be storming my door."

Leaving the engineer alone a moment in front of the *Spokesman* building, where the roaring presses were delivering the afternoon edition of the *Chronicle*, the *Review's* evening satellite, Moran disappeared, returning a few minutes later and setting a stiff pace toward his apartment near the public library.

"Just happened to stumble onto this," the reporter declared, taking up his story again. "Bumped into a chap in the Davenport lobby an hour ago. Smelled a bit of news right off when he pointed out a man and asked me if it was Herman Greeb."

"Greeb?" echoed Wallace, his interest at once aroused.

"Just that. When I told him it wasn't the man he was looking for he seemed so disappointed that I got to asking questions. Say, the yarn he slipped me was an earful. Don't doubt a word of it. You wouldn't either if you could hear him. This kid—that's all he is—came out here from the Middle West. Iowa, I think it was. And what do you suppose brought him here? What do you imagine this poor kid's got on his mind?"

"If Greeb's concerned in it I'd imagine it was money," Wallace remarked. "Am I wrong?"

"You're not. You're a hundred-percent right. Seems like this kid's father died a year or more ago," Moran explained, as the two slowed down on the hill that overlooked the river, "and left behind a trunkful of choice mining stock purchased through Greeb. Now the mother is ill, and the family are in need of funds, and this youngster, after his letters had been ignored, has come on to Spokane, foolishly believing that Greeb would make a refund on the stock. He went to the office and made his wants known and of course was laughed at. Naturally he didn't get to see Greeb personally. Trust that old boy to avoid unpleasant scenes."

"He had one unpleasant scene this afternoon," said Wallace, referring to his own exploit; then, before Moran could question him, he added: "What does your copy propose doing now?"

"Search me! He's down and out. I'll slip him a little change and see if I can't rustle up a job. The story he has given me is worth a fair handout."

In the living room of Moran's apartment, Wallace made the acquaintance of the reporter's "copy." The latter gave his name as Stanton. He was a thin, sunburned youth, dressed in new but cheap clothes that made no pretense of fit. He said he had come from a farm in southern Iowa. There was

something at once appealing in his voice and manner, and Wallace began to ask questions.

Stanton answered readily enough, and in fifteen minutes he had revealed the details of his pilgrimage into the Northwest. His story was commonplace and touched with familiar instances that were so often ridiculed by the sophisticated. The father had invested the savings of a lifetime in the purchase of mining stocks sponsored by Greeb. Of course no dividends ever had been paid on them, and never would be. But mother and son had not despaired and were comforted by the belief that the gaudy certificates were worth their face value. No; Greeb had not answered any of the letters written him, so Stanton had decided to come West and attend to the matter in person. His reception at the Greeb office had left him dazed.

"I'm sure if I see Mr. Greeb himself he will do the right thing by me," Stanton declared hopefully. "I told the man in the office I'd be back again. And I'll keep going until I see Mr. Greeb. I know he'll help me."

"Yes," said Moran; "like a fox would help a chicken. I've brought Wallace around to see you, Stanton. He's a mining engineer, and if any of that junk Greeb slipped your father is worth more than the paper it's printed on, he'll tell you. Let him look at the pretty pictures."

With a heavy heart Wallace accepted the bundle of certificates that the youngster eagerly produced, running through them with a practiced eye. "Half of these mines never existed," he said at length, "and the other half are still prospect holes. I'm sorry."

"But Mr. Greeb told us——" Stanton protested.

"Just forget all that bunk," Moran broke in. "Greeb is a great promiser. That's his greatest asset. You'll never get a cent out of him for these pictures, Stanton, and for that matter you'll never get to see him. He is only in to buyers."

Stanton sank down into a chair, his countenance mirroring the distress and torment that Moran's words must have inflicted.

"I wish something could be done about it," Moran spoke up again. "You're not the first victim—or the last."

"Why isn't he punished?" Stanton broke out suddenly, and into his eyes flared the look that had alarmed Tedford. "Why do you let him keep on swindling folks?"

"We've been trying to put the high sign on him for years," Moran answered ruefully, "but he's been too slippery for us. His time is coming. It's bound to."

Stanton jumped from his chair. "I'm going to see him right now," he declared. "I'm going to make him see me."

"Hold on, son!" admonished Wallace, detaining him. "Don't be foolish. You'll gain nothing but trouble."

"Guess I can stand it," the other returned doggedly. "I'm getting used to it now. If Greeb's as bad as you all say he is he ain't fit to live. I want to talk to him, just once. And if he won't listen to me I'll——"

"Don't get in bad, Stanton!" Moran cut in hurriedly. "Greeb will have all the best of it. If you make a disturbance in his office he'll ring for a cop and you'll be jugged. And if you go around threatening him he may get you locked up for a term. Calm down now and talk sense."

"I've got to go back home with some money."

"All right! Just make up your mind for good and all that you'll get none from Greeb; then scout for a job. This is the best country in the universe for job-finding. I can send you down on a fruit ranch of mine, or Wallace can get you a place in the hills. And when you land a job you'll be fixed to send some money home. That's the sensible thing to do, isn't it? You know it is. And I'll guarantee you a bed and three meals a day until you connect with a pay envelope."

Stanton listened quietly enough to all that Moran had to say and seemed

to think the better of his threats. "Maybe it's the best thing for me to do after all," he agreed. "You're both mighty good to me," he added in a voice that was far from steady.

"Not at all," said Moran. "It's the nature of the folks out here to behave like human beings. And if a few scoundrels do happen to prove an exception to the rule, the rest of us are not to blame. We'll try all the harder to square up things."

Wallace and Moran left the apartment shortly afterward. Before that the reporter promised Stanton to be back in time for dinner, and urged his guest to make himself comfortable until six o'clock.

"Some copy, eh?" Moran ventured jubilantly, when he and the engineer were out of hearing and once more headed toward town. "Comedy, pathos, and heart-interest galore."

"And all the makings of a tragedy," added Wallace.

At the window of Moran's apartment Stanton watched his two benefactors disappear around the library corner. Then a few minutes later he left the house, walking slowly along the high bank that sloped precipitously toward the river. He gazed curiously at the stadium below where a ball game was in session, and more interestedly at the many fishermen who were casting their flies to lure the speckled trout.

Stanton walked on to Monroe and turned across the great concrete arch that spanned the lower falls of the turbulent Spokane River. For a long time he leaned against the rail to watch the crystal-green waters in their foaming cataract over the rocks below. Far down under the bridge he saw the huge pipe lines that conveyed the harnessed water into the power-house turbines. The roar of the falls was deafening, and the mist swept against his face like rain.

After a time he moved on, retracing his steps to Main Avenue. He turned aimlessly to his left. He had not had any destination in mind when he left Moran's apartment; simply he wished to get out of doors and walk in the bright sunlight. It was better than remaining inside, alone with unpleasant thoughts. Despite all that the reporter had said and all the arguments he had brought to bear, Stanton could not down the bitterness in his heart. His hand strayed to his coat pocket where the bundle of worthless securities rested. They had cost his father almost twenty thousand dollars. Now Greeb had the money and would return none of it.

Almost subconsciously Stanton turned at Post Street, and a moment later he was in front of the Greeb offices. The very sight of the name in big gold letters maddened him. They danced before his eyes with silent, mocking insolence.

A short, thickset man with glasses sauntered into view, crossed the walk, and stepped into a big car parked at the curb. Stanton watched him, aware that he had come from the Greeb offices. The watcher's eyes glowed ominously. He moved forward just as the man in the car touched the controls and the big machine purred softly and shot away.

"Say, some wagon, ain't it?" a voice piped at his elbow; and, turning quickly, Stanton beheld a crippled newsboy gazing in awe after the departing machine.

"Know who it belongs to?" Stanton asked, while a quick suspicion stabbed at his heart.

"Sure! To Greeb," the newsboy answered. "Didn't you see him get in just now?"

Stanton turned back to look up the street. The car had been lost in the dense traffic of Riverside. The wave of hatred that he had in a measure kept in check since the outburst in Moran's apartment broke forth again in a rushing flood. He knew the man now; he would know him again.

"Where does Greeb live?" he asked at length.

"Up yonder." The newsboy pointed toward the low range of tree-clad hills that sheltered the city on the south. "See the big stone house? Looks like a castle, don't it. Greeb lives there. He's a swell."

CHAPTER VII.

THE RIVERSIDE REVIEW.

WALLACE had dinner that night with Runyon and the latter's business associate, Mr. Hart, at the Spokane Club, where all the surprising affairs of the day were under discussion. The owners of the Pend Orielle Mine were obviously depressed at the news Wallace imparted, for with Greeb's clutching fingers about to close upon The Silver Lining claim, future operations looked dubious.

There could be no recourse to the law to remedy matters. Miss Kingdon's story of the substituted papers could not be upheld in court. Greeb had but to produce his option to gain his end. The girl would have to admit that her signature was genuine. There seemed to be no loophole by which the girl could retain the ownership of her claim.

"Greeb tipped his hand to me," Wallace said, when the trio left the dining room and strolled out upon the balcony to finish their cigars. "He is probably waiting for you to make the first move."

"I suppose we'll have to negotiate with him first or last," remarked Hart, "if only to learn his terms."

"Wouldn't be at all surprised if Greeb made a bluff of sinking a shaft on the property," ventured Runyon. "If the vein doesn't pinch out——"

"That 'if' is going to hold Greeb back," Wallace broke in. "An investment of a hundred thousand won't appeal to him unless he is dead sure of results. He would prefer to sell out at a handsome profit and let you take all the risk."

"He'll never get any handsome profit out of me," snapped Runyon. "I'll stick out for fair play if it means closing down the Pend Orielle for a year. I want you to go up to the property with us to-morrow or next day, Wallace," he continued after his anger had subsided. "We'll open the drift we cribbed up. I want you to examine it, take a batch of samples, and get all the reports on them. Divide them up among the different assay offices in Cœur d'Alene and Wallace. Make believe the stuff comes from your own prospect. I want to make sure of myself before going ahead one way or another."

"Better make it the day after to-morrow," suggested Hart. "We'll close down then to overhaul the pumps and Wallace can work undisturbed. I'm not trusting too many of the workmen on the job."

"Suits me," said the engineer.

When the cigars were finished the men left the club and walked up Riverside Avenue. The mine operators left their engineer at the Stevens Street corner, turning south to the Spokane Hotel, while Wallace remained to board a Fern Hill car that would take him out to the Kingdon home.

Standing at the corner, his mind far away from the busy traffic about him, Wallace was hailed by Mr. Nicholls, who with Baker and Hussey in tow had just come in from their daily round of golf at the country club. Mr. Bailey, secretary of the Northwest Mining Association, joined the group.

Wallace was urged to make up a foursome at the Down River course on the following afternoon, when Jo Novak, the local professional, had promised to take a hand in the match.

"You're a day too late," the engineer said, declining the invitation. "I'm a workingman now. Have to chase ore values instead of the elusive rubber ball."

"Just learned you had hooked up with the Runyon interests," Bailey observed. "Glad to hear of it."

"Why in the world didn't you postpone work until after the Pacific coast championship games?" Baker inquired jovially. "They're beginning on the eighteenth. We need a few good localites to buck the Seattle and Portland crowd. They're coming here to clean up."

"You're not classing me along with Novak and the other professionals, are you?" asked Wallace. "I haven't had a club in my hands since I went to Camp Lewis eighteen months ago. I'd

make a sorry showing against those coast sharks."

"Play a few rounds with Novak and you'll get back into form," predicted Nicholls. "I'll fix it all right with Runyon. He's a pill swatter himself. How about it?"

Wallace shook his head. He was in no mental condition to enter a tournament. "I'll get in trim for the September battles," he said.

As further arguments were unavailing, the crowd moved on. Wallace's car came in sight and he was preparing to board it when Moran darted across the street and blocked his move. "Wait for the next one," the reporter urged; and at the sight of the speaker's troubled countenance the engineer obeyed.

"What's on your mind now?" queried Wallace.

"Seen Stanton anywhere?" Moran asked.

"Haven't been looking for him. Why? Your copy disappeared?"

"Looks that way. Went back to the apartment at six as I promised and found the place empty. Stanton's walked out on me."

"Don't think he wandered far," said Wallace. "Not when he's depending upon you for dinner."

"I'm afraid he'll get into trouble. You know what he threatened this afternoon. If he carries out his plan to see Greeb—well, there's no telling what will happen."

Wallace sobered instantly. "Forgot all about that," he admitted.

"I haven't," returned Moran. "I'd hate like blazes to see the kid in trouble. If you've nothing better to do you might scout around a bit and see if you can locate him."

"Unfortunately I have something better to do," said Wallace. "I wouldn't worry too much about Stanton. He doesn't know Greeb by sight, and I'm of the opinion that Greeb's summering with his family at Hayden Lake. No danger of Stanton going that far."

Another car came along at that moment and Wallace boarded it, leaving Moran standing at the curb. The engineer's visit at the flower-covered bungalow on Fern Hill did not terminate until after twelve o'clock. The conversation between Miss Kingdon and himself was not of the most cheerful nature, although Wallace attempted to be as optimistic as possible. He mentioned the fact that he had called upon Greeb and that the holder of the option was determined to exercise his rights in the matter of purchasing The Silver Lining claim. The girl was broken-hearted, but Wallace comforted her by intimating that a way might be found to avert the calamity. As the plans he had in mind were rather vague and in no shape to be outlined, the engineer did not go into details.

His visit ended, Wallace departed, walking down the hill to Rockwood Boulevard. As no car was in sight he decided to walk on until one appeared. At the moment he gave no thought to the fact that his course into town lay along the boundaries of the Greeb estate.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MOVING FINGER.

THE Greeb estate and mansion, occupying a large acreage on the slope of a hill that looked down upon the business section of the town, was one of the show places of Spokane. The house itself was an imposing structure of timber and stucco, ivy-covered and mullion-windowed. A great stone wall encircled the estate—a wall a dozen feet in height and fully ten feet in width at the bottom, tapering to half that width at the top. It had been built without mortar, and from the earth-filled crevices blossomed a profusion of rock-growing plants and vines.

Within the seclusion of that wall was a fairyland of garden, with its cascading waterfalls and quiet pools, its Japanese tea house, quaint bridges spanning the artificial streams, winding trails amid the shrubbery, fantastically trimmed hedges bordering the terraces, marble benches, and foun-

tains. At the entrance to the grounds was a lodge-keeper's stone house guarding the huge iron gates that swung between rock abutments.

Greeb drove his car through the gate and followed the graveled, rhododendron-bordered road that led to the garage. After he had parked the car he went into the house, refreshed himself in his own private swimming pool, donned a lounging robe, and went out upon the secluded veranda to await the call to dinner.

Greeb's family had left town some weeks before to take up quarters at their summer lodge at Hayden Lake in the Idaho mountains. Greeb himself went out there on days when the pressure of business did not interfere with the thirty-mile drive. On this particular night, however, he had decided to remain in town. A cook and a butler were retained at the town house to cater to the needs of their migratory employer; but for the past week the butler alone survived, the cook having deserted without notice.

Shelton, the butler, occupying the place of both chef and serving man, was a stolid, unobtrusive individual with very little to say, a combination of virtues that appealed to Greeb. He had accepted the position in the household a month before and had proved himself a capable and thoroughly experienced servant.

Greeb dined leisurely and remained at the table to smoke while the butler cleared away the dishes. When Shelton had finished his task and padded noiselessly around turning off the unnecessary lights, he coughed discreetly, as butlers have a habit of doing when about to ask a favor, and begged permission to spend the evening in town.

"Sure!" said Greeb. "Nothing to do around here. Only show up in time to get my breakfast. I want to be out of the house early in the morning."

"Yes, sir. And thank you, sir," murmured Shelton and melted away in the shadows. He did not, however, go directly to his own quarters over the kitchen, but entered the main hall through another door and guardedly pulled a switch that disconnected the telephone in Greeb's upstairs chamber.

Greeb finished his cigar and newspaper, closed and locked the doors in the lower part of the house, and ascended to his apartment on the second floor. There he prepared for bed, selected a novel, read until drowsy, snapped out the table lamp at his elbow, and went to sleep.

He awoke some time later, just how much later he did not know until he turned on the light by his bed and looked at his watch. It marked twenty-five minutes past midnight. He was about to extinguish the light and go back to sleep, when he heard a noise. It seemed to be in the upper hall. He listened attentively, deciding that it must be Shelton returning to the house. The sound was repeated. It appeared to be right outside his door. The butler had no excuse for being upstairs at that hour of the night.

Greeb was not alarmed, but he was annoyed. "Is that you, Shelton?" he demanded, his voice rising irritably.

As there was no response, Greeb swore to himself, climbed out of bed, and walked across the room to the door. He opened the door quickly, to discern a crouched figure against the opposite wall of the hall.

"What do you mean by this night prowling, Shelton?" he queried, taking it for granted that the man in the shadows was his butler. As he spoke he thrust out a hand to snap on the light switch; but his hand did not reach its object. A thin, red flame stabbed the gloom of the hall, a report echoed, and Greeb, clutching at his stomach and trying to cry out, swayed backward and toppled heavily to the floor.

Strangely enough he did not completely lose consciousness. He realized that he was upon the floor, flat on his back, and that he was staring vacantly at the ceiling, his gaze centered on the yellow glow reflected from the shaded table lamp. The room was very quiet. There was a dull pain somewhere below his ribs, and the lower part of his body seemed paralyzed. He could not reason out what had happened. At

length he closed his eyes. When he opened them again his brain was clearer. The noise in the hall, the open door, the report of a revolver—all came back to him in sequence. He had been shot—wounded. He must get help.

After a time he managed to drag himself inch by inch across the rug toward the table. His groping fingers touched the loose phone wires, jerked at them, and succeeded in bringing the phone toppling to the floor. Twisting desperately he got hold of the receiver and pressed it against his ear; then he spoke a number into the mouthpiece of the instrument. Again and again he spoke the number that would connect him with police headquarters, oblivious of the fact that no voice had reached him over the wire. He gave up finally, too weak to account for the dead wire.

The exertion he had put forth had drained his strength. Still he was in no pain, unless the numbing sensation could be called that. He lay for some time gazing stupidly at the ceiling before swooning away. When he came back to his senses again his mind was centered upon one thing. Oddly enough it was not upon the man who had shot him. It was upon a matter of business. If anything happened to prevent his appearance at the office on the following day the result might be disastrous. He must take precautions to avert the calamity.

Slowly Greeb turned his head, his eyes searching the floor. A pad and pencil, always kept on the little table beside his bed, had been knocked to the floor along with the telephone instrument. With infinite labor he recovered the pencil and brought the pad within reach. Slowly and deliberately the pencil moved across the paper, leaving a message behind it.

Presently Greeb's fingers relaxed and the pencil slipped away from them. He was too weak to recover it, too faint to think clearly or to care. He lay back, staring up at the ceiling, watching it grow dim and wondering vaguely why the light was going out. Then the shadows engulfed him.

CHAPTER IX.

A BIT OF ROUGH STUFF.

WALLACE passed briskly along the parked boulevard with its rows of prim cedars and beds of pink-and-white rhododendron—the Washington State flower. His mind was filled with conjectures. A town-bound car approached in the distance, its headlight sweeping the street. By that time, however, the walk had appealed to the engineer, and he decided to finish his journey on foot and enjoy a pipe of tobacco.

He turned into Ninth Avenue, and, because of the short cut, struck diagonally through the gardens of the Sacred Heart Hospital. The city lay below him, nestled in the wide valley, its confines marked by myriad silver lights. The moon swung aloft in a cloudless sky. Off to the north the low mountain ranges that marked the Okanogan Highlands were visible. Beyond them lay Canada. To the east of him were the Bitter Roots and the Cœur d'Alenes. Mount Spokane reared its snow-capped head in the distance, the eternal sentinel guarding the vast inland empire.

Wallace stood a moment in thoughtful contemplation of the scene spread before him. How many times in the past months, in foreign lands, he had conjured up that glorious vision! How many times he had counted the days and the weeks that must elapse before the vision would be a reality again!

Walking on and emerging from the quiet hospital grounds, he crossed the street and passed along in the shadow of high stone walls. It was then that he was brought to realize that the wall marked the boundary of the Greeb estate, and once more his mind reverted to the distressing problem that was his to master.

Midway in the block he stopped to refill and light his brier, leaning close against the rough wall to shield his match from the wind. At the moment the struck match flared, something dropped heavily upon his shoulders and bore him to the walk. The pipe was

wrenched from his lips and his face was ground into the earth. Instantly recovering his presence of mind and fully aware of the danger that threatened him, the engineer kicked out violently with his feet and flung out his arms in an effort to grapple with the unknown assailant.

Apparently the man had jumped from the top of the wall, and, either wittingly or not, had carried Wallace along with him in the short but swift journey. It was far too dark to distinguish features, and the wrathful engineer was in no mood to hold a parley. The unknown at once demonstrated that he wished to avoid a conflict by rolling over and dodging a vicious blow that Wallace launched. After that he scrambled to his feet and raced away in the shadows like a frightened rabbit.

Wallace bounded erect, delivered himself of a few choice remarks, and started off in pursuit. A block farther on, attempting to take a corner at high speed, he tripped over a bush and sprawled his length upon the ground. By the time he had recovered from the second mishap, the pursued was out of sight and hearing and Wallace decided to give up the chase.

After he had brushed himself and felt tenderly the sore spots that proclaimed themselves, Wallace retraced his steps to the scene of his first encounter. With the aid of a few matches he recovered his hat, but diligent search failed to reveal the whereabouts of his brier. The loss of his pipe, which had been a treasured friend since his fraternity days at the University of Washington, concerned him not a little, and he exhausted a box of matches before giving up the quest.

Before the last match had flickered out he caught sight of a crumpled bit of paper lodged against the wall and picked it up just as the dying flame nipped his fingers. Without giving much thought to his action at the time, he thrust the paper into a pocket and walked down the hill. As he reached an arc light he recalled his find, removed it from his pocket, and smoothed it out. Except for a single word, sprawlingly written in pencil, the paper was blank.

Curiously Wallace turned it over in his fingers, wondering if his assailant had dropped it in the struggle, or whether it had been cast aside by a passer-by. In either event it was nothing to waste time over. It seemed to offer no clew.

Wallace glanced at his watch presently, relieved to find it had not been harmed, and likewise surprised to learn that he had been almost an hour on his way to town. He walked on at a more rapid gait, keeping to the outer edge of the walk and, where possible, avoiding the deeper shadows. The next amateur holdup who tried to waylay him would meet with a warm reception. The engineer already had decided to pay another visit to the scene of his night's encounter early the next morning. Whatever trouble it entailed, the vanished pipe must be recovered.

CHAPTER X.

THE TRAGEDY REVEALED.

NINE o'clock was the usual hour for the firm members of the Greeb Development Company to present themselves at their Post Street offices. Tedford and Dayne made their entrance within a few minutes of the appointed time, exchanged the usual morning repartee, and looked over the mail that had been assorted and marked by the stenographer.

At ten o'clock Tedford peered into Greeb's private office at the end of the corridor and found it unoccupied. After questioning the clerk on duty at the reception-room desk and learning that the president had neither appeared nor phoned, Tedford scowled and went away to consult with Dayne.

Dayne was a mild-mannered little man with china-blue eyes and the flowing beard of a patriarch, who was given to smoking gold-tipped cigarettes and playing solitaire. He had made his start in the commercial world by selling orange land in California that

would produce nothing better than cactus and horned toads, and had managed to run up a sizable bank account before leaving the Golden State by way of a window when an irate investor came in at the door with a shotgun. After that his trail crossed Greeb's, who needed an extra bit of capital, and he annexed himself to the vice presidency of the organization. Since that time he berated himself for having wasted so many years of his life in platting desert acreage when exchanging engraved mining certificates for the coin of the realm was far more lucrative and attended with less personal risk.

"I wonder," said Tedford, coming to a halt before Dayne's desk, "if Greeb has forgotten about the option we were to take up this morning?"

"Greeb," the other returned confidently, "never forgets anything. He's probably had a breakdown somewhere between here and the lake. That is if he went out to the country last night."

Tedford rubbed his chin meditatively. "He stays in town one night or so a week. I'll phone up and inquire."

He got the Greeb town house on the wire and spoke to the butler. Yes; Mr. Greeb had remained in town the night before. No; he had not left the house yet. In fact he was still in bed, so Shelton confided.

"In bed?" echoed Tedford. "What's the matter? Sick?"

"I don't believe so," the butler replied.

"Why don't you find out?"

"Mr. Greeb never wishes me to disturb him in the mornings," Shelton explained.

"Well, it's after ten now," protested Tedford, "and there are matters of importance to be attended to at the office. Just tell him, if you will, that Tedford wishes to speak with him at once."

"Greeb must have made a night of it from all appearances," volunteered Dayne.

"Looks that way," agreed Tedford, hanging up the telephone receiver and sitting on the edge of the desk to await the butler's report.

A few minutes later, as the men waited expectantly, the telephone bell rang, and Tedford once more took up the receiver. "What's that?" he asked, as the choking, incoherent voice of the butler rasped in his ear. "Speak slowly. Don't yell. What's——" Tedford broke off suddenly and the color drained from his face. "Great Scott! I—I'll be right up."

"What's the trouble now?" Dayne inquired, gazing curiously at his partner's blanched cheeks.

Tedford slipped off the desk. "Greeb's been killed—murdered!" he faltered. "The butler found him on the floor of his room. The man's too excited to explain anything more. I'm going right up."

"We—we'd better phone the police, hadn't we?" gulped Dayne, getting weakly upon his feet.

"You do it," said Tedford. "I must get up to the house at once. This is horrible, horrible."

The news spread through the office. Dayne got in touch with police headquarters while Tedford struggled into his coat and snatched up his hat. A few minutes later he was out of the building and racing toward the Riverside corner and a taxicab stand.

About the same time, Wallace had alighted from a Rockwood car at the lower edge of the Greeb property to renew the search for his missing brier. He had intended to get out much earlier, but after breakfast Runyon had called him to the office to look over a map, and by the time his work was completed there and he had arrived at the scene of his previous night's encounter it was considerably after ten o'clock.

While engaged in a search that seemed as fruitless as the one the night before, the engineer took notice of a big machine that raced past him on the street and caught a glimpse of several uniformed police officers in it. A block behind another car put in an appearance. At a point opposite to where he was standing, the second car

came to a halt with a squeaking of jammed brakes.

"Wallace!" the driver shouted.

"Hello, there, Moran!" Wallace responded, walking up to the machine. "What's the excitement now?"

"Haven't you heard? Greeb's been killed. Hop in and go along with me."

Moran threw in the clutch and the car bounded ahead, Wallace swinging into the empty seat beside the driver. They whirled around the next corner and came to a stop before the massive iron gates that guarded the estate.

"News of the affair just came into the office as I was starting for home," Moran explained as the men jumped to the ground and ran through the gates. "Wasn't my place to cover it, but the *Chronicle* editor told me to go ahead. Too big a story to miss."

"When did it happen?" asked Wallace.

"During the night I guess. The police are just ahead of us."

Wallace checked the flood of questions that rushed to his lips and followed at Moran's heels as the reporter hastened toward the big house. An officer was posted at the door, but recognizing Moran permitted both men to pass on without question. He took it for granted that the engineer was a member of the fourth estate, and Wallace did not stop to correct the mistake.

The men passed through the lower hall and bounded up the stairs to the door of Greeb's chamber. The police detectives and the coroner already had taken charge. Apparently nothing had been disturbed in the room. The body lay on the floor beside the overturned telephone. An electric stand lamp still was burning. Moran and Wallace looked in from the open doorway.

Jim Carr, well known to both reporter and engineer, and one of Spokane's best detectives, seemed to be in command. He was issuing orders and giving what assistance he could to the coroner. The latter at last arose from where he had been kneeling beside the body.

"What do you make of it?" Carr asked.

"Shot through the stomach—revolver undoubtedly," the other replied. "I'll probe for the bullet later. Death wasn't instantaneous. The stains along the rug show the victim must have been struck down at the door and afterward dragged himself to the table. Tried to telephone."

"Looks as if he had made an attempt to leave a message," said the detective, exhibiting the pad that had been taken from under Greeb's hand. "Some numbers on it. Don't know what they signify."

The coroner nodded. "We'll find out before long." He ordered two of the officers to lift the body and place it upon the bed. "Where did that butler go?" he queried presently.

"Murphy's watching him downstairs," said Carr. "Want to see him?"

"At once."

One of the detectives left the room, returning a moment later with the butler in tow. The servant was white and shaky.

"What's your name?" the coroner asked.

"Thomas Shelton," the butler replied.

"Tell us what happened this morning."

"I came in and found Mr. Greeb on the floor and——"

"How long ago?"

"About half an hour, sir. Mr. Tedford phoned and——"

"Who is Tedford?"

"One of Mr. Greeb's firm."

At that moment a disturbance was heard downstairs. At the sound of one of the voices, Wallace spoke up. "Tedford is here now," he said.

"Let him come up," said Carr, dispatching one of his men to adjust the difficulty below. The officer at the door doubtless had questioned Tedford's right to enter the house.

Tedford came hurriedly up the stairs and entered the room. A glance at the sheeted form on the bed brought a faltering query: "Is it true? Mr. Greeb is dead—murdered?"

Carr nodded. "Undoubtedly. What

do you know about the affair? The butler tells us you phoned here this morning. Is that correct?"

"Yes; not half an hour ago," Tedford answered. "I was worried because Mr. Greeb had not appeared at the office at his usual time. The butler told me he was still in bed. I asked the butler to call Mr. Greeb at once. We had some important business to settle to-day. The next thing I knew I received word of this—this horrible tragedy."

"Was the door of this room open when you came up to call Greeb this morning?" the coroner asked of the butler.

"No, sir. I knocked several times, and upon receiving no response I opened the door and looked in. I saw right away that Mr. Greeb was dead and ran down to inform Mr. Tedford."

"You are the only servant in the house?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did you hear any disturbance last night?"

"No, sir; that is, not after I came in. I was given permission to go out last night. I left about eight o'clock."

"Was Greeb alone at the time? No visitors?"

"He was alone when I left. He might have had visitors during the evening. I could not say for sure."

"Where did you go when you left here?"

"To the theater—the Woodward."

"Stay there all evening?"

"After the performance I had a bite to eat with some friends. Then I walked home."

Carr took a hand in the questioning. "What time was the performance over? About eleven o'clock?"

"About that hour I should say, sir."

"You enjoyed the performance, did you?"

"Why—that is, yes, sir," the butler returned, somewhat astonished at the unusual query.

The detective whispered a word to the coroner; then the latter resumed his examination: "What time did you return to the house?"

"About one o'clock."

"How do you know it was that hour?"

"I wound and set my alarm clock."

"After you returned home and before you retired, you did not come upstairs? You heard no noise, nothing to arouse your suspicions?"

"No, sir."

"None of the doors or windows were open or unlocked?"

"I came in through the servants' entrance," the butler explained. "I did not look at any of the doors or windows. All of them are kept locked at present," he added. "The house has been closed for the summer, with the exception of the small dining room and Mr. Greeb's apartment."

The coroner stepped to the big window that opened from Greeb's room. It was of a casement type and locked into position. Although open a foot or more for ventilation, it did not permit a wide-enough entrance for the passage of an intruder. Besides that, a sheer wall dropped below to the terrace.

"Don't think Greeb's visitor came through here," the coroner declared. "Must have used the door. And that means he came up from the lower hall. How long have you been employed here?" he asked, turning again to the butler.

"Slightly over a month, sir."

"And before that time?"

"I was employed in Tacoma."

"The friends you were with last night will doubtless be glad to corroborate your statements relative to the time you joined them and the time you left for home?"

The butler hesitated for the first time. "They left town early this morning," he said. "I'm afraid I would be unable to get in touch with them."

"Oh!" The coroner shrugged and exchanged glances with the detective. "Well, no matter. You will consider yourself under arrest, Shelton."

The butler, totally unprepared for the shock, cried out protestingly as one of the plain-clothes men advanced: "I had nothing to do with Mr. Greeb's

death! You can't arrest me. I am innocent of any wrong-doing. I've told you all I know. It's the truth."

Carr silenced him with a curt rebuke: "You haven't told us the truth, Shelton. If you had we might have been lenient. You've been too eager to establish an alibi."

"No, no!" Shelton cried. "I'm telling you the truth."

"How about the Woodward Theater episode?" Carr demanded. "You said you remained in the theater until eleven o'clock, and that you enjoyed the performance. No doubt you're ignorant of the fact that because of an accident to one of the company last night's performance was canceled. I happened to be there at the time myself. After a few days in jail, Shelton, you may find it to your advantage to tell us the truth—the whole truth. Take the prisoner to headquarters, Murphy. I'll interview him later."

CHAPTER XI.

ADDING TO THE FACTS.

BOTH Wallace and Moran had been deeply interested in the progress of the examination and the trap into which Shelton unwittingly had fallen. Moran had busied himself with notes all the while, and when the coroner had left the house, following the departure of the butler and the officer who had him in charge, the reporter broke into a chuckle.

"You're a fast worker, Carr," he declared admiringly. "Looks as if you nailed the guilty party right off at the start."

"Shelton may prove to be a good lead," the detective returned.

"Any added particulars you care to slip me?" Moran inquired.

"Not many. The crime must have been committed shortly after midnight. Greeb's watch was found on the floor, where it had been knocked from the table when the phone was pulled down. The crystal was broken and the hands stopped at twelve thirty-five."

"Were the phone wires cut?" Tedford asked.

"No. The switch downstairs had been disconnected, rendering the phone in this room useless."

"Seems to me that's a clew," Tedford suggested quickly. "The murderer must have thrown the switch before committing his crime."

"It is just possible," Carr answered. "You are acquainted with the family of the deceased, I presume? Better let them know what has happened. They may be able to shed some light on the affair."

"I'll send a wire immediately." Tedford started toward the hall; then he turned back. "Jove, I'd almost forgotten! A man appeared at our office yesterday afternoon, demanded to see Mr. Greeb, and became threatening when his request was refused. He had some stock certificates to dispose of and was under the impression that Mr. Greeb, through whom they were purchased, would refund the money."

The detective seemed at once interested. "Who was this man?"

"I've forgotten his name, but I would know him if I saw him again. When I told him that we could do nothing in the matter, he became abusive. Said he would see Mr. Greeb and demand a settlement."

Wallace shot a quick glance at the reporter. Moran looked troubled and appeared to be debating a problem that had suddenly intruded itself.

"I'll have him looked up, if he's still in town," Carr said. "Perhaps you can give me a description of this man, Mr. Tedford."

"I can do that, and give you his name along with it," Moran spoke up quietly, deciding, after an approving nod from Wallace, that it would be better to make a full explanation now and save possible trouble later on in case Stanton was arrested.

"What do you know about it?" Tedford asked, turning questioningly toward the reporter.

"Perhaps more than you do," Moran answered. "This chap's name is Stanton. Hails from Iowa. I met him in the Spokane Hotel yesterday afternoon and listened to his story." The re-

porter went on to give an account of the meeting, of the use he had intended to make of it, and finished by saying that he had offered the youth quarters at his apartment until a position could be found for him.

"Where is he now?" the detective wanted to know.

"Couldn't say," Moran answered truthfully. "He left my apartment last night and hasn't shown up since."

"Was he bitter against Greeb?"

"He didn't express a great deal of love for him."

"Do you think he would be capable of murder?"

"I don't want to think so," Moran said after a pause. He found himself shielding the youth despite the fear that had been with him since the time of Stanton's disappearance. "Stanton's only a kid—a poor, deluded, unsophisticated kid," he went on. "He may have talked a lot and made a few threats, but I can't believe he'd do harm."

"I'm not so sure of it," Tedford spoke up. "I mentioned to Mr. Greeb afterward that the chap looked dangerous. I still think so. If this butler didn't have a hand in Mr. Greeb's death I'll wager Stanton had."

"I'll depend upon you, Moran, to turn this fellow over to the police for investigation if you run across him again," Carr remarked, apparently sharing in Tedford's belief.

The reporter promised to render all possible assistance in the matter. The detective was silent a moment, his gaze centered upon Wallace as if to question the engineer's appearance upon the scene. The two men had long been friends, their association dating back to college days.

"You in the newspaper game now, Wallace?" Carr asked.

"No. Just happened to be in the vicinity when Moran came along and picked me up."

"Gorry!" exclaimed Moran. "That just reminds me. What brought you up to this district, Wallace?"

"Looking for my pipe," said the engineer.

"Pipe?" echoed both Carr and Moran.

Wallace nodded. "I would imagine, from what has taken place here, that I've an inside tip on this case," he began. "Wanted to spring it while the coroner was present, but thought it better to wait until the butler made his exit. Probably the man responsible for Greeb's death was the same one that descended upon my head last night, knocking the breath out of my body and the pipe out of my mouth and vanishing as swiftly as he had appeared."

"What are you driving at?" Carr demanded.

The engineer explained the nature of the adventure that had befallen him while passing along the wall of the Greeb estate the night before.

"Holy mackerel!" cried Moran. "We're on a warm trail for sure! Did you get a good look at your assailant?"

"Got nothing but a few bruises," Wallace answered. "It was too dark to see anything. All I do know is that my midnight adversary was a wiry chap and as slippery as an eel; and some sprinter into the bargain."

"That would seem to eliminate the butler," said Carr. "Shelton is stocky, and I wouldn't like to put up any money on him in a foot race."

"It seems to tally with Stanton," Tedford spoke up quickly.

Wallace nodded. "It might have been Stanton," he admitted.

"What time did this mix-up occur?" asked the detective.

"It was considerably after twelve when I left Fern Hill. I walked down from there. I'd say it was around one o'clock when the lightning struck."

"The time corresponds all right," said Carr. "I'll expect you to keep in touch with me, Wallace," he went on. "By the way, did you find your pipe?"

"Not yet. Might have, if I had come up here early enough this morning. Some early pedestrian must have picked it up."

Carr began to gather up the exhibits in the case to transfer to police headquarters. "Look here, Tedford," he

said. "Perhaps you can make something out of this. Greeb evidently started a message of some kind before he died. We found a pad and pencil under his hand."

Tedford took the slip of paper offered him and studied the three numerals written upon it. "Six, sixteen, nineteen," he read off aloud. "Nothing else?" he inquired, looking up at the detective.

"That's all. This seems to be half a sheet—that is, half the size of the other sheets on the pad," Carr said. "The numbers comprise all that was written, or else something followed them on the other half of the note, which isn't to be found."

Tedford shook his head. "I can make nothing out of them," he said.

"Hold on!" exclaimed Moran, who had viewed the numerals over Tedford's shoulder. "What's the date?"

"This is the seventeenth," said Carr.

"And yesterday was the sixteenth, wasn't it? This is June, the sixth month, and the nineteen could stand for the year. Six, sixteen, nineteen could stand for yesterday's date, couldn't it?"

"Jove, you're right!" broke from Tedford. "Mr. Greeb must have started this with a date line and passed out before he could continue."

"Just possible," admitted Carr. "Still," he went on thoughtfully, "it would seem to me that a man, anxious to leave a message, and probably aware that he was near death, would have dispensed with the date."

"Mr. Greeb dated everything he wrote," persisted Tedford, upholding the theory Moran had advanced. "A lifelong habit is a difficult thing to break; and perhaps he did not realize that he was so near death."

"Well," said Carr, pocketing the slip of paper and moving toward the door, "we'll discover the significance of these numbers before long."

Without further parley the men descended to the lower floor of the house where an officer remained on guard. Out in the grounds, later, Carr interviewed the detective in charge of the squad that was searching the premises. Nothing of importance had been found, but Carr ordered the men to stay on the job.

"I want to get hold of the gun the murderer used," he said. "The probabilities are that it was tossed away when the man left here. It's an all-day job to search this place," he went on, looking about him. "Ought to have a regiment armed with rakes to make good on it."

Tedford hurried away to make his report at the office and to get in touch with Greeb's family at Hayden Lake. Wallace guided Carr and the reporter to the point along the wall where the unknown had made a hasty exit from the grounds. A large tree on the inside of the garden, its wide-spreading branches extending over the wall, doubtless had offered a simple means of escape. Confirming the engineer's story, there were footprints in the soft earth below the tree, and the flowering shrubs close by had been trampled down.

Wallace shinned up the tree and remained among the upper branches for some time. When he dropped down again he held a bit of evidence in his fingers. It was a bit of leather, found wedged in a crotch of the tree limbs, apparently wrenched from the heel of the unknown's shoe.

Carr examined it closely. "Part of a heel all right enough," he agreed. "It may come in handy later on. We'll have to find the particular shoe it fits, and after that the man that fits the shoe. Then we'll have the tree climber."

"And the chap that dropped on my neck," added Wallace.

CHAPTER XII.

THE TWELVE-O'CLOCK WORRY.

ON leaving the scene of the tragedy, Moran took Wallace into town and dropped him on Sprague Street, the reporter hurrying on to get in his copy for the first edition of the *Chronicle*. Wallace went up to the Pend Orielle offices in the Old National Bank

Building, but Runyon and Hart were both out and the stenographer did not know when they would return.

Wallace used the office telephone to get in touch with the Kingdon residence, only to learn from Mrs. Kingdon that her daughter had left the house a few minutes before with the intention of visiting the Greeb offices.

"Greeb's office?" Wallace repeated. "What was her idea? I told Norma last night that it would be useless for her to see these men. Besides," he added, "Greeb was shot and killed last night."

Mrs. Kingdon voiced her astonishment. "If Norma hears of it she probably will return home. She told me she wanted to interview Mr. Greeb personally."

"She may not hear of it in time," said Wallace. "I'll head her off if I can."

In a remarkably short time after Moran had ground out his copy, the boys were crying the early edition of the paper with scareheads of the murder —and very little else—and every one was discussing the tragedy. Greeb was not a man of high standing among his fellow townsmen—none of the firm was for that matter—but the revolting manner of his death was a thing to invite public comment.

Tedford, visibly shaken, left the taxicab he had engaged and went into the office of his company to relate the known circumstances of the distressing affair that had taken off the firm's guiding hand. Naturally, a pall of gloom settled down over the rank and file of the Greeb employees and work for the day was temporarily suspended.

It was not until after eleven o'clock, when a visitor entered the reception room and sent in his card to the office occupied by Tedford and Dayne, that those executives were brought to realize the important matters requiring their attention.

Since Greeb would not be on hand to take command, as he usually did when cash transactions were in order, Tedford and Dayne were made aware of the fact that, for the first time since their admission to the firm, they were to proceed without the dictation of a president.

"It's the matter of that Bitter Root option," Tedford announced when the visitor's card was placed before him. "Must be attended to before twelve o'clock."

"I should think," observed Dayne, who was nervously pacing the floor, "that in view of Greeb's death the business details might be postponed until to-morrow."

"I'm afraid the law does not recognize death as an excuse for not living up to written agreements," replied Tedford. "The gentleman in the outer room would be only too glad if we permitted this option to expire without exercising our purchase privilege. We are purchasing for fifty thousand dollars a property that is worth four times that sum."

Dayne nodded. "Greeb placed the money in the safe last night?"

"Yes." Tedford glanced at his watch. "We haven't much time to waste in talking."

The men walked into the office formerly occupied by their late president. Tedford stepped to the door of the safe and began to manipulate the dial. After the required number of twists and turns, he laid hold of the massive handle and pulled. The door remained closed.

Tedford frowned and once more sent the dial on its required number of revolutions, repeating each number aloud as he reached it. Once more he pulled at the handle and once more the door failed to move.

"What ails the thing?" he broke out disgustedly. "I've never known it to balk before. Here, you try it, Dayne."

Dayne crossed the floor and took charge of the dial. A moment later he essayed to swing open the massive door, but was no more successful than his partner had been.

"Queer!" said Dayne. "Do you suppose the mechanism is out of order? It must be," he added.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Tedford. "Let's hope not."

"Well, it is either out of order or Greeb changed the combination without telling us," Dayne declared.

"But why should he have changed it? There was no occasion for doing so." Tedford stood in silent contemplation of the stubborn door. "We'll have to call in an expert," he said at length.

"That'll take time," protested Dayne with a swift glance at his watch.

"Perhaps not. I'll phone at once." Tedford bounded out of the office and delivered instructions to the telephone operator. After that he passed on into the reception room where the man he was to do business with cooled his heels.

"I am very sorry to have kept you waiting, Mr. Brinton," he began apologetically. "Doubtless you are aware of Mr. Greeb's violent death and the circumstances——"

"Heard about it," the other interrupted shortly and decidedly unsympathetically. Brinton was a tall, rawboned individual with piercing gray eyes and a wind-burned complexion: a typical representative of the hardened prospector of the Western hills. "Greeb wired me last night that he intended to take up the option I gave him a year ago and asked me to be at this office before twelve o'clock today."

Tedford nodded. "Certainly, certainly, Mr. Brinton. Mr. Greeb had made all arrangements and everything is ready. Unfortunately, at the last minute, we have discovered that the mechanism of our safe is out of order. The money to be paid you is locked up there. I have just sent out an emergency call for an expert who doubtless can remedy matters. I hope, Mr. Brinton, in the trying circumstances, that you will grant us a slight extension of time if we are unable to open the safe before noon."

Brinton surveyed the Greeb representative with a deliberate and hostile glance. "I'll wait until twelve o'clock," he announced.

"But surely, in view of our present predicament, Mr. Brinton, you will allow us a few minutes of grace," Tedford protested. "Remember this is a condition over which we have no control. The fifty thousand in cash is all ready for you the instant the vault is open."

"You'll have to pay it over to me before twelve o'clock," Brinton said, unmoved, "or the option will be expired. You've got about half an hour yet," he went on, consulting his watch.

Tedford looked troubled. "Perhaps you'll accept a check," he ventured hopefully. A loophole had presented itself. As this was Saturday the banks would close at noon. The check could not be presented for payment before ten o'clock on Monday. By that time the safe would be open and the cash deposited at the bank to cover the draft.

"Nope," the other answered. "We agreed on cash and it's written that way in the agreement."

"But, Mr. Brinton," Tedford pleaded frantically, "don't you understand that we——"

"Oh, I understand all right enough," Brinton cut in; "but I'm not shedding any tears over it. I'd consider it mighty lucky for me if you failed to come across with the money. I've got an offer right now of a hundred and fifty thousand for my property. I always knew my claim was valuable, and I guess Greeb knew it, too. I didn't want to give him the option on it at his price, but my wife was sick and had to be sent away, and I just had to have a little cash. I was sort of crazy with worry at the time and nothing seemed to matter so long as my wife was to be made well. Now I'm realizing what a fool I've been and what a scheming snake in the grass Greeb was. If he had been a decent sort he could have lent me a thousand or so on the claim. But he wouldn't do that. He knew he had me in a tight fix and demanded an option. I had to give it to him."

Brinton got out of his chair and advanced upon Tedford. "You're asking me to show you a little consideration, aren't you? Well, I'll be just as considerate of you as Greeb was of me. He knew why I had to have the money.

I pleaded with him to make it a loan. He laughed at me. Said I could take what he offered or nothing. Now the shoe's on the other foot, and I'm going to laugh at you. I'm sorry Greeb isn't here.

"I've got to give you until twelve o'clock," he added grimly, "but that is all. You won't get a thousandth of a second grace from me. That's final."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE JOY BRINGER.

TEDFORD slunk back to the private office where Dayne awaited him and broke the distressing news. A moment later the expert from the safe company put in his appearance, learned what was wanted of him, and set to work immediately.

In less than five minutes the expert turned to face the apprehensive onlookers. "I don't think the combination you gave me is the correct one," he said.

"It must be!" Tedford cried. "Why, I opened the safe yesterday morning with that combination."

The expert shook his head. "Well, if the combination hasn't been changed," he said, "there's trouble somewhere in the lock mechanism and it'll take me some time to locate it."

"How long?" Dayne queried anxiously.

"If I'm lucky I may be able to locate the trouble before night."

"Before night?" Tedford repeated. "Impossible! We must get into the safe before noon."

The expert grinned. "What do you think this is—a toy? This safe is one of our latest and best models. I installed it myself. Why, the smoothest crib-cracker in the country, armed with the best tools, couldn't drill and blow this door in less than three hours. Even then I doubt if the job would be a success."

"But it must be opened! We're ready to pay——"

"It isn't a question of money," the expert cut in sharply. "I could not guarantee to open the door in less than six hours, if you offered me two million. I'd make sure," he added, "before going ahead on this job, that you have given me the right combination."

"We're sure of it," said Tedford.

"Very well, then, do you want me to begin operations? It is a delicate job and I'll be forced to damage the mechanism. The necessary repairs will cost at least a thousand."

"Oh, hang the cost!" broke from Tedford. "We would pay twice that if the job can be done before twelve o'clock."

"Might as well ask me to open it with a buttonhook, or pack the safe on my back up Riverside," the expert announced.

Tedford turned to Dayne with a helpless gesture. "A hundred thousand profit gone; that's all!" he choked. "Brinton won't wait a second later than twelve."

The expert did not seem to be particularly interested. "I'm waiting for your decision, gentlemen," he spoke up at length. "If you hope to get into your safe before to-morrow morning you'd better step lively."

"Might as well be next month as to-morrow," Dayne groaned, sinking wearily into a chair.

"All right. There's nothing further for me to say or do. If you reach any decision before closing time to-night, let me know." And with that cheerless statement the expert walked out of the office.

In his abrupt departure, the expert neglected to close the door of the private office, and neither of the men inside seemed to notice it. They slumped back in their chairs, while the precious minutes ticked away.

"Pardon me!" a voice spoke up suddenly. Tedford jumped out of his chair and turned to face Wallace.

"What do you want?" Tedford demanded irritably.

"Has Miss Kingdon been here?" the engineer inquired.

"Haven't seen her."

Wallace glanced curiously at the two men, and presently allowed his eyes to shift to the door of the safe.

"What seems to be the trouble?" he asked. "Can't the safe be opened?"

"Wouldn't be sitting here if it could," snapped Dayne testily.

"I suppose not," agreed Wallace. "Just met Brinton in the reception room," he went on. "He told me of your trouble. First time I knew you had an option on his property."

"Well, what of it? Are you interested in the matter?"

"I propose to be," was the engineer's unexpected rejoinder.

A flicker of annoyance crossed Tedford's face. "Just where do you come in?" he demanded.

"From the chance remark that Brinton let fall a few minutes ago, I'm under the impression that the Greeb Development Company stands to win or lose about a hundred thousand dollars within the next quarter of an hour."

"Oh, clear out!" Tedford cried. "We've no time to waste——"

"True; you haven't," Wallace broke in significantly. "That is why I've pushed my way in here uninvited."

"You can push your way out again —in a hurry."

"On the contrary," said Wallace, "when you hear what I've to say you're going to insist upon my staying."

"Meaning—what?"

"Meaning," the engineer returned with deliberate calm, "that I believe I can open your safe."

The two men in the office started. "Open the safe?" repeated Tedford incredulously. "You?"

"What do you know about safes?" Dayne queried.

"Very little," Wallace admitted; "but I may be able to perform a miracle in the present case. Will you give me a trial?"

"What do you intend opening it with —talk?"

"No; the combination," said Wallace.

Tedford regarded the engineer with a look of dumfounded amazement. "I don't know what your game is," he began slowly; "but go ahead and try your skill."

Wallace stepped over to the door of the safe and began a slow manipulation of the dial. Tedford and Dayne watched him from a distance, smiling skeptically. Almost before they were aware of it, the engineer had straightened, had gripped the handle of the door. The massive wall of steel swung outward noiselessly.

With a shout of mingled joy and surprise, Tedford and Dayne jumped forward; but just as they reached the door, Wallace put his weight against it. The door closed as silently as it had opened. The dial was spun and the bolts locked again.

"What—what in blazes do you mean by this?" cried Tedford, pushing the engineer aside and tugging frantically at the handle of the door.

"I merely wanted to demonstrate that I could open your safe," Wallace answered quietly.

CHAPTER XIV.

SO MUCH FOR SO MUCH.

RAGE and chagrin were manifest in Tedford's stormy countenance. He whirled upon Wallace with blazing eyes. "Stop this nonsense!" he cried. "Open the door again, Wallace. We'll admit that you can do it."

"Then you are willing to discuss terms?"

"Terms?" spluttered Tedford. "What terms? Want us to pay you for the job?"

"Precisely. Why not?"

"For Heaven's sake," Dayne's voice lifted shrilly, "stop this monkey business. We'll pay you for your trouble. It's ten minutes to twelve now. Open the door, Wallace."

"I expect my payment now, not afterward," Wallace said, unperturbed by the excitement.

"Well, name it." Tedford drew a roll of currency from his pocket. "A hundred ought to be sufficient."

"I don't want your money," Wallace replied, ignoring the bank notes that Tedford thrust toward him. "What I do want is a confession, signed by both of you gentlemen, that the option you have on The Silver Lining claim was

obtained by trickery and deceit and that you renounce all right to purchase it."

"This is blackmail!" stormed Tedford.

"Perhaps it is," Wallace returned; "but in the circumstances it is permissible. Your company practiced deceit in obtaining Miss Kingdon's signature to the option, and I propose to return the compliment by levying blackmail. It is difficult to pursue honorable means when dealing with the unscrupulous."

"The safe can stay locked for a month before I'll agree to those terms," Tedford declared hotly.

"That is a matter for you to decide. But please remember what is at stake. You're in for a hundred thousand profit if you can close with Brinton before twelve o'clock. On the other hand you forfeit that profit by denying my request and retain the privilege of buying The Silver Lining claim, which at best is merely a speculation."

"The claim's worth fifty thousand dollars."

"You're taking a chance. The Pend Orielle vein may pinch out, or it may shoot off in another direction. You're gambling on it and letting a sure thing slip through your fingers."

"I'd do it before giving you the satisfaction of trimming us," Tedford retorted.

"All right," said Wallace. "If that's your final answer I'll make my exit and——"

"Hold on!" It was Dayne that shouted to Wallace as the latter was on the point of leaving the office. "I'm willing to sign. You've got us licked, Wallace."

"Don't be a fool!" Tedford cried, turning furiously upon his partner.

"I'm not," the other retorted. "I'm ready to take a sure profit instead of gambling on a prospect. For Heaven's sake, Tedford, listen to reason! Take a sure thing and let this Silver Lining proposition slide."

Tedford hesitated, glaring first at his partner and then at the waiting engineer. With surprising swiftness he appeared to manifest a change of heart.

"All right," he said at length, shrugging. "I'll submit."

Wasting no more time, Wallace seated himself at the desk and upon a sheet of paper bearing the Greeb Development Company imprint, wrote a short statement to the effect that the undersigned, executives of the firm, admitted that the option between themselves and Miss Kingdon relative to The Silver Lining claim had been obtained by trickery and substitution of papers; that Miss Kingdon had disposed of the timber rights only; and furthermore, that the company thereby renounced all rights as to the purchase of the property.

When it was finished, Wallace arose to his feet. Dayne and Tedford, scarcely taking time to read through the confession, attached their signatures to the document. After he had blotted and folded it and placed it in his pocket, the engineer stepped to the safe and once more began to manipulate the dial.

Tedford moved forward, his eyes fixed upon the polished dial. Aware of the latter's purpose, Wallace changed his position so that his body was between the dial and Tedford's searching eyes. Tedford uttered a smothered exclamation and looked meaningly at Dayne.

With a final twist of the dial, Wallace stepped back. Tedford jumped forward, followed closely by Dayne. The ponderous door opened obediently as Tedford seized the handle and pulled upon it. He reached for the steel box in which he had seen Greeb deposit the currency-filled envelope, snapped the catch, and opened it. Then he fell back. Both men cried aloud. The box was empty.

CHAPTER XV.

UNEXPECTED COMPLICATIONS.

FOR an instant following the amazing discovery and the startled cries of the two men, no one moved. The sight of the empty treasure drawer appeared to rob the onlookers of speech. Even Wallace was transfixed.

"Gone!" Tedford gulped at length.

"Might be in one of the other boxes," suggested Dayne.

In frantic haste the men jerked out the remaining drawers in the safe and turned over the contents. Their search was unavailing. The fifty thousand in currency that Greeb had deposited the afternoon before was not to be found.

Dayne, overcome by the tragedy, collapsed into the nearest chair. Tedford suddenly whirled. Reaching the desk, his hand dropped into a partly opened drawer, and when it came in sight again his fingers were gripping a revolver.

"Stay where you are, Wallace!" he cried, leveling the weapon at the surprised engineer. "You've got a lot to answer for. If you make a move toward that door I'll shoot."

After the first shock had passed Wallace calmly surveyed the irate man and the revolver that was extended before him. The whirlwind of conjectures that rushed through the engineer's mind was not reflected upon his countenance.

"By thunder!" Tedford broke forth again. "I'm beginning to get wise to this affair. The whole thing is clear to me now."

"I'm glad it is," Wallace remarked quietly. "You have that advantage over me, Tedford."

"This is your game from beginning to end. Now I've got you cold." Tedford walked forward, the gun in front of him, his eyes fixed threateningly upon the engineer. "How did you get the combination of our safe?"

"I thought everything was clear to you?"

"It is. I thought maybe you'd confess. Those numbers that Greeb put down before he died—they didn't comprise a date. They were the first three numbers of the safe combination. He changed them yesterday without consulting us. Six, sixteen, nineteen! Those were the numbers you used a few minutes ago, weren't they?"

"They were."

"What were the others?"

"I may tell you—later," Wallace said. "It depends."

"Where did you get them?"

"Providence supplied them."

"Providence?" Tedford sneered. "That's pretty thin. Why don't you come through with the truth? You got them from Greeb's room."

"You're fifty per cent correct," the engineer replied.

"You came here yesterday afternoon and threatened Greeb, didn't you? You threatened all of us? I heard your talk. You won't deny that."

"I admit I used rather harsh words," Wallace answered.

Tedford laughed jeeringly. "And you told Greeb he had reached the end of his rope, didn't you? Looks as if that prediction has been carried out, Wallace. You've admitted being up at Greeb's house last night, although the yarn you told, to alibi yourself, sounds pretty fishy. The police believed it, and so did I at the time. Now I'm beginning to see light. You visited Greeb. You must have known that he was alone in the house. You probably demanded the return of Miss Kingdon's option. When it was refused, you killed Greeb."

"Tedford, you——" Wallace began hotly.

"Never mind explaining," the other cut in. "You'll have time enough for that. You shot and killed Greeb, didn't you? Then you went away for fear an alarm would follow. When it didn't, you returned, saw what Greeb had written and must have known that it was the combination to the safe. You snatched up the paper, but got only half of the sheet. Where's the missing half, Wallace? Do away with it? Of course you remembered the numbers that were found this morning under Greeb's hand. Then you came down here during the night, got into the office, opened the safe, and looked for that Silver Lining option. You didn't find it, because Greeb left it in his desk; but you did stumble across the fifty thousand in currency and helped yourself to it. You were right on hand this morning when the police took charge up at the Greeb estate, horned your way in, and looked over the

ground to make sure you'd left no traces behind. Naturally you were enraged because the option wasn't found, and as a last chance you came to us, proved you were able to open the safe, and worked this final ruse."

Wallace, listening to the case that Tedford was building against him, smiled tolerantly. "You ought to be writing motion-picture scenarios, Tedford," he observed. "Your imagination is vivid enough, even though your plot structure is full of flaws. Put down that gun and behave yourself."

"I'll put it down when I've notified police headquarters," Tedford returned with a grin of triumph. "I may be barking up the wrong tree, but one thing is sure, you're going to have a hot session with the police before I'm called off. Maybe you can explain how you were able to open our safe just now if you didn't get all the number combinations from Greeb's room. And if you did get them from his room, you'll have some more explaining to do before the police will be satisfied."

"That shouldn't occasion you any worry," Wallace replied.

"No; but it will afford me a great deal of interest. Dayne!" He turned to address his partner, who had been listening dumfounded to the swift arraignment. "Get on the phone and notify Detective Carr, at headquarters, that we have found the man he is looking for. Tell him that we will hold the prisoner here until he arrives."

Dayne bounded out of his chair, went to the phone, and after the operator had connected him, spoke the lines that Tedford had instructed him to say.

"And now, Wallace," Tedford went on, when Dayne had finished his conversation, "I'll trouble you to hand over the paper you bribed us into signing a few minutes ago."

"The trouble will all be on your side if you expect to have it returned," the engineer said.

"Careful now!" warned Tedford. "Remember I've got you covered. Better hand over the paper. I'm in no mood to argue."

"It wouldn't do you a particle of good if you were in the mood," returned Wallace. "Put the gun back in the desk, Tedford. You won't use it."

Faintly, from outside the office, whistles were sounding. It was twelve o'clock! The knowledge of that fact seemed to infuriate Tedford. His company's valuable Bitter Creek option had expired; all the firm's available cash was missing, and it looked now as if the opportunity to profit by the purchase of The Silver Lining claim was also to be denied them.

"You—you're responsible for this!" Tedford broke out. "And by Heaven, you're going to pay the penalty! You knew the money wasn't in the safe when you offered to open it!"

"It looks to me," Wallace spoke up mildly, "as if the Greeb Development Company was just about to sink for the third time—and with no rescuers in sight. The thing I prophesied is to be fulfilled before I expected."

"Hand over that paper!" Tedford shouted. "Hand it over or I'll take it from you!"

Wallace laughed. "Come and take it. You and Dayne ought to be able to turn the trick."

Tedford advanced warily; but Dayne hung back. "Wait until the police arrive," the latter suggested. "They can get it for us."

"Sure; and they'll probably read it, too," said Wallace. "Want them to use it for an exhibit? It'll make a choice bit of copy for the newspapers, won't it?"

The door behind the engineer opened cautiously. Wallace heard the almost inaudible click of the turning knob and whirled to face a possible third opponent. "Norma!" he exclaimed wonderingly at sight of Miss Kingdon's white face.

Simultaneously, Dayne and Tedford, quick to take advantage of the engineer's position, leaped forward, and a moment later the three men were struggling together on the office floor. Wallace was not altogether unprepared for the attack, nor was he unequal to the odds, so long as Tedford was pre-

vented from using the revolver. Dayne was speedily eliminated from the scrimmage, and with a howl of pain rolled over against the wall, both hands clamped to his jaw. Tedford proved to be a more formidable contender, but after Wallace had broken his hold and sent the revolver spinning out of reach, and had put into operation a few of the tactics learned in training camp, the challenger had all the fight taken out of him.

Jumping to his feet, Wallace turned upon Miss Kingdon, who had come into the office and had been an interested spectator of the short and lively battle. "Lock that door, Norma!" he said.

Without questioning him, the girl closed the door that led into the outer offices and turned the key in the lock. The men on the floor were in no condition to interfere.

"We'll have to beat a dignified retreat," Wallace spoke up a moment later, after he had crossed the floor and closed the safe door. A twirl of the dial sent the heavy locks into place again. "I'm not ready to surrender yet," he added.

"Surrender?" the girl echoed in astonishment. "What do you mean?"

Before Wallace had time to answer, a loud summons came at the locked door of the office. Undoubtedly the police had arrived upon the scene. The engineer took the girl's arm and led her toward a smaller door on the opposite side of the room. It opened at his touch, disclosing a narrow corridor and a flight of stairs.

"Come along," Wallace urged. "This was Greeb's means of a silent and speedy exit when trouble threatened. We'll make use of it."

CHAPTER XVI.

ON A NEW TRAIL.

THE later editions of the *Chronicle* and Spokane *Press* that afternoon carried interesting and highly colored accounts of the affair that had taken place in the Greeb office—accounts that were rendered particularly vivid by Tedford's session with the police and the reporters.

It was made clear that the message left by Greeb before his death had been the numbers of his safe combination. As half the sheet upon which the numbers had been inscribed was missing, it was presumed the assassin had taken it. The fact that Wallace had opened the safe that morning seemed to give credence to Tedford's theory of the murder, the theory that he had propounded in Wallace's presence and elaborated upon later for the benefit of his audience.

That, coupled with the news of the engineer's assault upon Dayne and Tedford and his escape to avoid arrest, made a sensational story, and one that placed Wallace under grave suspicions. All matters pertaining to The Silver Lining option had, however, been kept under cover. It was one point in the affair that Tedford did not care to advertise.

Wallace had disappeared, and the authorities were combing the city for him. Miss Kingdon was found at home by police and reporters, and she told a straightforward story. She admitted calling at the Greeb office at noon, witnessing the fight between Wallace and the other men—although her version differed somewhat from Tedford's account—and admitted frankly that she and Wallace had escaped by a side door. After the engineer had placed her aboard a car he had left. That was all she knew.

Runyon and Hart of the Pend Oreille Company experienced double-barreled shocks upon reading the newspaper accounts; and naturally Lee Moran, reporter, looked upon the affair with alarm and amazement.

Moran, pondering deeply over the events of the day, returned to his apartment about dusk. He had turned in a glowing account of the new Greeb case developments, but had essayed, so far as it was in his power, to cast doubt on Tedford's theory of the murder. Personally he ridiculed the idea that the engineer was connected even remotely with the tragedy, and the news

hounds in the local room were of the same opinion. The nature of the remarks that were exchanged between desks regarding Tedford in particular and the Greeb organization in general were as scorching tongues of fire.

Bounding up the hall stairs to his apartment, Moran discovered his door unlocked, and went into the living room to find Wallace occupying a chair before the open window.

"Holy mackerel!" he ejaculated at sight of the engineer.

"Don't turn on the light," Wallace said quickly. "I seem to be a fugitive from justice at present and it wouldn't look well for me to be found in your quarters. You'll pardon my unbidden entrance, I'm sure. Happened to know where you cache the key."

Moran drew up a chair beside the window. "For the love of Pete," he began eagerly, "will you be kind enough to give me a straight tip on this new shocker?"

"That's what brought me to your humble domicile, Moran," Wallace answered him. "But while I'm talking I might as well have an audience of two. Suppose you get hold of Carr and bring him here."

"Carr? He's on your trail; the whole police force is for that matter, and a couple of dozen news hounds as well."

"I prefer to discuss matters with you and Carr alone, just at present," the engineer said. "I don't think Carr will pinch me. See if you can locate him."

Moran needed no second bidding. A few inquiries over the telephone put the detective on the other end of the wire, and a few tactfully worded remarks were sufficient to bring Carr up to the apartment on a run.

"Hello there, Wallie!" Carr exclaimed when he stepped into the living room. "Been waiting to hear from you all afternoon. You bloodthirsty, murdering scoundrel! Ready to confess, are you?"

"Ready to make a clean breast of the whole affair," Wallace answered with a smile.

"Look here!" Moran broke in, unable to restrain his curiosity. "Did you actually open Greeb's safe to-day?"

"I certainly did."

"Where did you get the other half of the combination?" Carr inquired. "Tedford says that——"

"Got it on the walk below the wall of the Greeb estate," the engineer interrupted. "Must have been dropped there by the chap who did the flying leap. I forgot all about that incident when I related the details to you this morning."

"You found the missing half of the paper after the scrimmage?" persisted Carr.

"Yes; while I was hunting for my pipe. Picked it up, glanced at the writing it contained, and tossed it away again. Never gave the thing another thought until a few hours ago."

"What were the numbers on it?"

"There were none. Merely the one word 'repeat.'"

"Oh, ho!" cried Moran. "Then the combination was six, sixteen, nineteen, repeat."

Wallace nodded. "I never connected the slip of paper I found with the slip you found beside Greeb," he went on, "until I went to the Greeb office and bumped into Brinton."

"Who is Brinton?"

"A mining man from the Bitter Roots. He was at the office to close a deal, and while chatting with him I learned that Tedford and Dayne were having a time opening the safe. Then it struck me all at once that Greeb had changed the combination without mentioning the fact to his partners, and the numbers he had written down on the slip of paper were the answer. Of course I had the advantage over the rest of you chaps by knowing what the missing half of the paper contained. The hunch was so good that I left Brinton and pushed my way in to confront Tedford and Dayne. They gave me an opportunity to demonstrate my skill—and I made good."

"Why didn't you tell them the combination instead of doing the job yourself?" asked Carr.

"Because I had an ax to grind," Wal-

lace answered. "I meant to exact compensation for my knowledge."

"How's that?"

As briefly as possible Wallace related the facts regarding The Silver Lining option, the claim's undoubted value, Greeb's perfidy, and the method taken to obtain Miss Kingdon's signature.

"Holy mackerel!" exploded Moran. "So that was at the bottom of all this funny business! Well, it doesn't surprise me. Greeb and his brood are full of these playful tricks."

"Did they hand over the option?" inquired Carr.

"Didn't ask them to—had a better scheme in mind. After I had proved I could open their strong box, I locked it again and made my demands. You see they had to get into the safe before twelve o'clock in order to get the fifty thousand in cash that was to purchase Brinton's property." Wallace explained the nature of the business deal and also the nature of the paper he had forced the two men to sign.

"A full confession, was it?" Carr chuckled. "Good work, Wallie! You had them trapped all right. And they signed it?"

"You bet they did! Decided it would be better to rake in a sure profit of a hundred thousand than to gamble on The Silver Lining. And after I had opened the safe, hanged if the fifty thousand wasn't gone!"

"That's another hard nut for us to crack," the detective admitted. "Well, go on. What happened then?"

"When I opened the safe the last time Tedford saw me make use of the first three numbers that Greeb had put down. But I prevented him from knowing the 'repeat' idea. Naturally enough what he did see knocked him cold, and he suspected me of any number of things. First thing I knew he had me covered with a gun and was accusing me of murdering Greeb and rifling the safe of the fifty thousand. Then he had Dayne phone police headquarters.

"Before the police arrived," Wallace went on, "Tedford remembered the damaging bit of paper that he and Dayne had signed and threatened to perforate me unless I returned it. I gave him the laugh. I had put myself in a bad fix to get hold of the paper and I wasn't going to let it go without a struggle. Just about the time Tedford was coming at me, Miss Kingdon appeared at the door, and when I turned to her, Tedford and Dayne launched an attack. It was a rough-and-tumble fight for a few minutes, but I managed to win out. After that, while the police were pounding on the door that I had Miss Kingdon lock, we decided to make a dignified retreat. We got away nicely by means of a private rear exit that Greeb thoughtfully had provided for his own use."

"Whew, what a story!" breathed Moran. "A thriller in six reels—and to be continued."

"I didn't think it advisable to remain in the office and submit to arrest," Wallace said. "I hadn't a bit of evidence to offer in my defense. Sojourning a few weeks behind bars didn't appeal to my sense of humor."

"It was the only thing for you to do in the circumstances," the detective agreed. "Tedford has sworn out a warrant for your arrest on two charges—unpremeditated assault and complicity in the Greeb affair."

"Looks as if it is up to me to turn detective and help solve this case in order to clear my own name," Wallace remarked. "Until we land the man or men guilty of Greeb's murder and the robbery of the safe I'll have to stay under cover."

Carr nodded. "That's the best way out. I wasn't at headquarters when Dayne phoned in this morning," he went on; "but I heard about the affair shortly afterward. When I reached the Greeb office the excitement had died down a bit. Tedford and Dayne gave me an earful of talk, showed me the empty box that had contained the fifty thousand, and swore that you had pulled a gun on them before making your getaway. I let them chatter and formed my own conclusions—which I kept to myself."

A perplexing frown suddenly contracted Wallace's brow while the de-

tective was, speaking, and a most startling theory took possession of his active mind. The thing seemed too wildly extravagant at the moment to permit of telling. In the dusk of the room the engineer's changing expression passed unnoticed. Both Carr and Moran seemed wholly absorbed in their own mental battles.

CHAPTER XVII.

DISCUSSIONS AND DECISIONS.

THE three men in the darkened room of the apartment remained silent for a long time. Carr took a cigarette from a box on the table and lighted it. The flaring match disclosed a grim and thoughtful countenance.

"We're up against a tough proposition," he remarked at length, turning in his chair. "We've got to work fast if we are to accomplish anything. But three heads are better than one," he added hopefully.

"I seem to be the one that has provoked all the trouble," Wallace said, "and I'm willing to shoulder all the blame. I put myself in bad simply because I didn't propose to stand by and see Miss Kingdon swindled out of her property. I went into this with my eyes open."

"Any self-respecting chap would have done the same," Moran declared. "You've saved The Silver Lining claim for the girl. Now it remains for you to save yourself. You can count on my sticking by you, Wallace, and I guess Carr's right with me."

"That goes without saying," the detective said. "There's a warrant out for your arrest, Wallace, and if I lived up strictly to the oath of my office, I'd take you to headquarters; but I won't. First, because I know the charges against you are absurd; and second, because if you were locked up and Tedford continued to act as he has, you couldn't get out on bail. As a murder suspect you'd be on the inside looking out for an indefinite period. I believe you can do more good if you're on the outside looking in, not only for yourself but for the case in general. And just as soon as you get hold of some evidence to support your story, I'd suggest surrendering."

"That's my idea exactly," chimed in Moran. "Too bad I wasn't with you last night, Wallace. It would all be over but the shouting."

"Got that piece of paper you found by the wall?" Carr asked suddenly.

Wallace shook his head. "Don't know what I did with it. Tossed it away I guess."

"And not one chance in a million of recovering it again," Carr said gloomily. "And by the bye," he added, as if the recollection had just come to him, "here's a new angle: Is this your pipe?"

The engineer reached for the brier. A glance at it even in the dim light was sufficient for identification. "It's the old hod all right," he declared promptly. "Who found it?"

"One of my men. Found it inside the wall."

"Inside?" echoed Wallace. "How did it get over the wall?"

"That remains for us to find out," said Carr. "At the time it was turned over to me I didn't mention the fact that it was yours. I'm keeping that back. No use adding to your troubles."

"Some one planted it there," cried Moran.

"Undoubtedly," Carr agreed.

"Hang it all," the reporter broke out indignantly, "it stands to reason that if Wallace were mixed up in this affair he wouldn't have been seen around the premises this morning and wouldn't have framed up the story about the chap who dropped upon him."

"Well, we've a pair of likely clews," the detective asserted. "That butler put his foot in it when he tried to alibi himself. He'll bear investigating. He was alone in the house with Greeb. And as for a motive—well, there's the fifty thousand in cash missing from the safe."

"How do we know Greeb put that money in the safe?" asked Moran. "Did any one see him? We've only Tedford's word for it—and Dayne's."

"We are pretty certain of it from the fact that he changed the combination," Wallace replied. "Moreover, if the money hadn't been in the safe these men wouldn't have signed the paper I drew up."

"Well, why did Greeb change the combination?" persisted Moran. "Do you know that? Didn't he trust his partners?"

"Search me! We know that the combination was changed and that Greeb sought to inform his partners of it before passing out."

"And we don't know yet," Carr remarked, "if the man who murdered Greeb was the same one to make use of the combination and get away with the fifty thousand."

"There's a devil of a lot we don't know," agreed Wallace; "but we're going to find out. Haven't run across Stanton yet, have you, Moran?"

"Nary a glimpse of him," the reporter replied.

"We'll locate him shortly," the detective said confidently. "His description has been wired throughout the State. All trains leaving here since morning have been searched. Stanton isn't a crook by nature, and he won't be employing the usual camouflage. I've notified the authorities in his home town to keep their eyes open, particularly with regard to any letters that may come for his mother. If he got hold of any coin the first thing he'll do is to send some of it home, or take it there himself. Either way he'll play into our hands."

"Still convinced that Stanton's mixed in this, are you?" the reporter asked.

"I certainly am. He seems to be a better lead than Shelton, the butler. Stanton had a real grievance against Greeb—the sort that preys on a man's mind."

"The chap I mixed with last night was about Stanton's build," said Wallace. "I'll have to admit that, Moran. I know it wasn't the butler."

"Isn't it possible that the butler had an accomplice?" suggested the reporter, eager to stem the tide of suspicion against Stanton. "That chap may have been the one you met, Wallace. Perhaps it was a fifty-fifty job—the butler doing the gun act and getting the combination, while the other chap robbed the safe."

"If Shelton makes up his mind to talk we may learn something of interest," Carr returned in answer to the other's theory. "Just at present he is as mum as a salmon."

"Haven't you found anything on the Greeb estate?" Wallace asked presently.

Carr nodded. "One other thing beside your pipe," he said. "In raking out a goldfish pond back of the house my men discovered a revolver—a small, thirty-two-caliber weapon containing one exploded cartridge. The coroner is satisfied that the bullet he probed for and found was of that variety."

"No distinguishing marks on it?" asked Moran.

"No. The owner of the weapon failed to carve his initials on the butt," Carr replied with a trace of sarcasm. "An oversight, undoubtedly!"

"And I don't suppose there were any finger prints on it, either," Moran came back, grinning. "A detective of the fiction type would be up against it for clews, wouldn't he?"

Putting a stop to the good-natured raillery between the two men, Wallace arose and looked at the radium dial of his watch. "Nine o'clock," he said. "Haven't we wasted about enough time in talk?"

Carr stood up expectantly. "Going out? No use warning you to look alive, I suppose; but just keep in mind that if you're pinched I can do nothing for you. Stay away from the Kingdon house and your own apartment. They're both watched."

"Thanks for the tip. Will one of you get word to Miss Kingdon that I'm O. K. and will be able soon to show my smiling face in the daylight?" The engineer stood a moment in thought. "What a trick of fate!" he went on. "Here I am, to save my own hide, seeking to ferret out the murderer of the man I've called the biggest scoundrel in the West. A queer sort

of jumble, isn't it? By the bye, Carr," he added more briskly, "suppose I would have a chance to look over the Greeb house to-night?"

"For the love of Pete!" cried Moran. "Wonder you don't want to visit police headquarters! Stay away from the danger line, Wallace. Don't get reckless. Remember you're fairly well known in this district, and if you're seen you'll be jugged."

"Cork up your fears, little news hound. I'll be the acme of precaution, whatever that is. What do you say, Carr? Any chance for me to do a bit of investigating?"

The detective hesitated a moment. "Well," he said presently, "I've withdrawn all but one of my men from the estate."

"That makes it simple enough," said Wallace. "Suppose I meet you at the Greeb house within an hour? I'll climb the wall. You go in through the gate and tell the sleuth on guard there that you intend to look over the premises and don't want to be interrupted."

"I'm willing to oblige you, Wallace, if you think it'll get us anywhere," Carr said, eying him speculatively.

"I'll guarantee you one surprise at least," Wallace promised.

CHAPTER XVIII.

BEHIND THE CURTAIN.

WALLACE left the Maple Avenue apartment half an hour after the departure of Carr. Moran was at home for the night and ready to turn in after nearly thirty-six hours of work. In spite of that, however, he would have been only too glad to accompany the engineer if the latter had given permission.

Once past the lighted entrance of the building, Wallace turned northward, intending to approach the Greeb estate from the hill rather than the city side. The dark streets, after he had passed under the elevated tracks of the Northern Pacific, made traveling more secure, and he walked along at a brisk pace.

A chance remark that Carr had let fall had blazed its way into Wallace's mind. Thinking back over the many episodes of the day and subjecting them to a keen and deliberate analysis, the engineer began to construct his new and surprisingly simple theory. So far he had kept the matter strictly to himself; but it would not be for long.

Although it was after nine o'clock, according to the daylight-saving law, the twilight lingered on the softly rounded mountaintops, and in the west the sky still was tinted with pink and saffron. The cool breeze was redolent with pine and rose-bloom and honeysuckle. High above where he walked, trailing off to the west, the winding Rim Rock Drive was visible, along which the evening procession of motor cars rolled, their headlights flashing in and out among the trees like gigantic fireflies.

Wallace mounted the steep hill and bore off to the east, skirting the thinly settled Cliff Park district. From there he descended so as to strike the wall of the Greeb place at its darkest point. Beyond pulling his cap down over his eyes, he made no attempt to disguise or alter his appearance.

He gained the shadow of the wall, and, after a bit of preliminary survey, selected a point of attack and experienced little difficulty in surmounting the loosely piled stone. Once over the top he scrambled down on the opposite side and found himself in the garden. The whir of insects and the murmur of falling water were the only sounds to greet his listening ears. He threaded his way cautiously among the laurels and rhododendrons and reached the nearest path.

At one point in the garden, higher than the rest, he was able to glimpse the big gateway at the far side of the estate where the police guard was posted below the swinging lanterns. Well screened from the gate itself, the house was visible, every window darkened. It was toward the house that Wallace presently directed his steps. Gaining the shelter offered by the wide veranda, he established himself comfortably to await the arrival of Carr.

The detective appeared shortly afterward, coming up from the gate pathway. He spoke guardedly to Wallace, who had challenged him; and presently the two men found themselves in the wide hall. Carr locked the door behind him, and the curtains were drawn before the lights were turned on.

"I'm not afraid of my own man at the gate," Carr said, to account for the precautions taken; "but if these lights show up too prominently some of the snooping newspaper hounds may decide to investigate."

The main stairway led from the big hall to the upper floor, and the upper landing was within a dozen feet of the room that Greeb had occupied the night before. Once inside the room, with the blinds drawn and the lights on, the men began a second thorough inspection of the premises.

"Let's form a working basis to begin on," said Wallace. "We have decided that the murderer must have come in from the hall, since the window would not furnish a means of entrance. That correct?"

Carr nodded. "The light by the bed was still burning when I arrived here this morning," he said, "proving that Greeb either was reading before he went to sleep, or awoke and turned it on before the intruder entered. We know, furthermore, that he was shot down near the door. Either he was called to the door, or he started to investigate a noise in the hall. The stains on the rug show clearly enough where he fell and where he dragged himself to the table to pull down the phone. The instrument in this room we've found to be disconnected, either purposely or not, and so Greeb did not succeed in his quest for help. Doubtless when that was made clear to him he resorted to the writing of the message."

"The butler said the door was closed when he came up here this morning," Wallace remarked. "If that is true some one must have closed it after the shot was fired. The bullet did not come through the panels."

"I'm not prepared to believe anything the butler has told," Carr returned. "For the present we'll imagine that the door was opened by Greeb himself, and that the assassin was in the hall and fired the shot from there. Now we're up against a puzzler. How long a time elapsed between the shot and Greeb's death, and what was the murderer doing in that period? The coroner's opinion is that the victim lived about fifteen minutes after the bullet struck him. That seems plausible enough, since we have proof that Greeb dragged himself across the floor, pulled down the phone, and wrote out a message just before death claimed him. But where was the murderer? Surely he didn't look on calmly while his victim was going through with that performance! Yet we know that the message was tampered with."

"I'd say the man that fired the shot hid away for fear an alarm would be raised, or that his victim was still alive and might recognize him. When he returned to the scene he found his victim dead."

"Well, that's good enough," said Carr; "but it leads us to another question. Did the murderer know the significance of the numbers Greeb left behind him?"

"I would say he did," Wallace replied. "At least he made an attempt to destroy the message, which amounts to the same thing."

"Not always. A criminal would be suspicious of any writing left by a victim, whether he was able to decipher it or not."

"True enough," agreed Wallace. "I'm not up on all the fine points of criminology. At the same time," he added, "if this message had been entirely destroyed, there would have been no connection between the murder and the robbery of the safe."

"That's a good point to bring up," Carr admitted. "It would seem to indicate that the man who murdered Greeb also helped himself to the fifty thousand dollars in the office safe. We'll work out our theory on that assumption, anyhow."

"I wonder if Greeb made a practice

of changing the safe combination without notifying his partners?" Wallace asked.

"Both Dayne and Tedford affirm that such a thing never happened before," the detective answered. "The correct combination was always known to all three men."

"Then something must have occurred yesterday that made it imperative for Greeb to do this unusual thing," Wallace declared. "Find out what it was and we may have a working clew."

"Another good point," said Carr. "It'll bear looking into. You're not so dull a sleuth after all, Wallace."

The engineer accepted the compliment with a smile. "If the mining game blows up I'll go after your job," he returned. A moment later he asked: "Did either Tedford or Dayne have any explanation to advance for Greeb's act?"

"None at all. Said it was a mystery to them."

Wallace shrugged and said nothing. Presently he walked to the door, opened it, and stepped into the hallway. "Let's follow up our first theory," he suggested. "The murderer shot Greeb the moment the door was opened and probably saw his victim fall. Doubtless the noise alarmed him, and he sought a hiding place. Where would he go? Not downstairs—no telling whom he would run against there. Up here, then. Still, all these rooms are locked." The engineer tried all the other doors that opened from the hall and found them secured. Then he turned toward the end of the hall, where a curtained recess met his eyes.

"This looks attractive," he said. He approached and drew back the heavy velvet portières that masked a wide window ledge. An exclamation followed the turning on of a bracket light: "Look here, Carr."

"Scratches!" ejaculated the detective. "And fresh ones at that! Some one certainly roosted in here. By Jove, Wallace, that theory of yours is beginning to pan out! But it eliminates the butler. That bird wouldn't have hidden away. He knew the house was deserted except for himself and his employer."

"He might have hidden away, not for fear of an alarm being raised, but for fear his shot hadn't taken effect and that Greeb would come out and recognize him. No; we can't eliminate the butler entirely," Wallace added. "He fits in somewhere."

The window behind the curtain was found to be locked on the inside. Moreover, it looked out upon a sheer wall that reached to the ground and seemed to afford no means of ascent or descent. Doubtless the curtained ledge had been used merely as a hiding place by the assassin, and the deep scratches in the polished woodwork had resulted from nails protruding from the unknown's shoes.

"Better find out what kind of shoes the butler is wearing," Wallace suggested after a prolonged study of the marks. "The man who used this place as a refuge must have been wearing nail-studded soles and heels."

"Just the opposite sort a butler would wear," remarked Carr. "Rubber soles and heels would be more in his line."

"Yes; unless he deliberately changed his footgear in an attempt to put the police on a false scent. He may have been crafty enough to bait the trail." Wallace glanced up at the wide window casings; then he mounted the sill. "Hello, here's something!" he exclaimed. "Take a look at this, Carr."

The detective joined the engineer, and the two men examined a few marks that were visible on the paint of the casing. "This woodwork has been freshly painted," Carr declared. "It's hardly dry yet. These marks look as if the man who hid in here put his hand against the paint and——" He stopped, and after turning on another light, scrutinized the evidence carefully. "They're finger marks all right enough," he announced; "but confound it, the paint was too wet to record clear impressions. Nothing here but blurs."

"And here's where the man wiped his hand on the curtain," Wallace put in, indicating the stains on the velvet portières.

"Sure is!" Carr scowled. "Jove, if we could find just one clear finger print —just one!"

The men got down from the window sill. "Look here, Carr," Wallace began, "I don't pretend to be infallible, but from one little remark you let fall to-night I've built up a fairly good theory, and the few facts we have uncovered in the last hour appear to substantiate it."

"That so? Well, fire away. Let's have the dope."

The detective listened attentively as Wallace outlined the idea that had taken possession of him during the last few hours, and his amazement increased perceptibly as the engineer continued.

"Great Scott!" he broke out when Wallace had finished. "You've opened my eyes to a new slant in the case. It's the best lead yet. Why didn't you tip your hand before, Wallie?"

"Well, it looked dubious at first—or rather wildly extravagant," the engineer returned; "but the longer I mulled it over in my head, the more reasonable it appeared. It'll stand a bit of investigation, don't you think? I'm sorry I can't take a hand in the job. You'll have to do all the outside work."

"I'll get busy right off," Carr declared jubilantly. "Any good suggestions to offer?"

"Don't know how good they are," the other replied, "but I'll offer them just the same."

For the next half hour the men planned their new assault and discussed the means of attaining their new objective. Their enthusiasm ran high, for the longer they dwelt on the matter the more convinced they became that the trail opening before them was the one to lead them to a shining goal.

Their plans completed, so far as it was possible to outline them at this preliminary stage of affairs, the men extinguished the lights on the upper floor and descended to the veranda. There they separated, having arranged a means of future communication, Carr leaving by the road gateway, and Wallace striking off through the shadowy gardens to make his exit over the stone wall.

CHAPTER XIX.

A PACKAGE OF SURPRISES.

THE circuitous route that Wallace was forced to take between the house and wall was not a great distance, nor did the narrow path at any point expose him to the vigilant eyes of the gate watchman. The engineer would have completed his journey quickly enough and been out of the grounds almost as soon as Carr had it not been for the fact, or at least a suspicion, that he was being followed. On several occasions, stepping aside into the deeper shadows and listening attentively, he fancied he heard the faint crunch of gravel or the snapping of a twig.

The thought that it might be Carr was dismissed as speedily as it had been entertained. The detective may have wished to see him again, but there was no excuse for him not to call out and announce his presence. By the time Wallace had gained the foot of the high wall, more than ever convinced that some one was trailing him, he made up his mind to take matters in hand and bring about a meeting with the unknown skulker.

Keeping well back in the shadow of a tree, Wallace fastened his eyes upon a distant bit of the path, open to the moonlight, along which his follower must travel. He waited patiently, eyes and ears alert, his mind assailed with speculative fancies. A few minutes later, when the engineer was beginning to think that perhaps after all his fears had been groundless, the head and shoulders of a man appeared above the distant hedge.

It was not until the man, advancing cautiously, had turned so that the moonlight struck his face, that Wallace recognized him. With the recognition Wallace checked an unbidden exclamation. It was Stanton!

Somewhat astounded by the appearance of this new actor upon the scene, the engineer watched and waited.

Stanton remained standing in the path, looking off in a direction opposite to where Wallace crouched. He was bareheaded.

After a moment of deliberation, Wallace moved forward. He wanted to get close enough to speak to Stanton, to call him by name. Stanton was moving away when the engineer reached the side of the hedge and guardedly called his name: "Stanton!"

At the sound the other whirled, rigid with expectancy.

"It's all right, Stanton," Wallace spoke again, and followed with his own name. "No danger," he added. "Come this way."

With a startled cry that rang shrilly in the silence, the man turned and plunged like a frightened deer through the flower beds that bordered the path. Hedges nor vines nor the creek itself deterred him. He raced wildly along, stumbling and crashing, making as much noise as an elephant on a rampage. Wallace saw, instantly, that Stanton was running directly toward the gate where the officer was on guard.

"The fool!" he broke out angrily. "Now he's trapped."

The first cry evidently had aroused the officer, for he jumped from his bench at the gate and came bounding down to meet the peace disturber. Wallace ducked back and quickly scaled the wall. From his position on top of it, he was able to witness developments, at the same time screened from observation by an overhanging tree.

Apparently blind or indifferent to where he was going, Stanton ran headlong into the arms of the astonished officer.

"Sufferin' saints!" bellowed the man, recovering himself after the impact. "Whatever's broke loose here? Is it you that's making all the noise?"

Stanton's answer was not intelligible to Wallace, although he strained his ears to catch it. However, it must have been decidedly unsatisfactory to the officer, for he took a fresh grip upon his captive and propelled him along the path toward the gate.

Wallace, his interest aroused by the surprising developments, did not propose to miss the concluding scenes of the garden drama, and in spite of the risk entailed, jumped from the wall and sprinted lightly up the path to a point well within the shadow of the lodge-keeper's house. There he dropped upon all fours and crept furtively ahead, guided by the sound of voices.

Under the light of the big lantern that swung above the gate, the officer was subjecting Stanton to a brief cross-examination. Now that he had quieted down and apparently realized what his foolish behavior had brought about, Stanton was as dumb as he had been noisy.

"It's daffy you are," the officer ventured at last, when Stanton refused to speak. "How did you get into the garden? Answer me that! And what brought you here? Don't you know ——" He broke off to peer closely into the prisoner's white face. "Sure now, I'm thinkin' you're the very bird we've been waitin' to catch. Is your name Stanton?"

"No; it ain't!" Stanton cried, squirming desperately to break away. "Let me go. I ain't done nothing."

"Let you go, is it?" the officer returned. "Sure, I'll let you go to headquarters in the wagon."

There must have been a telephone in the lodge-keeper's house, for the officer renewed his grip on Stanton's arm and dragged his prisoner toward the door. Apparently he did not propose to lose sight of his captive while communicating with police headquarters; but Stanton put up so determined a struggle and became so unmanageable, that the officer brought his club into evidence and rapped the obstreperous prisoner over the head. Stanton dropped to the ground as limp as a cloth.

"You're a fightin' son of a gun!" the officer remarked, calmly surveying his prostrate captive. "Maybe now you'll behave yourself while I'm calling for the wagon."

With that, the doughty minion of the law strode into the house and concerned himself with the telephone. The door of the lodge-keeper's house faced the garden, and once inside the room the officer was unable to keep his prisoner in view. Instantly aware of the situation, Wallace, who had been a silent spectator of all that had taken place, crept forward, determined to execute a bold plan. He wished to get hold of Stanton and question him before the police were given that privilege. In the present emergency the only way open was to kidnap the man and make off with him bodily.

The officer appeared to be having his own troubles in getting an open wire and was talking excitedly. Wallace reached the open space below the swinging lantern and was prepared to rush forward when Stanton cautiously lifted his head, jumped to his feet, and raced swiftly down the street. The engineer bounded forward and gave chase. He was quick to realize that Stanton had been shamming; that the blow had not rendered him unconscious; and that he had planned his get-away in advance.

The officer, still engaged at the telephone, was blissfully unaware of the developments beyond the wall of the house. No alarm was raised by the time pursued and pursuer had reached the end of the dimly lighted street and were sprinting up a narrow lane that led toward the hills. Stanton proved himself to be a capable sprinter and for the first few blocks managed to keep well in the lead; but Wallace was blessed with more endurance, thanks to his army training, and slowly closed in upon his quarry. The district through which the men were traveling was sparsely settled, and no curious spectator interfered with the racers.

Where the lane ended, opening into a bit of natural park, Stanton's speed diminished. A moment later, after one despairing glance behind him, he collapsed. Wallace stooped down, picked up the exhausted man, and carried him to a spot where a hedge offered more concealment from the road.

"Here, here, Stanton, buck up!" he commanded sharply as the other began to whimper. "I'm not a cop. Don't you remember me? I'm Moran's friend."

Stanton lifted his head and gazed searchingly at Wallace, apparently confounded at the voice of the speaker and at the sight of the engineer's civilian clothes.

"Don't you remember me? I'm Wallace. I was with you and Moran at the apartment yesterday."

Stanton gulped back a cry. "Yes, yes; I know now," he choked. "How did you get here? I thought—thought the——"

"Thought the officer was chasing you, eh?" Wallace broke in. "Of course. Well, he wasn't. If you had listened to me back there in the garden instead of throwing a fit and arousing the neighborhood, we might have avoided this excitement."

"You—you're going to help me, aren't you?" Stanton pleaded, clinging frantically to the other's arm. "Promise you'll help me. You will, won't you? You won't let them take me!"

"They won't get you for a little time at least," Wallace declared. "Not after all the trouble you've made for me. What in thunder started you squealing a while ago when I called?"

"I—I was afraid. I didn't know who it was. You frightened me so I didn't know what I was doing."

"Afraid of what?"

"Afraid of the police. They're after me. They've been after me all day." Stanton began to whimper again.

"Why are the police after you?" Wallace asked, feigning ignorance in order to draw an explanation. "What have you done?"

"It—it was Mr. Greeb. You know—he robbed my father. Oh, I told you all about it. He wouldn't return the money. He deserved to be killed, and when I went to his house last night ——" Stanton broke off abruptly in the middle of a sentence, broke off as if a hand had closed over his throat. Then he fell back.

Wallace shook him roughly. "An-

swer me, Stanton," he ordered. "Answer me! I want the truth! Did you kill Greeb?"

There was no sound from Stanton; no indication that he had heard. Puzzled, Wallace bent down. Stanton was cold and limp. There was no shamming this time, the engineer reasoned quickly. Either from fright or the excitement he had been through, or from an after-effect of the blow received a short time before, Stanton had lost consciousness.

Wallace stood up, aware of the predicament that confronted him. He could not remain where he was, nor could he carry Stanton any great distance. Long before now the officer at the Greeb gate must have turned in an alarm upon finding his prisoner gone. That would mean a hurry call for the police and a vigilant search of the surrounding territory. The efforts of the authorities would be doubled once the identity of the escaped prisoner was made known.

Scarcely more than a half mile distance from the Greeb place, Wallace was by no means secure. Every foot of the district within a five-mile radius would be explored; and the parks in the neighborhood, whose virgin wildness afforded likely hiding places, would be subjected to a more rigorous examination. The engineer, himself a fugitive, might readily escape the net; but that idea was far remote from his thoughts. He had a grim bit of business to talk over with Stanton when the latter returned to consciousness, and he proposed to transact it without police interference. He would as soon surrender as think of escaping alone. Stanton must go along, whatever danger it entailed.

Resolute of purpose, Wallace picked up the limp form of his companion and swiftly sped away. He kept in the shadows as much as possible and rested at intervals when his arms ached from the sagging burden they carried. He kept on up the hill, intent upon reaching the summit. Somewhere beyond, in the friendly shelter of the evergreens, he must find a refuge.

CHAPTER XX.

BAITING THE TRAP.

DETECTIVE CARR was the busiest individual in Spokane from the moment he left Wallace at the veranda of the Greeb residence. He arrived at police headquarters shortly after ten o'clock that night, closeted himself with the chief, imparted certain bits of information, begged for certain favors, and had them granted with an alacrity that sent his spirits soaring.

When Carr had finished his heart-to-heart talk with his superior and begun to issue assignments to the men who were to take part in the coming program, the officer stationed at the Greeb estate got an open wire at last and spoke his little piece. Carr was on his way to the scene of the affair before the second report came in that told of the newer developments.

After the disgruntled officer had rendered an account of the adventure that had befallen him, Carr ordered his men to scour the neighboring territory; then the detective rushed away to begin a quest of his own. He had accepted the guard's tale without much questioning, but personally he was skeptical. It was hard for him to believe that Stanton would return to the scene of the crime, whether he was guilty or not, and raise a disturbance to bring about his arrest.

At the same time Carr began to speculate on Wallace's movements. If the guard's story was to be credited, the engineer had no more than left the Greeb premises before the excitement broke loose. He must have heard it —perhaps had been concerned in it. The detective hoped that Wallace would not permit himself to be snared in the net spread to catch the man who seemed to answer to Stanton's description.

It was considerably after midnight when Carr returned home and went to bed, and it was just seven when the alarm clock aroused him the following morning. He was not disappointed to learn that the search of the night before had been unrewarded and that his own men had not made any arrests.

Upon arriving at headquarters an hour later, he heard reports that a man answering Stanton's description had been picked up by the town constable in Hillyard. This report was followed by several others from Davenport, Reardon, and Fort Wright. The authorities in each of the villages had made arrests and were bringing their prisoners to Spokane for identification.

After the morning *Review* had reached the outlying districts with its sensational account of the previous night's affair, a deluge of telegrams were received at Spokane police headquarters from near-by points in eastern Washington and the Idaho panhandle. Suspects resembling the wanted criminal had been apprehended everywhere, it appeared, and were being brought to the inland empire metropolis.

Carr viewed the unexpected epidemic of arrests with a grin. "If this keeps up," he told the chief, "the railroads will be running special excursion trains to accommodate the prisoners and their escorts."

"Looks that way," the chief agreed. "The only men who can identify Stanton are Moran and Tedford. We'll have to call on them when we get our army of suspects lined up. Strange we can't get hold of Wallace, isn't it? He seems to have dropped out of existence."

"Well," said Carr, "I'm of the opinion that Wallace is doing a bit of gumshoe work himself and won't show his face until he can squash the charges against him."

Between business engagements that morning Carr found time to visit Miss Kingdon, ostensibly to question her. In reality, however, his interview was prompted by a desire to quiet whatever fears she entertained, and to assure the girl that Wallace was perfectly able to take care of himself in the emergency and would doubtless show up within the next twenty-four hours.

Returning to town, Carr ran into Runyon in front of the Paulson Building on Riverside. The mine owner stopped the detective and plied him with questions. Carr's answers were noncommittal.

"It's all blamed nonsense," Runyon declared hotly. "Wallace had no more to do with this Greeb affair than you had. Don't know why he is keeping under cover, but you can bet there's a reason for it. And I've a hunch when he does show up he'll start a few fireworks."

"I agree with you there," Carr replied so enthusiastically that the mine owner went away pondering.

In the course of the forenoon the detective met a host of Wallace admirers, all of whom were puzzled over his disappearance, but were certain that the engineer was innocent of the charges made against him. Carr visited the Greeb offices in Post Street and had a few words with Dayne and Tedford, both of whom were nervous and steeped in gloom.

Learning that a number of suspects were to be at headquarters that day, Tedford promised the detective that he would be on hand to point out Stanton should he be among the number.

"Any line on Wallace yet?" Dayne inquired.

"Hasn't been arrested yet," was Carr's evasive reply. "There must be some reason for his disappearance."

"Reason? I should think so," Tedford maintained. "He knows he'll have to face too many charges and answer too many embarrassing questions. That's the reason. Seems to me Wallace is more important in this affair than Stanton. We've something pretty definite against him and we haven't on Stanton."

"They might have been working together," hazarded Dayne.

Carr smiled at the ridiculous assertion. "If either of them turned the trick they turned it alone," he declared. "It's a one-man job: the murder and the robbery."

"That's what I said from the first," announced Tedford; "and the fact that Wallace seemed to be the only one to know the combination of the safe puts him in a bad light. You'll admit that, won't you?"

"Yes," said Carr; "I do."

"Let's hope he's nabbed before making away with the fifty thousand," Dayne remarked anxiously. "We need——" He stopped short at a warning glare from Tedford. Evidently the latter did not care to have the financial status of the firm advertised, however true it might be.

"There's one thing I don't yet understand," the detective said: "If Wallace got into the safe the night before and made off with the fifty thousand, why should he return the next day and put himself under suspicion by opening the safe again in presence of witnesses?"

"He didn't think any of us would be keen enough to figure out that the message Greeb left was the safe combination," Dayne replied.

"Granted," said Carr; "but he must have realized when he opened the safe that the fifty thousand would be found missing. And for that matter," the detective went on, "you haven't yet told me why Wallace showed you this kindness?"

"Kindness?" jeered Dayne. "If you class blackmail as kindness——"

"That is readily explained," Tedford cut in sharply, doubtless preferring to render his own account of the matter. "You see we held an option on some property owned by Miss Kingdon. It has turned out to be valuable. Wallace wanted us to cancel the agreement. That's what started the trouble with Greeb the day before his death. Wallace wanted to get in on the profits of the sale, and when we turned him down he threatened us. And yesterday morning, when he appeared, he demanded that we hand over the option in payment for opening the safe."

"Had us backed into a corner," Dayne added. "He knew we had to get into the safe before twelve. We had to accept his terms."

"Wallace wasn't after the money when he got into the safe the first time," Tedford declared. "He wanted to get his hands on the option. Of course he helped himself to the money when he ran across it; but the option was in Greeb's desk that night and Wallace didn't find it. That's the thing that brought him down here the next morning."

"Oh, I see," Carr said. "Then Wallace has the option?"

"No, he hasn't. It is still here. Wallace forced us to sign a paper to the effect we wouldn't buy the property."

"Well," the detective said, apparently impressed by what he had heard, "that gives me a new slant on the affair. Much obliged for the information."

"Haven't the police been able to dig up any new leads?" inquired Tedford.

"We got one thing that ought to be of use to us," said Carr. "The man that shot Greeb obligingly left some evidence behind him."

"What was it?" asked Dayne.

"Finger marks. They are not so clear as we'd like them to be, but I guess they'll answer. I'm going to have them photographed to-morrow. Then I'll finger-print the butler and also Stanton and Wallace, when they are caught. I may decide to finger-print every man who had anything to do with Greeb, just to be on the safe side."

"That's a great idea!" Tedford declared. "The man whose finger prints correspond with those found at the house will be the man you want."

"You can bet on that," Carr replied. "It is one bit of evidence that can't be faked."

On his way to headquarters Carr passed the American Theater in Post Street, and at the stage entrance was hailed by Ralph Lee and Francis Powers, local matinée idols of the Woodward Stock Company. They twitted him good-naturedly.

"Ah, ha!" sang out Lee. "Old gumshoe Carr approaches! Where's your disguise? How do you expect to do any sleuthing wearing your own face? Come into my dressing room and I'll fix you out with an assortment of wigs and beards."

"Lay off the comedy, you lowbrow ham actor," returned Carr, giving Lee a dig in the ribs.

"Take a look at our show this week,

Carr," chimed in Powers, "and I'll give you a few pointers on how a real detective detects."

Carr laughed. "Wouldn't waste a dime, Powers," he returned, walking away. "Never did like burlesque."

When the detective reached headquarters he was met by some genuinely startling news. A ranchman from Cheney, in conversation with the chief, stated that, coming into town early that morning with a load of produce, he had seen on the hills south of Manitou Park, a man carrying another in his arms. Thinking there had been an accident, the rancher hailed the pair, but instead of replying, the man with the burden had struck off through the trees and disappeared. The rancher went on to say that he had forgotten all about the incident until he read an account of trouble at the Greeb estate in the newspaper and thought it advisable to report what he had seen to the police.

A number of officers were at once dispatched to the scene, the ranchman volunteering to accompany them in his machine. After their departure Carr did a lot of hard thinking. Murphy, the guard at the Greeb place, had been forced to knock out his prisoner and leave him unguarded while sending in a call. Upon returning he found the prisoner had mysteriously vanished. With the knowledge of Wallace's presence somewhere in the vicinity, it flashed to Carr that the engineer might have been responsible for the prisoner's disappearance. Just why, the detective could not imagine. Still, Wallace may have had a reason. If Stanton was unconscious, Wallace must have carried him away bodily; and if that was so, and the ranchman's story was correct, the theory was fairly well verified.

Puzzled over the affair, Carr hastened to find Moran. It had been arranged that Wallace was to get in touch with the reporter in case of an emergency, the reporter to communicate at once with Carr. Upon his arrival at the Maple Street apartment, the detective was informed that no telephone message of any kind had been received by Moran. And when Carr had related the newest development in the case, the reporter looked stunned.

"Whew!" he exclaimed. "That's a poser, isn't it?"

After leaving word with the operator downstairs to take any message that might come in for him, Moran accompanied the detective to the Davenport grill for lunch. After paying their respects to a chafing dish of curried crab, for which that particular tavern is justly famous, the men went to police headquarters, where Moran and Tedford were to look over the suspects gathered in that morning.

In spite of the good description given by both Tedford and the reporter and wired to the authorities in the surrounding towns, the overzealous local officials had arrested a dozen suspects that no more resembled Stanton than a Wenatchee apple resembled a Walla Walla prune. After the unfortunates had been looked over by the two men they were speedily discharged.

Tedford, Moran, and the chief were disappointed, to say nothing of the village constables who had expected to be complimented for their prowess. But not so Carr. He was more than ever convinced that Stanton had been the man taken prisoner the night before at the Greeb estate, and that Wallace, for reasons best known to himself, had carried him off.

Later in the afternoon Carr went in to have a talk with Shelton, the Greeb butler. The men talked together for an hour; and when the detective left headquarters to visit Moran's apartment for the second time, hoping to receive some word from Wallace, he was smiling.

CHAPTER XXI.

WHEN THE LIGHTS FLARED.

AT dusk that night, which meant close to nine o'clock, the gathering shadows blotted out the detail of the gardens surrounding the Greeb mansion. Within the confines of the four high walls the shadows hovered like a purpling veil. The insect orchestra

played a shrill accompaniment to the splashing fountains and the tinkle of hidden cascades. Leaves rustled softly as if in applause. There was no moon. There were no lights in the windows of the house; no sounds of life about the locked mansion.

At the gateway, under the swinging lantern, the police guard sat, puffing idly upon a pipe and stretching his limbs in solid comfort. An occasional machine glided past the gate, its headlight flashing upon the lone watcher.

Almost a block away from where the officer sat, a man appeared and was lost immediately in the shadows as he scaled the wall and dropped softly to the ground within the confines of the rock inclosure. A moment later he stood erect as if to get his bearings and then moved cautiously toward the dark house. Only once in the journey between wall and house did he permit himself to use his electric torch, and that was to guard against stepping into a pond. The light winked on and off and the shadows closed in again.

When he reached the house he encircled it, stopping to listen at intervals and treading upon the turf to muffle his footsteps. At length he crossed the wide veranda, and by sense of feel alone he found the door. A key was inserted and with a barely perceptible click the lock shot back. The man opened the door an inch at a time, stepped inside the hall, and just as guardedly closed the door again.

Step by step he mounted the stairs. On the top landing he hesitated momentarily, then crept along noiselessly in the blackness of the upper hall. At the far end of the hall he reached out expectantly until his fingers came in contact with the portières that closed off the deep-recessed window. He drew the curtain back.

Presently he removed a knife from his clothes and opened the largest blade; and not until then did he extend his torch, snap it on, and center the dancing ring of yellow light upon the window casing. Next he stepped up, mounting the sill. The blade of his knife, guided by his right hand, touched the painted woodwork of the casing. At the moment of contact, almost as if he had closed a switch, the lights in the hall blazed forth. He turned with a choking, surprised cry. The torch and the knife slipped from his fingers, and his wide, staring eyes focused themselves upon the three men who calmly surveyed him.

"Good evening, Tedford!" Wallace said. "We've been expecting you. Trapped yourself nicely, haven't you?"

Tedford, framed in the recess of the deep window, seemed too stupefied for words, too stunned to move. His eyes, almost glassy with terror, shifted from Wallace to the men behind him. He recognized Carr and Moran.

"Looking for finger prints, eh, Tedford?" Carr asked. "Wanted to efface them, didn't you? Afraid I would get yours and compare them, weren't you?"

Tedford's knees began to sag, and he would have fallen heavily if Wallace had not jumped forward to catch him. He was as limp as a wet cloth, and the engineer was forced to hold him up.

"A complete flop!" Carr broke out disgustedly. "I expected it. He's yellow clear through. Stand up, Tedford!" he commanded sharply, reaching out to relieve Wallace of the burden. "Stand up now! Show us a little of your iron nerve."

When the detective stepped back, Tedford managed to stand alone. Gradually his shoulders straightened and the fear in his eyes turned to resentment. "What do you want of me?" he asked in a surly tone.

"We want to hear your confession," Carr answered. "Come on, out with it, Tedford! There's nothing left for you to do. You killed Greeb, and you took the fifty thousand from the safe. Just admit it and we'll end this session."

"You—you're talking nonsense," Tedford began weakly.

"Yes? Then perhaps you'll tell us why you came here to-night?"

"I wanted to make an investigation."

"Rot! You came here to destroy those marks on the window casing. We saw you make that attempt. You had

your knife ready when we snapped on the lights. That's a fact and you know it."

Tedford made no response. He must have realized the utter futility of denying what was so evident.

"You fell into the little trap that Wallace and I arranged, Tedford," the detective went on mercilessly. "I baited the trap by letting you know we had found finger-print evidence in this house, which I intended photographing to-morrow. You swallowed it as the truth and saw where the only means of protecting yourself was to get here to-night and destroy the marks. Evidence in the destruction of evidence, Tedford. That's our case against you. And you haven't a ghost of a chance to deny it.

"I didn't say where those finger prints were to be found, did I?" Carr continued, driving home another truth. "But you went right to them. You knew where they were. You doubtless recalled smearing your hand against the wet paint of the window casing. So you headed straight for that spot with your knife. And now that the trap has been sprung and we've caught the man it was set for, I don't mind telling you we never had any finger prints to photograph. We did find marks on the casing, but they weren't distinct enough for evidence."

Tedford's jaw sagged, and he stared blankly at Carr, his countenance betraying all that his lips refused to utter.

"You played your hand pretty cleverly, for a novice," the detective remarked. "You bluffed us, and you must have bluffed your partner. You did not propose to split that fifty thousand with Dayne, did you? Not much! Not after all the trouble it had cost you!"

Tedford's lips moved. "You—you can't prove anything against me," he blurted out in a desperate attempt to defend his cause.

"Don't fool yourself, Tedford," Wallace put in quietly, taking the floor against the accused. "We can prove everything. I fixed you as the guilty man yesterday afternoon when Carr told me of his observations in your office. You made your first blunder, Tedford, when you opened the safe after I had closed and locked it."

"Why, I—of course I opened it again," Tedford stammered.

"How did you find out the combination?"

"I read it over your shoulder when you opened the safe."

"No; you didn't," Wallace returned. "You may have seen the first three numbers, but I prevented you from reading the last three by standing in front of the dial. I took particular pains to do that, Tedford. No; you knew all along what the combination was, knew the money was gone from the safe, and knew you would not be able to take up that Bitter Root option. I'll say you were a good actor. You fooled me at the time, and you fooled Dayne as well. And to carry out your bluff you had to sign the statement I drew up."

"It's a lie!" Tedford cried despairingly.

"And your second blunder," Wallace went on, ignoring the interruption, "came from not planting a bit of evidence at your office before the robbery was known. You were quick to accuse me of the job, but you failed to show how it was possible for any one to enter the office without breaking in the door or filing the bars at the windows. One must have had a key to gain entrance to the office and——"

"You had the key," Tedford broke in. "You took it from Greeb's pocket."

"Wrong again," said Carr. "The office key was found in Greeb's pocket when the coroner took charge here."

"I don't believe it."

"I don't care if you do or not," retorted Carr. "The key is on the ring with a number of others at headquarters. You and Dayne have the only duplicates. Come now, Tedford, stop bluffing! It's getting you nowhere. We've got you cold. When Wallace tipped me off that you must have been concerned in this affair, I paid a visit to your apartments—while you were out. Haven't you missed anything?"

Tedford glowered, but made no response.

"Didn't you miss a pair of shoes?" Carr inquired. "One of them was shy a bit of heel. Didn't notice it, eh? Well, I have the shoes at headquarters, along with the missing bit of heel. The two fit perfectly. Of course you didn't know that the lift of leather wrenched from the heel was found in a tree growing beside the wall of this estate—the tree you scaled in making your getaway the other night."

"Didn't it give you a shock, Tedford, when you dropped on my neck?" Wallace chimed in.

"Have you investigated the contents of that little steamer trunk of yours, Tedford?" Carr inquired. "The one back in the closet? Did you note that the lock was broken?"

An imprecation escaped Tedford and his face paled. "You—you broke in to it?" he cried.

"Sure! I wanted to find where you had cached that fat bundle of currency," the detective replied. "Figured it must be in your possession. You wouldn't carry it with you. So you tucked it away in the bottom of that trunk. That's where I found it—the whole fifty thousand."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE SILVER LINING.

THAT astounding revelation, coming as a knock-out to all the faint hopes Tedford may have entertained, proved to be the end. With a shrill, hysterical laugh he flung up his hands. "Anything else?" he cried mockingly. "Anything else against me?"

"Plenty," Carr replied. "But what's the use? I've shown you a few of the cards we hold. Do you want us to put them all on the table? You're beaten, Tedford. Be man enough to admit it."

"I'm beaten," Tedford repeated, his voice changing abruptly and sinking to almost a whisper. "I'm beaten. I can't hold out—any longer. Take me away from here. Lock me up. Do anything you want with me. I don't care."

"Then you're ready to make a clean breast of the whole affair?" Carr asked. "You'll confess to the murder of Greeb and the robbery of the firm's safe?"

"Yes, yes, yes; I'll confess. Don't torment me. I killed Greeb. I killed him. I'm not sorry. I had been long enough under his thumb. When I saw him put the fifty thousand in the safe the other afternoon I decided to take it and disappear. I had it coming to me. I put almost that sum into the firm. But when I went to open the safe that night I found Greeb had changed the combination. That—that maddened me. So I went to his house, knowing he was to stay in town that night. I had a key to the door—a key Greeb kept at the office. I intended to wait until he went to bed—to surprise him, threaten him with a gun and make him give me the combination. I figured I could tie him and lock him in a closet. That would give me time to get the money and get out of town before an alarm was raised. But Greeb must have heard me in the hall. He opened the door and was ready to turn on the lights when I fired at him. I didn't dare to have him recognize me. Then I hid in the window back of the curtain."

"Your theory exactly, Wallace," Carr broke in. "Go on, Tedford," he urged, as the prisoner showed signs of collapse. "Tell us the rest of it. Get it off your chest."

"After a while I crept back to the room," Tedford continued, his voice weakening. "I saw where—where Greeb was dead. Then I saw what he had written and knew it must be the combination. After I had read the numbers, I meant to destroy them. But in my haste I snatched up the paper and tore it in two. I kept the one piece in my fingers when I ran out of the house and—and must have dropped it when Wallace gave me a fight."

"You didn't know until morning that you had left part of the paper in Greeb's room?" asked Carr.

"No; I didn't know."

"How about that pipe of mine, Tedford?" Wallace inquired. "Did you find it and throw it into the garden?"

Tedford nodded. "When we were fighting on the walk my fingers came in contact with the pipe. I thought it was my own, at first. I didn't want it to be found, so I put it in my pocket. The next morning, when I heard your story and knew the pipe belonged to you, I dropped it in the grounds on my way out, knowing it would be found and—and bring you under suspicion."

"Did you know at the time of the fight who your opponent was?"

"No. I didn't learn that until—until you mentioned it."

"After your bout with Wallace you went to the office and took the money from the safe?" Carr asked.

Again Tedford nodded. "Yes; I took it. I thought of running away afterward; but when I realized that Greeb was dead and couldn't possibly identify me—I decided to stay and bluff things through. Running away would have laid me open to suspicion."

"Then it wasn't until after I had opened the safe that you decided to throw suspicion on me?" Wallace insisted.

"Not until then. I knew that you must have found the paper I lost with the word 'repeat' upon it—must have figured out it was a part of the safe combination. I thought you'd be unable to prove how you got the numbers of the combination and things would look bad for you."

"Things did look bad for me at first," Wallace admitted.

"Guess we won't have to bring on our star witness to confront the prisoner," Carr remarked. "Just as well, though, if we keep him out of it altogether."

"Star witness?" It was Moran who uttered the query. The reporter had not felt called upon until then to take an active part in the dramatic scene that had been enacted. He had joined his companions at the last moment and for that reason had not been informed of all the developments. "What witness are you talking about, Carr?"

"Your protégé—Stanton," the detective answered.

"Where is he? Where does he figure?"

"Stanton is at the Kingdon house just now. He is about all in after his sorry experiences."

"Why, you didn't tell me anything about it," protested Moran.

"Didn't think it was at all necessary," said Carr. "What concerns Stanton is not for publication. Since Tedford has confessed we won't need Stanton's testimony. And I'm just as well satisfied."

"It'll never get past me," Moran declared. "I've tried to protect him all along, and you know it. What's his story?"

"He saw Tedford leaving these grounds the other night," Carr began. "Stanton found out where Greeb lived and came up here the night of the murder to have a talk with him. He hung around on the outside, afraid to go into the house. Then he saw Tedford come out. Tedford hadn't closed the door behind him in his hurry to get away, and at last Stanton got up courage enough to visit the house. He went upstairs to the room where the light was burning and saw Greeb on the floor—dead. That scared the kid silly and he ran out. He hid off in the hills all day. The next night he sneaked back, remembering that he had lost his hat, and fearing it would be found near the scene of the crime."

"Afraid he would be accused of the murder if his hat was found in the grounds?" ventured Moran.

"Exactly." Wallace took up the story at that point and related briefly all that had taken place the night before, from the time he had seen Stanton to the time he had fainted in the park after the pursuit. "Thought for a moment my suspicions were all wrong and that Stanton had committed the murder," he went on; "but after Stanton had recovered and told me all his story, I saw where we were on the right trail. We kept under cover all day. Then I got in touch with Carr, had Stanton taken to the Kingdon home, and we came here to join you."

"Whew!" exclaimed the reporter.

"That is some story! And what about the butler? Didn't he figure in the affair at all?"

"Oh, the butler's all right," Carr answered. "I got the truth out of Shelton this afternoon. He admitted faking an alibi, but gave me a reason for it, which I've verified. Seems he was out on the night Greeb was murdered with a lady whose husband wasn't along, and —well, it's obvious why he couldn't bring her into the affair. In addition to that, Shelton confessed to having disconnnected the telephone switch here in the hall downstairs. Said he expected a phone call and didn't want Greeb to receive it. Don't know how true that was, but it doesn't seem to enter into this affair and we——"

"Look out!" cried Moran, jumping forward. Wallace followed suit. The detective whirled about just in time to see his prisoner leap upon the sill and plunge headlong through the mullioned window. Tedford, unwatched for a moment, had doubtless experienced a change of heart and sought to escape by the only way open to him.

With Carr in the lead, the men raced down the stairs, through the hall, and out into the side garden. The wide-spreading branches of a tree directly below the window and the thick carpet of underbrush that covered the ground had served to break Tedford's wild plunge. Beyond a general shaking up and a few cuts from the broken glass, the man was uninjured. He was attempting to crawl away on hands and knees when Carr pounced upon him and jerked him roughly to his feet.

"What do you think you are, Tedford —an airplane?" The detective produced a pair of handcuffs as he spoke and linked himself to his prisoner. "Guess this will hold you down to earth for a while. Come now, step lively! Our next stop is police headquarters."

Wallace and Moran followed the detective and his prisoner along the path to the gate, where Murphy, officer on guard, came running down to meet them.

"Sufferin' saints!" Murphy began, gazing wide-eyed at the procession. "What's the——"

"Never mind the saints or the questions, Murphy," Carr broke in. "Get on the phone and order the wagon."

When the patrol had arrived and taken aboard its passengers, Moran included, Carr called out to Wallace: "What's the trouble? Aren't you coming with us?"

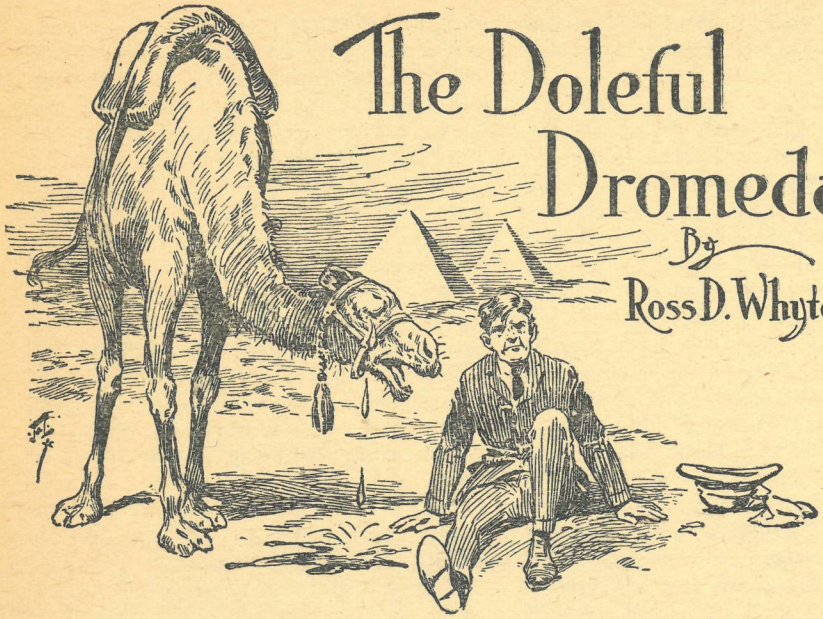
Wallace shook his head. "See you all to-morrow. Just at present I've an engagement to keep with a young lady on Fern Hill." He waved a hand to the men as the patrol rumbled off and set out in the opposite direction.

RIGHT AWAY

By Marjorie Charles Driscoll

DEAR UNCLE SAM: I take my pen
And write for all my fellowmen,
To offer just this simple plan—
If you would be a friend to man,
Ease human ills;

Please issue orders right away
To place, without undue delay,
Above each letter box a sign,
One simple, plainly printed line—
"Please post no bills."



The Doleful Dromedary

By Ross D. Whytock

THE loud, raucous blast of an automobile horn at my coat tails gave my nervous system a shock that threatened absolute paralysis for a moment; then wild, berserker rage took the place of fear, and I whirled about with murder in my heart to confront the big red roadster that had made a horror of my Fifth Avenue crossing. Half reclining and laughing at me through the steering wheel of the car was Johnnie Manners.

Meeting Manners was no less of a surprise than the blast of the horn, and while I stood looking foolishly at him a dozen chauffeurs began to express themselves forcibly regarding tying up traffic, and the big, blue-coated minion of law and order started toward us.

"Hop in, you idiot, before I'm taken to the pie factory!" shouted Manners, and the next instant I was lying on the back of my neck in the red juggernaut and we were shooting down the Avenue.

"Got anything on your mind?" began Manners as he swung the car around the rear of a motor truck, and missed an onrushing limousine by the merest fraction of an inch. "If you haven't I'm going to run you down to my Long Island place to talk over old times."

"Your Long Island place—this car—what does it all mean?" I stammeringly inquired.

Manners only chuckled and sounded the nerve-shattering horn, and then laughed outright as a dignified old gentleman in a top hat made a mighty leap from in front of the onrushing red monster and reached the curb of safety by a superhuman effort. On we sped in silence, and we had reached the center of the Williamsburgh Bridge before I could bring myself to speak again.

"What does it all mean?" I asked. "The last I heard of you you were on your uppers in Egypt. What's the answer?"

"A moth-eaten, humpbacked dromedary," replied the irrepressible Manners, and at my look of blank amazement he laughed and banged the eardrum-bursting horn of terror, causing an ancient and spavined horse attached to a junk wagon to hoist itself on hind legs like a ballet performer.

"That's the answer, old top," he went on. "Fortune is at last shining upon me because of an investment in the

most ornery old shebang of a camel that ever went eight days without a drink. Heavens, man, but I've a story to tell you, and there's no man I'd rather have met to-day than yourself. The wife is out in Chicago, and I'm all alone, and you and I are going to have the dandiest little old dinner that a pair of old-time pals ever got outside of."

I could only gasp. It was all beyond me. "Wife—wife," I murmured.

"Yes; wife, house, cars, everything," replied Manners, "and all because of a raffle."

"Raffle?" I questioned. "Win a wife in a raffle?"

"No, not a wife, but a dromedary; a dismal, rabbit-faced ship of the desert," chortled Manners. "But wait until you've sampled one of my French chef's dinner and I'll tell you the story."

Once more the horn blared its warning, and traffic frantically and fearsomely pulled to the curb to let us go scooting past. We lapsed into silence. It was too much for my bemuddled mind. Crouched down in the seat, I wondered whether my friends would be able to identify my remains if Manners' horn should fail to cause some truck to get out of the way.

II.

THE last time I had seen Johnnie Manners was in Bombay. I had been sent out there by my company on business. Manners was spending the last of a small fortune that had been left him by an aunt. He was my traveling companion as far as Alexandria on my return. There was but little left of the aunt's bequest, but with what remained he decided to take a whirl at night life in Cairo. A year had elapsed since our parting, and here I had come across the young spendthrift with a wife, a country place, and a motor car that threatened to disorganize completely the traffic rules of the nation's metropolis and its environs.

Manners' house was one of the show places of the north shore; a structure of fantastic design, with red-tiled roof and green facings—altogether an architectural nightmare. It was just the sort of a place that Manners would conceive of as home, sweet home. As we shot up the driveway, scattering gravel in four directions, two grooms in liveries that must have been designed by a futurist in the throes of delirium tremens rushed out and stood at rigid attention.

Manners vaulted out of the red demon and dragged me after him. "Feed it some oats, James," he ordered, and the grooms gravely saluted.

The next instant I was being ushered into the huge, extraordinary-looking house. The interior was in keeping with the exterior. The color schemes of the rooms fairly screamed. The decorator must have served his apprenticeship as a designer of circus wagons. An English butler wearing the habiliments of an Arab chieftain met us as we crossed the threshold. The apparition salaamed low.

"Dinner for two in the tomb of Pharaoh, and be quick about it," commanded Manners.

The butler salaamed once again and vanished.

"Regular Aladdin's-lamp stuff, eh?" remarked my host.

I admitted that it was startling, to say the least.

While we were awaiting the summons to dinner Manners led me on a tour of inspection of the living rooms. I was knocked speechless before we had progressed more than three feet. The place fairly shrieked in its garishness. What little æsthetic tastes I possessed were bludgeoned into insensibility. The colors would have driven a peacock into a fit.

"Now, I'll show you a picture of the mistress of this palace," said Manners, and he led me forthwith into a long, narrow, and darkened room. He sat me in a couch that threatened to engulf me. At the far end of the room was a white screen, and as I gazed at it I heard Manners fiddling with a row of push buttons. Behind me I heard a whirring sound, and then a shaft of

white light projected itself through the darkness and circled on the screen. The next instant the screen presented a moving picture of the prettiest girl I have ever gazed upon. She was walking in a garden of roses, and a flock of little woolly dogs frisked at her feet. She smiled sweetly upon us and then tossed a kiss. A button clicked, and we were in darkness once more.

"That, old toppy, is the mistress of this artistic abode of wealth and comfort," said Manners. "Sorry she is not here to greet you, but dear father-in-law is up against it with an attack of gout, and she's gone out to nurse him back to health. Beats the mischief how these billionaire pork packers do get sick at times! This moving-picture stunt is a little surprise for wifie when she gets back."

While I was recovering somewhat from my daze the Arab-clad butler suddenly appeared before us, salaamed, and announced in Piccadilly English that dinner was served in the tomb of Pharaoh.

We passed through a narrow doorway into a dimly lighted room, which, when my eyes became accustomed to the subdued light, I found to be an exact replica of an ancient Egyptian tomb, such as might house the mortal remains of one of the rulers of the old Nile country. The walls were covered with strange hieroglyphics, and at either end of the room two mummies in glass cases grinned upon our feast.

"Cost us about one hundred and fifty thousand dollars to fix up this room," remarked my host. "Had an ancient tomb shipped over from Egypt. The missus is crazy about Egypt, and so am I; but say, Bill, I'm hungry. Every time I think about Egypt I get hungry. Never let myself forget about it, so I'm usually eating half the time. Bring on the grub, Alexander."

III.

I MUST say that, despite my weird surroundings, I did ample justice to that dinner. Johnnie Manners certainly had a prize of a cook, and by the time we reached coffee and cigarettes I had eaten so much that I was ashamed to look the mummies in the eye. And then Manners told me the story of it all.

"When I left the steamer at Alexandria," he began abruptly, "I streaked it for Cairo and its high jinks. I didn't have any king's ransom in my jeans, but I had enough to get by with; that is, I would have had enough to get by with if I hadn't in a moment of mental aberration taught a brace of English muttonheads the ancient and honorable game of American draw poker.

"When we finished that lesson," he went on, "I couldn't draw a check for a sou marquee. In fact, I could hardly draw my breath. I was downright busted. They put me out of the hotel in the end and held my luggage for board long due, so I took to hanging around the cafés watching for Americans. I bumped into a few Cook's tourists, but the pickings were bad, and by this time I had begun to look so shabby that I was ashamed to admit that I was an American.

"Things went from bad to worse," Manners continued. "I had been sleeping out under the palms so much that I felt like a potted plant. A square meal would have driven me mad. One morning I awoke with a craving for food that made me almost ready to turn cannibal, and a thirst that it would have taken the Mediterranean to quench. I had one shiny shilling to my name.

"As I was wandering down the street in an anarchistic frame of mind I heard loud and excited voices in a near-by bazaar. Full of curiosity—I certainly was filled with nothing else—I wandered into the place of excitement. I found a raffle in progress; the capital prize being a dromedary, complete with trappings. There were a number of other prizes, among them a stuffed hyena. While I stood surveying the capital prize and wondering whether it was edible, a native asked me if I would take a chance. I don't know why I did. Probably it was the power of sug-

gestion brought to bear on me by the Egyptian, perhaps it was my temporary absent-mindedness, or it may have been the gambling spirit in me that caused me to part with my lone shilling. I took the chance.

"When it came to the time for the drawings I was as excited as the insect-bitten natives about me. Then came the reading of the lucky number, and, ye gods and purple sunsets, I had won the miserable, moth-eaten quadruped! The motley throng about me gave a loud cheer, and half in a daze I took the capital prize by the halter and led it forth into the street. Then, suddenly, the enthusiasm of winning departed from me, and I wondered what I was to do with the beast.

"I tried to sell the dromedary, but no one would buy. I tried to give it away, but no one would have it even as a gift. I surveyed my capital prize, and something told me I had received the stinging of my young life. That dromedary was the most doleful-looking specimen of its kind that ever trod on cloven hoofs. It was a nightmare! The beast gazed upon me with limpid and melancholy eyes, and as I looked the harder I saw that my prize was weeping.

"It was bad enough to be stone broke in a strange land, but I felt that I had reached the absolute limit when I found myself handicapped with a weeping dromedary that I couldn't sell or give to any one. I tried to get away from the beast, but he was not to be eluded. He had taken an extreme fancy to me and followed on when I started down the street. I entered several cafés, leaving the animal to his own resources on the street, and when I did not reappear in what he thought was the proper time, he would start to force his way through the doorways and the proprietors of my havens of refuge would order me and my ship of the desert to begone.

"After I had abandoned the dromedary for the sixth time the authorities set a native policeman to watch me and see that I did not leave him standing. I wandered up to the terrace at Sheppherd's Hotel to hear the band play, thinking the music would serve as a balm to my wounded dignity, but that accursed hair trunk on stilts dogged at my heels, and when I turned to berate my Nemesis in choice American he would stand swaying from side to side, his eyes upon me with a look of reproach and the tears coursing down his jowls. It was maddening!

IV.

"NIGHT came upon me at last," Manners continued, "and there I was, a waif in a foreign land, with the unenviable companionship of a camel. I thought of the wild desert and the engulfing sands and decided to wander away into the silences. And the dromedary followed on. Over the Kasr-el-Nil bridge that spans the Nile at Cairo I marched, with my doleful dromedary a few steps astern and weeping silently. That foolish beast must have had some secret sorrow or a long-lost love or something, or perhaps it was downright affection for me that made him sob.

"Late into the night we marched under the Egyptian moon, and then, black and towering, the pyramids loomed before us. Close up to the ancient monuments the expedition halted. I was too exhausted to proceed farther, and as I sat down, more dead than alive, with my back against a huge hewn stone, the camel knelt before me and sobbed as if his heart was breaking. If I had possessed one ounce of energy I would have arisen and slain that curse of Cairo then and there, but I sat like a man in a trance and with black murder in my heart. I don't know whether it was the rhythmical swaying of the dromedary's hump, or the low moans that issued from his rabbitlike face, or what, but presently I fell sound asleep.

"It was well into the forenoon when I awoke and gazed into the face of my capital prize. Again I was beset with a horrible desire to set upon that beast with teeth and claw.

"To what lengths I might have gone had not my attention been distracted I know not. But looking past the sor-

rowful face of the dromedary I beheld a vision in white. I forgot being broke, forgot being hungry, forgot even the presence of the dromedary as I gazed at the girl who was approaching. I thought for an instant I had died, and that I was gazing upon an angel. Beside the girl was a fat and perspiring man in a white helmet, and dragging his hamlike feet behind them came a Sudanese guide.

"Suddenly the girl caught sight of my melancholy ship of the desert, and seizing her companion by the arm exclaimed: 'Oh, daddy, please let me take a ride on that beautiful camel.'

"As the party neared me I rose to my feet and bowed low before the vision of loveliness. Daddy addressed me.

" 'Is that camel to rent?' he inquired.

" 'No,' I replied; 'I'll give him away. He's yours for the asking. Help yourself.'

" 'No,' said daddy; 'I'm not buying camels. Pork packing is my business; but I'll give you ten dollars if you'll let my daughter use him for a while.'

" 'You're on,' said I. The thought of ten bucks raised visions of a meal that would partially satisfy my monumental craving. Daddy whipped out a wad of money that made my head reel as I looked at it and handed me the price agreed upon. Little cutey was jumping up and down like a child with a new plaything. I pocketed the ten, and then watched the dragoman start to hoist the girl aboard the doleful dromedary. It was my chance at last. When I saw that the beast's melancholy eyes were not upon me I scooted around a rock and set out, hotfoot, into the desert.

"I don't think any one ever ran quite so fast as I did during the early stages of that flight. I was rid of my curse at last, and joy lent me wings. On and on I ran and walked and stumbled and fell. From time to time I looked behind me, but nothing was in sight. I was alone on the Sahara, far from my camel's melancholy glances.

"Presently I came to a little oasis and found a spring of the most beautiful water in the world. I took aboard an eight days' supply. Then I lay down under a palm tree and slept the sleep of the just. When I awoke the sun was dropping like a red ball into the desert, and I began to think of Cairo and the food that ten dollars would purchase. Even as I started to my feet I saw something approaching my oasis. It was indistinct, but somehow or other there was something about it that seemed familiar.

"As I stood gazing with bulging eyes I made out the swaying figure of a camel coming toward me at record speed. From time to time the beast would place his nose to the sand as though to follow a trail, and then on he would come in leaps and bounds and jumps and flops. But, horror of horrors, on the hurricane deck of that monument of misery was the figure of a woman; and, as the outfit drew closer, I beheld in the dim light the vision of the pyramids, clinging for dear life and too terrified to utter a sound.

V.

"WHEN that dromedary of destiny got his peepers on me," Manners went on, "he fairly flew across the intervening space and fell on his knees before me like a pilgrim at a shrine. The young woman fell forward in a faint, and I reached her just in time. Lifting her from the back of the beast I carried her to the spring and bathed her face. In a few minutes her eyes opened, and she smiled up into mine. Right then and there I kissed her and told her that she was my dream come true. She cuddled close and called me her preserver.

"As we sat there in absolute bliss I felt something behind me, and over my shoulder came the rabbit face of the camel with tears of jealousy coursing down his face. My enchantress let out a piercing shriek and passed into another faint. I laid her gently on the ground and arose in righteous wrath and smote that camel hip and thigh. I booted that dreary dromedary all over the oasis and pursued him for a mile

across the burning sands. Then I returned to my fairy queen to find her restored to her senses and with a smile of approval for my violent actions toward the four-legged nuisance.

"Never was there such a night as that which we spent sitting beneath the great palms and watching the romantic moon rise and journey through the Egyptian heavens. We were both speechless. We could but sit with our arms around each other in ecstacy.

"She had told me briefly what had happened. It seems that after my sudden departure the camel had acted as camels should act for a time; then he began to cut up strange didoes, running about and sniffing the air. Suddenly he started for the great beyond with her father and the dragoman in pursuit. For hours the camel and his terrified burden had journeyed about the desert before the beast discovered my tracks and streaked it for the oasis.

"When morning broke a search party, headed by the almost distracted pork packer, arrived on the scene. Daughter told daddy how I had saved her life, and we both told him how much we loved each other. And so we started back to Cairo. Far behind us I could make out the figure of the dromedary, but the all-fired walloping I had given him the night before made him hold aloof. My curse had departed from me, and I had won an heiress for a wife."

VI.

LATER that night, when Manners was showing me to my bedroom, we passed a door from which issued an odor not unlike that which prevails about a Chinese joss house.

Manners read the questioning look on my face. "Oh, this," he remarked, "is my den."

Throwing open the door Manners switched on a light, and I beheld a big bronze dromedary, and before the image incense burned. Manners salaamed low before the fetish, and, as I looked, I thought I saw a tear trickle from the humped one's left eye.

OVER THE MOON

By Jo Lemon

IN childhood days I heard a rhyme
About a bovine most erratic,
Though not believing at the time
A cow could be so acrobatic.

The rhyme declared she jumped the moon,
And spoke about a cat and fiddle—
And also of a dish and spoon
Whose actions added to the riddle.

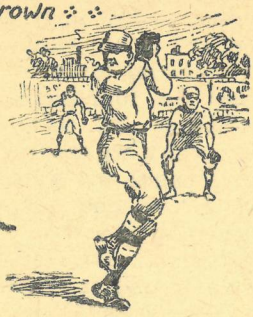
A fiddling cat I must declare
Is something quite beyond explaining,
As for the dish and spoon affair,
I find it far from entertaining.

But in the cow I place belief,
Although to me she was a stranger,
For in these days I find the beef
So high her record is in danger.

Baseball Adventures of Larry Brown

Something Stirring

By Burt L. Standish



(COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE)

CHAPTER I.

WORK AND SUPERWORK.

THEY had begun calling him Laughing Larry Brown; and he had puzzled more than one man beside Pat Nolan, manager of the Eagles. There was no doubt that he could play center field with the accuracy of a battle-scarred veteran and throw in the pep of a high-school youngster; there was no doubt either that he stood up to the plate and swung his ash in a way to make the experts dub him a natural-born, three-hundred hitter; and there was no doubt, also, that he packed a goodly allowance of shrewd, fertile brain under his thatch of auburn hair. Granted all this, you'd be tempted to say he was a perfect player—a twin Tyrus. But they don't grow on every bush, that kind; or, what's more to the point, crop up every season in the training camp. Far from it. Larry, too, didn't happen to be the exception. Briefly, as Nolan put it, his trouble was that he "played in streaks!"

That was it; for several seasons before Nolan grabbed him he had given ample proof of it. He had first been gleefully gobbled by a Bucko scout; his preseason work had caused countless eulogistic columns on the sporting pages over the country; his actual début had brought out even more fervent literature; and then had come his ghastly slump. It had lasted a fortnight—and again he had picked up. Again, too, he had dropped. And such, alas, had been the history of four long years—the Buckos, the Dips, the Peps twice running. Always he had ended back in the minors, given up as hopeless. The last time, in fact, had seemed really the last—until came Pat Nolan. He had brought the tail-end Eagles into fifth place, and this season he was crying for outfield timber!

Larry was popular in camp, with the veterans and the recruits—and that is uttering a mouthful. If any jokes were played on the six-foot-two fellow, he laughed as heartily as the perpetrator; if he lost his wad at poker, he only chuckled and assured them all he'd have better luck next time; if he won, the other fellow felt that Larry actually

hated to take the money; but after taking it he promptly spent it. If Nolan got after him in practice, he simply nodded his head and grinned genially. To make it as strong as possible, it was known that two weather-beaten veterans had given two-to-one odds that Laughing Larry couldn't even once lose his temper. So Nolan, liking his stand at the plate and the swing he carried, took him back home and put him in the first game in place of the fast-fading center fielder.

It was the same old tale. For ten days, Larry burned up the league—and again came the glorified write-ups. Then, for a week solid, he put up a brand of ball that a high-school player justly would have been ashamed of. For two whole months it went on this way—a week of superwork, another so poor that it was laughable instead of tragic. What exasperated his manager more than anything, however, was the blithe and merry manner in which Brown himself accepted it all.

"Don't waste time worrying," Larry would say gently. "Man, you're getting gray over a mere game of baseball."

In vain did poor Pat rail at him; gladly, he could have choked the big, simple, honest center fielder. Then, one day, he annexed a deep-rooted theory, and forthwith broke it to Larry:

"Me boy, you've got to make good or I'll ship ye back to the sticks for good an' all. Ye big, grinnin' ape, can't ye git that smile off yer face an' take life seriously fer once? Man, man—it's yer livin' yer playin' fer, not yer health. Ye haven't any private forchoone, I'm told, yit ye cavort like a kid let outa school. Git mad—git mad, Larry. Do ye know what it means—mad? When the pitcher slips one over on ye don't grin; grit yer teeth an' tell him he's a big stiff an' can't do it again. When a man slashes one out that fools ye, don't tell him he put one over on ye—tell him he couldn't make the same mistake twice in a million years. An' when ye git one by the infield, don't laugh an' wish the guy better luck next time—tell 'em they couldn't stop a toy balloon. An' when—— But, there—there, lad. Ye git me, don't ye? Git mad, Larry—snarl an' yell an' howl an' ride 'em to death. Aggrissiveniss—aggrissiveniss is what ye need, ye red-headed-son-of-me-own-soil!"

But Larry, Pat Nolan instantly saw, had not been listening—and the harassed manager was undoubtedly on the point of assault when he happened to glance over the field and see the cause of the distraction.

Larry was gazing raptly at a lower box. "But she's a beautiful girl, Mr. Nolan—a regular Irish colleen, if you don't mind my saying so. I—I never saw her before; but I've heard. Great Scott! How weak words can be!"

"Yis," put in Nolan testily. "Sees iviry game—bin away till now with her mother. But, listen, Larry, I want you——"

But Pat Nolan noticed that no attention was being paid to him. A wily look came into his keen, blue eyes:

"Bless me soul, me boy, but what a heathen I am! Come, lad, an' let me make ye acquainted!"

Introductions followed, during which Larry showed to decided advantage. His head was back higher and a lively fire was in his eyes, his manager noted. When the game was called, he bowed to them and took his leave gracefully.

"Just show mother an' Dora that ye're as good as I've said, Larry," Pat shrewdly called after him. "Sure, they've nivir seen ye disport!"

"A lively matinee is in order," Larry called back, laughing.

His prediction proved correct. Four times at the rubber, he had secured three hits—the last one an untarnished homer, with two on, that had sewed up the game. In the field, he had gracefully accepted every chance.

Needless to say that Mr. Nolan was pleased—indeed, he was so pleased and grateful that he casually asked Larry if he wouldn't like to drop around to the house with them and have a taste of a "good ole homy Irish stew?" What? Oh, well; there may have been some deep design under it all. But judge

for yourself—judge by listening to what he told Dora, while he took her aside as Larry was exchanging pleasantries with the missus:

"Dora, fer the sake of yer one an' only father, give Larry a bit of the blarney. I've bin tryin' to git the lad interested in somethin' since I've had him—an' I can see that he's that now. It's fer the sake of the team, child, fer I believe that if he ever got to thinkin' seriously of a thing it'ud wake him up. What? Oh, come now, darlin'. Sure, don't I know ye bin seein' a good deal of Morden, an' it looks like a match to yer dad? But what difference does it make. He's the star twirler of his team an' they're leadin' the league an' will stay there fer the rest of this season, anyhow. I tell ye just be nice to the boy, that's all; just talk ball an' ask him about himself once in a while. It may wake the gossoon up an' make him the champeen he really is. Yes, Dora—a champeen. I want ye to know, girl, that if that Larry lad once could git sensible he'd be—he'd be—he'd be a second Cobb! 'Tis not foolin' I am—no! . . . So won't ye, Dora—just fer yer dad's sake—be just a little kinda nice to the lad?"

After a few more words and a little coaxing—she did like to quiz people—Dora murmured sweetly that she'd try to give her daddy an assist "for the team's sake!"

She must have thought a lot of the team, it appeared. Certainly her father could find no fault with the way she cast her favors on the big, laughing, red-headed chap. By the way, he did not seem to be a very hard person to be nice to. He talked well and he listened well, and as he left, that first evening, Mrs. Nolan vowed that he made her think of one of the dear boys back in the Emerald Isle. He showed such respect to the old people!

To all of which Dora remarked that he "wasn't so bad, maybe, even if he did have pink-tea hair and a roaring laugh. And she had been nice, hadn't she, dad? Why, she'd even asked him around the very next night!

CHAPTER II.

A BIT OF SINCERITY.

YOU have gathered that Dora was experiencing no difficulty with her rôle of coquette. To sum up the veterans and recruits who had lost their hearts to her would have demanded an adding machine—and they were still going strong. You will see, therefore, that Larry was not kicking in on any simple game. Indeed, he should have felt—and probably did feel—exceedingly happy at being allowed the movie rights as often as he got them.

Coming right down to it, Nolan was the most joyous. The lad's hitting was again causing caustic comment—caustic because it was looked upon as but another wild spurt. If this was so, they pretty soon had to agree that it was the longest of all; in fact, several came right out and said that at last—at last Larry Brown——

Anyway, the Eagles miraculously jumped up to third place, and Pat Nolan every night thanked his lucky star that the Buckos, with Morden, hadn't been due this trip. Glory be, what would happen then! Probably Larry would sink for good.

But then the Eagles went on the road for the Western jaunt, to return home and engage the dreaded leaders in a six-game series. The last evening Larry begged of Dora—and received. Characteristically, he came to the point at once:

"Dora, I'm a youngster and I haven't got a name—not even a regular, sure job. But I want to know if you won't promise to marry me? I—I know that Morden is—is a lucky devil. Even so, is—is there just a wee hope? And, queen of the blue eyes and the black hair, don't I care for you with all my heart? Dora, isn't there just a little chance—if I make good? And that I can—for you?"

Dora let her laughter ripple. "Mercy, Larry, but you're too young to be talking of such things; too young and impressionable and light-hearted. You really don't know how to be serious, you just *think* you care——

"Think—think, girl!" he broke in. "Could any one look at the eyes of you and not be sure?"

"You did caress the old stone, Larry. But—but I like you as a friend—as a sister might." And she dimpled cutely.

"Please take back the sister stuff," he said, and grinned; but pain came to his voice the next second: "I am young, Dora; that I admit. But what's the harm in my laughter? Isn't it better than to carry gloom? Well, maybe I shouldn't have spoken—just yet. I—I just meant, anyway, is there any hope? I meant is—is Morden sure? This is the real thing with me, Dora."

Even Dora, for once, in the face of such sincerity, might have been at a loss for a fitting answer; but she was saved the trouble. Mrs. Nolan came bustling in to see "her Larry" and to wish him all the luck in the world on his trip. And so, although he accepted it beautifully, he was forced to leave with the question still unanswered. And, after the manner of his sex, he took the matter quite glumly. Just how glumly he took it can easily be explained. After the third game with the Purple Sox—rank cellar habitués—Pat Nolan sent the following telegram to his daughter:

Write Larry letter. Say anything—but say something that will *rile* the lad. We've got to get something stirring. Dropping close to the second division.

The next evening, Larry tore open a dainty epistle. It was a fair-sized specimen, containing no more than light gossip that was cheering and diverting; but it ended up by saying she was so sorry he'd slumped and hoped he'd do what she knew he *could.*

Considering that Larry stayed up most of the night answering it—what he wrote was so lengthy as to need eight cents instead of the usual two for mailing—his exploits the next day should be given full credit. He hit for four figures—likewise he fielded so. Indeed, his annihilation of the horse-side, on that never-to-be-forgotten swing over the Western circuit, is ancient history.

Good old Pat Nolan, bringing his team home in third place, was deliriously happy. Larry's phenomenal pep, his inexhaustible work, had imbued the rest of the boys with power for superhuman deeds. They were playing a fast and consistent brand of ball now that would win any pennant in any league in the world—if only they had started earlier. Even so, it was the first time in the club's history that it had been fairly, firmly intrenched in the first division, and could it but remain there the fiery Irish manager would have no more to ask this season.

But Nolan realized that he had got himself into an exceedingly critical position, after all. So long as Dora was nice to Larry Brown, it would be well; but how would she play her part with Morden himself in town? He dreaded to think; and also he scratched his head. But girls were queer. What was it that his daughter saw in the pitcher, anyway?

It fell out that Larry, after morning practice, waded through his lunch and jumped a trolley up to the Nolan apartment. He figured that he'd have exactly fifteen happy minutes with Dora. However, as he got out of the elevator and went to ring the bell the door of the apartment opened and Dora appeared. And Morden, just leaving, was with her.

Poor Larry must have seen many colors, and his heart must have played an erratic tune. Nevertheless, he retained his poise. "Hello, Dora!" he said. "Back from the trip at last; and I just took advantage of the few minutes I have to come up and get a wee sight of you." Then genially he turned to the proud moundsman who was leading his league: "Hello, Mr. Morden. I suppose you're going to burn them over this afternoon. Ah, but it's some smoke you have, all right," he added in frank admiration.

The star southpaw raised his eyebrows, and drawled with unutterable scorn: "'Lo—*busher!*"

Then quite calmly he turned his back, bid Dora an elaborate good-by, and started for the staircase. Had he

waited for the elevator he might have noticed that her face went red and her chin set with the same expression her father's did when he thought a decision was unfair.

Larry ignored the insult, except for a whitish look about the nostrils, which he could not control. Seeing Dora's plight, he passed it over, and started to relate some funny story pertaining to their trip. But once inside, seated on the cozy sofa, he gave up all pretense:

"Dora, I've a few minutes only, and I want to say my say. I've played better ball lately; I've played it seeing you ahead of me, and seeing a regular job at three or four thousand a year with you by my side. You don't know how your letters have cheered me. I carry them with me and read them over and over. I care for you a lot, and——"

"Ding-aling-aling!" interposed Dora. "Time to wake up, Larry."

"Oh, don't make a joke of it," he protested. "I want to play big-league ball and stick to it and get you. Is there a chance if I do? Please be serious just a second."

"They do say, Larry," Dora answered him, seemingly a bit fussed, "that you're not exactly—not exactly serious enough yourself; that you are not ready for big-league company."

"They do, do they," said Larry. "Did Morden—— But never mind that; excuse me. Just you watch me to-day, Dora, and I'll show you what I can do. Just you watch me to-day! There'll be something stirring."

"Hooray!" cried Dora. "I'll have to watch you, Larry. I'll be there."

"And—and will you go to the show with me to-night? Any theater you choose."

"Mr. Morden has asked me to go," she replied innocently.

Larry's jaw set hard, and Dora told herself that she had never seen him quite so angry—or better looking.

"Will you go if I show you I'm not a busher?"

Doran crimsoned a little. "Larry," she said, nothing trivial in her tone, "it is not a question of busher. Just go out there this afternoon and play the game of your life."

"Is that all?" returned Larry. "Well, that's too easy. Just watch me flutter."

CHAPTER III.

HONEY AND GALL.

IF Larry Brown needed the inspiration of a crowd in addition to the new spur that Dora had supplied, he certainly had that in his favor. The biggest throng of the season was on hand. As he marched onto the field he received an ovation, but for once he failed to respond in his usual rollicking way. Instead he merely bowed his acknowledgments and kept that set look about his lips. Indeed, all through practice his mates kidded him, wanting to know who had died in the family. During the first and second innings, too, he was the subject of their raillery. But Larry, for the first time, didn't laugh it off; he just sat there in the dugout and glared.

The big surprise came when he stepped up to the plate in the third inning, with a man on second and two out. Gone was his grin, gone his merry eye. In place there was a wild, a savage expression all over him that even the cheers of the fans couldn't soften. Nolan, frankly, was trembling.

Morden had pitched airtight ball; the man on the keystone sack got there through two flagrant errors. It did not precisely soothe Morden's temper, and he tried to take it out on his rival: "'Lo, busher!" he taunted. "Where's that baby smile gone?"

But Larry's answer electrified the crowd—as well as the entire team. He did not reply with his customary good-natured banter; he literally snarled out his words like an enraged beast: "Hurry up and put that pill over, you spindle-legged pup!"

The crowd, coming to life, howled gleefully.

Morden, powerful for all his slim length, had abnormally thin legs; and every fan was well aware that if anything would get his goat it was a reference to his shanks. "You big hunk

of cheese!" he snapped back. Then, with a hasty wind-up, he let the ball go with all his might, straight for Larry's head.

The batter ducked and came up angrier than ever. "What do you think you're doing—throwing hand grenades, you eel-legged rat? Can't you put one over? What's the matter? Losing your nerve and showing your yellow streak, eh?"

For answer there was a snarl, a click of the jaw, and Morden shot the ball out like a bullet, again for that flaming head.

"Put it over, you piker!" cried Larry, as he righted himself. "I'm not going to slam it for more than a triple!"

Morden, biting his lips and fuming, deliberated. This business of trying to bean a swift man didn't pay. He'd have to put everything he owned on the ball and show this busher up. Slowly he went into the contortions of his elaborate windup; still more slowly he unwound himself, and then he sent the sphere over the plate with what was called the best drop in the game.

Larry Brown had never been particularly effective against Morden—especially against this tricky ball. But now he stepped back, dug in his spikes, and slashed out for the grayish horsehide with his whole body and mind behind the action. There was a mighty crack as his ash met the leather—and before the ball was retrieved Larry had lived up to his promise. One man was home, and he himself was perched safely on third. What is more, he was not grinning. If anything, he looked fiercer than ever!

His next time up, in the fifth inning, Larry looked wilder than before. Busher, eh? Huh, that match-legged kangaroo would call *him* a busher in front of *her*, eh? Well, he'd show him, all right—he'd show him. And, obeying Nolan's instructions, he landed on the first ball and singled cleanly over short.

For ten grueling innings the game went on; and every fan in the huge park howled himself hoarse whenever Larry stepped to the plate or made a put-out. It was the surprise of the year, this new kind of a laughing Larry. His teammates were riding him, you may be sure, and to all of it, unmerciful though it was, Larry did nothing but glare. Pat Nolan alone remained silent—and Pat was having to pinch himself to find out if he wasn't dreaming. Unless he was wrong, the big change for good had come to his center fielder.

But Larry, as yet, had not fully tasted of the fruits of sheer delight. Arrived the tenth inning. The score was two-two; two men were out, and precisely that number of bags were populated. The crowd begged Larry to "give it a ride." Nolan, on the third-base coaching line, spoke for the first time. He didn't beg Larry; he told him he knew he was going to do it.

But Larry Brown wasn't listening to the crowd or to his manager. Instead, he saw a black-haired, blue-eyed, dimple-cheeked portrait in a box; the face of the portrait was tense, and beneath it two dainty hands were tightly clasped. What she was thinking of he couldn't tell, but he'd show her. He'd show her he wasn't the busher his rival had said he was; that he was ready for the big league all right; that's what he'd do, anyway!

Morden, white-faced with anger, looked at Larry with eyes that gleamed deadly hate. He would have given anything in the world to bean him, yet he knew that he must pitch his best. Carefully he deliberated on what ball to use, several times disagreeing with his battery mate.

"Stop wastin' time, spindle-shanks!" called out Larry. "Man alive, you don't think it makes any difference what you pitch, do you? Come on, you yellow gawk!"

Quickly, dexterously, like lightning, Morden came to life. Hoping to catch his man by surprise, he sent the ball over without even winding up.

But he did not catch Larry napping; he stepped back, rapidly brought up his bat, and slashed out for that oncoming sphere. It may be stretching poetic license a bit, but when he landed on it

the ball smoked. The shortstop, after a brilliant leap, got his hand on it, only to have it sizzle through his glove and make him think his fingers had been scorched.

After the winning run had gone over, Larry didn't streak it for the clubhouse with his pals. Instead, he raced over to the box that held Dora. Quick though he was, Morden was there ahead of him, mentioning something about busher's luck!

Larry, bowing coldly to him, asked Dora if he was intruding. And she dimpled and looked arch.

"How about the show, Dora," Larry asked.

Morden looked scornful and supremely confident. A sneer came to his lips as Dora turned, not toward Larry, but toward him. She smiled ever so sweetly and spoke in a voice that for one of the men was honey, for the other gall.

"Thank you so much for your invitation, Mr. Morden; but I've finally decided to accept Mr. Brown's. Perhaps you won't mind after what has just happened."

Let us hand it to Morden at least that he did not play the villain at bay. He uttered something that resembled a growl, and followed it with words to the effect that he would be delighted. Then he turned on his heel and made his way through the crowd of fans toward the clubhouse. He took it coolly enough; no doubt of that. And yet there was something about his manner suggesting that the incident, so far as he had to do with it, was not closed.

It was the very next day, about an hour after morning practice, that Pat Nolan, meeting Heinie Schultz, the Eagle's best bet on the third sack, received some news that interested him strangely.

"Say, Pat," remarked Heinie, "that Laughing Larry guy! What's his game?"

"I should think you'd know after what you saw him do yesterday. His game is baseball."

"Yes, I know; but his other game. I saw him in Goldmark's big jewelry store just now. He was looking at some chunks of ice—solitaire diamond rings. Break it to me gently, Pat, if it's true. Is that cherry-headed Indian thinking of wishing himself on somebody as a bridegroom? If he is——"

But Pat had fled in the direction of a taxi stand, and he didn't stop until he was seated in a cab and shooting toward his apartment, where he intended to chat a little with Dora.

The further baseball adventures of Larry Brown will be related in the next issue of TOP-NOTCH, dated and out November 15th. It will be a story of novelette length.

To the Winds with Prudence

TALKING of scarecrows," said Jones, "why, my father once put one up, and it frightened the crows so much that not one entered the field again for over a year."

"That's nothing!" retorted another farmer. "A neighbor of mine once put a scarecrow into his potato patch, and it terrified the birds so much that one rascal of a crow, who had stolen some potatoes, came next day and put them back."

Using Him Rough

MRS. BROWN'S only lodger was an actor, and one night he presented her with two tickets to see him play the villain in the great drama, "All For Love."

Spellbound, Mrs. Brown and her daughter watched the villain pursue his wicked way through three acts.

It was a great shock to Mrs. Brown to find she had harbored such a villain beneath her roof. But worse was to come. In the last act the triumphant hero shot the villain through the heart, and he dropped dead in the paper snow.

"Oh, mother," cried Miss Brown, in a voice that was heard above the loud applause from the "gods," "what shall we do? They've killed our lodger!"

Riding to News Hounds-

By Patrick and Terence Casey—

(A NOVELETTE)

CHAPTER I.

WHEN THE SCENE CHANGED.

BOY and man, Jim Sproule, now night city editor of the *Express*, had worked for Ira Hunt, sometimes called the American Northcliffe. He had been the best "make-up" man on any of Ira Hunt's coast-to-coast chain of eleven metropolitan dailies. In fact, when Ira Hunt's millionaire father had given into his young son's keeping the San Francisco newspaper, Jim Sproule had originated then that uniquely Hunt display style of make-up —the spread of headlines, the featuring of photos, police news, and studleys.

Hunt forever was transferring the editors of his papers in one city to the control of the newspaper in another city. In this way, fresh vigor was constantly being infused into his dalies. However, Jim Sproule had become such a fixture of the *Clarion* that in twenty years he never was changed. But one day, after twenty years, Hunt shooed west from Chicago two young and pushing protégés of his, Chandler and O'Gorman, the one to serve as managing editor, the other to hold down the city desk.

Jim Sproule did not get on well with the "Chicago cubs," as he called the two. They were mere pudgy children in French socks to his veteran eyes. He was, at that, not a half dozen years older than they, but they were live with the rebirth of change; they were bubbling with that enthusiasm of men in a fresh job and a new and altogether different town. To them, Jim Sproule was a slow-moving, heavy-jowled and wordless pensioner of Ira Hunt, tottering on the verge of decrepitude and paresis.

They preserved a certain respectful and deferential attitude toward Sproule. But they found many things to object to in his make-up of the *Clarion;* they listened to his advice, but they did not follow it. What the *Clarion* needed, in their eyes, were large hypodermic injections of wide-awake "pep." They sought to shunt Jim Sproule into a less important job.

He fought back, at first, in dazed unbelief that these lean young wolves meant ultimately to devour him. But at

last full realization came. After twenty years as the best make-up man on the coast to succumb to these striplings! No; he could not stand being assistant to O'Gorman in putting the paper to bed. In desperation, one day, he quit the *Clarion* flat.

The Chicago cubs lived in chill dread as they awaited the inevitable dénouement. They had not meant to shove Jim Sproule so far. Quickly Ira Hunt flashed the command: "Get Jim Sproule back at any price!" Say what you will about Hunt as a politician or as a propagandist, he ever has been magnificently baronial, with kindness of demeanor and largess of cash, toward those that have given unto him their life blood in faithful service.

Sam Sparhawk, one of Hunt's thousand-dollar-a-week right-hand men, went to Jim Sproule to salve his hurt pride with gifts of frankincense, myrrh, and costly aromatic nard. He offered Sproule a contract covering the rest of his working days at eight-five dollars a week with an annual increase of ten dollars the week; a pension of half his working wage whenever he saw fit to quit; and his option of make-up man on any of Hunt's eleven newspapers save and excepting only the *Clarion.*

There was the rub. Stout in his consciousness of twenty years of unfailing service, wounded as only a lifelong servitor can be wounded and unable to forget like a younger man, Jim Sproule wanted complete vindication, absolute victory. He forgot the materialistic windfall of the increasing scale contract, the old-age pension. He wanted a personal triumph over the Chicago cubs. It was the old job on the *Clarion* or nothing.

The Chicago cubs could not be very well removed from the *Clarion;* they really were infusing new life into the old paper and showing results in subscriptions and advertising. It would be impolitic, due to the hard feeling existing, for Jim Sproule to return there. In the end, unable to gain his principle, Sproule refused to go back into his feudal allegiance to Hunt.

Jim Sproule was that good a make-up man that, so long as he could stand on two feet, he never need lack a job. He did not want to go to work for the *Express,* the rival morning paper. He always had looked down on the *Express;* he could remember when it started as a two-page pink sporting sheet, featuring the returns and forecasts of the horse races. It had been something of a muckracking town gossip, later, and there were rumors that it had forced advertising and subscriptions and the actual passage of money itself through the appearance or nonappearance in its columns of certain data on public men and merchants.

But that was when San Francisco was young and raw, and the Vigilantes were not yet a memory, and the California pioneers had not lost in death so many of its members as it has today. In the quarter of a century intervening, the horse races had waxed and then altogether waned, while the *Express* had made millions and political power for Reuben Langwald, its owner, and was considered a conservative organ, even more conservative than Hunt's blaring *Clarion.* Jim Sproule became night city editor and make-up man on the *Express.*

CHAPTER II.

IN A SPIRIT OF CHARITY.

A CERTAIN old-timer given a job by Jim Sproule was a little shriveled derelict with a pale face; he was small and delicate of feature. In his round close-cropped white head were small nervous eyes, quick and bright as a shabby sparrow's. His linen was always white and hard boiled, his face bald and soapily pure as a baby's, and well-worn but extremely and noticeably neat were the black string tie and black Prince Albert coat.

The first night he must have suffered agonies, waiting there like a nervous shabby sparrow for work to be given him. He was too timid to sit down. The busy local room clattered, clanged and blared with the hurly-burly of reporters pounding typewriters, telephoning, answering shouted assign-

ments, continually coming and going. The little shrinking old-timer was everlastingly getting underfoot. And apologizing. Timidity with him was an outstanding trait. Right off, some one on the staff nicknamed him the "Rabbit," and the monaker stuck.

An old cabinet containing a washbasin and a cloak closet in juxtaposition was a battered time-worn fixture of the news room. In its face were two doors, the one to the washing compartment, the other to the closet, usually left carelessly open like two spread wings. After he had been on the *Express* long enough to learn meekly to warm a chair, the little old-timer fluttered with that chair behind an open door, one night, no doubt hoping thus to make himself less conspicuous in his prolonged idleness and humble waiting.

There, hidden from Jim Sproule's desk by the intervening bulk of the cabinet, concealed from the whole dingy disorderly room by the open door, he made it his wont to sit in breathless quiet the long evenings through. Had he known that Jim Sproule hired him as a reporter only in a spirit of vicarious charity and that he never was to be assigned any task, he could not have disposed himself in a more out-of-the-way hiding place.

One almost forgot that the Rabbit was on the staff. Shortly after noon he would put in his initial appearance in the local room, only to vanish as if into thin air until the afternoon tediously had waned and the clock stood at six. Then would come a few nervous preliminary rustlings and he would pop out of his rabbit hole. The big room would be almost emptied of reporters; Jim Sproule would be gone for his hasty snack of dinner. Gillen, the police man, late returned from the Hall of Justice and busy with some items about which he had not cared to telephone, would suddenly hear, at his elbow, a meek tremulous voice:

"Mister Sproule, has he gone out to supper? It's past six o'clock. Would it be all right for me to go to supper, too? Mister Sproule, he must 'a' forgot all about me."

He would come shuffling diffidently in, at seven, and go at once into timorous ambush behind that shielding thickness of door. A long evening of mouselike lying in concealement, and then one o'clock would draw round. Jim Sproule would take off black cloth sleevelets, put a coat about his stodginess, a hat on his grizzling head, and go out toward Louie's "place" up the alley, and then to bed.

The Rabbit would wait for Jim Sproule to leave. He seemed to shrink from bringing himself to Sproule's notice. He seemed to fear that, should he make himself the least bit conspicuous, Jim Sproule might change his mind and fire him—perhaps because only a second look needed to show how rickety and frosted of head and forlornly old a derelict he really was.

"Mister Sproule, he has gone home?" he would say to McCants, the reporter having the "late watch" who alone inhabited the shadowy local room. "It's one o'clock. Would it be all right for me to go home, too? Mister Sproule, he must 'a' forgot all about me this evenin'."

CHAPTER III.

THE JUDGE AND A BIG THOUGHT.

IT was almost a week before the Rabbit was nosed out in his warren by "Judge" Rigley, librarian for the newspaper and keeper of its "morgue." The Judge was the office cut-up. Around the local room of the *Express*, they called him "Judge" because at some remote time he had served a term somewhere as justice of the peace.

Reporters were hired, reporters were fired or quit, but Judge Rigley remained as much a bird of passage as a china setting egg. And just as much the bland hypocrite as is a china setting egg was Judge Rigley also. He was affable to his inferiors as well as superiors, affable as country butter. He employed fulsome flattery to all and sundry with the unction and largess of a designing woman.

He did little straight reporting. But he reveled in "covering dramatics"

which gave him opportunity to make sly digs at the performers and musical artists, and in reviewing books which gave him free volumes for his home library. At forty, he was bald as a shaving stick, tall, and remarkably lanky. He had a sallow, hairless, surprisingly youthful face. Since chaos, it seemed, he had been in charge of the newspaper's morgue.

His duties were perfunctory. He saw to it that various blond young women properly and persistently clipped with scissors and filed in brown manila envelopes certain "dead" stories in yesterday's *Express* and exchanges, together with photographs used and unused from the engraving department. All this mortuary endeavor took place in a cubby off the local room; the place was lined to the ceiling with shelves of manila envelopes and bound issues of the paper; it was murky with green-shaded droplights and disorderly with newspapers and clippings beyond counting.

The young female librarians were all blondes because Judge Rigley had a predilection for women of that type. As he had complete charge of the hiring and discharging of such assistants, he could indulge himself in this nicety of discrimination. He was ever ready to listen to their hard-luck tales and always eager to whisper very funny stories in their youthful ears. For, though forty and bald as a shaving stick, Judge Rigley was quite a bit of a Don Juan. He was a middle-aged flirt.

It was only because of his desire to please the many and the strong that he had assumed the motley of the comic man and practical joker. Judge Rigley had the shriveled soul of a shyster lawyer; he wooed popularity and guffaws; for the controlling be-all and end-all of his obscure existence was to be the power behind the throne in the dingy clattering newspaper office.

The local room was humming full blast. A few reporters lounged near Judge Rigley to witness his official comedy. The judge had found a dead mouse in the dusty library. Tying a length of string to its tail, he got upon a chair before the battered cabinet and, reaching over the door, dangled the mouse before the sleepily nodding Rabbit.

There came a frightened snort, then an aghast "Oh, Glory!" White as a new towel and quaking all over, the Rabbit burst forth. He found himself ringed round by the staff, who guffawed unrestrainedly. He halted upstanding, truly like a rabbit motionless with fright, his timorous old eyes confused and vainly seeking some vest pocket in which he might curl up and hide.

The next night the judge sawed through the legs of the Rabbit's chair with a satisfactory result. Through the following day, the old man limped about.

Busying his brains, that evening, but all out of new comic material, the judge fell back upon some tried devices that had provoked much mirth when played upon certain old-timers who had preceded the Rabbit. He dropped to the flooring before the Rabbit's ambush a burned-out incandescent bulb that burst with the sharp report of an exploding bomb. He attached a long string to the knob of the concealing door and, while sitting innocently remote in the cubby of a library, pulled shut the door at the most unexpected moments, arousing the old fellow each time from his undignified drowsing.

Ed Hobart, water-front reporter, came into the office, early one evening, laden with a basket of deep-water crabs, the gift of an Italian fishing company on his beat. The crabs were all huge husky-looking fellows, and very much alive to judge from the many sharp nippers waving and outreaching above the top of the borrowed basket. They were for any that would come and take.

Judge Rigley tiptoed over to the cabinet's door and, peeking behind, saw that the Rabbit sat with bowed head and gently snoring in his cubby. Then he spent a delicious half hour whispering his plan to every one worth while in the local room. A large and ex-

pectant séance having been thus produced, he took from the basket a writhing specimen and, with deep stealth, deposited it in the side pocket of the sleeper's frock coat.

The whole staff waited breathlessly for the Rabbit to start from his doze and innocently put a hand into the capacious pocket of the coat. But minutes dragged by and the expected dénouement failed to come. Most lost interest and turned their minds to the business for which they were hired.

Judge Rigley, seeing his little joke hanging fire and the interest waning rapidly, thought to prod it into laughable consummation. He exploded an incandescent bulb upon the floor. But the Rabbit only started out of his sleep to look in shivering fright sharply about. The judge then pulled the string on the door, but the old derelict had become rather used to that trick and only blinked in the sudden light caused by the removal of the shadow of the door. All evening the judge waited gloatingly, but it drew toward one o'clock and still the Rabbit did not put hand on those sharp nippers in his pocket. Ruefully the judge decided at last to go home.

The next day when the Rabbit showed up for work, he wore a cloth bandage about an index finger. There were other differences in him. His sparrow eyes were eager, and quested searchingly about the local room with strange yearning. He did not retreat as usual into his wonted ambuscade behind the cabinet door. He sat boldly in the open at a typewriter desk, seemingly controlled by his hungry eye-search of the room.

Judge Rigley assembled a fitting audience. He had noted the bandaged finger. He thought that his practical joke, which had hung fire overnight, might be exploded with careful nursing to even better advantage than if it had gone off at first.

He draped his lanky legs over the desk before the Rabbit. "Shame on you, old-timer!" he jeered. "Steppin' last evening with some wild women, eh? And one of 'em bit your finger!"

The Rabbit showed surprise. "You noticed my cut finger? Why, I got thet from a crab bitin' me."

"Oh, my eye—a crab!"

"Sure; a crab what I found in this yere pockit. Funny, too; I didn't know from Adam it was there. Jest felt a wrigglin' and a pinchin' arter I got to my room, and I put my hand in the pockit, and, my, he bit and held on strong as a bulldorg, the little varmint!"

"Oh, come, old-timer. You don't expect us to believe that ghost story!"

"At fust," went on the Rabbit, not seeming to notice the remonstrance—"at fust, I had the idee to make a pet of Yorky. I once knew a feller name of thet what used to go sidewise like him and I nicknamed that crab Yorky right off. I've had a lot of pecooliar pets in my time. Once it was a mouse when I was fust sent—uh, sent—— ennyways, a critter like Yorky would be dern handy and homelike to have round a two-bit room fer a feller to talk to what can't sleep well of nights.

"I jest hated to boil Yorky, I did," went on the Rabbit, "but, my, he was good eatin' boiled! Haven't enj'yed a meal like Yorky in a long time. Thet feller what put him in my pockit did me an awful good turn. I wonder why he was so thoughtful of me. I wonder isn't there enny more crabs round here for eatin' pu'poses. I was hopin' when I came to work to-day——"

He broke off, suddenly aware that he was the focus of a strange attention. The dozen faces turned to him intently were very sober, and many eyes were glassy and blinking with desperate effort to hold back silly moisture. He became at once ludicrously self-conscious and abashed.

Downing the foolish lump in his throat, stodgy shirt-sleeved Jim Sproule asked gruffly: "You haven't had your first pay day yet, have you?"

"No, Mister Sproule. Yer see, I ain't bin here two weeks yet."

"How have you been getting by as to meals?" asked Gillen, the police reporter.

Jim Sproule tried to tone this ques-

tion by saying: "We'll have to lend you some money until pay day. There's no reason why you should be broke just because the ghost only walks every two weeks."

But the Rabbit answered Gillen's question. "Oh, I've bin gettin' by purty well; eatin' as much as twice a day. In Mead's Coffee Kitchen, too; thet's swell grub there, elegant compared to what we got in—— Yer see, Mister Sproule gave me a dollar advance when I fust came to work, and I haven't had to ask for more sence."

All eyes were batteried on taciturn Jim Sproule who became more confused than ever the Rabbit had been.

"Let's git back to work!" he snapped sharply. "Gillen, I want to see you a minute in the outer office. And you, too, Hobart and McCants."

That outer office became, on the moment, a very busy place. Others were called in, two or three at a time. Each put his name to a list scrawled on a paper on Jim Sproule's desk. Jim Sproule's name headed that list and after it was written in the same handwriting, "Five." There was little talking, but there was much real "ponying up."

"Now that we've got the needed fifteen bucks," said Gillen at last, "where will we buy the meal ticket?"

"The Pals' Kitchen is my choice as a grease joint," spoke up Hobart, who new his San Francisco from the water front to Twin Peaks. "There is good chow there; it's handy downtown; and quite a few of the newspaper boys eat there nowadays."

Jim Sproule decided. "Let it be the Pals'," he said. "You run out, Gillen, change the money into a ticket, and slip it to the Rabbit real quietlike and persuasive. You know he may be inclined to be a bit proud and dubious about this sort of thing, not being used to newspaper ways."

Judge Rigley, rueful and discomfited, sat upon the desk before the Rabbit. Instead of applause, his little joke had won for him only oddly hostile glances. He watched the reporters going into the outer office, two and three at a time. He knew they were subscribing to a meal-ticket fund. He waited for them to call upon him. If they would only give him the chance, he would subscribe all of five dollars just to square himself.

There was one peculiar and redeeming streak in the spinelessness of Judge Rigley: He admired Jim Sproule. He admired Sproule because, when he could not gain his principle, he had turned down all the glittering offers of Ira Hunt and because, while only a hired man himself, he put this old frosted deadhead upon the pay roll with a lordly assumption of the very power of the owner of the paper, Reuben Langwald himself. Probably the judge realized that his own vertebra would never stiffen him to the heroism of Sproule's sacrifice and nonchalant charity, and that was why, perhaps, he so admired Jim Sproule.

It was this admiration, added to his own discomfort, which caused him to feel it very deeply when Sproule did not call upon him to subscribe. He studied the Rabbit in blue thought, a frown on his sallow, hairless, surprisingly youthful face. Suppose he should give the old man the "dope" on it all? Suppose he should tell him the real reason why he was hired—not to cover a story or write copy, but out of a pure spirit of charity? Imagine the Rabbit, thereupon, indignantly refusing the meal ticket and quitting the paper with contemptuous comment on hobo handouts! What a blow in the face that would be to these mawkish charity mongers and especially that worst "sob sister" of them all, Jim Sproule! The judge felt suddenly as if he hated Jim Sproule.

There was one salient flaw to the scheme. His hand would show too plainly. Some one would want to know who had told the Rabbit and instantly, because he already was in bad odor, they would suspect him. No; Judge Rigley was too bland a hypocrite to chance that.

All at once the judge had an inspiration. Why not use the cat's-paw to pull hot chestnuts from the fire? Why

not show these fourth-estate philanthropists, at the same time, what was real charity? The judge would yet restore himself to favor and the calcium glare.

CHAPTER IV.

AT THE SWITCHBOARD.

JUDGE RIGLEY forever was hanging round the switchboard of Ellamae Summers, the telephone operator. For the matter of that, so was every reporter with an idle moment on his hands. Ellamae was extremely pleasing to look at. Of course, to deduce from the judge's favoring eye, she had blond hair—real blond hair bobbed in the simplest but most entrancing fashion. She had sea-blue eyes and that peaches-and-cream complexion which goes so well against the colorless severity of a little white fur cap or a white lace summer hat. She had a rippling laugh and a million dollars' worth of personality.

Judge Rigley thought her the loveliest young woman that ever had come down the pike. Often he wished to take her to a Ladies' Night at the Newspaper Men's Club, or to some much affected bohemian restaurant. The obstacle was that she had no evening off from one week to another. The judge, as a result, had to fall back for feminine company upon his own less attractive blond librarians.

With an air of giving confidence he lowered his bald head close to the Rabbit's ear. He began by telling the old-timer the whole truth about the job on the *Express*, just why he was hired, just how long he would last. His manner grew subtly more sympathetic.

"But why not get on steady here?" he queried. "Why not make yourself so valuable in some other way, old scout, that even though they never give you a story to write, you won't be fired at the end of the month? Make yourself indispensable, that's the idea!"

"But what kin I do?" the Rabbit asked helplessly.

"That's easy. They need a relief for Ellamae—I mean, Miss Summers—the telephone operator. You see, she doesn't get off any nights at all and, naturally, she's been kicking. You take her place one night a week. They don't want to hire another operator just for that, but once you get the job, they'll forget to fire you."

The old man nodded his close-cropped white head. "Thet's no more than right. Young people should have some time off for pleasure. I'll be glad to volinteer to relieve her enny weekday night she cares to name. It'll be tryin', mostlike, watchin' all them lights and snaky plugs, but you tell her thet. I'll do it, even if they don't keep me on steady," he ended.

The following day Judge Rigley made a date with Ellamae Summers to take her to dinner Sunday evening, and the Rabbit was informed by Jim Sproule that he was to be at the switchboard on that particular evening as the relief. Much to Sproule's amazement, the old fellow hastily objected:

"But I can't! I can't run the switchboard Sunday night. I never thought it 'ud be Sunday night when I volinteered for the job. Sunday has bin my day off, yer know, and ennyways I jest can't work Sunday night."

"Why not? I'll give you any other night off you want."

But the Rabbit remained obdurate, withdrawing himself into an almost sullen silence and merely shaking his old white head in stubborn refusal.

"Let's compromise," said Jim Sproule at last. "You can work a few hours Sunday evening, eh? Whatever your big business is, it doesn't take all Sunday, does it? Well, if you could work between the hours of four and nine, say, I think that would be dandy. Ellamae—I mean, Miss Summers—doesn't report before four o'clock each day and, after nine, the switchboard isn't very busy and we can have an office boy keep an eye on it. Judge Rigley said he thought of Sunday evening because it's the slowest night of the week and you won't have much to do. What do you say? Will you take the job for the hours from four to nine?"

"Why, yes; I kin do thet. I'm allus

glad to help, relly, Mister Sproule, and I wouldn't act so contrarylike only it's most important I have most of Sunday evening free. I'd 'a' quit the paper before this, if you han't given me Sunday night off."

CHAPTER V.

MAN WITH THE TAMBOURINE.

SUNDAY evening about six o'clock, as he went out to snatch a bit of dinner, Jim Sproule thought to hearten his old protégé with a few praises of the sturdy way in which he was holding down the switchboard. What a surprise! Batting his eyes in aghast disbelief, Jim Sproule peered through the glass partition of the telephone cubby for all the world like a child of the slums viewing through an interposing pane an indescribable Christmas tree.

Within, engaged with the myriad brass plugs and little electric lights that forever silently clamored, was the Rabbit, arrayed as for the grim battle in the red-faced blue uniform and red-banded military cap of the Salvation Army!

Jim Sprule tiptoed away, his face gray and heavy jowled.

At half after ten that same evening, Judge Rigley and Ellamae Summers were still lingering over the coffee of their Italian dinner in the Café Borghese, a restaurant in Montgomery Avenue above Kearny Street, much affected by the newspaper crowd and by San Francisco's "hobohemia."

The Borghese was simply a long narrow storelike place. Along the walls, up to the ceilings, were great mural paintings, more colorful and daring of idea than au fait of workmanship. Some were ultra-impressionistic; others of various faddist schools. There was one mural, for instance, depicting a Celtic-dark Centaur in pursuit of a female of the same mythical species with red-gold mane and milk-white horse's flanks and barrel. It was truly arresting and might arouse considerable comment if "hung on the line" in any exhibition or salon.

The paintings were all by different artists who were supposed to have received meals in payment for their contributions. Always some notable of the writing world was to be seen there; Jim Silver, for example, as truly a poet and worth while of literary utterance as he was perpetually out at pocket. Rumor had it that he dined there gratis so that he might be pointed out by the management as a typical bohemian frequenter. He had an ascetic Dantesque face, and he usually was drinking copiously of red wine and insanely going about from table to table in a way only to be seen in youthful San Francisco.

Judge Rigley had refilled his wine glass too regularly throughout the repast. He leaned soddenly on the table and listened to Ellamae, his eyelids drooping and his eyes beneath fishlike of stare.

She was speaking of Jim Sproule's remarkable predilection for old-timers. He was a good solid sort, Jim Sproule, so old-fashionedly wholesome. She had not liked him when first she came to the *Express*, but she was much of a kid then, full of romantic ideas, and he had seemed so plain, so ordinary for a newspaper man. But a thousand little kindnesses and a daily cheerfulness of greeting gradually had showed her what a fool she had been.

"One can always tell a person by the way he acts over the phone," she philosophized. "Jim Sproule is ever quiet voiced, patient, and as gentlemanly as if the operator herself were standing there before him. Do you know," she confided, "I sometimes feel as if I could tell Jim Sproule anything, my inmost secrets, and he would advise me as if he were my brother. A brother, a big, wise, older brother—that is how I always regard Jim Sproule."

Judge Rigley's lips drooped lower, but a cynical smile etched his lips. "Jim Sproule wasn't always like that," he asserted. "When he came from the *Clarion*, he was a slave driver; had been so for fifteen years. He was a regular bucko over the reporters, the copy desk, the proof readers. Him hire

any old-timers that couldn't even write their own names? I should say nix! That was two years ago. And then he came over to the *Express* and changed to a Simon-pure, Simon-simple angel of mercy."

"That was just before I came to work for the paper," she said.

"That was just after you came on the paper. Jim Sproule changed complete the very day you came."

"Why, what do you mean, judge? You've such a funny expression on your face! You don't mean to insinuate that Jim Sproule changed overnight just because I came to work on the *Express?* I always thought that the trouble with Hunt and the Chicago men had——"

Judge Rigley's head jerked back as if about to break his neck. "Tut, that was only the start, the jarring him out of the rut! When he saw you then, he fell in love and about-faced in all his tactics."

The girl laughed low and ripplingly. "Oh, you silly! Jim Sproule in love! And with me! Why, he's the most distant sort, calls me Miss Summers and never hangs round in his spare moments like you, or Gillen, or even Mac. Jim Sproule! Why, I'd just as soon believe that Reuben Langwald, with his colorless eyes and long Mormon beard, had a case of untold love on me!"

"It's the straight goods, Ellamae. Nobody else has noticed it, 'ceptin' little noticin' me." The judge winked expressively and with effort. "But when I pipes a newsman old as Jim Sproule, changin' his collar twice a day, as if he were livin' in Pittsburgh, I begin to smell a mouse, a whole flock of mouses."

He struggled and shrugged himself into an attitude of real seriousness. It was almost as though he were pleading his own case. "You don't know these old-line newsmen, Ellamae," the judge went on. "They're the lonesomest, most bashful sort in the world. All they know is work. While other men are out with their wives or best girls to shows or cabarets, they're pluggin' away in some local room or hounding down news in a slum or police station. When others are home in their little white beds, they've just quit work and, at three G. M. in the mornin', are tryin' to make forlorn festival with other newspaper slaves in Louie's Place or Mike's or up at the club. No wonder they turn inside out and upside down when hit by a blazin' meteor like you, Ellamae!"

The girl was thoughtfully silent. Judge Rigley, his lanky legs very conspicuous, came around the table and fell into a seat beside Ellamae. He put one arm about the back of the girl's chair. She knew it was there. She drew away a little, unobtrusively, in order not to create a scene.

The judge misinterpreted her silence. He was too deep in his cups to note the slight withdrawal, the frightened tiny frown on her white brow. He had grown blasé in this little game of his, he had played it so often. He thought that his plea for Jim Sproule had showed his own case, strengthened his hand. He leaned toward the girl, and whispered.

Jim Silver staggered at that moment over to the table, one arm about the stooped shoulders of an old man in the red-faced blue uniform and red-banded military cap of the Salvation Army. It was the Rabbit on a collection tour, a tambourine in one hand. The poet took the tambourine and tinkled it under Rigley's nose.

"Come on, judge, old boy," he said in his finely modulated voice. "Help the down and outers. You know, 'the poor old tramps,' as Henley might say."

Rigley looked down into the tambourine and then slumped back in the chair the easier to look up.

" 'Lo, Jim," he greeted. His drooping lids lifted in real surprise at sight of the Rabbit. "Why, howdy, general!" the judge mocked leeringly.

He dug with much ostentation into a vest pocket for a piece of change. He dug into trousers pockets. Jim Silver, tired of waiting for him to contribute, his whirring brain quick with a new idea, wheeled round as if about to

fall and staggered away to another table. The judge dropped a twenty-five-cent piece upon the skin of the tambourine.

"You're a pretty spry old-timer gettin' round these places," he remarked suggestively.

The quick nervous sparrow eyes of the Rabbit focused sharp and oddly. Perhaps he had overhead some of the man's remarks to the girl.

"Yes; I'm purty spry goin' round these yere swell restaurants for money for the needy," he admitted. "But I'm not so spry, like some sorts I know, to lead young feet up the twinty or thirty steps to the second floor of gaudy restaurants." His eyes darted pointedly toward the blue eyes of the switchboard operator; then he turned away.

"You'll excuse me, judge?" said the girl, a moment later.

Her wide eyes followed, with a frightened desperation, the stooped old man as he went from the restaurant. She picked up her wraps.

Judge Rigley planted both elbows upon the table, his face in his hands, and, from under lids that strove to keep open, watched her slyly. He saw her pick up the wraps. He noted that she did not make for the rear of the restaurant where were the telephone booths, but toward the front where was the entrance. He staggered to his feet. Forgetting overcoat and hat, he stumbled between the tables out through the narrow storelike place after her.

She was standing in the entrance, looking quickly about in search of the aged Salvationist. She noted two men, with gold overseas chevrons upon the left sleeves of their civil clothing, standing in the entrance to the café next door. But the Rabbit had disappeared, perhaps in the course of his rounds into that blaring place.

CHAPTER VI.

ELLAMAE'S STORY.

IT was the Italian section of San Francisco, close to a quarter that, but a short time prior, had been given over to the city's night life. Ellamae Summers did not know her way about, and she was afraid. She lifted her hand to hail a passing jitney bus which bore the heartening legend, "Market and Kearny Street." Once there, before the *Express* office, she easily could find her way home.

"Ah, here you are, sweetie!" Judge Rigley, his bald pate shining, a leer on his face, stumbled out through the doorway and grabbed her signaling arm. She struggled to release herself, in her fearful frenzy dragging him a little out upon the sidewalk.

"Oh, please, judge!" she almost sobbed. "Let me go, please, please!"

Some one interposed all at once between them and, with a great surge of strength, shoved the man away. It was the Rabbit. He pressed his small but furiously livid face close to the stupefied one of the judge.

"You cur!" the Rabbit said.

Judge Rigley bellowed with rage, swung his free arm about, and clipped the Salvationist upon the side of the jaw. The judge was weak from all the liquor he had drunk, but the Rabbit was old. The blow shook him in every trembling limb; he released his hold of the judge's arm and tottered back.

There came a wild shout from the café's doorway: "Argonne! Argonne! Powder River! Let 'er buck!" And the two men in civilians, with the gold chevrons on their left arms, burst forth and sailed into the judge.

"Yuh beast, yuh! Yuh will hit the unie that was with us in the trenches!"

"Hold him up while I slough him, Bill!" shouted the other. "Didn't he crack the Salvationist and him old enough ter be his father!"

The Rabbit and the girl did not wait to see the judge make his inevitable acquaintance with the cement pavement. The jitney bus, answering the girl's summons, had halted at the curbing. They stepped in and jogged over the cobbles toward Market Street.

They felt safe, at last, when they sat down together in the light and cheerfulness of The Pals' Kitchen. With an old-fashioned courtesy, the Rabbit had suggested that they drop in here for a

cup of coffee to steady the girl's nerves. She had been almost hysterical when she stepped into the jitney bus.

The Pals' Kitchen was a novel little restaurant on Anna Lane in the heart of town, trellised with paper roses and fragrant with the odors of ever-ready coffee and crisp waffles. There was a long table in one corner given over to The Pals, an association of actors. Prize fighters, policemen, politicians, reporters, and various celebrities about town were forever dropping in throughout the night. Every so often some stage personage would feel the stir of the muse, put aside his cane or her toy dog, and sit down to the piano on the dais to one side.

"They knows me here," said the Rabbit, in explanation of a welcoming nod from a waitress. "I got a meal ticket and I eats here regular. It's jest like home 'most." He had shunted the tambourine under his blue red-faced blouse. He looked at the girl, deep interest in his shabby sparrow eyes. "Yer was tellin' me somethin' about your mother, comin' over on the bus, and how you and she allus used to go out together. Thet was the fust time yer ever wint out with the jedge then?"

Ellamae nodded her blond bobbed head. "That was the first time I have been out at night since mother died. You see," she explained, "I never had a night off before."

"Oh, your mother is dead. I never knowed thet. I s'pose you ain't got no father, either."

"No; he died years ago." She looked at the old man, an odd light in her sea-blue eyes. "I don't know whether I should tell you," she added, "but I feel like unburdening myself to you tonight, you are so good and noble. I never knew my father. I only know that he deserted my poor mother just after I was born. Mother and I had quite a struggle, but it would have been far worse had it not been for an old friend of dad's. Uncle George, as I always call him, is a rich man, the owner of several apartment houses and the fashionable San Jacinto Hotel. From him, I have a ground-floor apartment rent free, and mother always had a position when she was alive, taking care of whatever apartment house we happened to live in and subleasing the suites. Uncle George never bothered us but about once a year, around Christmas time; I suppose he knew we felt our position and our sincere gratefulness to him. He never forgot the holiday season nor my birthdays."

She had finished her coffee. They were walking up the steep, cable-slotted Hyde Street hill toward her home when the Rabbit spoke again. He must have been ruminating, all that time, over her story.

"Yer didn't say what your Uncle Jarge's name is," he almost asked. "I should like to know the name of a man like him!"

"Oh, didn't I? Well, it's Bronson—George Bronson. Of course, you've heard of him."

The Rabbit nodded. After she had gone into the apartment house, he stood in the dark street and bared his white close-cropped head. There, in his red-faced blue uniform, cap at breast, he looked up at the dimly lighted brick building.

"So Boston Jarge was thet good to pore Gentlemin Charlie Summers' wife and darter," he murmured. "God bless Boston Jarge!"

CHAPTER VII.

WITH A NEW REGARD.

JUDGE RIGLEY did not appear at the *Express* the following day, but when he did show up, two days later, the cuts on his sallow face were still red and malignant and his left eye was but a little less black for the doctoring. Considerable speculation buzzed about the local room and the cubby of a library. It was quickly noticed that he no longer hung around the telephone exchange and that there were no more tricks on the Rabbit.

Another day shuttled by without the Rabbit's once being given a private tip from the judge to go to the morgue to interview a man named A. Stiff, or to the central station to find out about

the arrest registered A. Yegg. Local room and library forgot about the unsolved mystery of Judge Rigley's bungled face and settled down into the humdrum business of feeding news to the insatiable public.

And then Jim Sproule looked up from his proofs, one sultry evening, to find the judge standing before his desk, a pained and dolorous expression upon his sallow, faintly scarred face. There were books missing from the library, it seemed. The judge had noticed it for two days handrunning, but he had held his peace, thinking to catch the sneak thief himself.

"But this last theft is the final straw, Jim. You know, Hobart's writing a feature story on James Matthew Clarke, who's going into the new mining fields of Nevada for the paper, and we need the 'Who's Who' for last year to find therein a list of Clark's published works and the honor societies and clubs to which he belongs. And the 'Who's Who' is gone, vanished utterly. I'm not sure, Jim," Rigley ended very confidentially, "but I've got strong suspicions."

"Not a sneak thief here in this office!"

"I'm sorry, Jim; yes. It pains me to think it, let alone say it. But suppose you call the Rabbit up——"

"The Rabbit a sneak thief? Pooh, judge, you're off there! Why, the old-timer's got religion. He's a Salvationist. He's straight, I tell you."

"Don't fly off the handle, Jim, and don't be too sure. It's a warm night and the Rabbit's got his coat off, hanging there behind the cabinet. Suppose, now, you call him up here, while I go through the Prince Albert. If it isn't in his coat, he won't even know we suspected him and there won't be any harm done at all."

Jim Sproule, stodgy and slow as he was, fell for the trap. He called the Rabbit to his desk and engaged him in small talk. Judge Rigley, meanwhile, went through the pockets of the frock coat hanging behind the cabinet door. Surely enough, in one of the pockets of that coat, the judge found the missing "Who's Who."

There was no one in the local room more surprised at the discovery than the Rabbit himself. He recovered from the fear that first had attacked him when called to Jim Sproule's desk. He knew then. He eyed the lanky, sallow and sorrowful-faced judge narrowly with his bright nervous eyes. But he said nothing.

"Come on, old-timer. What do you say?" asked Jim Sproule, his jowls pendulating heavily. "It kind of looks black for you, I must admit."

Gillen, the police reporter, looked up snappily from his typewriter. "Well, I don't know about that, Jim," he interrupted. "It seems to me," he added sagely, "that the same hand which put the crab in the Rabbit's pocket last week might have very easily planted that 'Who's Who' in that pocket to-night. Say, judge," he turned sharply on the librarian; "you seem to have it in for the old man. What did he do—black your eye the other night?"

The remark was an inspiration. Rigley's sallow face darkened with a swift flush of guilt. Jim Sproule, watching closely, noted the flush, grabbed the judge by both shoulders, and shoved his heavy-jowled face uncomfortably and pugnaciously near the other's.

"So that's your game!" he fairly howled. "Planting on this old-timer. Why, you sallow-faced moll, you leave this old man alone, or by Heaven I'll black your other eye and darned quick!"

Ellamae Summers, appearing in the door of her telephone cubby at the sound of loud voices, looked at Jim Sproule then with a new regard. In her sea-blue eyes, at that moment, he was a hero.

Judge Rigley waited until the blond female librarians had departed. Then he cleared off a section of the long center table, produced writing paper and fountain pen, and busied himself, his slightly discolored eyes lifting every now and then to the swing door as if in fear of being disturbed or discovered. He wrote:

DEAR MR. LANGWALD: I wonder if you are aware that your hired man, James Sproule, night city editor of the *Express*, has arrogated to himself strange power. He has hired as a reporter an old man of at least sixty years, who is so illiterate that, I believe, he cannot write his own name. Sproule is paying him a salary for dozing the hours away around the local room, while good reporters like Hobart and McCants are forced to bear the brunt of the work. Gillen, the police man, seems to be in cahoots with Sproule on this little graft of charitable robbery. I'd advise you to investigate and find out real conditions for yourself.

ONE WHO WRITES FOR THE GOOD OF THE STAFF.

CHAPTER VIII.

INTO THE PAST.

GEORGE BRONSON was dead. The hotel and apartment-house owner had been stricken with apoplexy upon leaving his offices in the Mills Building that afternoon.

Said Gillen, that evening, upon reporting in to Sproule from his beat: "I was talking to Captain O'Mangan this afternoon, Jim, about the Bronson death. Every one around the Hall of Justice was remarking how sudden it was. But what I wanted to know was whether the police ever had trouble with any of Bronson's investments—you know, liquor licenses, shady characters in his apartments, gambling games in the hotel, anything like that. I found out something odd."

"Not about Bronson's business," objected Jim Sproule stoutly. "I knew George Bronson. He was straight as a die. I've heard business men say they would rather have his word than his contract. He'd make you live up to the very letter of a contract; but if he gave you his word, he'd tie himself to every letter and spirit of that promise. He made money and passed it out lavishly to charity. That's the kind of a story I've instructed McCants to write—all about his founding of the day nurseries around town, the Nonsectarian Orphanage, the donating of the Salvation Army Home and Workshop."

"You knew Bronson personally?" queried Gillen in a kind of surprise. "Well, do you remember the famous stage robberies of twenty-five years ago?"

"I've heard about them, but they were a little before my time. Why?"

"Captain O'Mangan's an old-timer, been in the police department almost thirty years. He told me all about the stage holdups. You recall that Gentleman Charlie Summers, the bandit, was captured in the Palace Hotel right here in town, twenty-five years ago? Well, Summers had dropped a handkerchief from his pocket, up State a ways, in drawing on the express messenger of the stage from the mines. He posed around town, after the holdup, as a prospector; he was rotten with money; but it got noticed in certain circles that he never talked mines, when he could help it. Everybody was dubious of his neighbor in those days, anyway, and the finger of suspicion was raised against Summers. The handkerchief the bandit had dropped up State was identified through its laundry mark with the personal linen in Summers' suite of rooms in the Palace, and Gentleman Charlie was sent over to San Quentin for life."

"Yes, yes; I've heard all that. But what——"

"Well, Summers had a pal in the stage robbery, Boston George, who was never captured. He learned his lesson, I guess, when Gentleman Charlie was sent up. Anyway, it's said that he paid, by some underground-railway stunt, for Gentleman Charlie's defense——"

"Oh, cut out the palaver, Gillen! What are you driving at?"

"Just this, Jim. Gentleman Charlie's pal, Boston George, was none other than this same George Bronson who died to-day!"

It was a big story and exclusive. Gillen was positive that the police captain had "coughed" to no other reporter but himself. Not one of the other papers knew of the connection between the notorious Boston George of twenty-five years back and George Bronson, the wealthy and respectable hosteler, who had died that day.

"Here, Mac!" called Jim Sproule,

leaping into action. "Lay off that Bronson story. I've got a better angle to it."

McCants jerked his copy from the platen of the typewriter and appeared at the night city editor's desk.

Quickly Jim Sproule reviewed the information he just had heard. "Now, get up to Bronson's apartments on the Hyde Street hill," he commanded tersely. "Sound out the wife, but don't show your hand. Ask where Bronson came from, when he arrived in California. She's bound to slip up somewhere, if she's in the know. It's a big story, Mac, first-page-spread stuff! Get pictures! Be back here in a jiffy; or, better, ring in and let me know."

McCants grunted, resettled the glasses on his nose, jerked a soft hat down over his head, and flung himself out of the room.

"Judge!" hollered Sproule. "Oh, Rigley!"

That lanky individual bobbed out of his cubby like a jack-in-the-box, almost upsetting in his precipitancy the Rabbit, who was just on the point of opening the swing door to the library. Rigley scowled fiercely and muttered imprecations.

"Judge," said Sproule, "have you the files of the paper during the trial of Gentleman Charlie Summers, the stage robber?"

"I think so, Jim, though it's pretty far back."

"Well, a big story has broken on that to-night. Get out those files, judge, and any pictures or other stuff you have in the morgue on Charlie Summers, George Bronson, the hotel owner, and Boston George, Summers' pal."

Fifteen minutes later McCants rang in on the telephone: "What'll I do, Jim? Bronson's wife, who's an aged paralytic, won't spill a word. She refused even to give me a picture. I tried to nab one off the table, but she saw me and shooed me out."

"That's all right, Mac. Her attitude only proves and cinches our case. I'm sure, now, that George Bronson was Boston George, the bandit. Come on in, Mac. Everything's O. K. I believe we got all the dope and pictures we need in the morgue."

There was a swish of skirts and Jim Sproule, banging down the receiver, looked up into the distraught blue eyes of Ellamae Summers. The peaches had fled her cheeks; her face was very white.

"Oh, Jim! Oh, Mr. Sproule!" she exclaimed beseechingly. "You're not going to run that story. The key on my board happened to be open and I heard all you said. George Bronson was my uncle. At least, he always helped my mother and me. I don't know what we would have done, had it not been for him. You won't shake the skeletons in his closet, now that he is dead? What if he were a robber and a bandit once? Haven't his twenty-five years of honorable living, respectable business, and many charities redeemed him, earned him some exemption from the raking over of his past? It seems so unjust, so heartlessly cruel, to uncover all this at the very moment a good man dies. Oh, please, please, Jim, do this for me!"

Jim Sproule looked at the distracted girl, a cold sweat on his brow, his jowls pendulating heavily. "What?" he cried in an aghast whisper. "Kill the story?" He felt awe at the thought, the appalled horror of a man who had spent his life blood gathering and giving news to an insatiable public and who discovered, suddenly now, that he must deny that public some knowledge he felt, according to the ethics of his profession, was rightfully theirs to know. "Oh, I can't, I can't. It's too late! The paper——"

He paused with a sharp intake of breath. His faded eyes suddenly brightened with a strange velvety brilliance. He looked at the girl with an inexpressible yearning.

"The paper—to blazes with the paper! What did any paper ever do for me? Cut out my heart and trample it underfoot, after I had slaved off my fingers for twenty years! I'll do it! For you, Ellamae, I'll do it! I'll kill the story!"

CHAPTER IX.

"TELL THE TRUTH."

ELLAMAE made an inarticulate sound of joy in her throat and, as if overcome by her victory, blanched even paler of face. Sproule jumped to his feet and caught her to save her from falling. Thus, the girl a soft bundle in his arms, her quickly reviving breath fanning his heavy jowls, he was standing awkwardly, when he heard a voice behind him say quietly:

"No, my sentimental softie; you won't kill that Bronson story. You'll go through with it or lose your job!"

He turned his head quickly. Behind him, tall and angular of frame, a white beard of patriarchal length falling over his chest like a dickey, a sheet of writing paper in one hand, his small indefinitely colored eyes glaring angrily, stood the owner of the newspaper, Reuben Langwald.

Out from the cubby of a library, his sallow, hairless, surprisingly youthful face convulsed with a real and poignant dismay, bobbed the lanky form of Judge Rigley. He did not notice Reuben Langwald standing like a wrathful Mormon elder off to one side. He paid no heed to the girl shrugging gently out of Sproule's arms.

"Jim!" he called wildly. "It's gone, everything's gone. The March and April files of the Summers' trial, all the manila envelopes on Summers, Boston George, and the stage holdups! The only stuff left is on Bronson's charities."

Jim Sproule, a smile flickering over his lips, looked at the white-bearded publisher. Then he turned to Rigley and said quietly: "That's all right, judge. I do not intend to run the story anyway."

A wondrous, if fearful, glow from the soft sea-blue eyes of Ellamae thanked him.

Trembling angrily throughout his tall frame, Langwald stepped close to the shirt-sleeved editor. He waved the sheet of writing paper under Sproule's nose.

"So this is the kind of sentimental softie I have for night city editor!" he ejaculated witheringly. "See this paper? That's why I came down, to investigate. You've been hiring and paying men that are no earthly good at all, old men, just to pad the pay roll and rob me. And now you refuse blankly to run the Bronson story, the biggest thing of the year. Don't you know that George Bronson was on my black list, a personal enemy, and that any time I can get anything on him, I'm going to run it? Now, you'll either run that story, Sproule, or lose your job!"

"I don't want the job, Mr. Langwald."

"Don't want the job!" Langwald was dumfounded and aghast. It was as if his own beard had flexed along its white patriarchal length and slapped him full upon the brow. All at once his wrinkled, leathery face lighted up evilly. "Ah, I see. It's a plot! All the records are missing—isn't that right, Judge Rigley? I thought so!" He swung on Sproule. "It's you, Jim Sproule, who hid or destroyed them!"

He reached out to the desk for the telephone. "Now, Sproule, you'll either disclose where those records are, so that we can publish this story, or else I'll telephone the police and have you arrested for malicious mischief. You know who I am, Sproule. I can sock it to you good!"

It was no idle threat. Reuben Langwald, by virtue of his money and news columns, was a power in the politics of the community. As he waited for Sproule to answer, he put the receiver to his ear with a grim significance and resolutely shook the hook of the telephone.

"If you please, Mr. Langwald," broke in the girl's voice bravely, "you can't get the police department just now. There is no one on the switchboard."

This time it was Jim Sproule who thanked her with his baffled eyes.

The publisher banged the receiver upon the hook and the telephone upon the desk. He slewed round on the girl. But before he could mouth his anger, Judge Rigley, standing close, leaned

over and whispered something in his ear. Langwald changed expression and drew back.

"Who?"

"That old-timer, the Rabbit," said the judge. "Saw him entering the library when Sproule called me to look up the records. I'm not trying to save anybody's neck around here, Mr. Langwald, but I think maybe the Rabbit was put up to it. Better talk to him."

"Yes, yes; certainly! Where is he? We'll get the straight on this job yet!" He looked at Sproule, a wicked dancing light in his colorless small eyes.

Judge Rigley called the Rabbit. The girl glanced at Jim Sproule significantly and then eyed the waiting judge up and down with bitter contempt.

The little old man bobbed out from his cubby behind the cabinet door. As he drew near, he smoothed his worn but immaculate black frock coat with nervous white hands. "Yuh called me, jedge?" He kept looking at Reuben Langwald with bright sparrow eyes.

"Sure. Mr. Langwald, the publisher here, wants to know why you pilfered those records. Come on, old-timer; don't try to hedge about it. Tell the truth."

CHAPTER X.

FACE TO FACE.

ALL eyes were focused on the peaked white face of the old man. He wet his lips. "Well, I hearn Mister Sproule and young Mister Gillen a-talkin' and I've bin here long enough to know what 'ud happen. So I waited for you, jedge, to git out of the lib'ary and then I wint in, got hold of them files and envelopes, and stowed them all away in a mighty safe place. But I never knowed Mister Langwald hisself was gonna be here to-night, or I wouldn't 'a' bothered. There'd 'a' bin no need to——"

"Why, what do you mean?" The publisher was thoroughly astounded. He waxed sarcastic: "You mean you'd have been afraid to take a chance with me around, eh? Getting by with enough murder, I suppose, pretending to hold down a job as reporter!"

The Rabbit looked at the tall patriarch of a publisher, a strange bravery in his shabby sparrow eyes. "Mister Langwald," he said in his squeaky voice, ignoring entirely the other's pointed remarks, "I guess you don't remimber me; but I'd know you ennywheres, even though you are all over white beard nowadays. I remimber when you was doin' a little bail-bond brokerage business around the Hall of Justice—oh, all of twenty-five years back."

Reuben Langwald's leathery face went suddenly white as his beard and his small eyes narrowed into two black pinpoints which scanned the delicately featured, pale face before him with calculation and a deal of fear.

"Thet was a kinder side issue to the paper then," continued the Rabbit, "'cause the *Express* wasn't earnin' the money it is to-day; and you was kinder grateful to Jarge Bronson, I remimber, when he handed you money for to secure lawyer fellers to defend ole Charlie Summers. People allus wondered how it was Gentlemin Charlie was able to hire all them legal guys, when most of his money was pinched up there in his rooms in the Palace. You was the on'y one thet knowed!"

The Rabbit's febrile hands were no longer nervously fingering the lapels of his Prince Albert. He stepped so close to the publisher that the hireling might easily have seen the little beads of perspiration standing out all over the bulbous tip of that leathery nose.

"Rube Langwald," he said, his squeaky familiar utterance of the publisher's name sounding startling but seemingly altogether natural, "what have you got ag'inst Jarge Bronson, now thet he's dead? I don't think you'd 'a' dared outface him, was he alive to-day! P'rhaps he wouldn't come through to you on advertisin' and all thet. But then he had the goods on yuh, the same as me. I guess Hunt's *Clarion* acrost the street 'ud be kinder interested in what I knows!"

Langwald stepped back, his tall, angular frame shaking, a mad unreasonable fury in his black pinpoints of

eyes. "You! You got the goods on *me!*" he bluffed scornfully. "Why, you old bum!" he vituperated. "You white-faced jailbird!"

The Rabbit interrupted with a slow nod of his white close-cropped head. "Yes, a jailbird, Rube, a lifer; but you never knowed I got a pardon and came out last month. You thought you was free to do what you wanted in this case, now thet Bronson was dead. But I'll return all them records, and yuh dassent run the story. Rube Langwald, I got the goods on yuh—me, Gentlemin Charlie Summers hisself!"

There was a choked exclamation in a woman's voice and Jim Sproule leaped toward Ellamae Summers, as she slumped back upon the desk.

CHAPTER XI.

WHEN THE MAN SPOKE.

LAUGHING happily, Ellamae left the *Express* office, that evening, accompanied by two valorous escorts: her father—Gentleman Charlie Summers, some time called the Rabbit—and Jim Sproule, former night city editor. Reuben Langwald, hot with impotent rage, watched them go. He took a monogrammed silk handkerchief from his pocket and mopped his brow.

"So Jim Sproule wins all around," murmured Judge Rigley behind him. "Heavens, I wish I had it in me like Jim Sproule!"

Eager to vent his spleen on the nearest object, the publisher swung angrily on the judge. "What's that? Say, what are you whispering about, Rigley?"

There was an odd strained look on the librarian's sallow face. He wanted to repeat the very word she so fervently had breathed. He wanted, dearly wanted, to add: "That's what I was saying! Tie the can to me if you will, you old smug crook, but I'd like to have the stuff of Jim Sproule, to be always and altogether true to my manhood!"

It was a matter of little consequence, one would think, to thus flaunt his heart's true color in the face of the boss; but it was a crucial moment in Judge Rigley's life, a moment in which to prove himself, once and forever, captain of his own soul.

"Oh, it was nothing, Mr. Langwald, really," he heard himself saying, a cowardly panic seizing him and bringing forth once more the craven and lick-spittle in him. "Only about this Bronson story——"

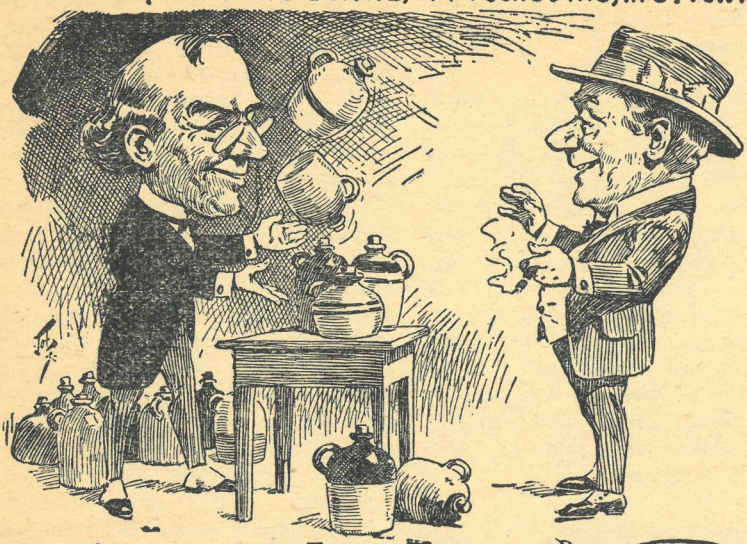
"Aw, to blazes with the Bronson story! Kill it! Write only a nice sugary account of his life and charities, understand? And here, Rigley, take the desk. You're night city editor and make-up man from now on. I'll show Jim Sproule I won't run after him like that crazy nut, Hunt. The best make-up man on the coast to throw up a good-paying job and turn darn fool at the age of forty over a mere doll-faced petticoat! You'd think an old newsman like Sproule would be more worldly wise than that. It's too little work, easy hours, and too much of his own way that's ruined him and——"

Judge Rigley stayed the diatribe with a raised hand. The old strained look had crept back into his face. This sanctimonious-looking millionaire had pressed him too far.

"You don't know these old-line newsmen, Mr. Langwald," he said very soberly—"no; not even you. They're the lonesomest, most bashful sort in the world. All they know is work and more work. While you are out with your wife to a show or carabet, they're plugging away in some local room or hounding down news in a slum or police station. When you are home in your bed, they've just quit work and, at three o'clock in the morning, are trying to make forlorn festival with other newspaper slaves in Louie's Place or Mike's or up at the club. No wonder that, at forty, they suddenly wake up and quit the game to live like normal human beings for a change!"

He had said it. Even as Reuben Langwald sputtered in his beard for words choice enough to be Rigley's valedictory on the *Express*, sweet and strong in the judge's brain was the realization that for once in his life he had done something that Jim Sproule himself would have admired.

Mr. Archie Catfitz, of Proone Villa, in a New Rôle



Juggling with Jugs

By C. S. Montanye

ALONG series of discouragements and failures had made my friend and roommate, Archie Catfitz, Esq., as pleasant to get along with as a baby rattlesnake. Because one of his pet inventions had, at the last minute, turned skittish, Archie had become gloomy, silent, and irritable.

I had no idea, however, that he contemplated doing anything desperate until, on arriving at Proone Villa, our boarding house, late one afternoon, I toiled up the stairs, entered our top-floor hall bedroom, and came upon my friend wearing a new suit, a haircut, and a smile!

This in itself was astonishing, but when I missed something in the room and promptly discovered that it was the packing-case workbench on which so many of his inventions had been invented, I knew there was something in the air besides the fragrant odor of burning rope—made by the cigar on which Archie puffed.

"Bill," he cried, wheeling around as I closed the door and advanced wonderingly, "let me introduce you to myself. No longer do you know Archie Catfitz the inventor! Come forward and shake hands with Archie Catfitz the drummer."

I gasped. "Drummer! Are—are you working in an orchestra?"

Archie sighed mournfully and tapped his forehead. "Where do you get that stuff, Bill? Don't you know a drummer is only another name for a salesman? And in me you see the star salesman for Jiggs & Joggs, the jug manufacturers." He finished off this amazing assertion with a few eccentric dance steps and laughed at my expression.

"Yes," he went on, grinning; "I went to see Mr. Jiggs about my invention, the corkless bottle, and stayed to become one of his selling force. I receive a real salary, Bill, and also a commission on my weekly sales. What do you think of that? And what could be sweeter?"

When at last I came to understand he wasn't kidding me, I shook hands with him. "Fine!" I said. "Now it's up to you to make good."

He looked at me strangely. "Make good? Do you mean to say you doubt

it? My dear Bill, it stands to reason that a person of my intelligence will not have to wait any great length of time before being given a partnership in the firm. Selling goods is a job that's made to order for me."

"That may be," I returned, "but I wouldn't count my chickens until I paid the first installment on my incubator."

Archie laughed, flicking a speck of dust from his blue-serge sleeve. "Quite true," he replied; "but a salesman, you know, has to blow his own horn."

I sat down on the edge of my bed and sought to recover my wits. "That may be, also," I said slowly, "but don't let your horn make as much noise as a whole brass band."

II.

IMPOSSIBLE as it seemed, what Archie had told me was true. Where once he raved and enthused over his inventions, he still did the same thing, only his enthusiasm was directed now toward the jugs of Jiggs & Joggs.

The boarders at the villa were all overcome when they learned of friend Archie's reformation, and Mrs. Proones, our good landlady, when he handed her the full amount of his back board and paid a week in advance for good measure, could not speak from the shock. Before she had recovered from her surprise, Archie had sold her three dozen big jugs and little jugs.

From what I could gather, my roommate was to work in and about the city for a few weeks. This, he explained, was to make him familiar with his line and to give him a proper confidence in both himself and his wares. Once he knew his line, Archie confided, he was to represent his firm on the road.

For almost a week I saw very little of him. He would duck out with his sample case in the morning before I awoke, and when he returned to the villa in the evening, it was to snatch a hasty dinner and then retire. When I pressed him for particulars of how he was making out, he turned the subject, told me his feet hurt from pavement pounding, and that he had just enough strength left to wind the alarm clock and topple into the hay.

On the fifth evening of his employment, however, when the last plate at the table had been scraped clean, and the boarders were contemplating an offensive on the piano in the parlor, Archie, sitting on the stairs to remove his shoes, caught me as I was in the act of slipping out to go round to the Palace Outdoor Movies, to see Douglas Baretanks in "The Stevedore's Sweetheart."

"Just a minute, Bill," he said; "let the movies flicker without you to-night and come upstairs with me. I've something to tell you."

Following him meekly to our bedroom, he seated himself in the morris chair by the window and elevated his feet so that the evening breeze might cool them, sighing contentedly.

"Bill," he began seriously, "don't let any one ever tell you that a salesman's life is a thing of sunshine and roses. It isn't! I've been hammering the trade all week, and outside of that little order from Mrs. Proones, I haven't sold enough goods to pay my expenses. I don't know why this is. If all the good words I've spoken for the jugs of Jiggs & Joggs were worth a nickel each I'd be able to buy Palm Beach outright."

He fished a small, leather-covered notebook from his pocket and turned the pages while I began to wonder what he had on his mind.

"What," I prompted, "did you want to see me about?"

Archie settled back in his chair. "This morning, Bill, Mr. Jiggs, my boss, informed me that he wanted me to get an order from the Mammoth Department Store. As to-morrow is Saturday, I'm to go up there after the store is closed for business and see a Mr. Rider Lott, the purchasing agent. Mr. Jiggs made the appointment for me and hinted, or gave me to understand, that if I don't get an order from them, I can kiss my road trip good-by.

That's all, except I want you to come along with me and lend your moral aid, as the saying is. Are you game?"

As Saturday is a half day I am released from toil at noon. I could see no reason why I shouldn't do Archie a favor and told him so.

"That's good of you," he murmured. "I'll meet you at twelve o'clock sharp outside of your building. You can take me to lunch, and then afterward we'll hop around to the Mammoth's place. Right?"

I nodded. "All except taking you to lunch," I cut in hastily. "Nothing doing in that direction. If you want to come along it'll be a Dutch treat."

III.

PROMPTLY at one o'clock the following afternoon, Archie, myself, and one sample case—which I carried—entered the Mammoth Department Store by a side entrance and stepped into the only elevator running.

"Remember, Bill," Archie said warningly, "you're supposed to be simply the person who carries my grip and helps me display the line. Don't speak a word, please. I'll do the talking, and I think my words will bear weight."

I laughed coldly. "I wish you'd bear this weight," I answered, pointing to the sample case. "When we started the darned thing weighed only a pound. Now it weighs a ton at least."

Archie made a gesture of displeasure. "Why worry about trifles? Don't you want me to appear at my best, and how can I if I have to lug that grip and lose all my pep before I ever get to our destination?"

We emerged from the elevator on a top story and entered a large anteroom which was surrounded with a number of doors all marked "Private." No one was visible, and I had about decided that my friend's appointment was a false alarm when a door popped open and a small gentleman wearing blue flannels and nose glasses came briskly out.

Perceiving us, he looked hard and then came forward, his brows lifted inquiringly.

"Mr. Catfitz, representing Jiggs & Joggs," Archie murmured, flipping out his business card. "I have an appointment at one o'clock with Mr. Rider Lott."

The little man inclined his head briefly. "I am Mr. Lott. I am sorry, Mr. Catfitz, but I can let you have only ten minutes or so. If, in that time, you can convince me that I should stock up on some of your jugs, I shall be happy to give you an order. Step this way, please."

We were piloted into a large airy office. Mr. Lott sat down before a broad mahogany desk, and Archie, suddenly growing very nervous, began coughing and digging me in the ribs with his elbow.

"Er—ah—umm—open up the sample case, Bill," he said. "Let Mr. Lott have the pleasure of looking upon the finest and most complete line of glass and stone jugs on the market."

I did as he requested, and together we transferred about thirty jugs of different sizes and shapes, placing them on the buyer's desk until they resembled an army on the march.

Immediately this was done, friend Archie plunged a hand into his pocket and withdrew a sheet of badly wrinkled paper. There was some typewriting on the paper, and he glanced down at it before looking over at Mr. Lott.

"The jugs of Jiggs & Joggs," he began in a singsong voice, "fully live up to their trade-mark of 'Quality First.' Made by union labor in clean, sanitary shops——" He paused to steal another glance at the paper and then continued: "They are manufactured of the finest materials obtainable. Not only do they outwear and outlast cheaper jugs but——" He broke off again to consult his memorandum. "But they are impervious to the hand of time. Turned out in factories that cover an area of sixteen square miles, the Wisconsin plants of Jiggs & Joggs are——"

Mr. Lott interrupted with a gesture,

his gaze suddenly falling on a small, brownstone jug, which he plucked deftly from its fellows and appraised with quick, keen eye. "The price of this jug?" he asked.

Archie, coming down to earth, consulted his pocket notebook. "Er—ah—umm! That's the BB jug. The price is twenty dollars a gross, less the usual discount."

Mr. Lott fingered his chin thoughtfully. "I've been looking for that size jug," he said presently, "for a long, long time. You may put me down for fifty gross."

IV.

DOWN in the street again I had all I could do to keep Archie from bursting into song. "As an inventor, Bill," he chortled, "I may be punk, but how about as a salesman? Just wait until Mr. Jiggs hears about this fifty-gross order; I only hope he doesn't try to kiss me! And how about that five-minute speech I doped out last night? I guess it didn't turn the trick—oh, no!"

Still chuckling with glee, we boarded a surface car, and Archie was so excited that he didn't know what he was doing and paid my fare.

"Bill," he said as I sat down beside him, "I'm going to give you the treat of your young life. I'm going to take you down to the office with me, introduce you to the boss, and let you hear what he has to say about me. That's the kind of friend I am!"

Twenty minutes or so later, we alighted in the downtown business section of the city and turned west. Archie's firm occupied the second and third lofts of a tall building, and as we entered the general offices and came upon the busy office force, my friend, still allowing me to carry the sample case, steered me into a small room which bore the sign: "Cable Crossing. Don't Anchor Here!!"

Hardly had we entered before a tall man with a bristling red mustache and pale, fishy eyes, came in quickly.

"Ah, back again!" said this individual, whom I rightly took to be Mr. Jiggs. "Well, what success with the Mammoth people, Mr. Catfitz?"

Archie, winking at me, shot down his cuffs, smoothed his hair, and cleared his throat. "The very best, Mr. Jiggs. As was to be expected, I landed them for a fifty-gross order."

The head of the firm whistled. "Ummm! As a jug juggler I think you might yet turn out to be worth while. What jug was it you sold?"

Archie displayed Mr. Lott's signed order. "The little double-B jug," he answered. "Our customer said he has been looking all over for that size and——"

Mr. Jiggs, whose face curiously had turned to a color that exactly matched his mustache, interrupted by making a strange, muffled, strangling noise. "The BB jug!" he roared at last. "Didn't I tell you distinctly not to include that sample in your line? Didn't I tell you three times or more we haven't made that size in over a year? Of course the Mammoth buyer has been looking for it! There hasn't been one made in this country; there isn't a firm that handles it!"

Archie turned as pale as a clean collar. "Now—now you mention it," he mumbled hopelessly, "I—I do recall you said something about it but——"

His words seemed to make Mr. Jiggs put his hands in his pockets for fear of using them. "Your memory," he howled, taking no notice of me, "must resemble the size of a pin point! How are we going to deliver fifty gross of jugs we haven't got? Perhaps you can answer that! You blithering idiot, this means the loss of one of our oldest and best customers! It means——"

He stopped to take a breath, and as he did so the door opened and in came a bookkeeper carrying a telegram in one hand.

"Pardon me for interrupting," the newcomer said, "but this wire just came in, Mr. Jiggs. It's from Benson, manager of the factories. He says that he has just come across an even fifty gross of those little BB jugs, and that through

error they were not listed on the stock records. He also wants to know, now we don't make them, what he should do with them."

Mr. Jiggs snatched the telegram away, read it, and glanced at the trembling Archie. "You, Mr. Catfitz," he observed, in a milder tone, "seem to be born in luck."

My friend drew himself up weakly and tried hard to smile. "No, Mr. Jiggs," he murmured; "I was born in Brooklyn."

V.

GOING home Archie was strangely silent, but when we turned our corner and came in sight of Proone Villa and its boarders, lounging on the front steps, he began to assume his natural perky appearance. "Whew! That," he remarked, "was rather a close shave!"

I nodded. "It was," I replied; "and the next time you have one, Archie, see that it is in a barber shop!"

PIGSKIN DAYS

By Arthur E. Scott

KNIGHTS of the pigskin, jerseyed bright,
Troop out in bold array,
Each tuned to do his level best—
To die or win the day.

Then rushing, battling, fighting mad,
They clash in mimic war;
A down—a rush—a ten-yard run—
A chance is given to score.

The tang of frost is in the air,
The day is bright and clear,
Once more the crowds the grand stand throng,
Each thrilling play to cheer.

"See there! He's off!" the crowd cries out,
As one man gets the ball,
And cleverly evades his foes
Who try to make him fall.

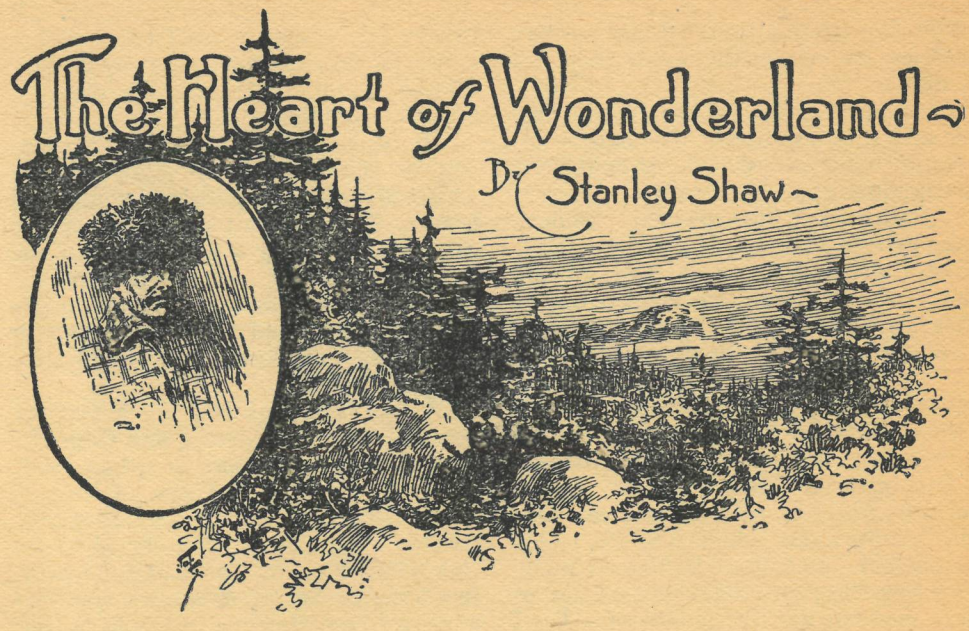
Swift as a deer he speeds along—
Ten yards to go—then four—
He scores a touchdown for his team—
Six points onto the score.

I mentioned to a football fan
November's weather drear;
To grill him on his gridiron fun
Seemed like a pleasant jeer.

But hot as any gridiron broil
The fan shot back with zest:
"I'd rather have the football month
Than any of the rest."

The Heart of Wonderland

By Stanley Shaw



SPENDING their honeymoon in Canada, Neal Trevana and Alice, his bride, met Jack Davidge, a quiet man who said he hunted wolves. Jo Laboré, Trevana's guide, bore out Davidge's statement. Trevana had been wounded, fighting with the Canadians; having got a transfer, he would shortly report to the United States army. Early on the morning of the day he planned to leave, Trevana left in pursit of a bear; he did not return. Davidge, with Alice and Laboré, began a fruitless search. Two half-breeds attacked the guide, who was saved by Davidge; Laboré said the men were Tom Jump and Joie Free-Horse, who worked for Pierre Bonfaucon, the storekeeper at Seven Trees. Later Davidge said he found a black bear which had been shot. At night Alice returned to her cabin; it had been looted.

Davidge remained at the cabin. On the fourth day Laboré wanted to search beyond the distant range, but Davidge objected. When Alice was alone, a man who said he was David Keller came to the cabin; he said Trevana had been killed. Just then Davidge entered and struck the man a terrific blow. After a struggle the wolfer dragged Keller from the place; with a cry of agony Davidge had wiped a crimson stain from his hand.

The day Trevana disappeared, a man named Travers, from New York, entered Bonfaucon's store and collapsed. He said he had been hurt and rembered nothing about coming North. He recognized a gun which Bonfaucon had; Jump and Free-Horse had brought it to him, the storekeeper said. At night when Travers, seemingly recovered, walked from the store with Gabrielle, Pierre's daughter—betrothed at her father's command to Jo Laboré—the storekeeper said: "If a certain Yankee does not wish to find death by the surest route he had better watch very carefully." "He has money," said Helena, Bonfaucon's wife.

CHAPTER IX.

A WOMAN DETERMINED.

HELENA started back toward the door. Old Pierre watched her go in impotent rage, his hands itching to fasten themselves on her throat. But he held back; he knew he was never her match; she had the advantage of him in years and vigor, if not in intelligence; it was only by chicane and guile that he could get the better of Helena. He returned to his chair and began to think. Lizette, Helena's cat, came and started to hop up into his lap; he drove her away with kicks, venting on her some of the physical spite he dared not vent on his wife.

All this while Travers and Gabrielle were walking through the dusk toward Eugenie Portois', every moment on increasingly good terms with one another; for the man paid her many pretty compliments. If there was one thing for which the daughter of Bonfaucon had an especially willing ear, it was compliments; and she was naturally wise enough to know that compliments are

often like protestations of piety—they increase in fervor the more they are doubted.

"I fear m'sieu is attempting to flatter and turn my head," she said in response to one of Neal's most exuberant encomiums upon her beauty.

"Flatter you!" he repeated. "Believe me, Bebelle, I'll say it can't be done. Had I the nimble tongue and flowing nerve of old Omar himself, I'd not be able to do more than half justice to how good you look to me, girlie."

Gabrielle's eyes met his archly. It was too much. Almost before she realized it, Travers had caught her in his arms, bent back her head and pressed a kiss upon her full red lips. For a moment her eyes blazed back into his; she hardly knew whether to be angry or pleased. Jo Laboré had never made love like this; yet Gabrielle was not so sure now but that she would have liked him to; it was pleasant; and this Yankee with his becoming white hair and florid skin was certainly a very handsome man. That his breath smelled strongly of brandy struck Gabrielle as nothing out of the ordinary; in fact all the young men whom she knew drank wine or spirits of one variety or another. Still, she was woman enough to realize that at least some reluctance was called for. Her eyes dropped before Neal's; yet she made but a slight effort to free herself from his arms as she protested:

"M'sieu, m'sieu! This is not right. M'sieu should know that I am already betrothed to another."

"Betrothed your grandmother!" protested Travers with a laugh. "A kid like you betrothed! You talk nonsense. I'll have to speak to Pierre about this. If there's any betrothal for you, Bebelle, I'm the boy that's got to have something to say about it. Think I'd let a little peach like you get by me? Not much!" He kissed her again.

"No, no, m'sieu!" protested Gabrielle, struggling from his arms this time. Even though she felt tremendously flattered and pleased at the attentions of such a man as this, Gabrielle was also becoming a little frightened. "Please believe me, m'sieu, when I tell you that it has all been arranged by my father, though I confess, I, myself, was not much consulted."

His brain stimulated beyond all reason by the cognac, his sight dazzled with Gabrielle's resplendent youth and beauty, Neal did not even possess the curiosity to inquire who it was that she was betrothed to. In his present exalted state such matters did not interest him; he would have felt equal to demanding the moon—and would have expected to get it.

By this time they had arrived at the home of Eugenie Portois, and Gabrielle entered with her cheeks as red as roses. Eugenie, wisest of her sex, at least in Seven Trees, metaphorically speaking, smelled a rat the moment she observed Gabrielle's blushes, and Gabrielle proffered the basket of delicacies with her mother's compliments and felicitations regarding the present state of the old prophetess' health.

Eugenie had been recovered from her headache for some time, but, even had she not, she knew that there had never existed sufficient affection between herself and the wife of Pierre Bonfaucon to warrant Helena in dispatching comforts on the occasion of so slight an illness. She immediately surmised that Gabrielle had been sent on this particular errand for some reason other than the one that appeared on the surface. What that reason was it now became the business of Eugenie Portois to discover, and the wise old dame immediately went about it.

"So this is M'sieu Travers?" she cackled. "I remember to have seen m'sieu upon his previous journeys to Seven Trees, but white hair has so changed his appearance I do not think I should have recognized him." She turned to Gabrielle and pinched her cheek playfully, as she added: "How red your cheeks are, my dear! What a fine-looking couple you two make, standing side by side! It is almost as if you were at the altar, is it not, my dear?"

Gabrielle's skin became even rosier than it had been before. Eugenie

chuckled; it was enough. "So," she thought, "that is what is in the wind, is it? Helena is trying to arrange an affair between this rich Yankee and her daughter. I'll wager my second best nightcap the idea doesn't please Pierre any too much—Pierre with his hate of everything Yankee. Well, since I have no love myself for the old rat, perhaps I can help the affair along—and get a little fun out of it at the same time."

Thus Eugenie, during all the quarter of an hour that Gabrielle and Travers remained in her home, so kept up her sly hints and innuendoes that when Gabrielle departed she almost felt that it was a settled affair between herself and Travers. She was due for a rude awakening, however, upon her return home. Pierre met his daughter at the door.

"A word in private with you, my girl," he said, grasping her arm and leading her toward the kitchen, while Travers took a seat outside. Arrived in the kitchen, Pierre whirled his daughter about as he said sternly: "Now mind, Bebelle, there is to be no nonsense between you and that brandy-guzzling Yankee. You are betrothed to Jo Laboré; Jo is to buy my store, and I have other reasons. I would see you both dead before I would give you to that Yankee."

It was only in Pierre's later and more feeble years that Helena had taken to asserting herself, and Gabrielle had been brought up to be a dutiful child toward her father. Now, as she saw the stern look in her parent's eyes, she knew that he meant exactly what he said, that he would oppose any match between his daughter and Travers with his last breath. Furthermore, Gabrielle realized one fact that Helena with her duller brain seemed never to encompass: that when it came to a matter on which he had really fixed his mind, Pierre usually came off victor, accomplishing his end, if not in one way, in some other. Method mattered nothing to Pierre Bonfaucon, attainment was everything. Gabrielle went to her bedroom in tears. She had really begun to like Monsieur Travers.

However stern Pierre might be with his daughter, he showed none of that disposition when he joined his guest out in front of the house. He was affability itself. "What a night it is!" he said, as he dropped into a chair and lighted his pipe. "Will not m'sieu have another bottle of cognac—there is plenty more in my cache?"

Travers pondered a moment before answering. He not only realized that, because of this strange appetite that had come upon him, he was already consuming more of the liquor than he ought, but he was becoming increasingly curious regarding why Pierre should so persistently urge him to continue drinking. Of course there was the old man's ever-present desire to sell his product; yet this seemed hardly sufficient excuse for such constant and open urging. It was Pierre's custom to use more craft and diplomacy. And, during this evening, Travers had begun to notice a queer, shifty glitter in the habitant's eyes that further aroused his suspicions.

"What the devil is this old Pierre up to?" thought Travers. "Something clandestine, I'll be bound; something more than retailing a little unlawful whisky. And he is afraid I'll discover his secret. He wants me to keep on buying his liquor, and he wants to keep me so pleasantly jingled that I won't smell out his scheme. Foxy old rat!" Aloud, he said: "No, Pierre, don't believe I'll take another bottle to-night. I suspect I've been drinking a great deal more than I ought already, but, somehow, I do seem to have the awfullest thirst."

"Come, m'sieu," urged Pierre with a rather dry and sterile attempt at cordiality. "One more bottle, a night-cap, and this one, as you Yankees are fond of saying, shall be 'on the house.'"

Travers could hardly refuse now without seeming discourteous. "Well, as you say, Pierre," he answered. "But make it wine, not brandy, this time."

"Very good, m'sieu; the wine it shall be then," answered Pierre, much pleased. "But for the wine I must go to the cellar."

Pierre entered the house, leaving the other outside smoking, his chair tipped back against the building. It was a beautiful night, clear, starlit, and still. All Seven Trees had gone to bed, not even the barking of a dog disturbed the quiet air. Travers was beginning to wonder what kept Pierre so long when he became aware of the hum of conversation. Somewhere within the house interior, Pierre had run into Helena, and they were arguing. At first Neal caught only an indistinct murmur, then both, in their anger, began to raise their voices louder than either was aware of, and suddenly Travers began to listen tensely.

"I tell you I will not have it so," Pierre was saying.

"Look here, old turtle," returned Helena vehemently, "you will have it as I wish or this is what you will get: Suppose I inform those English, those mounted police, who recently called here, about your contraband copper scheme? Eh, what of that, my dear old turtle?"

Neal heard a choking, gasping cough from Pierre, and then Helena went on:

"So, that makes you gasp, does it?" she snorted. "You did not realize how wide open your wife has been keeping her eyes of late. I knew you were up to some deviltry, and I made it my business to find out what it was. Somebody is getting out copper from the old De Kalb mine to send to the accursed boches; it will start on the way very soon, and you are mixed up in the affair. And that, my sweet turtle, as you well know, is a hanging affair. But no, the English would not be so kind-hearted as to hang you. They would stand you up against a wall and fill your old skinflint heart to bursting with lead; twelve bullets they would put into it. I swear I will tell those mounted police, unless——"

Helena was unable to finish her threat. Travers knew from the stifled gurgle with which she uttered her last word that a hand had been placed over her mouth, and he barely caught Pierre's hoarse whisper of:

"Will you hush, then? Do you not know that the Yankee, M'sieu Travers, is outside, and that he may hear? Do you wish to hang us all, daughter of the devil that you are?"

It was now Travers' turn to gasp. A graduate of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he had specialized in mining engineering, he had heard of the famous De Kalb copper mine. He did not know exactly where it was, but he had a hazy idea that it was not far from the Bitter Water, where he had first come to his senses following the accident, or whatever it was that had effaced all memory of his having journeyed to Canada. "De Kalb's Folly," the mine had been called.

Years ago, a visionary Frenchman named Justin de Kalb, having located a rich vein of almost pure copper in central Ungava, had started to mine it. Copper, at that time, was selling for twelve cents, and even twenty-cent metal was considered but a feverish dream of the wildcatters; yet De Kalb had found, after blocking out many tons of ore, that his product was going to cost him not less than forty cents the pound, delivered either at a railroad or at outside tidewater. The discovery that all his money and effort had been wasted sent the Frenchman into a decline, and he died a heart-broken man; his heirs disposed of the mine for a song. Popular report among the habitants and Indians of that part of Ungava now had it that the original French owner's ghost haunted the old workings, and few were so hardy as to go near there.

Travers saw the possibilities at once. "By George!" he thought. "That's a scheme all right; a big one; tremendous. And I believe it could be worked. The boches would willingly pay five dollars a pound for copper to-day—if they could get it. Five dollars! Why, they'd pay any price a man might choose to ask. And there's the old De Kalb Folly stuffed with it, all blocked out in the stope chambers. But how and where will it be taken to tidewater? Labrador? If it were going there, old Pierre wouldn't be likely to know of the scheme. Hudson Bay?

More likely. Blockade runners might take it on there and get away with it. Well, wherever it is, it's up to me to find out and stop it, and, by the good Lord that made me, I've got to cut out this strong-drink business from now on!"

Yet, even as he made his good resolution, he involuntarily wet his lips with his tongue. It was queer; though he had been consuming the stuff all day Travers had never in his life wanted a drink quite so much as he wanted one at this very moment. His further meditations were cut short by the appearance of Pierre with the wine he had promised to bring from the cellar.

"Just this one, Pierre, and then I'm off the stuff for good," said Travers resolutely.

The two sat out there under the stars far into the night, and now Pierre partook of the bottle's contents quite as liberally as did his guest. Perhaps the old man drank to encourage Travers, perhaps to stimulate his brain, for he was speculating on how he might keep Helena from gabbling, yet still discourage any intimacy between Travers and Gabrielle.

In the meantime Helena, who had retired, lay awake in her bed, also thinking, wondering how she might best encourage and bring about a marriage between this same Travers, whom she believed to be rich, and her daughter, Gabrielle. Two things spurred on Helena in her plotting: The worthy ambition to see Gabrielle married to a man of wealth and position, and the ever-present itch and desire to defeat any cherished scheme of her husband. Helena liked Jo Laboré well enough; but because Pierre favored that particular arrangement Helena, perforce, opposed it, and she was determined to have her way.

CHAPTER X.

A QUESTION SETTLED.

"WHAT day is this, Jo?" asked Alice.

Jo Laboré pondered a moment, counting on his fingers. Then he laughed. "Me, I try for remember an' say my prayer every day, so she don't mak' much difference whether she Friday or Sunday; but I t'ink, ma'm'selle, that she ees Saturday, to-day."

Alice smiled wanly at Jo's quaint way of putting it. Then she glanced about the rough, log-walled room. An enormous cement-plastered fireplace was on one side; opposite was a cupboard, a table and chairs against the wall. A fur-covered, home-made couch where Alice lay had been placed between the two front windows that faced the river. Opposite this, also against the wall, was a triple row of well-filled book shelves.

Jo Laboré sat at the left of the fireplace near Alice's couch, busy, as always; on the other side a door opened into a second room where the back of a short, excessively fat woman dressed in a polka-dot calico wrapper could be seen as she bent over an amazingly rusty iron stove and stirred something in a pot. Jo was restringing a snowshoe, the rawhide thongs of which had been gnawed by mice during the summer.

The room with the fireplace, for all its roughness, was, in a way, orderly; it had the air of everything being in its proper place. The hard-packed earthen floor was neatly swept, and the glass panes in the two front windows above Alice's couch shone as if freshly polished. The day was cold, and a pile of blazing spruce logs in the fireplace gave out a comforting warmth and a pleasant fragrance. Alice sat propped up against a huge pillow that was stuffed with fir-balsam twigs.

"Then it is just a week since you and Mr. Davidge brought me here. How long does that make it since Mr. Trevana went after the bear, Jo?"

Jo was again forced to count tally on his fingers. "I t'ink, ma'm'selle, she eleven day," he answered finally. "We stay one night at de Wolverine camp w'en you firs' take seek. Next morning, M'sieu Davidge, he t'ink you get no better fast, an' say we best carry you some place where dere ees doctaire. But me, I say eef ma'm'selle get well an' fin' we take her way from

deese country before we fin' M'sieu Trevena, she kell us both sure."

Jo paused a moment while he tried to push a refractory piece of caribou through a too-small hole in the white-ash snowshoe rim. "By gar!" he said, "de man what burn dese hole in dese shoe rim ees got better eyesight dan me eef he t'ink dat hole ees big as rudder ones. I have burn heem again." He leaned toward the fireplace and laid a slender steel rod across a flaming log where it would soon become redhot. Then, catching Alice's inquiring glance, he resumed his explanation.

"I tell M'sieu Davidge dere's ole Hetty Quanito; she part Eskimo an' part Canada, but she's work long time at nurse up Doc Grenfell's hospital on de Labrador, an' she good nuf doctaire for mos' all rudder folks in deese country. Me, I theenk one good nurse better dan two poor doctaire, anyway. Suppose we get ole Hetty for come and take care mam'selle? I don't think she goin' be much seek anyway; she jus' wore out weeth no sleep and worry. Beside, she don' eat nuf for keep chipmunk alive since m'sieu went off, an', by gar, ole Hetty she fine cook. Nobody don' have no poor appetites w'en ole Hetty fix de meals, I bet me.

"M'sieu Davidge, he say de rain and snow come soon and a canvas tent no place for seek folks, so why we don' carry you down to hees cabin and let ole Hetty take care for you dere? Dat soun' like sense; so, by gar, we do her. I fin' Hetty, an' here we be!" finished Jo triumphantly as he poked the redhot rod through the snowshoe rim, sending up little curls of blue smoke and filling the air with the pungent odor of scorched ash. Then he turned toward Alice and studied her a moment while he waited for the wood to cool before threading the caribou thong, adding cheerfully:

"An' now, mam'selle, I t'ink eef dere's any rudder doctaire get you well quicker dan ole Hetty, me, I like for see heem; he's some doctaire, eh, what? Your cheek dey look more lak roses again, same as when you first came up in deese country weeth M'sieu Neal."

The tears stole into Alice's eyes as she reached out her hand and laid it on Jo's arm. "Haven't you heard a single word," she asked plaintively, "or found a single trace? Of course you have kept up the search?"

"For sure, mam'selle, we keep up search; but we don' fin' wan thing except two empty cartridge shell over near de foot of ole Mesaba, an' I can't be sure dose come from M'sieu Neal's rifle. Mabbe dere's rudder man got gun lak hees, and mabbe dey been dere whole year. But dat's all I fin'. I go out to-day, only M'sieu Davidge say, on de day behin' yesterday, he haf go down river in hees canoe for get some coffee an' flour, so I t'ink I stay in house an' feex dese snowshoe, an' mabbe rudder few things what need she be feex. Eet's 'bout tam M'sieu Davidge get back."

Alice turned and stared out of the window. Many things puzzled her—many things she could not talk over with Jo. She had not told the guide what that man who had attacked her at the tent had said about Neal; that he was dead, and she did not intend to. She refused to believe it herself, but she was afraid that Jo might, and that it would cause him to relax his efforts in searching. Though to search seemed rather hopeless, after the lapse of eleven days, she simply could not give up yet. In her heart, she trusted in some sort of a miracle. Just what that miracle might be, she never even went so far as to speculate; but it did not seem to her possible that Neal could have died or been killed without leaving some trace behind him.

Then there was Jack Davidge's strange actions after he had struck the man who had attacked her at the tent on the Wolverine; that puzzled her. Were Alice to live to be a very old woman, she could never forget the queer look of horror that had overspread the tall wolfer's features the instant he found Ketter's blood defiling his hands. Davidge had known, of course, that he had not killed the man; why, then, should he be so distressed? Had the sight of blood called to mind

some past crime that was haunting him? Alice rather doubted that supposition; his emotion had seemed a deep and intensely felt horror of the thing itself, not horror at the awakening of some buried memory. It was all a mystery.

Another matter that had been occupying Alice's mind and vaguely perplexing her for the last two days was the room where she lay. She knew that she was in Jack Davidge's cabin, yet the place did not quite fit in with the man she had known at her husband's camp, especially the books on the wall. They were no chance volumes, neither were they the sort of literature she would have expected to find in the home of a lonely Ungava wolfer. If these were Jack Davidge's property, they but deepened the mystery with which the wolfer had been enshrouded in Alice's mind since the first.

She turned from consideration of the books, which were those of a cultured taste, and began to study her own situation. What was she to do? She had a generous supply of funds with her, and it was possible, of course, if she could make arrangements with Jo Laboré, Davidge, and Hetty Quanito, for her to stay on up here; but was that the right thing? Hugging tight to the hope that Neal was still alive, to go away now seemed like turning one's back on a drowning person; yet Alice realized that most sober-minded, unsentimental folks would have counseled otherwise, calling it foolishness to persist in searching after the lapse of so long a time. Alice wished again that she had some one to advise her, and at last broached the subject to Jo.

"What do you think we ought to do?" she asked. "Do you suppose it is of any use to hunt longer for Mr. Trevana?"

Jo leaned the snowshoe that he had finished mending against the wall and studied a moment, his head tilted first to one side, then the other. Then he spoke: "Well, mam'selle, me an' M'sieu Davidge, we talk deese same matter over two, t'ree, four night ago. M'sieu Davidge, he theenk it no use for hunt any longer. He say eef M'sieu Neal alive, he fin' hees way back to de tent on de Wolverine long tam before dis—we leave de tent weeth a note pin on de flap, so eef m'sieu come back he see her dere. Eef he dead, M'sieu Davidge say, eet no use for hunt anyway, because de wolf and bear she take care of dat all right."

Alice shuddered. Jo paused and poked at the log fire before he went on: "But me, I don't know. I theenk suppose ole Etienne Afourchet he ees look at it dat way de tam I go off for hunt, break my leg, an' don' come back? By gar, I sure die out in de wood eef ole Etienne ees theenk it no use for search, eh, what?"

"Quite right, Jo," Alice agreed. "I never could live another happy or satisfied moment if I went back while a possibility of finding Mr. Trevana remained. So long as we have not discovered any trace of him dead, there remains the chance that he may be alive."

"Mabbe you hear, mam'selle, 'bout dese Indian what stay alone out in de wood five, seex, seven mont'? Eef dey keep hees head dey is all safe. Bear and wolf she live, so why not de man, eh? Me, I live up in deese country pretty near all my life. I go work in Montreal shoe factory wan tam; but he so stuffy I don' like heem much, so I come back—an' I theenk mos' anything can happen once."

Alice nodded in agreement. Perhaps Jo's reasoning would not stand close analysis, but, in her present state of mind, she found it comforting, and the great-hearted guide in voicing it, was probably thinking of that as much as of anything.

"I am certain you are right, Jo," said Alice. "If I can make suitable arrangements with you and Mr. Davidge and Hetty, I believe I shall stay here, for a while longer, anyway. Do you suppose I can make arrangements?"

"Sure, mam'selle, you feex dat all right," answered Jo. "Me, I don' go for have any rudder special business on my hand dis season; ole Hetty she satisfy so long as she get her t'ree square

every day—by gar, but dat Hetty, she some eater!—an' M'sieu Davidge, I theenk he agree wid anything you like, mam'selle."

Alice glanced up quickly, thinking she detected a queer note in the way Jo spoke his last sentence.

"What makes you think that, Jo?" she asked.

Jo pondered a moment. "Wall," he hesitated, as if not quite sure of what he desired to say. "I theenk mabbe M'sieu Davidge suspec' you theenk he have something do weeth M'sieu Neal's disappearance, so he try hard for make everything look on de square."

"You mean that he is anxious to assure me of his good faith in searching for my husband?" asked Alice.

Jo shook his head. He was thinking of finer distinctions, though he found it difficult to put them into words.

"*Non*, mam'selle," he answered. "Not quite. Me, I theenk sure M'sieu Davidge don' go for have anything do weeth M'sieu Neal's disappearance *himself*, but I not so sure he don' suspect rudder folks."

"Well," urged Alice. "Go on. What makes you think he suspects some one else?"

Jo again found it difficult to express perfectly the idea that, through close study of Davidge, had found lodgment in his head.

"Wall," he said presently, "for one t'ing, he don' never make no suggestions. He always ready for look here or dere, or anywhere, or do anyt'ing I say. But he don' never say, 'Suppose we search over rudder side de river today?' or, 'De Indian travel all over dese country; mabbe we better fin' some Montagnais and tell heem keep her eye peel for m'sieu.' I try for make heem talk 'bout what we bes' do, but she no use, an' sometam I theenk mabbe he 'fraid he forget an' suggest some place what ees mos' on hees min'."

"Just what do *you* think, Jo, happened to Mr. Trevana?" asked Alice.

"Me, I theenk, eef M'sieu Neal ees not dead, mabbe he get all turn roun', and go in rudder direction from hees camp," suggested Jo earnestly. "Mabbe he keep on in wrong direction four, five day, mabbe two, t'ree week. Wall, pretty soon he sure fin' out she is wrong way, eh, what? Den, eef she not too late, he turn and come back to hees own camp."

CHAPTER XI.

THE MOONLIGHT HUNT.

ALICE TREVANA'S first duty, after deciding to remain in the North, was to send back letters to her friends and to Neal's friends and army superiors explaining her husband's strange disappearance. These letters Jack Davidge carried down in the canoe to mail at Etienne Afourchet's; it would be many days before they could reach their destination.

Then, as soon as she felt strong enough to travel, which was during the second week of her stay at Davidge's cabin, Alice, with Davidge and Jo, again resumed the search for Neal. But, as the weeks went by, they realized that this merely amounted to going over the same ground again and again. Yet, even now, at the end of eight weeks, Alice would not give up, would not abandon the hope that in some way Neal would yet turn up. Something, she could not have said just what, seemed to tell her that he was alive.

"I can't abandon him!" she said over and over to herself.

Her own bounding good health and the insistent manner in which the lure of the North country had worked its way upon her were also helping to restore Alice's spirits again to normal. Since her short illness, she had been spending all her days outdoors, and she was again beginning to feel the same exquisite joy in just breathing the keenly stimulating Canadian air, the same sense of well-being and pleasure in simple muscular exertion that had been hers when first coming here. No matter how far they traveled, she rarely became so fatigued that a brief rest did not make her feel fit and eager to go on; again she knew the sweet, refreshing slumber of a child, and she ate, as Alice herself confessed, "enor-

mously" of Hetty Quanito's plain, but appetizing cookery.

Her mind still dwelt on Neal, but she was becoming reconciled to the belief that waiting was all she could do, worrying would not help. She had set no definite time for returning to civilization, though she realized that that was a question she would eventually have to decide upon. In the meantime, she tried to build up health and strength, mental and physical, during her period of waiting.

One night she was even tempted to go out with Jack Davidge on a wolfing trip, or "run" as he called it. What Jo had previously told Alice regarding Jack Davidge's mysterious ways of getting wolves had greatly aroused her curiosity; yet it is probable she would not herself have mentioned her desire had not Jo first broached the subject. Jo was suffering from a touch of rheumatism in the leg that had once been broken, and could not go himself.

"By gar, I don't like for miss dis!" he said regretfully, as Davidge was preparing to start. "But my leg, she haf be treat like sick babby for day or two, or she geeve me trouble all winter." He turned to Alice and added laughingly: "Mabbe mam'selle, she take my place?"

"Indeed I would like to," said Alice, who was helping Hetty to clear away the supper dishes. "But I am afraid Mr. Davidge wouldn't get any wolves if I were along. I shouldn't know how to act."

Davidge halted his preparations and studied her face a moment. "Would you like to get a wolf, ma'am?" he asked.

"I would, very much," she answered offhandedly, thinking his question was merely casual.

"Get ready, then," he returned.

Alice hurried to don her outdoor garments. Davidge's preparations were very simple. He did not even take his rifle—only a pocket flash light and a package wrapped in a piece of wolf hide that had been hanging outdoors for several days.

"Mabbe dat de secret trap bait," laughed Jo, as he noticed how careful Davidge was of this package, handling it only with a pair of gloves that appeared to have been soaked in the fresh blood of some animal. "Or mabbe she poison, eh, what, m'sieu?"

"It isn't exactly either," was Davidge's noncommittal reply; "but I reckon it may have a whole lot to do with whether we get any wolves or not."

There had been a slight fall of snow that afternoon, and, although rapidly scudding clouds obscured the sky, there was still light enough to see objects for a considerable distance ahead. As they walked away from the cabin a cold wind blew directly into Alice's face, smiting her cheeks like a rain of fine sand, bringing the warm blood rushing to every capillary. Davidge took pains constantly to face the wind. He walked a few paces ahead.

"Keep right behind me, and don't talk unless you have to," he said. "We shan't stand any chance of getting anywhere near a wolf for two or three miles yet, but it's best to remain quiet."

Occasionally Davidge examined the ground with his flash light as they went along. Perhaps two miles beyond the cabin he seemed to find signs that interested him, for he paused and spoke softly as he began unlacing the bundle he carried.

"I'm going to put coverings over your boots," he said, "and you mustn't touch them with your hands."

Alice was wearing a short skirt, bloomers, and high tan pacs. She saw Davidge draw forth from his bundle a pair of roughly sewed overshoes that appeared to be made of fur. As she held out first one and then the other foot, he slipped these on over her pacs, and then donned a pair of the same sort himself. Alice was aware of a permeating animal odor; it brought a quick recollection of the occasion when, as a child, she had visited the Bronx Park zoo with her parents and had watched the gray timber wolves gamboling about their huge inclosure. In the keenly cold air it was not wholly unpleasant.

"Now follow me," said Davidge. "Pretty soon I'll strike off to the right. When we come to a spot of bresh"—he was apt to call all timber "bresh"—"you dodge in and let me go on. Don't walk more than a few feet in, just enough to reach the shadow, and wait there. Before long you'll likely see a wolf coming; he'll be following your tracks; when he gets near enough, shoot."

They moved on for a considerable distance. Her feet covered with the fur overshoes that deadened every sound of her tread, Alice felt as if she were walking on a thick velvet carpet. Soon they veered off and began traveling across the wind. At length a clump of pine loomed up in the distance. As they reached it Davidge turned to her.

"Don't come any nearer to me," he whispered; "but dodge in among those pines."

Alice started to turn off. "Are you afraid?" he asked, a little anxiously.

"Not in the least," she whispered back. Every nerve in her body was beginning to tingle with pleasure in the undertaking. "But you?" she added. "You have no rifle."

"I never carry one when I'm wolf running," he explained. "You may have to wait some time, but don't get discouraged. I'll not be far off, and I'll come back inside of an hour."

He left her, and Alice was alone with the mystery of the night. She watched Davidge's figure as it merged into the darkness. He had turned again and was facing the wind. Alice leaned against the trunk of a pine and waited, her rifle poised, every muscle relaxed, yet ready to respond instantly to the slightest brain impulse. There was no sound save the whispering swish of the wind through the pine needles overhead and the occasional splitting of a tree trunk in the cold. The night was beginning to clear, patches of friendly stars peeped out now and then, and, occasionally, she caught the silver sickle of a moon. Alice faced a wide stretch of almost level white plain, broken only at rare intervals by patches of pine that looked like tiny islets as they lay silhouetted against the snow.

Suddenly her ear caught a distant howl—one of the most penetrating, yet mournful sounds in nature, especially at night. It reverberated for an instant among the branches above, and then was answered from far away to the left. The sound thrilled her like a drumbeat to battle.

CHAPTER XII.

MAN AGAINST WOLF.

ALTHOUGH the Ungava wolf is blood brother to those of the southern latitudes, he is a different animal in character. Making his home in the northern latitudes, far from the haunts of civilization, with him game is plentiful, but it must be constantly battled for with beasts of his own kind. In consequence, he grows considerably heavier and much more fierce in disposition, possessing courage to a degree unknown among wolves of the southern and western United States. In seasons when epidemics have decimated the country of the smaller game on which he usually feeds, Ungava blacks and duskies have been known even to track and attack human beings. In such an instance they are no mean antagonists. They seldom travel in packs, but usually in pairs, and it is not uncommon to find the males hunting alone.

The unearthly howl that Alice had first heard was soon repeated, nearer this time; the answer also came from a shorter distance away. In that vast primeval wilderness of silence it was like soul calling to soul. Alice knew that one, perhaps two wolves, were approaching the spot where she waited. All eagerness, she could hardly stifle an inordinate desire to rush out and meet them.

Her eyes fastened on the trail over which she and Jack Davidge had come, now faintly discernible in the waxing starlight, Alice made out a dark form loping out of the shadowy distance. It stopped once, threw up its head, howled, and then came on again. The

rifle flew to her shoulder, but she waited. The wolf was approaching head on, not an easy shot, and she wanted to be absolutely sure. She was not aware of the remotest feeling of loneliness or of fear, only a deep, unutterable joy in the hunt. The wolf's eyes gleamed in the light reflected from the snow; occasionally he dropped his muzzle and sniffed the trail. He was now scarcely more than sixty feet away; yet Alice still hesitated, so keen was her pleasure in watching the perfect rhythm of his muscular exertion.

Abruptly he halted; his forelegs stiffened and the fur along his spine arose like a bristle brush. He bared his teeth and sniffed the wind. From somewhere there had assailed his sensitive nostrils an unfamiliar odor; his suspicions were aroused. Alice realized that it was the time to shoot; her rifle barked. The wolf dropped in his tracks, made an effort to pivot on his hind legs, and lay quiet.

Every nerve athrill, she hurried forward to inspect the carcass. It was a dusky. She was a little sorry that it had not proved to be an Ungava black. Returning to her station in the shadow of the pine to await the second wolf, she heard him howl again to the left, but farther away. Perhaps, she thought, he had been frightened off by the report of her rifle, or perhaps by the acrid and penetrating odor of exploded powder.

For more than an hour Alice waited. Jack Davidge had promised to return inside of that time, and she was beginning to think it odd that he did not come. She waited a half hour longer, and still no Davidge. Sure that she could easily back-trail her way to the cabin, she was not frightened, but she was becoming increasingly apprehensive regarding Davidge. With the memory of Neal's strange disappearance in her mind, she thought of a score of things that might have happened to the wolfer. He had no rifle, and he might have encountered some animal that had killed or injured him. Finally, she decided to start off on his trail, for a short distance, anyway; that was better than waiting in uncertainty.

Davidge's footsteps, going off to the left, were plainly visible in the freshly fallen snow. Alice followed them as far as a second clump of pines, and then paused. She had heard two more wolves howling, and still another at her rear. From the sound of the latter she judged it to be the same that had earlier answered the call of the wolf she had shot.

Desiring not to be caught with a wolf at her rear, as well as two in front, Alice found a shadowing pine and stood there. All three wolves now sounded quite close, but she could see none of them, and there was something odd about the way two of them were acting; they seemed to be circling the clump of pines, while the other was *in* the pines. She became a little anxious; one or two wolves she would not have feared, but a whole pack was quite another matter, and it began to look as if they were hunting her instead of her hunting them.

She stood with her back to a tree, watching the moonlit plain in front, her every sense on the alert, the rifle poised. A single wolf was undoubtedly still somewhere in the clump of pines, the other two were encircling it, and there was a note of probing curiosity in their fitful howls.

Just then, Alice saw them coming toward her across the snow, shoulder to haunch. The foremost was an enormous black, his fur thick and lustrous; he appeared to weigh at least one hundred and seventy-five pounds; the other was much smaller. They were not yet near enough to make a hit sure, and she waited with the rifle at her shoulder, a little nervous and shaky. She felt certain of killing one, but could she pump in a cartridge in time to get the second, and where was the third? For several seconds he had not howled. Then, unexpectedly, she heard his call, only a few feet away.

She had started to whirl and face him, for he was the nearest, when a heavy body rushed past her toward the two approaching animals. For a

moment it was in shadow, and then a strange thing happened. The foremost wolf, the largest, halted, raised his head, laid back his ears, gave a quick howl, then braced his forefeet, jumped ahead a short distance, jumped back, and bared his teeth as the hair arose in a crest along his spine. It was as if he dared something to come on and fight. The smaller wolf turned tail and retreated; a safe distance away he sat on his haunches and began to utter a series of long, dismal howls.

Then another, and still more peculiar thing occurred. The huddled, half-seen form that had rushed past Alice came into a bar of moonlight and she knew that it was not a wolf, but a man. Crouched over, going warily toward the waiting animal, he moved slowly, swaying neither to left nor right, seeming to glide, almost to float. The wolf watched him, his head tilted first on one side, then on the other, constantly sniffing, his eyes glowing, his ears now alert. This was a wholly new performance; the wolf could not quite make it out; he was frankly puzzled, yet very curious. Suddenly he lifted his head, howled again, and was about to pivot and dart off when the man howled in answer, and Alice knew that his was the same voice calling that she had heard earlier off to the left, and from her rear in the clump of pines.

The wolf halted, braced his feet once more, beating a nervous tattoo on the snow, jumped ahead, and then began slowly to step backward as the man advanced. The howls of the wolf at the rear became a quick *agitato*.

Alice watched this performance with wildly racing thoughts, almost as greatly puzzled as the huge wolf, yet aware of a strange feeling of exhilaration. Then, in a breath, her ears were assailed with the sounds of a fierce commotion, snarls, stifled howls, panting lungs, and the straining and rending of flesh and cloth. Man and wolf had clashed in a wild tangle, and now she knew that the man was Jack Davidge. He had no weapon; he was fighting the animal with bare hands.

CHAPTER XIII.

COURAGE AGAINST COURAGE.

BACK and forth they swayed in a tremendous battle for the mastery, like two primordial beasts, the wolf reared on his hind legs, standing as tall as the man, his jaws snapping. Now they were down, rolling in the snow; now up again, a whirling, lashing mêlée of arms and legs. Alice wanted to shoot, yet dared not for fear of hitting the man. Her heart felt as if it were thudding a thousand beats a minute.

Davidge was fighting to hold off the wolf and secure a fist-grip on his throat, the wolf to tear open the man's jugular vein with his fangs; countless generations of ancestors had bred in him the unerring instinct that there lay the vital spot. Their frosted breaths arose in a cloud of white about their heads.

So excited that she scarcely knew what she did, a queer singing in her heart, Alice had all but started forward to help with her clubbed rifle when, abruptly, she saw Davidge secure a hold with both hands on the wolf's throat. She heard muscles strain, bones crack, and the animal's gasps as Davidge's grip tightened.

Finally the wolf's limbs relaxed and the tongue lolled. Davidge flung the inert body down on the snow and peered about for the second animal, but he, being wise for his years, was already a hundred yards away, silently merging into the night.

With a sense of having dived deep into the waters of life, and of coming up panting for breath, Alice hurried to Davidge's side. "You are injured?" she asked anxiously.

He looked up, startled, from examining a torn sleeve. "I don't reckon so, ma'am," he said, his voice a little shaky. "But my leather jacket is. You didn't stay where I told you to."

"And you didn't return when you promised," she answered, smiling.

"No; I saw there were a couple of wolves headed your way. I tried to decoy them off first, but that wouldn't work, so I thought I'd better get them

myself," he explained. "A couple of hungry wolves might prove too much for you to handle alone."

"And is that the way you always get them?" she asked curiously.

His eyes fell shyly before hers as he picked up the dead animal and slung it over his shoulder. "I never killed anything yet, outside of vermin," he said quietly, "that I didn't give it as fair a chance for its life as I had for mine."

Alice could only gasp her amazement. This, then, was how he secured his perfect skins, free from blemish of trap mark or rifle ball—with his bare hands, matching courage against courage, fighting skill against fighting skill. And it was with his imitative howl he had lured the first wolf within range of her gun and had remained by until he knew she had killed her game.

Jack Davidge, always so silent about himself, suddenly emerged from his metaphorical shadow and became for Alice Trevana a man so filled with the pulsation and the breath of life that it startled, frightened her. It was so pregnant with possibilities. Try as she did to shut it out, there rose to her mind the picture of another fight in which man and beast were not locked in battle, but man and man, and one was her husband, and Davidge, with what seemed his superhuman strength, was crushing the life from Neal even as he had crushed it from the timber wolf.

CHAPTER XIV.

UP AND DOWN STREAM.

THE sharply stimulating autumn air about the tiny settlement of Seven Trees was redolent of pine and fir; the squirrels, their cheek pouches enormously distended, hurried with last-minute hordes of food to their winter storage places. The whisky-jacks—Canada jays—clothed in coats of soberly sedate Quaker gray that sadly belied their thieving disposition, noisily and ostentatiously hid acorns and bits of bright quartz in knot holes and obscure corners where they were destined never to find them again, no matter how hungry they might become. And the Seven Trees menfolk had already begun to dig up winter traps in preparation for the fast approaching fur season.

It was a late afternoon to delight any mortal with healthy blood coursing through his veins, for northern Canada was at her best; yet Travers, standing just below the village on the bank of the river fishing, seemed strangely unconscious both of the beauty of the dying day and the fact that for almost five minutes a fish had been industriously tugging at his line.

That morning he had picked up by the merest chance a strange piece of news—news that made his pulse bound. He had been talking with Benoit Dufrane, Seven Trees' chronic grumbler. Benoit, whose pet topic of conversation was always his ailments, of which he kept a plentiful assortment on hand to dilate upon at great length to any one who would listen, had come to Pierre's store to buy a bottle of "pain killer"—Seven Trees' panacea for about all the diseases to which human flesh might fall heir. Pierre, however, was out somewhere. Helena could not find the desired medicament, and Benoit had halted outside to gossip with Travers, who was sitting there smoking.

"Well, Benoit, what's the chief difficulty to-day?" asked the American laughingly. He enjoyed hearing the wizened little habitant tell of his aches and pains, for he had a dry, humorous manner of going about it. "Is it the gout, gastritis, or the glanders that has got you on the hip this morning?"

"Non, non, m'sieu," answered Benoit soberly, easing his rheumatic limbs into a chair. "She make sleep. Ba gosh, for two, t'ree night, I don' once close ma eye. You know, m'sieu, me, I live close to de river, an' all throo de night dere such a noise in ma ear I can't close ma eye."

Travers grinned. "Such a noise in your ears you can't close your eyes, eh? What sort of a noise, Benoit?"

Benoit pondered a moment. Then,

he, too, grinned. "Wall, m'sieu, I t'ink sometam mabbe I swallow woodpecker, and jus' now she wake up an' get busy; dat what she soun' like. She keep hammer, hammer on inside ma ear whenever I lay down on pillow and try for go sleep."

"Imagination—dreams!" suggested Travers.

"Mabbe, m'sieu," said Benoit. "Me, I t'ink myself she mabbe dream. Rudder night I get up and look out de window when I hear dat noise, an' what you think I see, m'sieu?"

"I don't know; what was it—the devil beating a tattoo on top of your cabin with drumsticks?"

"Non, non, m'sieu," answered Benoit in an awed whisper. "Me, I see six, eight, ten canoe go up de river, all in line, weeth nobody in dem for paddle. *Up* de river, m'sieu, agains' de strong current, all empty, an' nobody for paddle heem. Me, I know dat tam, she sure wan dream, eh, what, m'sieu? Canoes, dey don' go up river widout she be paddle, an' dis tam year, de current so mighty strong dey don' go up very easy *weeth* paddle."

Travers' interest was awakened; an idea had entered his head. There had never been power boats on the Babos; it was too shallow, had too many portages; in fact, very few of the residents of Seven Trees had ever seen a steam railroad, to say nothing of a motor launch, and a portable canoe motor would have appeared to them almost like a miracle. Benoit's story of noises that he heard when he laid his head on the pillow sounded very much to Travers as if a power canoe might have been dragging a string of other canoes up the river. He knew how far such a sound carries, even with an underwater exhaust, when one's ear is in touch with the earth; he had often caught it a half dozen miles away.

If this was the case, for what purpose were those canoes being sent up the river? Could it be to freight back that contraband copper Helena, Pierre's wife, had referred to during their recent argument? Travers knew that the Babos River emptied into the Larch, the Larch into the Kooksoak, and the Kooksoak into Ungava Bay. To be sure, there were many portages on the way, but of what account were portages when expense was not to be considered? It looked as if those canoes, if they were canoes, and not a dream, as Benoit seemed to think, had been going up the river after freight, and it might be their freight was to be copper from the old De Kalb Folly, if the mine was in that vicinity. Being in the dark as to exactly where the mine was, the American began to question Benoit.

"Did you ever hear of the old De Kalb copper mine?" he asked nonchalantly during a lull in the conversation, after the discursive Benoit had pretty nearly worn threadbare the topic of head noises.

Benoit looked up alertly. "Me? Sure, I know heem," he answered. "Pierre, hees been talk 'bout heem only rudder day. Das de place what ees haunt? Wall, Pierre say dem Montagnais, Tom Jump and Joie Free-Horse what go near dere, some tam las' week, nearly get de life scare out from dem by dose ghos'. One ghos' he chase Joie Free-Horse two, t'ree, four mile and geeve heem bang on head what nearly put heem out business. Joie show Pierre the woun' on hees head. Me, you don't catch me goin' near dem place. Ghos', eef she min' *her* own business, ba gosh, I bat me I look out for mine all right."

So Pierre Bonfaucon was spreading new stories regarding haunts at the old De Kalb Folly. Matters began to look more interesting to Travers. "But just where is the De Kalb? I've often heard of it, yet never happened to hit it," he asked.

"You know de Bitter Water, where she be?"

"Of course I know where the Bitter Water is; camped there two seasons ago on my last trip here, right near the gallows stone."

"An' you know de range, up north from de Wolverine, Thunderhead, an' ole Mesaba?" continued Benoit. Yes, Travers knew those, too. "Wall," went on Benoit, "you go up de Babos

until you strike de Bitter Water; den you go mabbe three, four, five mile, an' you see de range; den you strike east over de range an' keep on for while, me, I don' know exactly how far; I never been dere. I don' care for mines what ees haunt; but keep on east an' pretty soon you strike de mine what ole De Kalb, he make heemself such fool 'bout."

A little indefinite to any one but a woodsman, yet Travers now had a fairly clear idea of where the De Kalb mine was. The information justified his earlier suspicion that if one had no dislike for portages, copper might be freighted down the Babos from there and finally reach Ungava Bay. And whatever copper came that way, unless it was toted a long distance around, would be obliged to pass Seven Trees. Travers had started to ask Benoit if he had seen or heard of any canoes heavily laden coming down the stream lately, when he saw Pierre approaching.

Pierre Bonfaucon was the last person whose suspicions Travers wished to have aroused regarding the ideas that were now stirring in his head, and he deemed it wise to change the subject; but garrulous old Benoit defeated this move."

"Me, I jus' been tell M'sieu Travers 'bout dem haunt what chase Joie Free-Horse up at de Folly mine," he said as Pierre reached them. "M'sieu, he theenk she all foolishness, but me an' you, Pierre, we know better, eh what?"

Pierre was visibly disturbed; his head snapped up, his eyes began to shine, and he was about to utter some sharp remark when he caught himself and said querulously: "Benoit, you talk altogether too much. It is not likely M'sieu Travers would be interested in such subjects." He started to enter the store, and Benoit followed.

"Me, I think I go get ma pain killer now," he said to Travers; "mabbe she geeve me some sleep to-night." Which supposition, since the desired medicine was mostly opium, was quite certain to be fulfilled.

And that was why Travers now stood on the bank of the river just above the bend where stood the village of Seven Trees, and where there was a spot of fairly quiet water, ostensibly fishing, but really more intent on watching the stream in both directions. If empty canoes had gone upstream they were pretty likely soon to come down, and, if more were going up, he wanted to see them, wanted to discover, if that were possible, what their business was. Several times he laid his ear to the ground, but he could hear nothing. Still, while they might use a motor to go upstream, it would be possible easily to come down in the strong current with only a guiding paddle.

CHAPTER XV.

A STRING OF CANOES.

TRAVERS had landed his fish and sat down to dig out the hook when he heard a light step approaching. Looking up, he saw that it was Gabrielle Bonfaucon. At first he wondered if old Pierre, his suspicions aroused, had not sent her out there to spy on him; but as he saw the look of surprise and pleasure on Gabrielle's face at sight of him, he quickly decided that she could not be spying.

Between Travers and Gabrielle matters had progressed rapidly since his strange advent in Seven Trees. The pretty daughter of Pierre had made a deep impression on him.

"Hello, Bebelle!" he called. "Where are you going?"

"I'm not going, I'm coming, m'sieu," she answered banteringly, as she took a seat beside him on the river bank. "I have been up the river to call on Marie Dufrane, and I am just returning."

The tone between Travers and Gabrielle was always one of laughing banter, give and take; yet the American was aware that Gabrielle liked him, and he liked her—liked her very much. Many times since that night when they had gone together to Eugenie Portois', Travers had said to Gabrielle:

"Well, little girl, when are you and

I going to get married? Seems to me it's about time we made that pretty picture before the altar that old Eugenie told about."

Always Gabrielle had turned the remark aside as a joke, as if she thought he did not mean it, which, of course, he really did not—then. But now, as Travers glanced toward the fascinating little beauty, as the waning light of the setting sun glowed on her warm, velvety cheeks, and was reflected from her sparkling black eyes, he was inspired to say it again, and in a different tone, not much laughter in his voice now, more earnestness.

Gabrielle glanced up quickly, her face suddenly become flushed. It was the first time Travers had spoken at all seriously. She was plainly agitated, for really Gabrielle had come to like this handsome stranger, and not only Eugenie and Helena, but many others in Seven Trees were constantly talking about what a splendid match he would make for any young woman.

"Marriage!" she repeated with a roguish smile, still a little banter in her voice, for all her heart was beginning to beat rapidly. "But has m'sieu yet asked me? I do not seem to remember it?"

"Quit your fooling, Bebelle," returned Travers, overcome with her beauty, his arm finding her waist and drawing her closer. "If you didn't know how I have felt ever since I arrived in Seven Trees and first saw you, you're not one-quarter as wise as I thought."

"Perhaps, m'sieu," answered Gabrielle. "But that is a thing one should not be satisfied to take for granted."

"Wise little head!" he said, laughing. "You've jolly well got the proper slant, as the English say. But now I *have* asked you, and when is it going to happen? You're the dearest, sweetest girl I ever knew, and you can't set the date any too soon for me." He thought of his reason for watching beside the river, and added: "I intend to stay here a short time longer, then we can go down to my home in the States. What do you say, Bebelle?"

She felt very contented in his arms. He pleased her greatly. He was always gentlemanly and deferential, even though he did take a good deal for granted. She realized also that he was in appearance and wealth a person almost any woman might feel flattered to have propose to her—and Jo Laboré had been away for a long time; in fact, Jo was not much of a fellow for lovemaking. True, Gabrielle really knew almost nothing about this stranger's past life, and he did seem to drink a great deal; yet she had been reared in a country where everybody drank more or less, and it was not considered a vice. That phase of the matter did not, therefore, impress her as being important. She snuggled a little closer in his arms.

"I think, m'sieu, that is a question for my parents to settle," she said.

"Then I shall ask Pierre to-night," he declared.

Gabrielle's face grew sober. She had a sudden recollection of what her father had said to her on the day of Travers' arrival in Seven Trees—that he would countenance no fooling with this stranger; yet she was sure that the match would have her mother's approval.

"I think, perhaps, m'sieu, that it would be better if I mentioned it to mama first," answered Gabrielle. "You know papa; one can never tell how he will take a matter; and mama may wish to prepare him first."

"Then we will consider that settled," said Travers. "Tell Helena at once."

"As m'sieu wishes," said Gabrielle. "Now I must hurry back. I promised mama to return before dark. Is not m'sieu coming?"

Travers was not living with the Bonfaucons; but was boarding with the neighboring family of Jacques Renaud. The Renauds owned a larger house than the Bonfaucons, and often took Seven Trees strangers to lodge and board.

"Don't think I will, not quite yet," he answered. "I promised Barbé Renaud I'd stay out here until I caught her a mess of fish if it took all night.

Haven't hooked but one yet, and I'm going to stick. Maybe the fish will be hungrier for my fly after sunset."

Travers made his excuse a little haltingly. About half a mile up the river he had just caught sight of a canoe coming down the stream. Whoever was in it, he wanted to interview him; and there might be more canoes behind that single one. If there were, he must see them.

Gabrielle started hurrying toward home; Travers waved his hand to her in a parting good-by, and then turned to look for the approaching canoe. It had disappeared. The river in both directions was without a single moving object on it, and neither was there a sign of a beached canoe anywhere.

"Blamed queer!" said Travers. "I'm sure I saw a canoe, and it was being paddled down in the middle of the stream." He reeled in his line, threw the pole over his shoulder, and started along the bank as he added to himself: "Something odd about the sudden disappearance of that canoe. Looks as if the paddler had seen me and decided to seek cover."

Scanning the shore on both sides, Travers made his way slowly upstream —slowly, because in many places there was a low growth almost down to the water's edge. Suddenly he halted and sank to the earth behind a thick patch of huckleberry bushes; he had heard some one approaching. The dusk was deepening rapidly, and, for a moment, he could see no one. At last he made out the person coming. It was Billee Rabbit-Ear, a pal of Joie Free-Horse and Tom Jump, the two drunken Montagnais who often hung around Seven Trees vicinity. Travers had seen the fellow on previous trips to Ungava. He was a good-for-nothing Indian, equal to any sort of deviltry if he were promised a dollar or a quart of whisky.

Billee Rabbit-Ear passed within a few feet of where Travers lay concealed. He carried a rifle and a canoe paddle over one shoulder, a jug in the other hand, and his trousers were wet almost to the hips.

Again "Blamed queer!" thought Travers. "That chap is headed for Seven Trees. He came down the stream in a canoe, but he has hid his canoe somewhere along the bank. He got out of it in fairly deep water, for he's wet above the knees. Now a man, unless his canoe was pretty heavily loaded, would pull it up on the bank and needn't get even his feet wet."

Travers studied a moment. "He might have sunk it, but it would be a queerly loaded canoe a chap would sink to hide. Or there may be a bay, or an offshoot, above somewhere. More likely. I'm going up a way and see."

Travers waited until there was no further chance of the Montaignais' hearing his movements, and then started upstream, carefully examining the bank as he went along. He knew that if there was a small bay, or an offshoot above, where Billee Rabbit-Ear had hid his canoe, the Indian would have been wise enough to conceal the mouth with brush in order that chance passers on the river might not have their attention attracted by the opening.

Suddenly Travers jumped across a tiny pool to land on what he supposed was solid ground, and found himself floundering in shoulder-deep water, his feet tangled in brush. For a moment he was helpless, then he managed to extricate his legs from the tangle and started swimming. He had fallen into the opening of a sizable bay cut out in the bank of the river, an opening that had been cleverly concealed with newly cut brush.

A few strokes, and Travers gained the bank. Then he drew himself up with a ripping, tearing exclamation of astonishment that even his usual caution could not make him wholly stifle. Concealed in that offshooting bay of the river were eight large canoes, all apparently heavily laden, their loads lashed down and covered with tarpaulins!

For an instant Travers remained quiet. He was not certain but that there might be some one sleeping in one of those canoes. There came no sound save the lapping against their sides of the waves made by his own

involuntary bath as the canoes lay there tetering back and forth. Cautiously, Travers waded out to one of them, drew out his hunting knife, slashed the tarpaulin cover, ran his hand into the opening, and felt around inside.

"Right the first guess," he thought. "It's copper ore."

He investigated beneath the coverings of the other canoes; all but one bore a load of the same nature, and that one was empty, save for a few bags of camping duffel, a can of gasoline, and a removable canoe motor stowed away in the stern. It was probably in this canoe Billee Rabbit-Ear had come downstream. Billee had left his own canoe here with the others while he went to Pierre Bonfaucon's to get his jug filled with liquor, after which he would return and take all the canoes down the river. The sky was rapidly becoming overcast, there was no moon, and it promised to be a dark night. It seemed likely that the canoes had been hid here to wait for just such a night before passing Seven Trees and going on.

Travers' determination was quickly made; here was one load of contraband copper that should never get beyond Seven Trees. The canoes were roped together on a towing line. After clearing the opening of brush, he found a pole, dragged all the canoes outside, and poled them to the middle of the river, where the current was strong. Then, as the current caught them and they started downstream, he began to cut them one by one from the towline, slashing a long cut in the bottom of each with his hunting knife as it was released. Thus they would all sink in different spots.

Travers had sent four of the canoes to the bottom and had been so intent on his work that he hardly realized how far downstream he was getting, when he heard a hail from shore. Looking up with astonishment, he discovered that he was almost opposite the bend in the river beyond which lay Seven Trees; and then he heard some one leap into the water and strike out toward the canoes, swimming rapidly. He could only make out the indistinct outline of a moving head, but he believed it was Billee Rabbit-Ear.

With feverish haste, he began to dispose of the three remaining canoes; the fourth did not matter so much, since it did not carry any copper, but he was bound that all the copper should find the bottom before Billee Rabbit-Ear reached him; then he would give his attention to Mr. Billee Rabbit-Ear.

About to sever the towline from the last copper-laden canoe, Travers glanced up to see how near the Montagnais was. Billee Rabbit-Ear was nowhere to be seen.

"Confounded queer!" thought Travers. "No Indian could drown unless he was drunk, Billee Rabbit-Ear was sober enough when he passed me, and he hasn't had time to get jigged since then."

As the laden canoe came opposite to the empty one in which Travers was kneeling, he reached down to slash the bottom with his knife, but his arm was caught in a viselike grip and, the next instant, he was in the water fighting for his life, with some one holding a choking grasp on his throat.

Foxy Billee Rabbit-Ear had been swimming under water, but, fortunately, Travers was armed with his knife, while the Montagnais carried no weapon. Hooking one leg over the canoe rim, the Indian battled to prevent Travers from striking out with his knife, to retain the choking grip he had secured on the white man's throat, and to hold his head under water.

For a moment it seemed as if the Montagnais had the best of it. Travers struggled desperately with arms and legs, but he could not breathe, and his strength had begun to ebb when the light canoe overturned and both men were left floundering in the water. His buoying leg hold on the canoe released, instinct made the Montagnais start a swimming stroke with one arm in an effort to keep himself from sinking. It gave Travers his chance; the hand holding the knife released, he struck quickly and effectively. Billee Rabbit-Ear gave one choking, gurgling gasp, then sank. It was the last of him.

The unloaded canoe had sunk, the other had gone downstream in the current. Spent and weak as he was, there was nothing for Travers to do but swim toward the shore.

CHAPTER XVI.

HELENA TAKES COMMAND.

AFTER leaving Travers, Gabrielle Bonfaucon went immediately home and informed her mother of his proposal of marriage, which was, perhaps, not so much of a surprise to Helena as Gabrielle had imagined it might be.

"*Bien!*" said Helena. "And why not? M'sieu Travers is a rich man; I think it is an excellent match for you. He will not expect any dowry. He will take you to his home in the States, and undoubtedly you will live very happily together. Yes, indeed, it is a very good match; far better than marrying with Jo Laboré, who is nothing but a poor French-Canadian guide and trapper. M'sieu Travers will make you a lady."

"But papa," said Gabrielle. "You know papa has set his heart on my marrying Jo, and having us run the store here. And you know how papa hates all Yankees, though he has appeared to take well enough to M'sieu Travers of late. Judging by all outward appearances they are excellent friends; yet papa informed me on the first day of m'sieu's arrival here that he would insist upon my marrying Jo Laboré with his last breath."

Helena drew down her thick black brows, thrust out her under lip, cast down her arms in a disdainful gesture and grunted.

"Huh! Are you so stupid, Bebelle, as to suppose I would permit that ugly old turtle to thwart me in this?" she asked. "If I desire that you marry with M'sieu Travers, that is who you shall marry with; be sure of that, my pet. As for your father, leave him to me. I will make it my business to attend to any objections he cares to make. I have a rod in pickle for him, and he knows it."

Gabrielle, however, still had her doubts. She thought she knew her father better than Helena did. "But you know how stubborn papa is," she ventured. "Even if he does not openly oppose the matter, I feel it in my bones that he will find some way to prevent it."

"Then, my pet, your bones are undoubtedly deceiving you," declared Helena. "So long as you have your mother on your side, be assured that you and M'sieu Travers shall marry. We had better make the usual arrangements here, and then you and m'sieu can have a civil ceremony later when you go to Montreal or Quebec, as I suppose you will. I shall talk with M'sieu Travers about all that myself to-morrow."

Marrying in a land so isolated as Ungava, where priests of the church are infrequent visitors even in the mildest of seasons, is made a matter of family agreement, to be confirmed later, if both parties happen to be fastidious, which is not always the case, by whatever ecclesiastical or civil authority first comes along, or, in the case of more well-to-do families, by a summer journey to a priest or minister at Quebec or Montreal. The parents of the bride-elect arrange affairs with the prospective bridegroom, or with his parents; sometimes he signs a paper testifying to his approval of dowry matters and the like, and sometimes he does not. It is apt to be rather a flimsy arrangement all around, but let this much be said: It probably serves quite as well, and is considered quite as binding by the participants, as are many more elaborate ceremonies.

"Would it not be better if M'sieu Travers spoke to papa?" suggested Gabrielle timidly. Knowing that this was the custom, she rather resented having her mother arrange everything for herself and Travers.

"Not at all," snapped Helena, who had been for several minutes working herself up to the point of talking with Pierre, mentally going over what she would say, and whose temper was, in consequence, becoming rather acid. "Your father is alone in the storeroom. I will see him at once. Run out to

one of the neighbors and save your feelings, for he may become violent." Helena shook her head aggressively. "But trust me, my pet, I shall be able to handle the old wretch."

Gabrielle having departed for the home of the Gauntiers, nearest neighbors of the Bonfaucons, Helena started toward the front storeroom to make her portentous announcement to Pierre. She was nervous, yet smiling. Though she knew it would mean a struggle, she took a certain amount of venomous pleasure in thinking of the news she was about to impart.

Deep in her heart, though she would never have acknowledged this to a living soul, Helena was conscious of an inferiority to Pierre. Mean and villainous though he was, he was still pure French, while she knew she was that despised thing, a "breed." And Pierre was educated, while she could neither read, write, nor figure; the ability to add five and five and make ten was one of life's eternal mysteries to Helena; in her eyes it was still but five and five, the limit of her counting, no matter how much adding one might do.

Yet Helena's quarrels with her husband, if they did nothing more, forced him, in a way, to acknowledge her place and presence in the household. Once goaded to the point of a verbal squabble, he could no longer ignore her, and that produced in Helena a queer, aborted sense of physical and mental gratification—made her feel good. For the time being, she thought herself Pierre's equal, if not his superior, for she controlled her temper better than he did. If she won her battle, this sense of gratification persisted for quite a while; thus quarrels had become with Helena a form of dissipation, like morphine or heroin.

Pierre was sitting alone in the front of the storeroom, smoking his pipe. He had just filled a jug with liquor for Billee Rabbit-Ear, and from Billee Rabbit-Ear he had heard a bit of good news. Billee Rabbit-Ear was taking the second load of contraband copper from the old De Kalb mine down the river, and a share in the tremendous profits of this venture—if it succeeded—would go to old Pierre. At the moment, anticipation had made him feel particularly good-natured. Lost in thought, he did not even glance her way as Helena entered. She drew forward a chair, sank her fat form into it with a sigh, placed her hands on her hips and began mildly:

"Well, old man, I have news for you."

Helena always began her arguments mildly; she knew, through past experience, that that was the best way to get her bearings. Pierre was foxy; there was no telling how much he might already know; neither was there any surety of how he might take a matter; he was one who could, when policy counseled, seem to change his front very quickly. Except in a few of his settled convictions, what Pierre thought yesterday was never certain to be what Pierre might think to-day. And then, beginning mildly permitted one to stress later points with greater emphasis—to build for a climax, as it were.

Even now Pierre did not turn his head, but continued placidly to smoke and stare out of the window, which aggravated Helena more than anything else he could have done. It piqued her. Beginning mildly and pleasantly, she had expected Pierre to be cordial; she had, as she thought, in a sense made an overture, and it was aggravating to have it thus ignored.

"Well," she said tartly, "do you or do you not care to hear my news?" Her out-thrust elbows took on a more aggressive angle and a sly twinkle stole into Pierre's eyes.

As a matter of fact, Pierre did not possess the remotest idea of what was in the wind. He had informed Gabrielle on the day of Travers' arrival that he would countenance no fooling regarding her planned marriage with Jo Laboré, and he had thought that ended the matter. Since she began so quietly, he had supposed Helena's information to be merely neighborhood gossip, and, though he was mildly curious, he took delight in affecting not to be. There was, however, such a thing as carrying a pose too far; it might lose him the

morsel Helena was treasuring, and now he turned toward her, removing the pipe from his lips.

"Mais oui, I suppose you women have again been prying into some of your neighbor's affairs," he said. "'Tis what you spend most of your time doing. Well, what is it? I can tell by your face that it is family scandal."

"So!" snorted Helena, straightening up in her chair. "Well, old turtle, if this is a family affair, it is a family very close to yourself." She paused with a set jaw, feeling certain that this would arouse him.

It did arouse him. Pierre's eyes began to glow. He was becoming suspicious, but in a direction entirely away from the truth. His anxiety made it difficult for him to restrain himself, but he did, and managed to say quite calmly:

"Since it concerns my own family, I am, of course, interested. Has one of those rascally sons of mine down in the States been getting into trouble again? From the look of pleasure in your face I should judge it to be something of that sort. Confound him! He need not depend on me to help him out, if that is what it is."

"No, old turtle, it is not your son this time," answered Helena, her own eyes beginning to shine, for she realized now from her husband's manner that the information she had to impart was going to be an entire surprise. "This news concerns your daughter."

"Bebelle, eh?" said Pierre, feeling sure now that it was nothing of any moment, and speaking more softly. "And what of Bebelle?"

Helena pondered a moment before answering. Pierre was taking the matter too placidly; it did not satisfy her.

"M'sieu Travers has asked Gabrielle to marry him," said Helena.

Pierre's jaw dropped and he drew in a quick breath. It almost strangled him, for just then his mouth happened to be filled with tobacco smoke. He began to cough spasmodically and to clutch at his throat with thin fingers, unable to utter a word. This *had* been a surprise.

"Be careful, old man!" said Helena, a little frightened as she saw his face grow purple. "You will choke yourself to death yet if you persist in attempting to swallow smoke in that fashion."

At last Pierre found his voice, and the words came from his lips in a torrent. "*Sacré Baptemé!* The villain!" he screamed. "Where is he? Let me but get my hands on him. He shall not have her. I have already told Bebelle that she is to marry Jo Laboré. How dared she go about flirting with this Yankee? Tell me where he is. I'll settle with him very quickly." Pierre arose, his hands twitching.

"Come, come, now; there is no need for you to work yourself up in that fashion. M'sieu Travers is down by the river fishing, but, I warn you, you had better keep away from him. You are far too old to start quarrels with young men." The matter was taking a turn Helena had not counted on. She had no desire to precipitate trouble between the two men. "As I hinted to you some days ago, it is my wish that Gabrielle accept this M'sieu Travers. He has position; he is rich; he loves her; it is a good match; a very good match for Gabrielle."

Pierre stared a moment at his wife with narrowing eyes; his anger mounting rapidly. Travers fishing beside the river had possibilities that made him anxious. He moved toward her with upraised arm.

"You she devil! You incarnation of all that is evil!" he screamed in shrill treble. "It is you, then, who have brought this intended marriage about? You—you——"

Helena arose hastily from the chair and faced him, her own eyes blazing. She had a premonition of what was coming. Never had Pierre dared to call her the name before; but she saw it forming on his lips now.

"You—you——" he stammered again. "You dirty breed!" It was the epitome of insult.

An instant Helena paused, her swarthy features turned suddenly gray; then, like a raging tornado, she

started toward her husband. Had she reached him, it might have gone badly with Pierre Bonfaucon, but Pierre was discreet, and there were other matters pressing him at that moment—those canoe loads of copper.

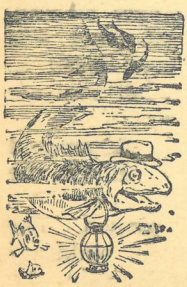
He reached the outer door, slammed it shut in Helena's face and hurried stumblingly toward the river, calling for Billee Rabbit-Ear. At last he came to the water; dimly he could see a man swimming toward the shore, and what he took to be a loaded canoe going downstream with no one in it. Forgetful of his infirmities, thinking only of his precious profits from that contraband metal, Pierre plunged in, not to try to save the man, but to reach the canoe that was swirling about in the middle of the river, fast disappearing into the night on its unguided way.

Pierre had been an active man in his day, as hardy a fellow as any in the water; yet he had taken scarce a dozen strokes when he began to realize his present error. His aged limbs were equal to no more. Panting for breath, he began to shout, not for Billee Rabbit-Ear now, but for anybody who would save him. And these frantic cries Travers caught as he was swimming for the shore after his fight with the Montagnais.

The succeeding chapters will be found in the next issue of TOP-NOTCH, dated and out November 15th. Back numbers may be obtained from any news dealer or the publishers.

The Fish's Searchlight

MANY varieties of fish living deep in the sea, practically beyond the reach of the sun's rays, are found to be provided with an independent lighting system of their own. Some have hollows in the skull or about the body which are filled with a phosphorescent substance. Others have luminous spots scattered about over the head, body, and tail. All of these varieties are furnished with numerous nerves that apparently form a system for producing this phosphorescent light. Thus the fish swims about in a faint glow emanating from its own body, and is able to use its eyes in searching for food.



Some scientists believe that these fish may have the power of sending out their luminous rays in different directions at will, in the manner of a searchlight.

Lucky Bargains

A FISHERMAN wanting sugar and having no money to pay for it gave a fur pelt in exchange for a pound of that commodity. Later when the man receiving the skin had it examined in a distant city, he found it to be a silver fox skin, and sold it to a dealer for one thousand dollars.

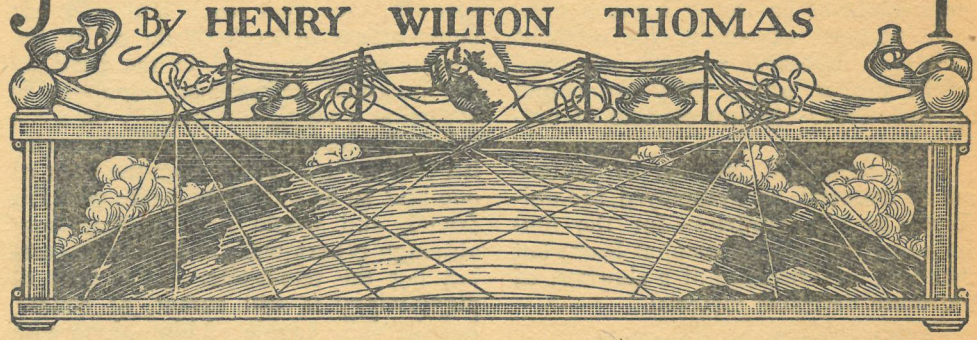
Even a better bargain than this was made by the "Fur King," John Nicholay. While in Lapland he bought a lot of sixty pelts from a native for fifty dollars. On looking them over carefully, he found among them seven skins of the nearly extinct sea otter, worth at least five hundred dollars each.

Wonderful bargains are recorded in connection with old books. For example: The priceless Coverdale Bible, now in the British Museum Library, was purchased by an amateur book collector from a butcher, who was astonished and delighted on being offered two dollars and fifty cents for it. He was just picking it up to use its valuable leaves for wrapping some meat.

A small fortune was made by the man who bought for ten dollars a dust-begrimed picture in a shop of the Paris slums. When he had it cleaned up it proved to be "La Belle Jardinière," one of Raphael's lost masterpieces, and the lucky purchaser disposed of it for twenty thousand dollars.

JUST A MOMENT

By HENRY WILTON THOMAS



The Great Awakening

BEAMS from the new sun that has risen to enlighten the world strike into its darkest corners and awaken all sorts and conditions of men. With the great awakening come new problems in science, industry, political and domestic economy. One important problem is that of the cook's automobile. Where shall it be stored? In the city the question is not such a difficult one, but for the suburban resident it is a condition that must be met courageously, with steady nerves.

In the new light.

Usually there is no diplomatic exchange in the matter. The ultimatum comes at once from the prospective cook or other retainer of the household:

"I must have room in your garage for my car."

To the country resident of large estate the problem, or the ultimatum, does not strike dismay; but for newlyweds, say, cozy in a cottage built for two, with a garage built for one, the affair presents some difficulties. It has soured many a honeymoon, but if the couple are made of the right stuff they won't allow a little thing like the rise of the proletariat to wealth and authority to interfere with their happiness. They just do their own cooking and defy the despot of the kitchen.

Of course, as soon as architects and others adjust themselves to the new order all will be well again for the humble cottager. In drawing his plans for the garage the architect will remember the cook's automobile.

The Economic Urge

REGULATIONS issued in Tokyo provide that farmers or others, in groups of not less than five in separate communities, who buy sheep to raise for their wool, may receive government assistance; the importation of sheep is to be encouraged with bounties. But here the statesmen are in a quandary. To find a country from which sheep may be imported is seen to be a difficult problem, as the need for more sheep everywhere is felt to be an urgent one by those who would retain their official status.

The economic urge.

They find the economic urge for more sheep irresistible. In Japan it has been decided to have the government manage a model farm and supply sheep to individual farm-

ers. The war taught the mikado, as it did government agencies in other lands, the wisdom of having at home a sufficient number of sheep, for without them it is impossible to outfit any army in the proper way. They are bound up with every efficient scheme of preparedness.

It is true that shoddy, or cotton-mixed material, was employed for uniforms by all countries—for the uniforms of the enlisted men, at least; but that was only because of a shortage of the more desirable material.

The snowy lambs are springing
In clover soft and green.

Car Hog Supply Waning

THE growling commuter notes an evidence of the new order in the reduced number of travelers known as car hogs. Not that the genus is no longer numerous—merely that it does not seem to be so numerous as it was in antebellum days. The men who were at the front or in camp, and are once more enlisted in the army of commuters, have had their effect on the situation. They bring with them into the train the excellent habit of sitting up fairly straight, knees together, and feet planted squarely on the floor. That makes traveling more agreeable for those who have to share the seat.

His Time for Discomfiture

Not quite so often now does the commuter have to hunt for space in a seat over which some car hog is not draping himself. The gentleman who crosses his legs and cleans his shoes on his seatmate's clothes is somewhat less in evidence; there is a noticeable decrease in the number of porcine ones who spread their newspaper over that of their neighbor.

And here the commuter bursts forth in a pæan of joy: The hog who sprawls over two seats and will not move unless ordered to do so by the conductor or punched in the head by an indignant fellow passenger—he is becoming a negligible quantity on some railroads; he is going to join the swinish traveler who turns over the back of one seat so as to be tête-à-tête with his friend, and would keep it that way, although others wish to share the seats but not the tête-à-tête. That type of piggy-wiggy is still extant, of course, but the daily supply of him, along with the supply of all types of car hogs, has been cut down perceptibly in the great awakening.

High Cost of Government

ANOTHER sign of the new light that has burst upon the world is the high cost of government. The awakened conscience of our people gives us new laws to meet newly discovered evils, but the existing government machine is seldom found equal to the enforcement of them. The machine must take on new and costly functions, and fresh demands are made upon the taxpayers, who include all classes.

High cost of government.

This condition seems to obtain not only with the Federal Government, but throughout the administrative forces of the various States, and running down through the large cities even to the smallest municipalities. A striking example was that of the movement to cut down the high cost of living. Immediately it was proposed to make the cost of government higher by an appropriation of several millions to pay for the investigation of conditions and the cost of enforcing the law.

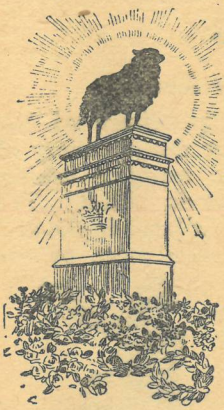
While such expenditures no doubt are necessary, it is to many a humiliation

that our present governmental machine cannot be utilized; that whenever there is a new crying evil to be checked —an evil that is countrywide, like profiteering—we find that not without building up our system at several points, and unless we place still heavier burdens upon the people, can the evils be dealt with.

Is the remedy getting to be worse than the disease? That is a question which connotes a real emergency—one that calls for the exercise of some of that high order of patriotism and that unselfish effort put forth by our great captains of industry, our labor leaders, and others in the concert of efficient work done during the period of the war.

The Need of Sheep

ANOTHER evidence of the new light that has broken upon the world is the movement started by several governments for the breeding of more sheep. It is one of the lessons of the war, which spurred the common folk of every clime into the paths of leadership instead of remaining in the age-old place held by the vast army of followers. With small regard for the announced governmental interest, one industry was abandoned for another, the object being to find a better standard of living and an easier means of livelihood.



Seen in the new dawn.

But the warning is sounded from the seats of power that sheep are needed in every land—at least every land where civilization has attained the clothes-wearing stage. East and West have one conspicuous desire in common at the present moment, and that is for more sheep. Politicians of note in every country are aligning themselves with the movement regardless of party.

The Japanese Government has taken up the matter with special vigor since the appearance in the Flowery Kingdom of marked symptoms of popular aversion to the sheep-raising and other lightly profitable industries. Efforts are being made by officialdom to raise the profits to a point that will bring old herders back to the fold.

Eyes on the Land Pie

A PHASE of the great awakening in England is related to the enormous landed estates of a few persons. No important movement for government acquisition of the land has yet been started on the Tight Little Isle, but the boys of reform are making greedy eyes at the huge pie. This is reflected in the surveys of the situation that appear in the public prints. Attention is called to the fact that there are no more dukes in the peerage than could be accommodated in a small sitting room. Excluding royalties, they number only twenty-six. Yet these wearers of the strawberry-leafed coronet own nearly 4,250,000 acres of British soil—a very generous slice of Great Britain.

Of this handful of nobles, the newspapers and the periodical press frequently remind their readers, nine are owners of 4,880 square miles—an area so large that if it were in the form of a square to walk around it would mean a two-hundred-and-eighty-mile tramp. And each of these nine dukes owns land, on an average, greater in extent than twice Schuyler County, New York. The remaining seventeen are owners of 1,743 square miles, their average holding being represented by a piece ten miles long and ten miles wide.

Getting by with it.

But all their acres put together, though they number more than 1,115,000, are eclipsed by the broad lands of a single holder—the

Duke of Sutherland, who is credited with possessing 1,358,000 acres. The published statements go into detail about these Sutherland territories. It is pointed out that they are so many you could make from them nine counties as large as Middlesex. They are eighteen times as many as the acres in the far-spreading County of London.

The propagandists seem to have marked the Duke of Sutherland for a special "picking," probably, as one daring publication puts it, his is the most flagrant case. So enormous, in fact, is this ducal estate that its owner could give away a thousand acres every day for three years, and yet keep more than a quarter of a million in his own hands. No publications except those listed as radical advocate an enforced reduction of the duke's landed estate; they merely present the facts for public consideration.

Local Color Supplied

THERE is new evidence that the fantastic Doctor Cook, who, after his "discovery" of the pole, painted it red, figuratively speaking, has taken his place among the immortal romancists of the frozen sphere, the poets of a paradise of ice. The good doctor gave us some local color that made worth while all that sacrifice of men, of ships, of money. He was labeled liar by the Peary explorers, but too late to undo the service he had rendered to the romancists. And now those Scandinavian explorers, Vilhjaimer Stefansson and Storker Storkerson, his lieutenant, throw in more warm color for the picture.

A dash of Color

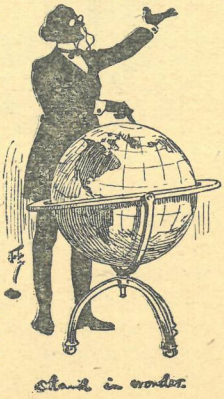
Quite a different conception is theirs from that of a frozen, arid region. When they think of the area centering about the pole and extending south to the outposts of civilization they out-Cook the celebrated American doctor. They have found out much, but they are quite sure of more.

For example, their arctic is a variable, cunning, tempestuous, wily place, teeming with life, tingling with adventure so stirring as to eclipse the free products of romance. It is filled with a great and terrible beauty, a beauty that warps the mind and lures and destroys.

It is far beyond the dreams of men who live in streets and pack themselves like pickles in subway trains, far beyond the imagining of those who have known only the gentler climates south of the circle, where mosquitoes feed upon them in summer. There are no mosquitoes at the North Pole, but there are birds of resplendent plumage. Doctor Cook "saw" birds there, gorgeous, too, in their feather; and yet it is probable that the human race, skeptical and prosaic, will make no demand for cut-rate tours at the North Pole.

Time May Answer

AFTER all the expenditure of life and treasure for the discovery of the North Pole, the world is asking, What are we going to do with it? The interest of humanity at large in the arctic has been kept alive more by the contributions of romance to the subject than by what fact has offered. The arctic seemed to drop from the popular consciousness with the discovery of the North Pole.


Stark in wonder

While the pole had the lure of the unattainable, it captivated the imagination of the world, and warmed the creative forces of the story-writing men and women. But the cold truth of discovery has presented

the pole as a mere geographical expression, an imaginary junction of longitudinal lines, wide-drifted stretches of snow, now glittering under a dimmish sun, now driven irresistibly before bitter and withering winds.

The region, so far as actually known, is an expanse of unbroken, silent plain, colder than interstellar space, deadly to every form of life, uninhabited, uninhabitable.

That is the picture painted with the pigments of ascertained fact. Of what value to civilization is the knowledge? Time may answer, and answer handsomely.

In the Everglades

WITH a view to bringing the Seminole Indians of Florida into closer touch with civilization, the government has appointed an Indian commissioner who has gone to live among them.

At the close of the last Seminole war in 1842, the government agents had instructions to transport the entire tribe from Florida to Western reservations. This was done to a great extent, and the government, as well as the State, has treated the matter officially as though the tribe were extinct in Florida. In fact, however, a few thousands of these Indians eluded the agents and hid in the wilderness of the Florida Everglades.

After the agents had gone, they appeared again in the towns at intervals to sell the skins of deer and alligators and purchase food. A few would venture even to set up tents on one of the fertile islands of the glades, comparatively near civilization. Here they began to till the soil and raise cattle and chickens.

As soon, however, as they got things into condition for a comfortable living, some white man would present himself and say that he had bought the land. The Indians, having no redress, as they had no official recognition by the government, then would retreat farther from civilization, until they at last made their home deep within the maze of the Everglades where no white man could find his way without a guide.

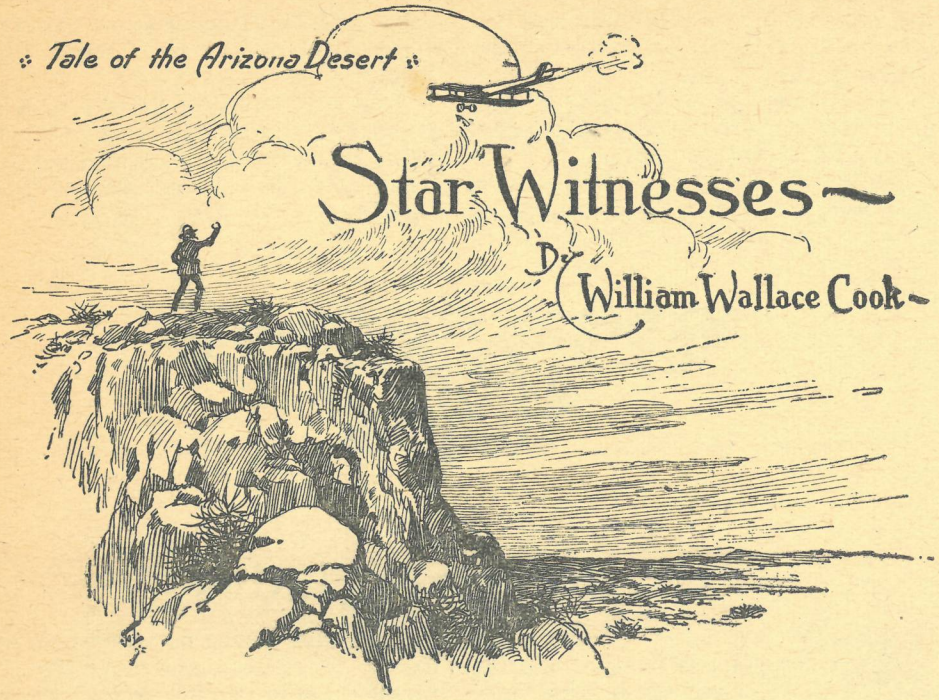
Mrs. Minnie Moore Willson, who has lived near these Indians, visited among them, and is the author of a book about them, says that the Seminoles live in thatched huts in the most primitive state. They subsist chiefly by fishing, hunting, and raising corn.

Although often in want, they will not accept a gift of money. They have an ideal code of morals, and they live up to it strictly. They must take a vow that they never will lie, steal, or cheat, and that they will "think with God."

Mrs. Willson says that in all the years she has lived near them she never has heard of a Seminole telling a lie.

Owing to their rigid laws against intermarriage with whites, the Seminoles have kept themselves an absolutely pure-blooded Indian tribe.

There now are about six hundred left, and the government has at last officially "discovered" them, granting them a reservation in Florida of one hundred thousand acres of land.



(A NOVELETTE)

CHAPTER I.

ONLY A FORLORN HOPE.

CHILSON had lost his ticket, stepped hard on a pasteboard box containing an old lady's lunch, and dropped his satchel on a fat man's toes. But that was nothing for Chilson. He was glad to think that he had got aboard without wrecking the train. And he was so cheerful in his little calamities that no one ever could feel real put out with him.

At noon the "accommodation" was to halt for twenty minutes at Skull Valley for refreshments. Chilson gave the old lady a dollar for putting his foot in the lunch box, figuring that she could use the money to buy a regular meal at the noon stop; and then the old lady, being a kind, motherly soul, refused to take the dollar unless Chilson would take the lunch. Chilson yielded, more to please the old lady than anything else, and wrapped the box in a newspaper and put it into his satchel.

Placating the fat man whose toes had suffered was not difficult at all. Chilson also belonged to the Great and Illustrious Order of Corpulent Chaps, being five feet nine inches tall and weighing two hundred and forty pounds. All persons of excessive stoutness have a sort of friendly feeling for each other; and in the case of these two in the drawing-room car there proved to be another tie: both wore, on their coat lapels, emblems which proved that they were lodge brothers.

"Sleep is conducive to beauty," said Chilson mysteriously to the other man. "Even a silk hat looks worn when it loses its nap."

Then the other answered in the accepted manner: "When life is not worth living, you can nearly always blame it on the liver."

Thereupon they shook hands in a peculiar way, and each had satisfied himself that he was not dealing with an impostor. Chilson sat down, wedging himself comfortably between the plush arms of the chair. He handed his card

to the newly discovered brother, a conventional proceeding that was returned in kind.

Chilson's bit of pasteboard carried this legend: "Mr. William Chilson, Loans and Insurance, Flagstaff, Arizona." The card he received in exchange caused his perennial smile to widen. "William Pendleton Biddle," he read, "Commission Merchant, Denver, Colo." And down in the left-hand corner was this: "General Produce."

"Bill," Chilson remarked, "how many are there of us in this world, do you suppose?"

"Ask me something easy," said Biddle. "You seem to have something on your mind, brother," he added; "what is it?"

Chilson was looking desperately through his pockets. Whatever he had on his mind was not reflected in his face. It was his nature to smile continually in spite of every disaster. Biddle's clew to something wrong was evolved solely out of Chilson's frantic prodding of his pockets.

"The trouble market is easy and always can be borrowed at low rates," Chilson remarked. "I've lost my ticket."

At this, Biddle froze just a little. Wearing the same emblem that Chilson did required that financial aid was to be extended if called for. It seemed queer that Chilson should have lost his ticket, and that he should have discovered his loss immediately after finding a lodge brother to whom he could appeal in his distress if he found it necessary. Money talks; but it does not always speak when spoken to. This has been known to happen among men with the same grip and password.

The conductor was coming along the aisle, pointing straight for Chilson, the only passenger in the drawing-room car who had got on the train at the last stop. The situation was growing tense. Biddle pretended to lose himself in a newspaper.

"Tickets!" said the man in blue and brass buttons, halting beside Chilson.

The latter drew a handkerchief across his damp brows and looked up beaming. "Did you ever hear this one, conductor?" he inquired. "A railroad usually begins asking for a receiver when there is nothing left to receive."

There fell a silence. Biddle plunged deeper into the news of the day. The man across the aisle, who looked like a drummer, began to grin in a knowing, sarcastic way. The old lady, whose chair was next to Chilson's on his right, seemed deeply moved and started fishing in her hand bag for the silver dollar recently given to her by the man who had lost his ticket. The drummer, at least, divined her generous intentions.

The conductor drew his face into a hard knot. "Don't get funny," he admonished. "I'm the ticket receiver on this train, and I'm here to receive what's coming to the company. Give up!"

"All right; I'll give up. Conductor, I've lost my ticket."

"Huh! Where are you going?"

"Phoenix. I'm a witness in a lawsuit——"

"Was it a one-way or a round trip?"

"I bought it going and coming."

The conductor took a perfectly good, unpunched ticket from his pocket. "Here it is then," he said; "one of the brakemen picked it up on the car steps." He worked his punch, tore the ticket in two, handed one part to Chilson, and put away the other. "You fat men are the limit for losing things," he growled.

"Two things I never lose—my temper and my overweight." Chilson dug two prime cigars out of his vest and presented them. "My regards, conductor. Burn one yourself and hand the other to the brakeman."

The hard knot untied itself with a smile, and the captain of the train crew passed on. The old lady was relieved, the drummer disappointed, and Biddle came out from behind the newspaper with fraternal greetings. Chilson invited Biddle to the smoking compartment, but when they got there they found it crowded. They went forward to the smoking car, turned two seats together, lighted up, and began to talk. They gave five minutes to their secret order, three minutes to general produce and the state of the commission busi-

ness in Denver, four minutes to Flagstaff and the insurance business, and then, as was inevitable, they got round to the stock topic for all persons whose embonpoint has become noticeable.

"Ever try the rolling treatment?" Chilson inquired.

"I've rolled till I've nearly wrecked the house," sighed Biddle, "and it won't come off—not a pound!"

"Same here," Chilson went on. "Bant?"

Biddle groaned. "The starvation method never got me anywhere," he said. "There's something about food that fascinates me. If I skip breakfast I always make up for it at dinner."

Chilson's grin became sympathetic. "Bill," he said, "I've tried everything, but it's no use. I'll admit I hadn't the nerve to go far enough with the dieting process to get results, but the starvation road is a hard one for a fat man to travel. War rations didn't help me at all. After several meatless, wheatless, sweetless months I weighed in for a gain of five pounds. Friends told me privately that I ought to go into hiding somewhere and stay till the war was over. They said I was a disgrace to the starving Belgians. It's a lonely day in a fat man's life when some human skeleton doesn't throw a gibe at him. Still there was a time when I fell off."

Biddle showed interest. "When?" he asked.

"When I tried bicycling to reduce. I fell off until I had to give it up."

Biddle looked disappointed. "Nobody loves a fat man," he chirped.

"True," agreed Chilson. "Are you married, Bill?"

"I flagged the nicest little woman in the world ten years ago, when I was a regular Adonis. Since I've become stout I know I'm a trial to Maggie. Her one aim in life is to find something that will make me thin. I try everything she suggests, but the banting process. It isn't in me to go through with that, even if she threatened to get a divorce."

"It's unlucky to play cards, Bill, with a woman who has winning ways," Chilson returned, "and Maggie will get you yet. I see you are bald, so it's perfectly safe for me to tell you a hair-raising personal experience. Listen! I'm not married, but I'm like Barkis—willin'. Oh, yes; there's a lady. We met in a most dramatic manner a year ago. We happened to see a crime committed, just us two, and now we're star witnesses for the State in the trial that coming off in Phoenix. Luella will be there."

Chilson straightened up, smoothed down his hair, adjusted his necktie, and snapped a bit of lint from his coat sleeve, smiling softly the while. "I've got a forlorn hope, a very forlorn hope, that when I meet Luella in Phoenix——" He halted abruptly, as though realizing all at once that he was going too far.

"Crime?" echoed Biddle, growing interested again.

Chilson nodded. "If all the sun had to do was to beam on the righteous,' he remarked, "it wouldn't have to get up so early in the morning. Luella and I saw that crime committed, by the most wonderful chance you ever heard of. We were perfect strangers, but when she screamed with fright and I rushed to her rescue—large bodies move slowly, but I really rushed—right then we became friends without the formality of an introduction. I knew that I had found the One Woman, Bill, and I hung to the trail.

"Then, when I asked her the question," Chilson went on, "she wept and said that she wished I was more sylph-like and more active, and that she would remember me always, always, and be a sister to me, and all my little universe sort of folded up like a collapsible hat-rack. Bill, in order to become sylph-like and active I didn't eat for two days. Then I had a relapse. When I meet Luella in Phoenix she will discover that I couldn't love her enough to go on a diet—and that's why I've got such a forlorn hope."

Chilson lifted his pudgy hands in a helpless gesture. "I love my country," he continued, "and I don't wish

it any harm, but if there'd only be a regular famine in the land with nothing to eat for a few months, I believe I could train down, get a figure, and show some activity. But that's too much to hope for," he finished, his perennial smile sadly dimmed.

Just here the conductor appeared in the rear of the smoker. "Hello, Bill!" he called loudly.

There were perhaps forty people in the car, and at least half of them jumped up.

"Bill Chilson!" the conductor added.

Everybody sat down but the man from Flagstaff. The conductor approached and handed him a telegram.

"Took that on at the last station," he remarked.

Chilson read his telegram and looked gloomy. "I'm not going on to Phoenix with you after all, Bill," he announced. "This message is signed 'Allison,' and requests me to leave the train at Pima Notch. Allison is the State's attorney. Some cross current must have ruffled the course of justice."

"Pima Notch next stop!" shouted a brakeman, putting his head in at the door of the smoker.

Biddle gave his lodge brother a feeling farewell, and accompanied it with the grip of good fellowship. Chilson, on his way back to the drawing-room car to secure his satchel, stumbled over a suit case and fell across the knees of four men who were playing cinch. He wrecked an interesting hand and drew down upon him the unkind remarks of the players.

Biddle drew a long breath and shook his head sadly. "He'll never win Luella," he muttered; "it's impossible."

CHAPTER II.

SOMETHING ELSE AGAIN.

PIMA NOTCH was entirely surrounded by desolate-looking hills. Chilson took a casual survey of the bleak environment and then tried to find the town. This was impossible because there was no town. The railroad came through the hills by a V-shaped groove and passed out of them by another. Midway between the entrance and exit was a section of planked platform and a railroad station about the size of a dog kennel. That was all there was of Pima Notch.

A sleepy-eyed man had emerged from the station to watch the train arrive and depart. Either he overlooked Chilson or else he was too languid to give him any attention. As soon as the train had left the man faded from sight. Chilson followed him up and halted at a bay window. The agent had fallen into a chair, his head tilted back, his feet on a table beside a telegraph instrument, and to all appearances he was fast asleep.

For so listless a person this was quick work. The windows of the bay were open, and Chilson leaned through one of them as far as his ample proportions would permit. With one extended hand he managed to reach the agent's shoulder.

"Hey!" he called.

The agent stirred uneasily and opened his eyes. "What d'you want?" he asked, with a yawn.

"I'm looking for a man named Allison."

"That ain't my name, and there ain't no one else within miles o' this place but you and me. But I reckon you can keep on lookin' if you want." The agent readjusted himself and went back to sleep.

Chilson pulled himself out of the window, mopped his brow with a handkerchief, and then examined the telegram again. No; there was no mistake. Pima Notch was the place; and there he was—but no Allison. There was a baggage truck at the end of the diminutive station. What use there could possibly be for a baggage truck at Pima Notch was a good deal of a mystery; maybe there was something in the rules and regulations that made it necessary for every station to have one. Chilson pushed the truck into the shade of the station wall, sat down on it, and fell to wondering where Allison could be. His thoughts were interrupted by a call from the distance.

Turning his eyes in an easterly di-

rection, he saw the form of a man outlined against a hill on that side of the station. The man was waving his arms and beckoning. Chilson surveyed the stretch of hot sand that lay between him and the person in question and was tempted to grumble. Being of an accommodating disposition, however, he yielded the point. Picking up his satchel, he plunged into the heat of that basin among the hills. Nevertheless it was his opinion that Allison was asking a good deal of him.

When he drew close to the man who had called him across the sweltering bit of desert, Chilson was conscious of a profound disappointment. The fellow was not Allison. The State's attorney had called on Chilson two or three times, so the man from Flagstaff knew exactly what he looked like.

"What's the idea, stranger?" he asked.

The stranger was young, slender, and agile. Something about Chilson did not seem to please him. He mumbled to himself, walking all around Chilson and studying him from different angles. When he had returned to the point from which he started, he released strong words which indicated that Chilson had no monopoly of the disappointment.

"Hanged if I know what they're thinking about!" he exclaimed at last. "I don't believe I can ever get away with you."

"If epitaphs were reliable, young man, the Old Nick would have to wear mourning," Chilson remarked in the oracular way that distinguished him now and then. "It depends on how you want to get away with me whether you find it a job or not. Who are you?"

"I'm here to pick up a man that's looking for Allison," was the answer.

"Then consider yourself engaged. I'm Bill Chilson."

"Oh, I hadn't a doubt of that; it was just the size of you that stumped me. This way, Bill."

He led the way through a break in the hillside, and Chilson, following tight at his heels, came out suddenly on a great level of ground and met the unexpected face to face. He dropped his satchel, gasped, and staggered. A man-made eagle, double-winged and of huge proportions, was roosting on the sand. A Mexican, dozing in the shade of the wings, was startled into wakefulness by the approaching footsteps. He was a particularly villainous-looking Mexican.

"Now, don't go all to pieces," requested Chilson's guide, turning on him. "Allison has gone to a whole lot of trouble, but he is handling a ticklish proposition. You are one of his star witnesses, and we've got to be careful of you."

"That's all right," returned Chilson; "I like to have people careful of me. What I want to know is, who are you, what's this airplane for, and where did it come from?"

"You can't expect me to know every blamed thing," replied the other; "my name's Henry, and I'm only the pilot. See if you can squeeze yourself into that cockpit."

He took Chilson by the arm, led him to the side of the flying machine, and indicated a hole in the deck.

Chilson surveyed the hole and turned away with a perceptible tremor. "I'd rather ride in a buckboard, if it's all the same to you, Henry," he observed. "I've heard of these things, and I've seen 'em down around the border, but, do you know, I never had any desire to ride in one."

"You were subpœnæd all in proper form, weren't you?" Henry demanded.

"Sure!"

"Then you've got to go, Bill, or suffer for contempt of court."

"I'm willing to go," protested Chilson, "but I claim the right to choose the means of transportation. If anything happened while we were up in the air, don't forget that I'd fall a lot harder than you would."

"Cast your eye over this." Henry took a letter from his pocket and handed it to the man from Flagstaff.

The letter was written on official stationery, signed "Allison," and commanded Chilson to proceed by airplane

with the deputy marshal who would meet him at Pima Notch. Allison begged that Chilson would overlook the somewhat irregular proceeding, but it was all in the interest of the very important trial in Phoenix.

"If you are a deputy marshal, Henry, I suppose I'll have to take a chance," said Chilson faintly. "I wonder what's happened in this case to make it necessary to ring in an airplane on me?"

"Airplanes are getting to be pretty common, these days," returned Henry. "They are used for carrying passengers and mail, and department stores are making suburban deliveries with them. They'll be as common as automobiles before many years. I wasn't expecting to have such a heavy passenger, but if I can get away with you and miss the tops of those hills, everything will be all right. See if you can crowd into the cockpit."

Chilson dropped his satchel into the cockpit first; then, with the help of Henry and the Mexican, he was hoisted up and forced down. Although cramped for space, he was aboard.

"If anything happens," he declared, "I'll never be able to get out."

"If anything happens," said the unfeeling Henry, "it won't do you any good to get out."

"That's so; and if the world wasn't full of fools the wise guys would have a hard time getting along. Oh, well, I guess this is going to be thrilling, all right. If you've got a camera, Henry, just take a snapshot of me, will you? If I live, I want to show the picture to a lady as proof of how daring and active I can be if I have to."

"We've got something else to do besides take pictures," returned Henry, climbing into another cockpit in front of Chilson's. He began working at something. "All right, Salinas," he called; "turn 'er over."

The Mexican laid hold of the propeller, pulled it down hard, and jumped away. There was a preliminary sputtering, but it died out and was not a success. Salinas tried again, and this time the hills gave back wild echoes of a motor beginning its song of power.

"Hang on to your hat, Bill!" yelled Henry.

That was the last thing Chilson heard, for the increasing din had reached a pitch that submerged every other sound. Chilson hung on to his cap, and the thrills came fast and furious as the airplane began to move. It was a wabbly start, for there was more ballast in the observer's cockpit than the machine was warranted to carry. But the rubber-tired wheels sped faster and faster over the scorched face of the desert. The unsteadiness grew less and less as the speed increased; then, presently, the last of the rough going gave way to a floating motion, and terra firma seemed to fling the big bird into the air.

In order to negotiate the hilltops, Henry "zoomed." In other words, Henry almost stood the airplane on its tail, climbing as near the perpendicular as possible. All Chilson could see, when he looked straight upward, was Henry's back, and he was glad that he was wedged so firmly into the cockpit that he could have looped the loop without falling out.

That zooming gave Chilson his most prodigious thrill; he did not figure that there could be any more thrills to beat that one. But in this he was mistaken.

The machine continued to climb, after grazing the crests of the uplifts. The wind hit the airplane with smashing fury, so that Chilson found it difficult even to breathe. There was a glass windshield in front of him, and he tried to double over and get more completely behind it. In this he was only partly successful.

Chilson, at the start, had cherished a faint hope that he might be too heavy and that the flyer would refuse to leave the ground. That hope had been dashed. Another took its place: Chilson now hoped that he would drag the machine down—not swiftly, but slowly and comfortably and safely so that the deputy sheriff would have to give up trying to get him to Phoenix by the air route. This longing also was shattered.

Then, when they were high in the air and had straightened out on an even

keel, Chilson began to feel a little more at ease. He looked around at the propeller, but it was going so fast he could not see it. Then he looked overside. He thought that they must be close to Wickenburg. He saw no sign of a town, however, and no trace of the railroad.

Gradually, as the minutes passed, he began to use his wits. His bird's-eye view of the scenery below revealed nothing at all familiar. He judged that it must be about half-past ten in the forenoon. But that could not be, he argued to himself, for the sun was on his right. He puzzled it out. If the sun was on his right, then Henry was not going south; and if he was not going south, he certainly was not bound for Phoenix.

"Henry," he yelled, "you've lost your bearings! We're going northwest!"

He might as well have tried to make himself heard in a boiler factory. His voice was caught up in the whistle of the wind, the roar of the propeller, and scattered in the great void.

Then Chilson had, perhaps, his greatest thrill of all. He was not going to Phoenix. Allison had some other plan. So far as Chilson could judge, he was being borne at an unbelievable speed straight into the heart of the Painted Desert.

"State's attorneys have a queer way of doing things," he thought, and resigned himself to the mysteries of that wild flight.

CHAPTER III.

STRANDED HIGH AND DRY.

MINUTES were like hours to Chilson. Never in his life had he been more helpless than he was in that flying machine. Owing to his snug fit in the cockpit, his movements were terribly restricted. If he tried to talk to Henry, the result was a discouraging monologue; Henry could not hear him, and he could hardly hear himself, even if he yelled.

The panorama unfolding below was of burned mountains and blighted plains, a monotonous picture worked out in dull browns and yellows. High above, the airplane shot through the blistering void. The torrid sun was the destroying angel of that wilderness, and only the rush of air past those in the machine made the flight at all bearable. In spite of the furious wind a clammy dampness gathered on Chilson's face; he gasped for breath and felt himself on the verge of suffocation.

Again and again he closed his eyes, crouched downward as far as he could, and bade what, he supposed, was his last farewell to life. But always his eyes reopened to the same dread landscape hurrying rearward beneath. At the speed they were traveling, Chilson imagined they had gone far enough to cover the breadth or length of that desert a dozen times. It was a time, however, when Chilson's imagination was not at all dependable.

He presently became aware that Henry had changed his course. He was circling in mile-wide turns, darting off on eccentric aëriel trails, retracing his course, and then racing away on another tangent. If there were anything to find in that blasted region below, Chilson would have guessed that he was hunting for something.

At last they tilted earthward in a descent. They spiraled and spiraled, like a huge gadfly coquetting with the broad, flat top of a butte. Then, suddenly, the howl of the propeller grew still, and only the scream of the wind through the fabric was heard.

"Where in blazes are you going?" shouted Chilson.

"Engine trouble!" yelled Henry in answer. "We've got to land, Bill, and this seems to be a likely place. Sit tight and don't worry."

Sit tight! It was impossible for Chilson to do anything else. But as for worrying, Henry might as well have asked that butte to get out of the way. The airplane swung across the sheer side of that flat-topped hill, hovered over the surface, skimmed the ground, touched and rebounded, and then touched and rolled on the rubber-shod wheels. A minute later the great fabric shivered and came to a halt.

Chilson stared at the surroundings. "You certainly picked out an elegant place to have engine trouble, Henry," he remarked.

"Take a drink and forget it," the pilot answered, passing over a water canteen. "A man don't generally have much to say about this engine trouble."

Chilson grabbed at the canteen and partook freely of its brackish contents. "We must be about ten thousand miles from Phœnix," he hazarded as he handed back the tin, flannel-covered reservoir. "What's the idea of going from Pima Notch to Phœnix by the way of China and the Desert of Gobi? You've had me up in the air, Henry, in more ways than one."

"Orders, Bill," answered Henry. "How do I know what Allison has got in his mind? I'm only the pilot. Get out; we've got to lighten ship while I tinker with the motor."

After a few unsuccessful attempts, Chilson managed to pry himself clear of the cockpit and roll off the machine.

"Life is full of trials," he puffed, "and the only ones it pleases are the lawyers. But why Allison has ordered one of his star witnesses aloft in a flying machine rather gets me. If we're not bound for Phoenix, Henry, then what is supposed to be our destination?"

"You got to have a reason for every blamed thing, Bill?" Henry demanded. "We'll talk about our destination later, after I find out what's wrong with the engine. Better take out that satchel, too; it must weigh several pounds."

The satchel was removed from the cockpit.

"Now," the pilot went on, "you stand right here, Bill, and crank for me, will you? When I give the word, pull down on the propeller blade, so. Mind your eye, though. Get out of the way as soon as you pull. If she began to whirl and happened to catch you, Allison would be out a star witness. See? It won't take us long to find out where the trouble is."

Chilson was eager to continue the conversation then and there, knowing well that a chat was impossible when they were aloft and roaring through the void. However, he was even more eager to have the trouble fixed up and to be on his way. So he posted himself by the propeller and waited while Henry climbed into his cockpit and adjusted himself to the levers and things by which he was surrounded.

"All right, Bill!" shouted Henry.

Chilson jerked down on the propeller blade and tumbled out of the way. At the very first pull the motor began to sing.

"Everything seems to be going all right, Henry," Chilson called. "That's a sweet-running engine, strikes me, and it's pegging along with never a miss. What did you think was wrong with it?"

Probably Henry did not hear much of this; there was a good deal of noise, and Chilson's voice, owing to his recent experiences, was not as strong as usual.

The airplane began to move, and it moved very briskly. The mesa was flat and smooth, in that part of its area, and the machine rushed toward the edge of the lofty plain in reckless fashion. Chilson's heart skipped a beat as he watched. It looked to him as though Henry would surely tip over the brink and crash at the foot of the wall, hundreds of feet below.

But this did not happen. The airplane lifted on the safe side of the precipitous descent; and it not only lifted but kept lifting, climbing up and up toward the blue of the cloudless sky.

"He's trying it out," thought Chilson.

When high in the air, Henry "banked" and pointed the plane directly southeast. He continued on that course, too, with never a moment's hesitation and evidently with not a thought for the man he had left behind.

Chilson was dazed. A slow bewilderment had taken possession of him. After a few seconds of inaction, he began to yell and wave his arms. It was useless. The airplane kept right on south by east, dwindled to the size of a vulture, then to that of a gnat, and then faded from Chilson's sight altogether.

Chilson's jaw sagged. He peered around him at the flat surface of that part of the mesa, and a mighty hopelessness welled up in his breast. Usually, when in doubt, he smoked a cigar. He groped for one now, got it out of his pocket, looked at it, and then returned it to his pocket again.

"Too hot," he muttered dully. "If I stand here in this sun long enough I'll begin to smoke without firing a weed. What do you suppose ails Henry?"

He wiped his brows; after that, he made his way slowly to the edge of the precipice and looked over. Below him was a straight up-and-down wall of dizzy height. He knelt and craned his neck out over space. Up-and-down walls were all he could see to right and left. Climbing to his feet again, he rammed his hands deep into the pockets of his linen duster.

"Say, but I'm dry!" he mumbled; "and hungry, too, hungry as seven bears."

It was nothing new for Chilson to be hungry. He had boasted to the conductor that he never lost his temper or his overweight. He had forgotten to mention his appetite in that schedule.

His only lucid thought in that forlorn moment was that he was hungry. Recent experiences had left his wits in chaotic condition, but above this mental state arose the clear call for food and water. He strolled back slowly toward the spot where the airplane had effected its landing. His satchel was there; and also, by some happy chance, the canteen from which Henry had given him a drink. The pilot had dropped it by accident, probably. Well, here was a little something to be thankful for.

Chilson took another drink; then he mechanically recapped the canteen and hung it over his shoulder. He began to realize that what he needed, even more than food, was a scrap of shade. The hot sun was wilting him rapidly. Before he started on his exploring tour, he studied the southwestern skies long and anxiously.

"Henry'll come back," he tried to reassure himself; "of course he'll come back. Allison will see to that, even if Henry loses his nerve. What will Allison do without one of his two star witnesses at the trial? If Henry doesn't come here after me, then some one else will. Meanwhile, I've got to keep myself from burning up. Whew!" and he mopped his face again, for the dozenth time.

He started south. The surface of the mesa was rough and a little promising in that direction. Before he had taken half a dozen steps, however, he remembered his satchel and went back for it. He picked it up, but immediately dropped it. There was a bit of metal in the leather handle, and the metal was hot enough to be decidedly uncomfortable. Taking the satchel under his arm he staggered southward, toiled up and over a slight "rise," and at last dropped down in the bottom of a little barranca. He had found his scrap of shade.

Chilson's endurance was so small as to be hardly worth mentioning. He had a dislike of physical exercise; it was not inborn, but acquired in later years as he took on more and more avoirdupois. In his youth he had been a trim figure of a man, quick in his movements, well muscled, and athletic. His figure, his "pep," and his muscle, it might be said, had been sacrificed to the great god Chow. Voluntarily he had traded his physical fitness for the phantom delights of hearty breakfasts, course dinners, and very late and expensive suppers. Thus he had loaded himself with superfluous flesh, clogged the springs of action, and, had he but realized it, come to live but half a life.

A motor car had completed his undoing. Unable to walk two blocks without puffing prodigiously, it had become his habit to transport himself over long or short distances in an automobile. So, of course, his muscles grew flabby. He agreed with the world that a fat man is a standing joke; and he entered into the spirit of the joke by storing his mind with humorous nuggets of wisdom. He scattered the nuggets with an open hand, and in this

way became something of a calamity to his friends.

Now, on the top of that desert mesa, the first thing to which his mind turned in his extremity was the dinner he had missed at Skull Valley. He groaned as he panted for breath in the barranca. And then he remembered the old lady's lunch for which he had bartered a silver dollar.

His red and perspiring face flamed with sudden eagerness. He opened the hot satchel, spread out the lunch on the paper in which he had wrapped the box, and proceeded to gorge on cold roast chicken, dill pickles, and marble cake. He found a pint bottle, sampled it, and found that it contained strong black tea. The tea had to answer for the demi-tasse of coffee.

Well, all in all it was a most excellent lunch. The fact that he had stepped in it, and somewhat scrambled the different articles on the menu, did not make the viands less toothsome or enjoyable. After he had made a clean sweep, with the exception of half a bottle of tea, he drew a breath of deep satisfaction, lighted his last cigar, and fell back comfortably on the soft sand that cushioned the bottom of the barranca.

"Now I'm all right till Henry gets back," he said, sighing contentedly.

It did not occur to him that Henry might not be coming back; or that, against such a dread contingency, it would have been well to put himself on rations with the idea of prolonging life to the last minte. Not at all! Devotees of the great god Chow eat what they want and all they want whenever they have it handy. To-morrow is another day, and Chow is supposed to look after his own.

CHAPTER IV.

A NATURAL CONCLUSION.

AFTER Chilson had smoked his cigar he sank into a drowse. From this siesta he awoke with a start, dreaming that the voice of a brakeman had dinned in his ears: "Phœnix! All out!"

He got up on his feet and looked dazedly around for the drawing-room porter, that dusky factotum of the journey's end, with his wide smile, his whisk broom, and his yearning for the customary two-bits. He had almost lifted his voice to call: "Hey, George!" when sudden realization smote him between the eyes. He staggered, drew a hand across his brows, and muttered: "Henry is a long time getting back."

The geniality of fat men is proverbial. The adage "Laugh and grow fat" was evolved by a discerning mind that reasoned backward, rightly or wrongly, from effect to a contributing cause. In Chilson's case the old saw was only partly true. He owed his stoutness less to a happy heart than to the list of comestibles scheduled under the caption "Bill of Fare." Nevertheless, he tried to survey life from its pleasantest angles. It was good policy, since a fat man can neither fight nor run. Now, he preferred to think nice things about Henry, inasmuch as he could not imagine why any one should want to fly away with a large and innocent person and maroon him on an island in the air entirely surrounded by the Painted Desert.

Possibly, Chilson thought, Henry was already back and waiting impatiently, perhaps fearfully, for him to show himself. Spurred by this fancy, he scrambled up the side of the barranca and took a look at the bleak, bare level toward the north. There was no airplane in sight. Chilson consulted his watch. Four o'clock! He no longer deluded himself with false hopes. What Henry had done he had done deliberately. He was a traitor to Allison. But why?

Chilson wandered about the mesa thinking it over. He tried to consider his plight with a calm mind and to reason correctly. The dangers of his lonely situation, however, shouldered aside his thoughts and confused his reflections. Marooned! Marooned on the top of a sun-blistered butte, miles and miles from anywhere! Nothing to eat, and nothing to drink except half a pint of bitter tea! Chilson groaned and tossed his arms.

The sun was well down the western curve of the sky. Its heat was tempered, and climatic conditions there on the mesa had become tolerable. The hour favored exploration, and Chilson started around the mesa's edge hunting for a way down. Self-preservation counseled this move, although how much better off he should be on the desert below than on the one in the air was a point that he did not pause to consider. The survey at least gave Chilson something to do and hence occupied his mind.

From point to point he moved around the mesa's brim, blowing like a grampus from the drag on his unused muscles, and taking longer and longer periods of rest at the places of observation.

In form the mesa was an irregular circle, its overhanging lip smooth and flat on the northern side and roughened at the southern. He guessed that the area comprised fifteen or twenty acres, and that its walls measured from five hundred to a thousand feet in height. At no place was there the slightest chance of effecting a descent. Where the walls were not straight up and down, they were cut under and gave only a glimpse of dizzy space beneath.

A long time was required in making this investigation, and when Chilson had returned to his starting point he slumped to the ground, tuckered out. He had done more walking in two hours than he had done in the two preceding weeks. He ached, and the perspiration oozed from every pore. Had the mesa been a barred cell he could not have been more completely a prisoner.

The sun was setting in fiery splendor. Its level rays struck broadside on against distant buttes, bringing out vivid streaks of red as well as varying shades of brown and yellow. Cactus clumps and greasewood bushes cast long shadows. And then, almost in a moment, the solar orb disappeared as though it had been jerked from the world by a mighty hand, and there followed a most enchanting afterglow which plated the crest of every butte with gold.

This performance of the sun did not appeal to Chilson. He was hungry again, and he wanted to drink, and he wanted to smoke. The realization that he had nothing to eat made him ravenous; and the knowledge that he was out of cigars served only to increase his desire for tobacco. As for the half pint of cold tea, that must be cherished and counted out in drops. He began to understand this, now, and was censuring himself for not having been more sparing with the rest of the contents of that box of lunch.

Henry, he reasoned, had dropped him on that mesa and left him there by a trick. Chilson shuddered as he thought how easily the trick had been worked. The motive back of the outrage was still very dark to Bill Chilson. Allison, the prosecuting attorney, remained his one hope. Allison needed him at the trial; in fact, his presence in court was of utmost importance to the State. Conviction hung upon his testimony and Luella's. Oh, yes; Henry would find himself in hot water when he reported to Allison.

Chilson's problem was to keep himself alive until Allison could effect his rescue. It seemed like a hopeless problem to the marooned star witness. He might last two or three days, he figured, if he was very sparing of the tea; after that—— He closed his eyes and refused to think of what was to happen then.

A faint howl from the shadows below startled Chilson. Coyotes! Once he had made a trip to the borax mines in Death Valley, and during that little junket he had heard similar sounds and they had been explained to him by old Pete Hornaday, who had accompanied him as guide.

In his great loneliness and discouragement, it was vaguely cheering to hear that wail of the desert scavenger. Chilson discovered that he was cold. One could roast by day and freeze by night in that part of the American Sahara. Chilson pulled his linen duster around him and buttoned

it to the chin. But what he needed was a winter overcoat.

Then, as he sat shivering, he had an idea. It was the very first spark struck from the flint of his resourcefulness by the steel of adversity. Rising lamely from the ground he stumbled through the starlight to the barranca where he had left his satchel. The sand in the bottom of the barranca was warm with stored-up heat. He covered himself with it, like a kiddie at play on some ocean beach; and later, wrapped in his sandy blanket, he fell asleep.

The night was a short one. Chilson opened his eyes to find that the sun was rising and that his stomach was clamoring for ham and eggs, toast, and coffee. He got up, shook the sand out of his clothes and hunted for the chicken bones discarded on the preceding day. He wolfed these like a famished dog and took a swallow of tea. There was little nourishment in the sorry meal, and he wondered how it was that he still seemed strong enough to continue his explorations.

He did not remember that, as camels store away water for long periods of drought, gentlemen of large proportions have reserves of sustenance upon which to draw in times of famine. Without reasoning about the whys and wherefores of his physical condition, Chilson devoted his strength to a search for something to eat. He had not investigated all the rough country on the south side of the mesa. Perhaps, if he hunted warily, he might find a chuckwalla!

Now, a chuckwalla is an edible lizard and inhabits the desert. Hornaday had explained all about it to Chilson. Skinned and roasted, Hornaday declared, a chuckwalla made a tempting repast. After selecting a stone that would be useful in slaying his quarry, Chilson began roaming through the rough country.

He did not find a chuckwalla, but he did happen upon a bunch of little gourds, growing miraculously out of the thirsty soil. Hornaday had shown him some of these in Death Valley, and had explained that they were called "desert apples" and might be eaten in a pinch. If ever Chilson was in a pinch it was then, so he cracked one of the gourds and sampled its bitter contents.

He decided that green persimmons were ambrosia compared with desert apples and continued to hunt for chuckwallas. The edible lizards kept on evading him, but again he stumbled upon something which recalled his talks with old Pete Hornaday. This was a barrel-shaped cactus, covered with long spikes curved like fishhooks. Hornaday said this cactus was called the "bisnaga," otherwise "the Well of the Desert," and declared that it had saved the lives of many unfortunates lost in the arid wilderness.

Chilson carried a pocket knife, and this he used to strip some of the vicious spines from the water reservoir, and then, after a good deal of work, to cut off the top and dig a little basin in the raw stump. The basin, according to Hornaday, would fill with juice in time.

Chilson, pleased with the way he was adjusting himself to his environment, sat down to wait for a drink from the Well of the Desert. There was a novelty about that Robinson Crusoe sort of existence which he might have enjoyed had his threatening perils not been so portentous. Yet, even so, to be doing something took his mind off his forlorn situation for the moment.

While he waited for the bisnaga to yield up its nectar, his wandering gaze settled upon a clump of cactus of another species. This variety of desert plant grew in the form of straight, slender poles, and was known as the "whipstock," or ocotillo. The sight of those thorny poles gave Chilson a bright idea.

He sawed off three of them with his knife, stabbing himself many times with the thorns, but paying no attention to the small hurts. After he had trimmed the three poles, he spliced them together with pieces of a tough, cordlike vine that sprawled around the base of the bisnaga. Next, he removed his linen duster, bound it by the sleeves to the end of the makeshift flagstaff, and planted his distress signal on the bank overlooking the barranca.

When he drew away to survey that linen duster, fluttering in the wind, he rubbed his raw and bleeding hands delightedly. Luella! If she could only see him now! He guessed that he was making good, even by her high standards of activity.

Returning to the Well of the Desert, he found the basin brimming. A great joy filled his heart, and he bent over the stump and quaffed the liquid. The next moment his whole interior revolted against the draft. Nectar! It was anything but that; and Chilson retired to his barranca and drank what remained of the tea in an attempt to get the taste out of his mouth.

This raid on his liquid supply brought him down to desert apples and bisnaga juice. Was life worth saving, he asked himself in a quandary, if it had to be puckered and pickled in those samples of desert flora?

The day's heat again had become most intense, and the discouraged Flagstaff man hugged his scrap of shade and panted for breath. What was the use, he demanded of the inner Chilson, of fighting against the inevitable, of trying to live in a place where every plant was a pincushion with the pin points out, where the pulp and juices of the native growths were too bitter to eat or drink, and where the heat of the day reminded him of a place said to be paved with good intentions? He had no sooner propounded this hard question than he thought of Luella, and immediately his heart softened. He would last as long as he could, he decided, and in the meanwhile pin his forlorn hopes to Allison.

The man who had lived to eat was finding it difficult to eat to live. His linen duster flapped and fluttered in the superheated air, visible, if there had been any one to see, for miles around. The day dragged on toward evening, and Chilson arose and staggered to the place of the desert apples and the cactus stump. For the first time in his life he was on a diet. Where food was plentiful, he had not been able to resist its temptations even for Luella; but there on his desert island in a sea of sand, he was compelled to make the most of what he had.

Henry, he decided, was an unfeeling brute.

CHAPTER V.

WHERE'S BILL? AND LUELLA?

ALTHOUGH he was more than six feet tall, no one ever guessed that Jason Pottle had a commanding stature because he was bowed forward in what might be called a "bookkeeper's stoop." Some bookkeepers are as straight as anybody, being heedful of the correct posture to assume while making debits and credits; but Pottle was not that sort of bookkeeper. Obsessed with the idea that he was constantly carrying a load, he allowed himself to bend beneath it. Perhaps this was because he was thin, abnormally thin, and a bit fragile. Oddly enough, he worked for William Chilson. And Chilson's loan and insurance business was the load that he fondly imagined he was carrying.

In the office next door to the Commercial Hotel in Flagstaff, Pottle was looking after the business just as though Chilson had not started for Phoenix and failed to arrive there. He had not the slightest idea what had become of Chilson. Somehow his employer's mysterious disappearance did not worry him half so much as it did some other people in "Flag" and the State capital. If Chilson never came back, Pottle dreamed of taking over the business, hiring a bookkeeper, and himself emulating Chilson's easy way of taking life. Chilson had no relatives, so there would be no one to object if the name on the glass door was rubbed out and Pottle's substituted for it. It was a positive relief to Pottle not to have Chilson around, scattering nuggets of wisdom which the bookkeeper felt that he must appear to enjoy or lose his job.

A week had passed since Chilson said good-by and started for Phoenix to pose in the limelight as a star witness in the Murray Flandon case. The star witness had been traced to Pima Notch,

and there he had vanished as completely as though his two hundred and forty pounds had dissolved into thin Arizona air.

On the second day after Chilson's departure, a telegram arrived:

Where's Bill? Not here yet. ALLISON.

Pottle wired the following reply and sent it collect:

Not here either. Left two days ago for Phoenix. Suggest inquire Miss Luella Robbins. POTTLE.

Next day this came from Allison:

Miss Robbins also missing. Double disappearance star witnesses disastrous. If you hear anything advise promptly.

Thus informed regarding Miss Robbins, Pottle's fancy took strange flights over his loose-leaf ledger. Just suppose now—he ought not to, of course, but there had to be some explanation of that double disappearance—just suppose now that there had been an elopement! Pottle had been refused by various ladies and elopements had a weird fascination for him.

This theory, however, received its mortal blow on the fourth day when the Flagstaff *Intelligencer,* under a scarehead, gave the mystery of Chilson and Miss Robbins a double-leaded column woven around two press reports. One report stated that Chilson had left the train at Pima Notch alone; and the other was to the effect that on the same day, on another railroad, Miss Robbins had left a certain train at Hackett's Gap, also alone. Pima Notch and Hackett's Gap were separated by a hundred miles of rugged hill country, inhabited almost entirely by Gila monsters, scorpions, tarantulas, sidewinders, and an occasional roadrunner.

For three days after the appearance of that column story in the *Intelligencer* Pottle would sit at his employer's desk, smoke his employer's cigars, and follow with deep interest all the published reports in his employer's case. The newspapers had a sensation and, naturally, played it up for all it was worth. Keen journalistic minds advanced theories to account for the disappearance of the star witnesses, and they were complicated and ingenious, but wide of the truth. Pottle could make nothing of it. But he had to admit that it looked as though the business was going to be his.

Then, just one week from the time that Chilson and Miss Robbins had seemingly fallen off the earth, Oliver Penhallock arrived in Flagstaff. He was general agent for the Scylla & Charybdis Life, Health, & Accident Association, whose business was handled in Flagstaff by Chilson, and in which association Chilson carried a fifty-thousand-dollar policy.

Penhallock burst into the dingy little office, looked around, and inquired: "Where's Bill?"

"You don't mean to say you haven't heard, Mr. Penhallock?" returned Pottle, aghast.

"About the disappearance?" Penhallock chuckled. "Oh, pshaw, tell that to the marines! Say, Pottle, men of Chilson's size don't fade into oblivion so easily as all that. It takes more than a breath of rumor to wipe out two hundred and forty pounds—a steam hoist and a donkey engine would have to be on the job." He grinned, winked, and nudged Pottle in the ribs. "What's the joke?" he asked; "just between you and me and the gatepost, you understand."

The bookkeeper was quick to catch Penhallock's point of view. His company had stretched a point, just on his say-so, in giving Chilson so much insurance. There is a big element of risk in overweight. If the Chilson disappearance was not a joke, then the S. & C. L. H. & A. A. would have to come across with a big indemnity. No wonder Penhallock was worried.

"It's like this, Mr. Penhallock," said Pottle. "Some sort of a while ago, Bill went south on business in Phoenix and other points. That was when he got involved in the Murray Flandon case."

"Involved?" echoed Penhallock, seating himself and reaching for a cigar in the Chilson box.

"Involved as an innocent bystander like," the bookkeeper explained. "He

had called on a friend out Grand Avenue, pretty well in the outskirts of Phoenix—about two jumps from where the Black Cañon trail begins, I understand. When he started back into town he had to wait for a street car. I don't know whether you've ever been to Grand Avenue or not, but it is bordered with these here palm trees. They're not very high, and the dead branches under the live ones hadn't been trimmed off—they just hung down as maybe you've seen. Well, there was a bench just back of the palms, and Bill sat on that bench while waiting for the car to come along."

Pottle, apparently in an abstracted mood, casually picked up the box of cigars and put it in a drawer of the desk.

"I get you," said Penhallock, exhaling comfortably; "go on, Pottle."

"Well, there was a lady on that bench, also waiting for the car," the bookkeeper resumed; "and out in the street, close to the car tracks, there was a Mexican walking up and down. That made three waiting for the car, see? But the two on the bench wouldn't be noticed from the street, although they could see pretty much all that went on in the street. I wonder if I'm making this clear?"

"You're making the whole thing read like a primer," declared Penhallock; "I can just see those two on the bench, and the palms, and the Mexican. Must have been a roomy bench if there was room for any one else after Bill took a seat."

Pottle smiled faintly. "Pretty soon, while those three were waiting for a car," he continued, "along came an automobile with two men, one driving, and the other in the seat behind. It was just whoopin' it up, too, that machine, coming from town and heading for the Black Cañon road. When it got close to the bench, the palm, and the Mexican, the car slowed down, and the man behind got up, leaned over the side with a revolver, and shot the Mexican. Without a word he simply blazed away, and the Mexican dropped; then the driver of the machine opened 'er up, and the automobile couldn't be seen on the Black Cañon road for dust. Right in broad daylight this happened, mind you, and the only two that had a good look at the man with the gun were Bill and Miss Robbins. Miss Robbins screamed and pretty near fainted. Bill got her a glass of water—he was so excited he can't remember where, but he got it—and that's how Bill and the other star witness first came to know each other."

"What happened after that?" urged Penhallock.

"Bill called the police by phone and got a cab for Miss Robbins. The Mexican was Bajo Sol, about as tough a citizen as there was anywhere, and he was a goner. There wasn't breath in him when the police arrived. Bill was taken to headquarters and shown some pictures in the rogues' gallery. He recognized one of them as that of the man who had done the shooting—Murray Flandon, otherwise 'Chip' Flandon, all-around monte man and three-card sharp. Bill came back to Flag after that trip, but he hasn't hardly been the same man since."

"Tender heart, eh? Seeing a human being killed like that sort of unsettled him, I suppose?"

"That's a poor guess," said Pottle. "Bill's been to Tucson six times since the shooting. Miss Luella Fenestra Robbins lives in Tucson."

"Ah, ha!" exclaimed Penhallock. "I'm beginning to see. Bill and Miss Robbins were subpœnæd as witnesses and both started for Phoenix, one from Flagstaff and the other from Tucson. Bill, so the romance runs, received a telegram en route and got off at Pima Notch. Miss Robbins also got a message and left her train at Hackett's Gap. Then the heart interest sort of goes up in smoke. Hasn't anybody imagined that Bill and Luella have been married and gone away on their honeymoon?"

Pottle explained about the hundred miles of impassable country between Pima Notch and Hackett's Gap.

"Well, anyhow," queried Penhallock, "what's the latest news?"

"Marks in the sand back of some hills at Pima Notch," answered Pottle in a voice of awe. "They just start without a sign of coming from any place, travel along for about two hundred feet or such a matter, then quit exactly as they began. Nobody has been able to figure out the marks yet. Sawtelle, the agent at Pima Notch, has a hazy remembrance of a fat man leaning through the window of the telegraph office and asking for some one named Allison. Sawtelle was dozing between calls for P-N, and an hour or two later when he went out to look for the fat man, he wasn't in evidence. That agent was the last man to see Bill alive.

"The next passenger to get off a train at Pima Notch," Pottle went on, "was Allison, the prosecuting attorney. Another fat man that had traveled on the accommodation with Bill had told Allison about the telegram and how Bill had got off at the Notch. The attorney investigated, but couldn't find out a thing."

"It still looks to me like one of Bill's jokes," averred Penhallock.

"As Bill's next friend," declared Pottle, "I guess it won't look so much like a joke when I put in a claim for fifty thousand on that policy."

"How're you going to prove that Bill's cashed in?" demanded Penhallock. "That's up to you if you're going to collect on that policy. Keep your shirt on, Pottle. Bill's all right, and I'm going to pasear down Pima Notch way to prove it."

"Everybody in Southern Arizona is trying to find Bill," asserted Pottle, "and you'll be just another. I can't begin to tell how many search parties and detectives Allison has out looking for Bill and Miss Robbins."

"No one has got anything on me when it comes to sleuthing," returned Penhallock. "I'm the original human ferret, Pottle, and when I freeze to a case either I get the party or the case gets me. You see," he finished mysteriously, "I've got an idea about this business of Bill's."

"May I inquire what it is?" returned Pottle.

"Sure you can inquire," and Penhallock got up and left the office.

CHAPTER VI.

BOSSING HIS ENVIRONMENT.

CHILSON, much to his surprise, found that he was still alive at the end of seven days on the mesa. He had to acknowledge, too, that although he was degenerating physically into a sort of Wild Man of Borneo he never had been more mentally active in his life. It was necessary to use his wits in order to keep body and soul together; and, as psychologists assure us that every thought is an impulse to bodily activity, Chilson was taking more exercise than he had done for years.

He became absorbed in the effort to keep himself alive. The environment was hostile, but at the end of his first two days on the mesa he knocked the chip off Nature's shoulder and enlisted for the war. He had forgotten that he possessed a fighting spirit; but now he remembered all about it, and realized how it had been smothered by an obesity that clamored for peace and ease. A sort of rapture filled him when he discovered how, painfully and slowly but surely, he was backing his hardships into a corner and wrenching existence out of the very teeth of fate.

The maguey, or American aloe, grew scatteringly in that part of his little dominion which he called the "rough country." His mind harked back to Hornaday and his teachings, and he plucked the hearts out of the plants and roasted them in a pit with greasewood brush for fuel. The result was a dish tasting like baked squash—something he never had been able to endure in happier times, but which now appealed to him like nightingales' tongues to the decadent and gorging Romans.

A patch of yuccas upon which he stumbled was turned to good use. By night he kindled a fire of the dried leaves to warm and cheer him in the barranca; and out of a strip of dry,

spongy yucca wood he manufactured punk. This held fire from night to night and helped to conserve his small and dwindling store of matches.

As relaxation from the hard struggle to satisfy his hunger, he played at hut building. Gathering a supply of ocotilla poles, he planted them in the form of a round wall in the sands of the barranca bottom, bound their tops fast with greasewood withes, and braided a roof for the shelter out of green yucca leaves. In this wikiup, during the heat of the day, he found more comfort than possibly could be had in the thin shade of the barranca bank.

Not all of his domain had been surveyed. There were little seams and valleys which he happened upon, during his continued but fruitless search for chuckwallas, that were unfamiliar and so put down on his list of new discoveries. In one of these he came upon a grove of a dozen giant saguaros, cacti of fluted columns as tall as the pillars of an ancient temple. Growing in the depression of the small valley, their tops failed to clear the banks on either side and so the saguaros had escaped his attention until that moment.

Five or six of the huge plants had been toppled to the ground, their ugly spines had vanished, their pulpy substance had decayed and withered away, and all that was left were long, slender ribs of skeleton whiteness. By accident, Chilson learned that the live saguaros were resinous and would burn. He touched a match to one at night and, as a result, had a mammoth torch that flung sparks toward the stars.

He delightedly made a note of this. It was possible for him now to have a beacon between sunset and sunrise. If there were any night travelers in the desert he would be able thus to attract their attention.

As day followed day and the fight for life went on, Chilson became impressed with the fact that his clothes, although going rapidly to tatters, were becoming too large for him. Every morning he noticed that the waistband of his trousers had become a trifle larger than it had been on the preceding morning. He took up the slack with a saguaro thorn for a makeshift pin. Diet was doing for him just what every doctor had declared it would do, and steadily but surely he was losing his overweight. Day by day he could bend over and bring his finger tips nearer his toes.

There was a tin box in his satchel, fitted with a lock and key. In this he carried sample policies and instruction books and statistical records connected with the insurance business. Pottle had jeered at him for carrying the box; he, a man who never toted his satchel if there was a red cap in sight, loading himself down with a tin box when a leather brief case would have filled the bill. Chilson and Pottle had argued about that box and at last had weighed it. The japanned receptacle, empty, but with lock and key in place, weighed just one pound.

This discussion with Pottle leading up to the weight of the box now gave Chilson a very brilliant idea. He constructed a pair of scales, building them of dried saguaro slats, bound together with the tough vines that had been used to splice the flagstaff. This framework had a platform at each end and was balanced in the exact center across a wedge-shaped rock in the barranca. The weights were carefully selected stones, which some prehistoric outburst of nature's forces had scattered over the southern half of the mesa. He got his pound weights by balancing stones against the tin box; then secured two-pound weights by balancing single stones against two of the pound weights; and so on.

After the scales were constructed he weighed himself every morning, piling stones on one platform until his weight on the other held the framework entirely off the ground. By this he learned that he was losing flesh at the tremendous rate of two pounds a day. At first he rejoiced over this discovery, but reflection filled him with panic. Two hundred and forty divided by two left one hundred and twenty. In other

words, if he were hung up on that mesa with a restricted desert diet for four months, there would be nothing left of him!

This matter claimed long and earnest attention. Chilson guessed that in desert apples, cactus juice, and the roasted pulp of the maguey he had found an antifat compound with which no remedy then on the market could compare. If he could carry his discovery back to civilization and advertise it, he soon would have Old Crœsus looking like a piker. Then he decided the scheme to be impractical. In order to get any stout person to eat desert apples or maguey pulp or drink the sap of the bisnaga, he would have to confine him on a mesa similar to that one and take all other food away from him. The remedy was altogether too complicated to be a commercial success.

Chilson had a safety-razor outfit in his satchel. The case that held the outfit was equipped with a mirror. A look in the mirror had convinced Chilson, among other things, that he needed a shave. He had run across a variety of the yucca called the amole which, Hornaday had assured him, was a regular soap plant. But the water was lacking, and Chilson was not courageous enough to try to use sticky cactus juice in its place. Let his beard grow! There was no one to see him, so what difference did it make?

Chilson had almost ceased thinking of Allison, or of the trial in Phoenix where he was to have been a star witness. Luella was often in his thoughts as he grew thinner and more active, and Henry was constantly in his mind. His one desire in life, next to meeting Luella in some pleasant part of the country, was to get off that mesa and meet the treacherous pilot face to face.

During the long evenings, while he sat in front of his hut by a warm fire of dead yucca leaves, he used his knife on a sturdy stem, cut from a cholla cactus. One would have thought he was making a cane. The stem was hollow and filled with a pith like the alder. Stripping this section of the cholla of its spines and bark, he laboriously pried out the pith through the fenestra, and so developed a stout club of wooden lacework. To the end of the club he bound a pointed stone with one of the straps cut from the satchel. With the weapon he could slay a chuckwalla, if he ever happened to find one, but that use was merely incidental to his main purpose. He was getting ready for Henry, in case that two-faced birdman ever returned to the mesa to look for his captive's remains.

It is remarkable how some things will escape a person, situated as Chilson happened to be. For two weeks he quenched his thirst at those vegetable Wells in the Desert and satisfied his hunger with roast yucca pulp and raw desert apples; and then, one afternoon, he turned into a small swale that he never had seen before and almost ran head-on into a house.

He was startled, naturally. It was not much of a house; just some roughly squared stones piled up in a primitive wall under the lip of an overhang. In one place there had been a door, and in another place a window. The wall was in such a ruinous condition, however, that the purpose of the two gaps in its surface only could be guessed at.

The idea that caused Chilson's heart to flutter was this: human hands had laid up that wall. People once had lived on that mesa. And if people had lived there, then they must have had a way to get up and down between the mesa and the plain below. Was it an old cliff dwelling? Undoubtedly it was. He walked in through what once had been the door, as he imagined, and there he saw a large barrel standing on end on a flat rock; and on another rock was a box with a hinged cover. There was a spigot in the bottom of the barrel, and a tin cup placed invitingly on the barrel's top. He seized the cup and turned the spigot. Instantly there came the music of running water.

Chilson drank greedily. It was his first drink of real water since he had finished the contents of Henry's canteen. It was not particularly good water, but nevertheless it tasted like civilization and home. Putting down the

cup, he turned in wonder to examine the contents of the box. It was filled with hard-tack! He pounded up the hard-tack, soaked it in water, and had his supper right there. After he had finished, he sat down by the barrel and took a guess at what it all meant.

Somebody had planned to bring him to the mesa and leave him. It had not been the intention of the schemer, or schemers, to abandon him utterly to thirst and starvation, and so they had made ready for him with the water and the hard-tack. For two weeks Chilson had known nothing about that food and drink, but had prowled around and wrested his sustenance from gourds and yuccas, and his only beverage from the bitter bisnaga!

He was dazed. Just to convince himself that he was not dreaming, he took another drink from the barrel.

Then his thoughts took another slant. If Henry had done this thing, it was fair to suppose that he expected Chilson to live. And why should he expect him to live if he did not intend to return for him?

A rainbow of hope suddenly glittered in Chilson's sky. He hummed an air; and he abandoned the barranca that night to sleep in the ancient cliff dwelling and guard his newly discovered treasures, the barrel of water and the box of hard-tack.

Since he had begun to lose flesh and to indulge in bodily exercise, Chilson had become a heavy sleeper. At his boarding house in Flagstaff he was troubled with uneasy slumbers, but there on the mesa he slept like a log. It was so that first night, back of the ruined wall under the overhang.

He awoke with the sun, somewhat earlier than usual, only to realize that a noise had aroused him. The noise proved to be a voice, pitched in a high and frantic key: "Help, help! Oh, is there no one here to help me?"

A voice, there on that desert mesa! And a woman's voice, at that! Chilson pinched himself to make sure that he was wide awake. Yes; there was no doubt on that point. For one dread instant he feared that he was losing his mind. Then the cry of distress reached him again, and he sprang to his feet, rushed out of the swale, mounted a rise of ground, and saw—a woman carrying a white parasol! He staggered and rubbed his eyes. It was Luella! He ran toward her with a joyful cry; and Luella screamed, turned, and fled away from him.

The pursuit led him to the scorched plateau on which he had landed with Henry. There he caught his foot in a rope tied to a stake, turned a somersault, and sat up dazedly on the ground.

He had never seen that stake or the rope before, he thought in his bewilderment. Where had they come from? And Luella—where had she come from?

In the distance the lady turned warily. "Come back!" Chilson called; "you must know that I wouldn't think of hurting you. How did you get here, Lu—Miss Robbins?"

She approached slowly, hesitatingly, far from reassured. "Are—are you the hermit of the mesa, sir?" she inquired.

She did not recognize him! His heart stood still, and a great sorrow filled him. Had he, in two short weeks, outgrown Luella's recollection?

"Well, yes," he answered; "I guess you might call me the hermit of the mesa."

He tried to speak naturally so that his voice would give her a clew to his identity; but the experiment was a failure.

"Then, if you please," said Miss Robbins, "I should like some breakfast. The man who called himself Henry said that you would attend to it."

Breakfast! And all he had for the girl of his dreams was hard-tack—hard-tack and water! Chilson mumbled to himself and passed his hands over his eyes.

CHAPTER VII.

A REASON FOR EVERYTHING.

IF the astral Chilson could have walked a dozen paces, turned, and given the material Chilson the once-over, it immediately would have been very

plain to the man from Flagstaff why Luella Robbins had fled from him and had failed to discover that he was some one she knew. He was aware, in a general way, that he had undergone great changes both externally and internally, but he was far from realizing the full extent of the transformation.

Not all fat men take pride in their clothes, or try to have their hatbands, ties, and stockings harmonize. Chilson, however, had been the stout Beau Brummell of the insurance business. Pottle was wont to declare that the greatest effort of Chilson's day was to dress himself with fastidious care. For this reason his friends had known him as a large but exquisite person whose silk shirts were built to order in Denver's most expensive factory. When he traveled he protected his finery with a linen duster, wore a plaid cap, and had the porter put his Panama in a hatbag. In flying with Henry he had kept on his cap and stowed the Panama in his satchel.

Two weeks on the mesa, spent mostly among the cactus clumps, had almost wrecked the cap as well as the expensive lightweight suit that went with it. Chilson's hair was long and ragged and, as already mentioned, he needed a shave. His oxfords were scuffed and broken. The sun had tanned him a swarthy hue, and his hands displayed evidences of hard labor.

Miss Robbins was to be excused for not recognizing him. Chilson, after a few minutes, came to this conclusion. Although consumed with wonder as to when and how the lady had arrived on the mesa, he put aside his curiosity for the time and led his companion to the hut in the barranca. She had a Boston bag, and he carried it along.

"This mesa hardly can be called a pleasant place, Miss Robbins," he remarked, "but you are welcome to the best. If you will make yourself as comfortable as possible, I will return in the course of an hour with something for you to eat."

She thanked him, and he picked up his own satchel and hurried to the swale and the cliff dwelling. His heart was pounding at a terrific rate. Luella, accustomed to all the luxuries of life, dropped down on that forlorn and heat-smitten mesa to share with him all its trying vicissitudes! He deplored the hard fact, even while it brought him a measure of joy. Now there was some one else for him to rescue from that dreary situation besides himself. He would show Miss Robbins what two weeks of tribulations had done for him; he would save her, by George, and take her back to her friends!

In feverish haste he dug up a root of the soap plant. A shaving stick had been part of his tonsorial kit, but he had exhausted the nickel-plated container and had neglected to replenish it. With brush and a little water he tried to mix a lather in a cuplike cavity of one of the stones forming the ancient wall. There were no suds in the soap plant's root, and nothing emollient, but he managed a shave somehow with the safety razor. Then he drew enough of the precious water for a bit of a wash—the first he had enjoyed in a fortnight. He combed his hair; he tried in sundry ways to make himself more presentable and less like a tatterdemalion. He removed his Panama from the satchel, unrolled it, knocked it into shape, and put it on. Now would she know him? He wondered!

For Luella's breakfast and his own he soaked a supply of hard-tack, dug the choice heart of a maguey from the roasting pit, and filled the tin cup with water. They had the one dipper between them, and he trusted fondly that it might prove a loving-cup. Improvising plates out of two thin, flat stones, he heaped the primitive breakfast upon them, laid the wooden fork he had carved from a saguaro rib across Luella's rations, and thrust into his pocket a pair of chop sticks for himself. Breakfast was served in the barranca.

Luella stared in astonishment as he came toward her, a stone in each hand, and walking carefully so that he might not spill the water.

"I am sorry, Miss Robbins," he said, "but this is all we've got."

"William!" she gasped.

He had won! At last she recognized him! Rapture filled him, and he put down the primitive meal and extended his hands. "Luella!" he cried, beaming. "I'm not suprised that you didn't know me. But the man who calls himself Henry might have told you."

She was excited and curious. Her eyes were blue, and they measured him critically. "How long have you been here, William?" she inquired.

"It seems like two years," he answered, "but I have cut only fourteen notches on my calendar stick." He indicated a sliver of yucca wood hanging by a piece of cactus fiber from the hut wall. "I cut a notch every day," he explained.

"Why, William Chilson!" cried Luella. "To find you in such a place and living on such coarse and primitive food! I can hardly believe it. Are you well?" The anxiety in her voice put him in a flutter. "You are getting thin, seems to me."

"The thinner I get," he returned, "the better I feel. I'm no longer a drone, but a worker. There's no Pottle here to attend to things. After breakfast, if you like, I'll show you what I've done. I—I built this hut," he added.

"You never!" she murmured, looking at the hut with the admiration she might have given a marble palace. "How could you do it?" she breathed, her eyes shining.

"Well, I just—I just made up my mind, and that's about all there was to it. But let's eat. That fork is a little clumsy, but I guess you can manage with it. I'll carve out a spoon for you later on."

Luella was hungry and seemed to enjoy the rough fare. She talked animatedly as she ate. Mr. Allison, she explained, had summoned her from Tucson as a witness in the Flandon case, and while she was on her way a telegram had reached her asking her to leave the train at Hackett's Gap.

"Why," interjected Chilson at this point, "precisely the same thing happened to me, and caused me to leave the train at Pima Notch."

Luella showed deep interest in the remark and then continued her recital. A man with a team and buckboard was waiting for her at Hackett's Gap. He drove her into the hills to an oasis, and she was welcomed by his wife and family at their adobe house. She asked for Mr. Allison, and was put off with a vague reply to the effect that she would see him when it was necessary. She soon discovered that she was not a guest at the oasis adobe, but virtually a prisoner.

"Last night," she proceeded, "a strange horseman galloped up to the door of Mr. Timberkin's house, called him out, and had a talk with him. Long before dawn next morning I was summoned from my room and instructed to bring my traveling bag. Imagine my surprise, William, when I saw a ghostly airplane anchored at the edge of the oasis on the desert sands! A man who introduced himself as Henry requested me to get aboard the flying machine. Think of it! I recoiled instinctively from what appeared to be a set program."

Luella sighed. "But all my protests didn't save me," she added; "I was made to get aboard the airplane and, just at sunrise, was deposited on this mesa. Henry, the pilot, drove stakes into the ground and connected them with a stout rope. I was very miserable as I watched him, and I begged that he would not abandon me in such an inhospitable place. But he was adamant."

Chilson reached for his cholla club, poised it in his itching fingers, and was consumed with indignation and wrath. Just one round with that Henry was all he wanted.

"He told me," said Luella, "that there was a very kind hermit who lived on the mesa, and that I was to find him and get him to give me my breakfast. He said, too, that I was not to worry; that I might have to endure hardships, but that they would last no longer than necessary. Then he looped the rope over the front of the airplane, did something to the controls, and started the propeller. The whirl of the propeller pushed the machine hard against the

rope, but it could not get away until Henry got into the pilot's compartment. The next moment he cut the rope with a hatchet, and the airplane jumped away and soared into the air like a huge bird.

"I thought, William, that I should faint," Luella went on. "I had borne a great deal, but this seemed the last straw. When the airplane was out of sight, I began screaming for help. Then"—there was a little catch in her voice—"you came, and I was more frightened than ever. You see, dear, I failed to recognize you; you are so changed! But I am almost happy now. To have a companion in one's misery helps a lot, doesn't it?"

"It does!" declared Chilson, overcome by the series of persecutions to which Luella had been subjected. "Now, the plot worked differently with me. I wasn't held a prisoner at any oasis. Henry and his flying machine were back of some low hills at Pima Notch. He said he would take me to Allison and invited me to get into the flying machine. Then he dropped me here, and I have had the time of my life trying to exist. Luella, what does it all mean? There's a reason for everything, and of course there must be a motive back of the high-handed manner in which we have been treated. What do you think about it?"

Miss Robbins, as Chilson knew, was very clever. If any one could guess the reason for that double marooning on the mesa, certainly it would be Luella.

"I've been thinking about that," she answered reflectively. "This questionable person, Murray Flandon, is trying to establish what is called an alibi; that is, he is trying to prove that he was in Prescott the very moment Bajo Sol was shot down. Now, William, you and I are the only ones who saw that terrible deed. We can identify Flandon as the person who used the revolver. So, you see, we are very valuable witnesses for the State. On our testimony alone Murray Flandon can be made to suffer for his cruel work. Without our testimony, his alibi may free him. It seems to me, taking all this into account, that Flandon's friends have planned to get us out of the way so that we cannot appear at the trial."

"Well, by James!" cried Chilson, greatly moved. "Do you know, Luella, that never occurred to me. But you have figured it out. It's all a deep-laid plot to save Flandon."

Luella put away the wooden fork and regarded Chilson keenly. "Have you lost all your humorous, philosophic nuggets, William?" she asked. "You aren't scattering them as usual."

"You'll have to pardon me, Luella," he said guiltily, "but there is so little that is humorous about this mesa that I seem to have mislaid the bag of nuggets. You don't mind?" he queried anxiously.

"Not at all," she returned, in a tone that suggested happiness and a great relief.

CHAPTER VIII.

A WORLD OF THEIR OWN.

THERE began for Chilson another two weeks—the happiest two weeks he ever had known. It was the same mesa, fiery by day and chilling by night; it was the same old fight for sustenance to vary a diet of hard-tack and water, and the fight was for two now; and there remained the identical worries regarding ultimate rescue. But the breath of love, hallowed by hope renewed, was wafting itself over that high and forlorn plateau, making molehills of difficult mountains, beautifying the sunsets, filling the starry, blue-black desert skies with poetry, and rearing castles of enchantment into the thin air.

Chilson was doing something for Luella; that was the idea. He was showing her in the most convincing way how resourceful and active he was. He was her guardian, her protector. If rescue failed to arrive from beyond the desert, she looked to him to find a way back to civilization for both of them. Inspired by her presence, he felt a sublime confidence in his own powers.

Luella was twenty-eight, and just three years younger than Chilson. She had a warm, romantic temperament. At twenty-five most unmarried ladies be-

gin to put away their hard-and-fast ideals; but not so Luella. Supple and active knights, wearing their ladies' favors in the lists, or couching brave lances at dragons who held their ladies in thrall, filled the bright vista of Luella's fancies. A stout and slothful person could not appeal to her. The man upon whom she bestowed her hand and heart must be a gallant fighter, daring tremendous odds if needs must, and acquitting himself victoriously in the fray. The Chilson of a month before did not measure up to these specifications, but the Chilson of the mesa was most promising.

On the afternoon following Luella's arrival, when the heat of the westering sun had diminished and become bearable, Chilson conducted his companion on a tour of the rough country.

The flagstaff with the floating linen duster won Luella's first attention. Chilson told of the thought that had given rise to the signal of distress, and of his ingenuity in putting the idea into execution. He showed her the decapitated cacti where he had quenched his thirst; the valley of the desert apples where he had done his first foraging; the maguey patch that had yielded him his counterfeit baked squash; the pit where he roasted the saccharine and nutritious hearts of the plants; the grove of saguaros and the scales he had contrived out of one of the fallen giants.

Luella's wonder and delight grew with every revelation. Knowing Chilson as he had been, she marveled to think of what he had become in so short a time.

"But where do you get your hard bread, William?" she asked. "And where is the spring that furnishes the water?"

He had been afraid of those questions. The answer he must give reflected upon his ability as an explorer. But for the bisnagas and the desert apples he would have thirsted and starved to death—all the while with a barrel of water and a box of hard-tack just around the corner, as one might say. Nevertheless, he told her the humiliating truth, and then led her to the ancient cliff dwelling.

The effect of that explanation was far from being what he had dreaded. Luella rested a light hand on his arm in a way that was almost a caress.

"William," she said, "how lucky that you did not find the water and hard-tack immediately after being so cruelly abandoned on the mesa! Just think! Why, you never would have developed so much resourcefulness as a food hunter."

Chilson expanded under this gentle praise. Then he mentioned the idea that had to do with the cliff dwellers who once had lived on the high mesa. Certainly they had a means for reaching the desert below, and to finding that means Chilson was going to dedicate the days that followed.

That night he burned a saguaro for Luella, and smiled as she gazed at the leaping flames and ecstatically clapped her hands. Later, in the light of the stars, he gathered armfuls of dried yucca leaves and started a blaze by the hut in the barranca. The hut was to be hers, and the cliff dwelling would be his own quarters. He felt that she could be comfortable on the pallet of soft greasewood tops and with the coverlet of braided leaves which he had constructed.

As they sat by the fire, she asked him if he had not heard the roar of the airplane that had brought her to the mesa. He admitted that he had not, and told how soundly he slept after the heat and burden of his toilsome days.

"Suppose Henry came back again in the night and you did not hear the flying machine?" Luella inquired.

"Now that you are on the mesa," he answered gallantly, "I promise that it shall never occur again. Luella, from now on I'll sleep with one ear open."

"And if no one comes to rescue us," she went on in a pleading voice, "you will see to it, William, that I am able to leave this place and return to my home in Tucson?"

"I have already promised myself that I would do that,'" he asserted.

Before leaving for his own quarters he allowed Luella the honor of notching the calendar stick.

"Don't let anything worry you, Luella," he said cheerfully. "In all the time I've been on the mesa I haven't seen a snake, a centipede, a scorpion, or anything else that creeps or crawls on the desert below."

She thanked him for reassuring her, and he said good night and went to the wall under the overhang. Next day he started his search for the old cliff dwellers' path up and down the mesa wall.

For this purpose Chilson used the divided rope which had held the airplane while Henry was cranking the engine. He knotted the two ends securely together, and armed with this twenty-foot cable he thrilled his companion with some risky maneuvers.

Tying the rope to a bowlder on the mesa's brim, he lowered himself into space for the purpose of making a close inspection of the sheer wall. He did this at least a dozen times, working his way gradually around the mesa's circular edge. On his last essay he made a disappointing discovery.

Some two hundred feet below him he saw the old path down the wall. The upper half of the path, however, had been blocked by a rockfall and rendered absolutely impracticable. There was no leaving the mesa by that route.

"What will you do now, William?" asked Luella calmly.

Chilson pondered for a few minutes. "Henry is bound to come back," he said. "He, or the gang for whom he is working, will understand that a barrel of water and a box of hard-tack won't last indefinitely. The airplane will return with fresh supplies. When that happens," he declared grimly, "I shall take care of Henry, and you and I will use his wings to take us out of the desert."

"Are you an aviator, William?" Luella inquired.

"I'll bet a farm I can handle the machine well enough to get us clear of the mesa," he answered.

"Suppose Henry is armed and resists?"

Chilson smiled calmly. "Never mind about that, Luella," he said with grim confidence. "Show me the airplane and Henry, and I'll engage to annex the machine."

As the days passed, Luella must have found the limited diet and lack of conveniences extremely trying. Yet she never uttered a word of complaint. She ate the hard-tack, the roast yucca, and now and then a desert apple, and she drank the unpalatable water with a grace and patience that claimed Chilson's unbounded admiration.

There were moments when she grieved a little about her friends, and the apprehensions they must feel regarding her, but the cheerful Chilson soon brought her out of that mood. He was, in truth, a great deal more cheerful than he had any occasion to be.

The brackish water was getting low in the barrel. He used none of it for himself, now, but went back to the Well of the Desert. All the water that remained must be for Luella. The hard-tack, too, was dwindling away. He cut that item from his diet and resumed his menu of desert apples and ate more largely of roast yucca heart. Luella detected him in his acts of generous self-denial, and taxed him with it. But he explained that he had developed a fondness for the desert forage and rather preferred it.

As the fourth week of Chilson's probation on the mesa drew toward a close —the second week since Luella had come to share his solitude—he found that he could not sleep so well. A large part of each night was spent in worrying about future prospects. On weighing himself of a morning, after such depressing periods, he found always that he had lost three pounds instead of the usual two. But the wonderful part of it was that he felt himself growing stronger and more active, no matter how much weight he lost. This, at least, was something to be thankful for.

In spite of the parasol which Luella carried with her whenever she went out in the sun, she became as brown as a wood nymph. So far as her health

was concerned, she did not seem to be suffering at all from that sojourn on the mesa. Nor did she grow perceptibly thinner. Here was proof, if Chilson needed it, that a plain desert diet was responsible for his own loss of weight.

The question that gave Chilson his sleepless nights was this: He had promised to save Luella and return her to her home in Tucson. Not the first idea as to how that mighty work was to be accomplished, barring the arrival of Henry and the airplane, had been evolved out of all his boasted resourcefulness. He would have to hit upon a happy thought before long. His wits were in a race with the diminishing water and hard-tack supply. It was necessary to find a way out of the dilemma in time to save Luella from thirst and starvation. He began to ration out the water and hard-tack, and as the rations grew smaller and smaller Luella took note of it. She wanted to know the reason.

He hated to tell her how helpless he was in the matter of ingenuity as applied to their escape from the mesa. However, the depletion of supplies had become alarming and at last he explained the distressing situation that confronted them.

"Why, as for that," said Luella brightly, "if you can live on a plain desert diet, William, so can I."

Horror rose in his face at the mere suggestion. He felt that he could not stand it to see her live as he was living, and fading slowly away. So he insisted that she should eat the hard-tack as long as a biscuit remained, and drink the water to the last drop. This state of affairs came to pass on a morning following the night in which Luella had notched the twenty-eighth day on the calendar stick.

Chilson was in despair. He delayed going to the barranca with his ominous report until Luella, fearing something had happened to him, came to the cliff house to investigate. Then, fearfully, he made known the awful truth.

Luella, however, had a rare spirit and bore up bravely. "Don't worry, William," she begged him. "I'll get along on the same food you are eating and seem to enjoy until you can think of some way to get off the mesa and across the desert. I have become very fond of roasted maguey; really I have. Let's have some of it, hot from the pit, for breakfast!"

They started from the swale, but Luella paused before she had taken a dozen steps.

"Look!" she whispered, her eyes lifted and a raised finger pointed toward the southeast.

One glance in that direction electrified Chilson. A distant shape swung against the sky, just beginning to glow with the touch of day. "The airplane!" he gasped. "Don't leave the swale, Luella," he went on excitedly. "Stay right here. This is the big moment, the one I have been waiting for!"

He ran back to the cliff house for his cholla club. Stern determination glimmered in his eyes.

A half sob escaped Luella's lips. "William," she murmured brokenly, "what—what if anything happened to you?"

"Would you care?" he demanded huskily, every heart string aquiver as he looked into her flushed and anxious face. "Luella, would it mean anything to you?"

"It—it would mean everything to me," she acknowledged prettily, and put her hands on his shoulder and bowed her head against his breast.

The soul of Bill Chilson flung aside the tatters of doubt and floated in royal purple toward the sun. Glory flooded his surroundings, and he flung wide the door of his biggest and brightest castle in the air and took immediate possession. The cholla club dropped. Clubs would be trumps in a minute, but just then hearts had been turned. He took the next trick with a kiss.

The roar of the airplane had been growing in volume. Suddenly it died out.

"Here, *mujercita!*" cried Chilson, emerging from his trance as sterner business called him. "Quick!"

He drew Luella into the cliff house;

and there, side by side, they stood peering outward and upward through the opening in the ruinous wall. The airplane swooped across their fragment of blue sky, dropping lower and lower toward the ground level at the north. For a second only it was seen and then vanished.

"William!" gasped Luella. "Henry isn't coming alone! There's another man with him in the machine! You mustn't go. You know very well that any friend of Murray Flandon's is a gun fighter and desperate. I can't let you go!"

He put aside her clinging hands gently but with determination. "Don't leave the swale, Luella," he commanded. "Stay here until I have captured the airplane."

He ran out and picked up his cholla club. Another moment and he had left the swale, eager for battle.

CHAPTER IX.

DUE FOR A LOSS.

FOR three weeks Penhallock, the human ferret, was an exceedingly busy man. His first port of call after leaving Pottle at Flagstaff was Pima Notch. He went out back of the first curtain of low hills and examined the marks in the sand—marks that seemingly began without rhyme or reason and led nowhere. At one end of that dim trail of mystery he saw what he believed were footprints, weeks old, and almost entirely obliterated. He rubbed his chin thoughtfully and was moved to remark for his own edification: "It's a whale of an idea, and I'll bet it rings the bell."

Returning to the hatbox of a railroad station, he roused Sawtelle out of his slumbers and cross-examined him. Had the station agent heard any noise on the day the fat man from Flagstaff had disappeared at Pima Notch? Sawtelle groped through his memory. Many questions had been asked him regarding the now famous case of Bill Chilson, but never one to match that of this new investigator. What sort of a noise would it be now? Chilson explained that it would be a droning noise, steady and regular and slowly dying away. Sawtelle had not heard it. When he was on duty, which was pretty much every hour in the twenty-four, his ear was tuned for only one sound and that was his station call.

Penhallock was disappointed, but not discouraged. Before leaving Pima Notch he wired a message to the home office of the S. & C. L. H. & A. A.

Wire name and address of man who wanted policy ten thousand and was turned down account being aviator. Application made two months ago from this part Arizona. Reply Ford Hotel, Phoenix.

In the capital, next day, he received this response:

Brune Trawlings, Hackett's Gap.

Penhallock chuckled as he put away the yellow slip. Hackett's Gap! Why, that was where Miss Robbins faded out of the world's perspective! The trail was warming up. Before carrying his investigations to the Gap, Penhallock dropped in at the State attorney's office.

Porter G. Allison received him personally. The caller won instant attention when he stated that Chilson of Flagstaff carried a fifty-thousand-dollar policy in the company that Penhallock represented. The prosecutor told how the outcome of the Flandon case hung on the testimony of Chilson and Miss Robbins. If they could not be found, then the notorious Flandon would establish his alibi and go free.

Allison had been trying to get the deadwood on Flandon for a long time. The monte man was leader of a gang that had been walking roughshod over the law in the Southwest. Bajo Sol, one of the troublesome crowd, had been won over by the attorney's threats and was to have given damaging evidence against Flandon and his clique on the very day he was shot down. Everything pointed to Flandon as the assassin, but if he brought forward witnesses to prove that he was in Prescott at the time of the killing, and Chilson and Miss Robbins did not appear to testify, the course of justice would be cheated.

Allison had not given up hope of locating his star witnesses. But the outlook was pretty discouraging. None of the few clews amounted to anything. Chilson had evaporated from Pima Notch; and Miss Robbins had faded out of Hackett's Gap. A man named Timberkin had met Miss Robbins at the Gap station and taken her to his ranch. A slim person with one eye and wearing a gray fedora had paid Timberkin twenty-five dollars to meet Miss Robbins and take her out to his place. After a week at his ranch, a youngish fellow in a leather cap and goggles had come and taken her away. That is all Timberkin claimed to know. He was in jail, and Allison was hoping that imprisonment would help him to remember something more about Miss Robbins; but, so far, the hope had not been realized.

Penhallock traveled to the Gap. Bruno Trawlings, he found, was the proprietor of a store at which a person could buy anything from pills to periodicals, from nutmegs to nails, and in one corner of the establishment could even ask for and receive his mail. Trawlings did not look much like an aviator. He admitted, in fact, that he was not an aviator. The nearest he had come to it was sinking seven thousand five hundred dollars in a flying machine.

Penhallock repressed his excitement. The trail continued to grow warmer. Under his patient questioning Trawlings explained about his investment in an airplane.

Over in Mexico a prospector whom he knew had located a rich pocket. It was so rich that a man could shovel nuggets of gold into a sack and not have to go through the formality of panning. But the prospector had been frozen out of the country by the unsettled condition of affairs. He managed to escape with his life, and a band of armed insurrectos had gone into camp between the United States boundary and the wonderful Eldorado. Trawling had become interested in the prospector's story and had thought of fooling the insurrectos by getting to the pocket over their heads. In other words, he put up for the airplane.

The machine had arrived. In his enthusiasm, immediately after paying the freight bill, Trawlings had applied for insurance. If anything happened to him he wanted to know that there would be money to take care of his liabilities. The insurance people turned down his application. On top of that, no one could be found in that part of Arizona who could put the airplane together. Then, too, the prospector who had discovered the rich pocket had disappeared. The flying machine became a white elephant on Trawlings' hands. A Mexican happened to drop in and offered him fifteen hundred, cash, for the outfit. Trawlings sold out, and charged up six thousand dollars to profit and loss. He hoped he never would be such a fool again.

Penhallock wanted to know what became of the machine.

Trawlings was in doubt about that. The Mexican took it away in a wagon, and the storekeeper considered the incident closed.

Thereupon Penhallock asked for light on the matter of the Mexican.

Trawlings answered that the fellow looked like a bandit and called himself Perdosa. At a guess, he declared, Perdosa was an insurrecto and had bought the flyer for use in fighting the government to the south.

Penhallock held fast to the subject of Perdosa. Could not Trawlings give him any clews about the man? The only clew Trawlings could furnish was this: Perdosa had a cross-shaped scar on his right cheek.

The industrious representative of the insurance company hired an automobile and went out to Timberkin's oasis. He questioned Mrs. Timberkin, but without result. However, he found marks at the edge of the oasis similar to those in the vicinity of Pima Notch. The trail was getting hot. The next step was to find Perdosa. On the following day Penhallock reappeared in Phoenix and talked matters over with Allison. A pleasant surprise was uncovered.

A Mexican with a scar on his face, answering Perdosa's description, lived in the Mexican quarter. He kept a tienda. He long had been suspected of connections with the Flandon crowd, but the theory never had been proved. On Penhallock's showing, Salinas y Garcia was brought in. Salinas y Garcia was the name on the tienda's sign. The other name, Perdosa, was apparently camouflage.

For several days Salinas y Garcia protested his innocence; and then, three weeks after Penhallock had started out to run down Bill Chilson, the Mexican was given a taste of the third degree and came through with a rush. The revelations he made were astounding. As an informer, he had more to tell, according to Allison, than Bajo Sol ever had dreamed of.

Salinas had bought the airplane for Henry Porto, an aviator. Porto was a friend of Tom Tewfik's, who was a gambler and a friend of Flandon's. Porto gave Salinas the cash and sent him to Trawlings. The machine was bought, trundled out into the desert, and there set up. Gasoline and oil were purchased in the Gap. After a wait of several days, Tewfik arrived at the camp where the aviator was keeping the airplane. Tewfik gave some orders, and Porto flew away, taking Salinas along with him. They came down at dusk among the hills near Pima Notch.

Next day a man got off the train from the North. He was a very stout man and wore a linen duster. Porto beckoned to him, got him back of the hills, and then showed him a letter Tewfik had furnished. Salinas did not know what was in the letter, but the fat man got aboard the airplane, and Porto sailed away with him into the Painted Desert.

Allison described Tewfik as a one-eyed man, a gun fighter, and quicker on the draw than any man on the border. He was also clever, and there was not a doubt but that he was engineering the alibi for Flandon.

Salinas y Garcia believed—he could not make the statement from first-hand knowledge—but he had heard that Allison's search for Miss Robbins had frightened Tewfik, and that Tewfik had ordered Porto to take the girl away to the same place where Chilson had been taken. Salinas had an idea that it was a waterless, inaccessible mesa on which the star witnesses were to be allowed to starve to death.

This news gave Penhallock a sinking sensation. But Salinas had not finished. He had heard something else, and that was that Allison's thorough search for the star witnesses had continued to alarm Tewfik, and that he had decided to visit the mesa, make sure Chilson and Miss Robbins had succumbed, or, if they were still alive, take the matter into his own hands. Tewfik had got into his friend Flandon's affair so deep that his only hope of personal safety was to blot out the lives of the star witnesses.

"It's all up with Bill Chilson," averred Penhallock gloomily, in the consultation that followed the revelations made by Salinas. "Our company is due for a loss. But you have the goods on this Tewfik, Allison."

"I suppose so," returned the attorney, "but he'll never come back here. After he carries out his plans at the mesa, he'll keep on flying. But then, Salinas y Garcia is the sort of man who wouldn't be believed under oath. Perhaps he is telling the truth, Penhallock, and perhaps he isn't."

"No hope in that for me," averred Penhallock. "Chilson has been four weeks on that mesa in the Painted Desert. If we knew right where to go to get him it would be too late. He was a mighty helpless sort of person, Allison. I know personally that he'd lie down and promptly expire if he happened to miss a meal. I'm mighty sorry, especially for Miss Robbins."

With an air of resignation he drew a cigar and snipped off the end with a cutter on his watch chain. "Beats all how common these flying machines are getting to be, eh? With the crooks and gunmen taking to 'em, law and order will have a dizzy trail to travel. That's always the way with good and legitimate wonders in the field of in-

vention—their glory has to be adulterated with a cheap brand of crime. I'm looking for submarine pirates to harry the seven seas, and skyhooting buccaneers to raise Old Ned with the coming argosies of the air.

"Bill told me once"—here he sighed reminiscently and made ready to scratch a match—"that if bees made glucose some dealers would adulterate it with pure honey. He was full of that line of bunk; so much so, Allison, that he became a good deal of a trial. Another nugget of his was this, that some men are about as valuable to a community as a last year's almanac. That went right home to poor old Bill himself. He knew the old almanacs pretty well, since they were the pay dirt from which he mined his nuggets. His trouble was fatty denegeration of the ability to hustle, superinduced by a terrible weakness for nourishment. Now he has paid the penalty on the top of that barren, sunbaked butte."

Penhallock lighted his cigar, arose, and made his way to the door. "It's a clear case," he finished, "and I'm ready to advise the head office to settle with Bill's next friend, Pottle, without waiting for further proofs."

Thereupon he left the prosecuting attorney's office.

CHAPTER X.

AN EYE OPENER.

CHILSON went forth with his cholla club to meet two armed desperadoes and stage an epic contest. He imagined that the airplane had returned to the mesa to leave fresh supplies of water and hard-tack and could not know the black designs of the schemer, Tewfik, and the misguided pilot, Henry. Chilson's plan was to take the two men by surprise and capture the airplane. So, with his rock-tipped bludgeon, he rushed to the attack.

Luella was wildly apprehensive. She found it impossible to remain in the cliff dwelling, and crawled up the bank of the swale to its crest; there, very cautiously, she posted herself in a spot from which she could follow every movement of her bold raggedy man.

How Chilson's recklessness and daring caused her heart to leap! She understood very well that he was risking his life for her. Ever since she had been so cruelly abandoned on the mesa William's first thought at all times was for her comfort and safety. Under the spell of his love and protection, Luella in two short weeks had come to know how much William Chilton meant to her.

Now, hurrying from the swale to meet his enemies and do battle, he was no knight in shining armor. His clothes, what remained of them, were much too large for him and hung upon his muscular frame in tatters. His oxfords had become little more than sandals, bound to his feet by a makeshift cordage of that tough creeper which had served him so well in holding things together. The sleeves of his dingy silk shirt had vanished completely, revealing his sinewy arms which, like his face, had been tanned a rich mahogany color. His only article of wear that harked back to the old days of peace and plenty was his Panama hat with its bright band.

Just beyond the swale lay a diminutive plain, with the patch of cholla cactus at one side and the opening into the barranca directly opposite. Chilson was loping across this bit of flat ground, his club over his shoulder and his eyes on a notch in the ridge that faced the level where the airplane made its landings.

Luella imagined that she would have to leave the swale and follow Chilson if she was to witness the conflict between him and the other two men. But in this she was mistaken. Suddenly, before Chilson had crossed the bit of plain, Henry and his companion appeared in the notch. They were looking about them carefully as they advanced, and the approaching figure made a powerful impression upon them and brought them to an astonished halt.

Chilson gave vent to a terrific battle cry and flourished his club. Instantly Henry and Tewfik drew their revolvers and leveled them. The weapons

gleamed in the sun, and Luella, fearing the worst, clasped her hands and stifled a cry of dismay.

"Halt!" cried the one-eyed man.

Chilson halted obediently, but it was evident that the threatening muzzles had not shaken his nerve. With the utmost nonchalance he lowered his club and leaned upon it.

"Who are you?" Tewfik went on.

"I'm the hermit of the mesa," Chilson answered easily.

"Where's the fat man, Bill Chilson, who was left here a month ago?"

Luella was thrilled. Neither Henry nor his companion recognized William! Here was something that William might turn to his own advantage, provided he was equal to it. What would he do now?

"You're looking for Chilson, eh?" the insurance man returned. "Well, it's about time. Come this way."

Shouldering his club again, Chilson turned and moved toward the cholla patch. Luella wondered at that maneuver.

Now the cholla cactus is the wizard plant of the deserts. Its needles are silvery white, very sharp and finely barbed. Those who are best acquainted with the cholla declare that it resents the presence of animal life and has a way of jumping at an intruder and taking firm hold of him with its barbed spines. The result is painful and disquieting.

Chilson, from experience, knew the paths through the cholla patch. He was not a safe guide for Tewfik and Henry, but they did not know that. Unsuspectingly they followed him; and, when they had come among the chollas, Tewfik was first to give a cry of anguish and bend down to free himself of a ball of spines that had fastened upon his shin.

The more one seeks to free himself from the hooked needles of the cholla, the more he becomes involved with other needles. This was so with Tewfik. More of the spines caught at his arms as he worked with the revolver muzzle to free his shin, and presently he was all but helpless.

Luella saw a light, at that moment, and it became plain to her why Chilson had led his enemies into that thorny thicket. She clapped her hands ecstatically. But her rejoicing was short-lived. Henry, profiting by the experience of his companion, made haste to leave the chaparral of darting needles.

"Now look what you've done!" he yelled to Chilson.

The Flagstaff man made his way out of the cholla patch by a safe path and drew close to Henry. The latter stared at him.

"Why," shouted the aviator, "you are Chilson! I'd hardly have known you, you are so changed. What do you mean by getting Tewfik into that mess?"

"The idea, Henry," Chilson answered, "was to cut down the odds against me, for the moment, so I could pay my respects to you. You and I have a bone to pick, my festive sky pilot, and——"

Henry lifted his revolver at that instant and pressed the trigger. The explosion echoed dully among the little hills of the rough country. Luella, with dread clutching at her heart, closed her eyes. Had William been slain? was the horrifying question that filled her mind. She opened her eyes and looked again.

No; Henry's bullet had missed its target. As Luella continued to watch, she saw Chilson whirl his club and let it fly. Weighted by the stone the club went true to its mark, striking Henry in the shoulder and knocking him off his feet.

Like a sprinter doing a hundred yards for the world's record, Chilson covered the distance between himself and the pilot. Before Henry could regain his feet, Chilson was upon him. Clutching Henry's hand, Chilson shook the revolver out of the gripping fingers. Henry seized Chilson about the throat, they came to grips, and there followed a wrestling match in which the rejuvenated Flagstaff man gave a wonderful account of himself.

He was quicker than a flash in all his movements. If Henry struggled to his feet, it was only to be tripped and

downed again by the adroit and nimble Chilson. At last he gave up.

"Hanged if I ever saw anything like this before!" Henry panted. "A month ago I could have rolled you over and danced a jig on you, but now you're too many for me, Chilson. Keep away! I've had enough."

Chilson picked up Henry's revolver. "You're a disgrace to the brave airmen who fought in the war, Henry!" declared Chilson. "You brought me here by a trick and left me to my fate. But that wasn't the worst. In a similar manner, you flew to this plateau and left Miss Robbins, a delicate woman nurtured in luxury and unused to privations. I ought to shoot you; and I would, right here and now, if I didn't need your services. Who is this man you call Tewfik?"

With the gun leveled at Henry, Chilson looked off toward the cactus patch. Tewfik was still struggling frantically with the chollas, oblivious of everything but his own troubles.

"He's the man who hired me," acknowledged Henry, dispirited by the helpless condition of his companion; "he's the friend of Flandon's who's trying to help him prove an alibi. I'm certainly in wrong this trip."

"Did you come here with fresh supplies of food and water for Miss Robbins and myself?" went on Chilson.

Henry shook his head. "Tewfik was afraid you two star witnesses might be alive," he said, "and it was his plan to take away what food and water you had left. He was against bringing those supplies here in the first place, but I insisted. I was willing to help get you here and leave you for a while, but that was as far as I cared to go."

"Is that so?" exclaimed Chilson skeptically. "Then why are you here now to take away what's left of the food and water? And why did you try to shoot me? Your talk doesn't hang together, Henry. But never mind. Go into the cactus patch and bring out your friend. The first thing you do, relieve him of his revolver and throw it to me. Start yourself!"

Chilson meant business; there was no doubt of it. He kept the gun trained on Henry and followed his every movement with a determined eye.

With great care the pilot went to the relief of the demoralized Tewfik. First, he picked up Tewfik's weapon and hurled it clear of the chollas. Chilson gathered it in and thus became a two-gun man, and doubly dangerous. Next, Henry led his limping and wailing companion out of the patch.

"Do something for me!" howled Tewfik.

"Take my club, Henry," Chilson instructed, "and pry some of the cactus off the gentleman. He seems to be in a good deal of pain."

Henry followed orders. Most of the cactus came away under his efforts, but many of the fishhook spines still clung to Tewfik's shins and arms.

"You will have plenty of time to work at them yourself, Tewfik," said Chilson mysteriously. "It will afford you recreation during the long, hot days. We—— Ah, Luella!"

The girl, overcome with happiness at Chilson's success, had hurried from the swale to congratulate him. Her face was glowing. "Oh," she cried breathlessly, "that was wonderful, William! Two armed men—and you had only a wooden club! I shall never forget this as long as I live."

"Come with us, Luella," said Chilson fondly, "while I introduce Tewfik to the slender resources of the rough country. But please keep behind. If there is any more fighting I want to be sure that you are in no danger."

Luella dropped behind and followed while Chilson drove the limping and fuming Tewfik and the aviator into the barranca.

"There is my hut, Tewfik," went on Chilson. "You will find it a pleasant retreat during the heat of the day. Notice the calendar stick hanging against the wall. As the days pass, you can notch them one by one on the stick. The nights on this mesa are very chilly. Dried yucca leaves, which are to be found in a valley just over the ridge there, make a very good fire."

Next he herded the two friends of

Flandon into the maguey patch and showed them his roasting pit. He described minutely how the maguey hearts were to be treated and made useful as food.

"There are other little conveniences that you will discover," continued Chilson. "You will make the most of them, I am sure. You see, Tewfik, you will have a big advantage over me when I was left here, for I have blazed a trail for you."

Tewfik set up a wail. "You mean to say that you are going to leave me in this place?" he demanded.

"For a while, Tewfik. Allison will get somebody to come back for you, I think. If he doesn't—well, that would be too bad. However, you can't logically protest against taking a little of your own medicine."

Chilson drove his two prisoners back to the barranca. There he made Henry pick up the two traveling bags and move toward the level ground where the airplane was moored. Tewfik, under threats of being instantly shot if he followed, was left in the barranca. Luella, upon request of Chilson, carried the rope which Henry had left on the occasion of his previous visit to the mesa.

"I presume, Henry," observed Chilson when they had reached the flying machine, "that you have discovered my intentions by this time. Miss Robbins and I are going to fly away with you to Phoenix. We——"

"But the bus will only carry two!" interposed Henry.

"It is going to carry three, this trip," Chilson insisted. "I have lost nearly enough weight to make up for a third passenger. If you think we can't get away, however, I'll have you give me some instructions in flying, and then I'll drive your bus and leave you here with Tewfik."

Henry was stricken with panic. "We'll get away somehow," he answered hastily.

He was equal to the occasion. Luella was placed in the observer's cockpit with the satchels, and Chilson was tied to the deck just in front of her and just behind the pilot's "office." Henry had an extra rope along, and it was strung between the stakes that had been planted on a previous occasion. The machine was held firmly while Henry could do the cranking.

Before he walked back to the propeller, Chilson spoke to him firmly. "Henry," said he, "I have two revolvers, and I am going to keep you covered every moment. If you try to take us anywhere else than to Phoenix, or if you attempt any other underhanded maneuver, there will be fireworks. Do I make myself clear?"

"Perfectly," said Henry.

The engine was cranked, the propeller began to spin, and the pilot returned to his place. He severed the rope with a blow of a hatchet, and the airplane moved toward the edge of the mesa, gathering speed as it went. Presently it began to lift; and Chilson, roosting on the turtle-back deck, blessed the rope that held him in safety.

He looked back. A forlorn figure was to be seen on the crest of the barranca bank; a forlorn figure, extracting cholla spines industriously from one of its arms, and only pausing now and then to peer wildly at the receding flying machine.

A hand touched Chilson on the shoulder. He looked around to see the smiling face of Luella. She was supremely happy, and there was a light in her eyes that went to Chilson's heart like an electric spark. Taking one of the revolvers under his arm, he used his free hand to blow a kiss to the lady in the observer's cockpit. Then his Panama blew off in the wind of their flight, and he faced around resolutely to keep watch of Henry.

The occurrences of the last hour would have proved an eye opener to Penhallock could he have seen them!

CHAPTER XI.

OUT OF THE SKIES.

ON the afternoon of the day Penhallock had interviewed Allison and gloomily announced that his company was due for a loss, strange rumors were flying about Phoenix. An air-

plane had landed at the ball park. It had fallen suddenly out of clear skies and deposited a lady, an aviator, and a tramp on terra firma in the outskirts of the city. The aviator had been turned over to a policeman, and the tramp had called a cab by telephone and taken the lady to the Plaza Hotel. Then the tramp had disappeared, had vanished utterly, and no one seemed to know just how it had happened.

Penhallock, in the lobby of the Ford Hotel, heard all these rumors, but they made little impression on him. "These flying machines will be as common as automobiles one of these days," he muttered. "It's an everyday occurrence, even now, to have one drop in on a community like this. Why all the excitement?"

He went on smoking and reading his paper. Some one approached and touched him on the arm, and he looked up. A trim stranger stood before him; not a tall man, but a person evidently of some consequence. His face was a rich brown color, clean shaven, and suggesting a character of kindly determination; his hands were rough and calloused, and looked like the hands of a toiler. But the form was straight, a little plump perhaps, but radiating an athletic fitness.

This stranger wore a suit of expensive brown clothes, a soft collar, and a very wonderful silk shirt. His tie, Penhallock noticed, matched his stockings and the band on his new straw hat.

"Well, sir?" inquired Penhallock briskly. "I reckon you have the advantage of me."

"All the world's a stage," said the apparition, "and all the men and women want to travel on top."

Penhallock dropped his newspaper and sat back with a gasp. "My stars," he gasped, "that sounds like Bill Chilson! But you can't be Bill. Bill has cashed in. He found life too hard for him on a bleak mesa in the Painted Desert and toppled over and gave up. Chilson was very stout, very slow in his movements, very much out of any picture one could paint that suggests physical activity. You, on the contrary, are full of pep; you have toasted yourself in the sun; you are supple and hard as nails. But you have Bill's eyes and general expression, although I miss the double chin. Who are you, sir?"

"Bill Chilson redivivus," the other answered. "Bill Chilson, star witness in the Flandon case, back in civilization once more by virtue of the spur of necessity that made him a man to be reckoned with. That's right, Pen. Say, you heard about the tramp that dropped out of the skies here in Phoenix with a lady and an aviator and then disappeared? Well, I'm that tramp. I disappeared into a clothing store, a shoe shop, and a tonsorial parlor, and when I came to the surface again no one knew me."

A flock of newspaper reporters arrived and pressed for an interview. Chilson fled from them and was taken upstairs to Penhallock's room. There, in the privacy of his friend's apartment, he related his adventures. He already had seen the prosecuting attorney; Henry was in jail, and plans were being made to send the flying machine back to the Painted Desert to pick up Tewfik.

"Bill," said Penhallock heartily, "you are a fifty-thousand-dollar prize package. I thought we'd sure have to pay up on that policy of yours. Instead of giving up and expiring on that mesa, however, you have made your terrible experience a stepping-stone to a happier existence. Great Scott, how you have fallen off! You're an A1 risk now, judging from the looks of you. How is Miss Robbins?"

"She's a regular little brick, Pen!" declared Chilson enthusiastically. "She faced all the hardships with a smile. After the trial——" He paused, with a happy glow in his eyes.

"After the trial?" echoed Penhallock. "What then?"

"Well, I shall want to change the beneficiary of my policy, and make it payable to Mrs. Luella Chilson." He laughed and clapped Penhallock on the back.

"Well, upon my soul!" gulped Penhallock. "When did that happen?"

"It hasn't happened yet, but it's going to," returned Chilson; "directly after the trial, at Tucson. I'll see that you get a bid."

"Fine!" cried Penhallock, and shook his friend's hand warmly.

"I'm due at Allison's office at five," Chilson went on, "and I have just time to take you to the Plaza and introduce you to Luella. Come on."

They left, evaded the reporters, and presently met the fair lady of Chilson's dreams. Penhallock's estimate of Miss Robbins was very high, and when he saw her take Chilson's roughened hand, caress it fondly, and heard her call him "my hero," he knew at once that a glad future of love and happiness was ready to receive his friend Bill.

"But look out." Penhallock warned Chilson, when they had left the Plaza and were on their way to Allison's office; "you are likely to forfeit all your glowing prospects by a return to the pleasures of the table."

"Not I, Pen!" asserted Chilson. "Having once tasted the delights of an active and purposeful existence, nothing could tempt me to such a fall from grace. Luella will look after my diet," he added.

"Here's where you ought to drop a nugget," Penhallock suggested.

"I left all the nuggets on that blessed mesa," said Chilson, "along with my overweight. A hint from Luella was all I needed."

"Heaven bless Luella!" exclaimed Penhallock, deeply moved, and cordially took Chilson by the hand again.

For Disabled Soldiers

DURING the war, if a soldier took out an insurance policy and was killed and did not leave any beneficiary who could take the insurance money, the policy reverted to the government. As conditions have entirely changed, due to the cessation of active warfare, the Bureau of War Risk Insurance asks that this forfeiture be eliminated from the act so that in no case will the government forfeit an insurance claim.

The bill introduced by Mr. Rayburn, of Texas, and those of other members widening the provisions for payment to disabled soldiers, have the indorsement of the bureau. By these bills a man totally permanently disabled will receive one hundred dollars a month instead of thirty dollars, as at present—one hundred dollars being paid now only in specified cases—and a man with one leg off will receive a percentage of one hundred dollars rather than a percentage of thirty dollars, as at present. The amounts payable if he is temporarily totally disabled are considerably increased by these bills and are deemed more nearly to fit present-day conditions, taking into account the present high cost of living.

Provision is made in a bill introduced by Mr. Sweet to pay two hundred dollars in case of double total permanent disability. There is only one known case of this kind in the country, the man having lost both eyes and both arms. If this becomes an act he would therefore receive two hundred dollars a month from the compensation feature of the act and fifty-seven dollars and fifty cents from the insurance feature.

Helpful Criticism

DO you know what the hanging committee have done?" said the first artist. "They've absolutely ruined my picture by putting it next to the worst daub in the exhibition."

"I've got the same complaint," said the second artist. "I looked in yesterday, and I found they've hung my picture beside an absolutely frightful thing."

"How do you do, you folks?" said artist number three, joining them. "I see they've hung your pictures side by side this year."

Why So Polite?

SHE: "Pardon me, sir, for walking on your feet!"

He: "Oh, don't mention it! I walk on them myself, you know."

(COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE)

CHAPTER I.

TOWARD THE REEF.

"SO Old Dick has us over a barrel?" The junior member of the Chadwick-Browning Motor Ship Company grinned at the dejected senior partner, and did not seem the slightest bit worried over Mr. Richard Maddern. The latter, known in shipping circles as "Old Dick," operated a fleet of cargo and passenger steamers of fair tonnage on the Pacific coast. "The Maddern Line," as it was known upon the coast, had been built up by hard work, questionable, even crooked, methods, and general thuggery on the part of Old Dick.

Up to 1915 he had disposed easily of such daring individuals who so far forgot themselves as to bid for the business, and this despite the fact that the Maddern ships were carrying capacity cargoes, and leaving freight on the docks. And then it was the Chadwick-Browning Company modestly entered with a single motor ship.

Old Dick had the habit of sneering at new ideas, young men just entering business, and office help just out of business college. In the case of the Chadwick-Browning Company he had a chance to sneer twice—at the youth of the partners, who had put their all into the single motor ship, and at the motor ship itself.

"Motor ship!" he had sniffed—"a tub with a gasoline engine in it is what I call it."

"But Diesel and semi-Diesel engines are a great success," his auditor had protested. "They are using them in German submarines, so why not in commercial vessels?"

"The Germans know how to build ships and engines and we don't," returned Maddern. As the statement was made before the United States had entered the war, the reply did not seem to the auditor so torrid as it might have sounded later.

So great was his contempt for this latest rival concern that Maddern ignored it entirely. Both Chadwick and Browning had worked as only young men embarking on their first business adventure can work, and then, late the following year, they added two more motor ships.

When this latest deal became known it created favorable interest in shipping circles, because motor ships were more or less of an experiment. To the experienced it could mean but one thing: Ships of the type were a success. Even Maddern took notice, then, and when he took official notice, it meant that the fight was on.

First he acquired all available statistics on the craft. Next he thoroughly investigated the financial standing of the Chadwick-Browning Motor Ship Company. With all data in his possession he knew as much about the business of the young shipping company as the members did themselves.

In January of 1917, Jacobs, general manager of the Maddern interests, entered the private office of Old Dick, armed with reports, facts, and figures.

"Mr. Maddern, he said, "if it is your intention to add a motor ship or two to our fleet, now is the time. The motor ship *Wenatchee* has been launched, and I understand can be purchased. She is the largest on the West coast and is of the finest type yet developed. What are your orders?"

"Jacobs," replied Maddern, "I intend to add not only one or two motor ships to our fleet, but four—and the *Wenatchee* is one of them."

"But," protested Jacobs, "there are not four ships obtainable at this time; the Chadwick-Browning people——"

"Exactly, the Chadwick-Browning people own three of the best ships, hope to obtain the fourth, and will if they have the nerve," interrupted Maddern.

"But they won't sell!" exclaimed Jacobs.

"My dear Jacobs," replied Maddern impatiently, "unless you learn to look into the future you'll never make a successful business man. Chadwick and Browning are young and have lots to learn. As yet we have not taken their opposition seriously, and, therefore, have not fought them. They have been proceeding with caution, and having always been successful, they are contemplating the purchase of the *Wenatchee*. To them such a purchase is a plunge. Past experience justifies the purchase. Very well, we'll let them.

"Once the deal has been made," Maddern went on, "they'll have about all they can handle even with things breaking even. Well, that's where we come in. We'll start a little rate war that'll put the boys on the financial rocks; then that's where the Maddern company will come along and salvage the wreck, and a fine bit of salvage it will be—four motor ships, with an established business, and all for a song. That, my dear Jacobs, is business." Old Dick rubbed his hands gleefully together. It would be one of the largest "bags" of his business history.

"Chadwick and Browning are a fine team, and they have had plenty of experience in the short time they have been in the game," said Jacobs dubiously. Jacobs was famed in shipping circles for his caution.

"Once again, look ahead," said Maddern. "Browning is the man who, though young, has had the practical experience. He has been to sea a great deal. He is magnetic, and commands the respect of men. He is a mixer. He it is who is doing the 'outside' work of the Motor Ship Company. Chadwick is the man who watches the treasury and manages the profits and losses to the profit of the company. A wonderful combination, but take one away and the other is liable to fall from lack of support.

"You may not think it," Maddern continued, "but the country is about to go to war. Browning will be in uniform the day war is declared and leave Chadwick to run things until he gets back. That is our chance. With Browning away where he can't hold the business by his personality, and with us cutting freight rates on the sly, a few light cargoes will head the S. S. *Chadwick-Browning* toward financial

reef; after that we'll let the tide of business do the rest, while the salving ship *Maddern* stands by in the offing until she piles up on the reef."

CHAPTER II.

TRUE TO HIS TYPE.

IT was just as Maddern had predicted. After many days of figuring and discussion of the matter Chadwick and Browning had taken the plunge and the motor ship *Wenatchee* sailed forth in March flying their house flag on her maiden voyage. Browning it was, who by his enthusiasm brought his cautious partner to take the plunge.

"Why, Chad," he said, "there's nothing to it. It'll strap us for a year or so, but the business justifies it. We've either got to go ahead or go back. We can't stand still and I'm for advancing. What do we care for debts. We've always had them and we have always paid them. We started with one ship. We now have three. The more debts, the more ships, and the more ships the more money coming in with which to pay the debts. It's a circle—pat me on the back while I'm patting you."

His confidence was borne out to a great extent by the returns from the *Wenatchee's* first trip. She cost more and it cost more to operate her, but the profits were large in proportion. Thus it was that both Browning and Chadwick felt the future would be well taken care of, when, late in April, the former appeared at the office of the company for the last time. He was in the uniform of an ensign and had been detailed for duty on the East coast.

In August Maddern began his attack on the young firm. The first indication that something was amiss came when several of the firm's heaviest shippers withdrew their business. Chadwick took the first train South and attempted to straighten things out. Nothing, apparently, that he could do or offer solved the difficulty. His trip was not entirely in vain, for he picked up some new business, but nothing that would come anywhere near offsetting that which he had lost.

Things ran along for a few months; then several firms that shipped South withdrew their business. This was right in his home town, and while he was unable to bring them back to the Chadwick-Browning Company he at least learned definitely what he had long suspicioned: Maddern was at the bottom of it all, and, true to his type, he was fighting in the dark and not in the open.

Good, game fellow that he was, Chadwick knew that Browning was having worry enough of his own in hunting down submarines without worrying about business affairs thousands of miles away, so he fought it out himself the best he could.

Two months before Browning returned home with an honorable discharge and a medal in his pocket Chadwick called upon the bank which held the Motor Ship Company's notes. The president greeted him somewhat nervously, though pleasantly enough.

"I'll get to the point at once," said Chadwick. "We want to renew those notes if possible."

"Very sorry, Mr. Chadwick," began the president after some delay, "but it was like this: You see——"

"Yes?" said Chadwick, wondering what he was trying to say.

"We, er—— That is, the directors had an offer for the notes at slightly better than face, and—er—we deemed it wise to take advantage of the offer. You see, we—er—knew that you would doubtless request an extension because of poor business conditions, and, of course you understand."

"No; I don't understand," said Chadwick hotly. "The security was of the best."

"Yes, yes, I know; but business is business," suggested the president lamely.

"Who bought them?" snapped Chadwick.

"A Mr. Maddern, a steamship man, I believe."

It was a blow, but one that Chadwick had been expecting. "You believe!" he said scornfully. "You know mighty well he's a steamship man and has been

doing his best to put us out of business. You know that, too. And here's something else you may not know: It looks like a frame-up to me, and it is poor business for an institution of this sort to lend its aid to deals of that character. Good day!"

With that Chadwick did the only thing remaining for him to do: He withdrew his personal account as well as the firm's and deposited both with a banking institution that was made up of younger blood, and for that reason likely to help a young firm out if possible.

In the three months that preceded the inevitable show-down, Chadwick worked tirelessly in his efforts to save the company from the rocks. It was not so much his own loss that was worrying him as it was to have Browning return after doing his bit for two years to find his business all but gone —that was what hurt.

Of Maddern he could expect nothing and so remained away. At places where he attempted to negotiate a loan he was told that because of the numerous Liberty Loans funds were not available. Such excuses he recognized as mere camouflage to Maddern's work. Other institutions informed him that because of exceptional building operations in Seattle available funds were being advanced to firms and individuals in that city—a reason which Chadwick recognized as valid, but which did not help him in the slightest.

In the end he waited for Browning's return with the hope that that clever young man—now a lieutenant and full of "pep" and ginger from his two years at sea—would find a way out of the muddle.

CHAPTER III.

INTO THE LION'S DEN.

APPARENTLY Browning was not particularly worried over Old Dick. He listened patiently to Chadwick's story and his sympathy was all for his partner.

"Tough luck, Chad, old man," said the lieutenant; "you've been carrying the load alone all these years and fighting an old hand at the game. It's a wonder to me things haven't gone to smash. Well, if they do, let 'em; we'll salvage what we can from the wreck and go at it again, but before we crash, let's see if we can't survive the storm." His cheerfulness acted like a tonic on the depressed Chadwick.

"Maybe we'll pull through, but it doesn't look much like it," he groaned.

"Sure thing Chad; if we had everything paid off, we could scrap him until he howled for mercy, because then, instead of our being over a barrel we'd have him. We can operate cheaper than he can."

"Yes; having a rate war, and trying to pay for the *Wenatchee* at the same time, is what started us to slipping."

"Let's see if we can't find a toehold long enough to get our breath. How much will it take to put us on our feet?"

Chadwick did not have to ponder before he answered. He had done all his pondering in the past. "One hundred thousand dollars!" he said instantly.

"Nice piece of jack, as the boys in the navy would say," commented Browning; "we might sell, but nobody would buy, except Maddern, and he figures he won't have to if he waits a while, but I don't want to sell. Prefer to go down fighting, and take what's left of the wreck and start over again. What do you think?"

"That's just the way I feel," replied Chadwick.

"Good! Then, there's no argument about that. Now, what I want you to do is to pack your grip, break out your fishing gear, and disappear into the Olympic mountains for two weeks. Have a good time and forget about business. I'll see what I can do, and if I can do anything I'll do it in two weeks. Come out, then, and we'll see how things stand. Now don't say you can't, for you can."

With that the protesting Chadwick found his hat shoved onto his head, his stick crooked over his arm, and himself firmly propelled out of the office and into the hall. There was no arguing the matter with such a swiftly moving partner, and besides Chadwick

really did need the rest, as, single-handed he had been bucking the Maddern organization for months, including Old Dick himself.

With his partner out of the city, Browning buckled down to work. First he wished to assure himself that Maddern absolutely refused to renew the loan and to that end he resolved to "take the bull by the horns." Accordingly he appeared at the Maddern offices the following morning and presented his card.

After some delay a smart-appearing office boy announced that Mr. Maddern would see him. Browning smiled at the boy, resolved that he would steal him for his own organization if ever the opportunity presented itself, and then entered the lion's den.

"Well, well, Mr. Browning," said Maddern, with a fine show of friendship; "glad to see you back, and I am told you did your bit with a vengeance."

"I did the best I could," replied Browning quietly. "Now, as you doubtless are a busy man I may as well state my business——"

"Never too busy to talk to the boys when they come back from the war," interrupted Maddern.

"Nor to sink the hook into them while away," thought Browning grimly. Then he said aloud: "Getting down to business, I guess we'll have to renew those notes. Very sorry; but the security is of the best, so there ought not to be any trouble." He looked inquiringly at Maddern. The latter's manner changed instantly. No longer was he a genial man attempting to tell a younger man that he was glad he was safely back from the war. Instead, he was his true self, a grasping old knave, who if he had been in the packing business would have even utilized a pig's squeal to his financial advantage.

"Very sorry, Mr. Browning," he replied, "but you see we intend to do a little expanding and will need all the cash we can get a hold of."

"Is that so?" replied Browning coolly. "Business must have increased while I was away."

"Very much so!" countered the other.

"Add a few new ships to your fleet, I suppose?" was Browning's next query.

"Yes," said Maddern pointedly—"motor ships?"

The statement was not lost on Browning, though if Maddern expected to derive any satisfaction from the taunt he was disappointed.

"You'll make no mistake in motor ships," replied Browning quietly; "we are perfectly satisfied with them ourselves, and expect to continue using them for years to come. Sorry I can't make some sort of an arrangement with you on the notes, but as you cannot see your way clear to extend them we'll have to get busy elsewhere. Good day!" Browning smiled pleasantly and was gone.

The door had barely closed upon his broad back when Jacobs entered the private office in response to an impatient buzz of the buzzer.

"Cool cuss—that Browning!" said Maddern by way of opening conversation; "I wish that we had him in our organization. Now listen to me, Jacobs, when a man with a load on his mind goes away as though he had dropped his load he will bear watching. What do you suppose that fellow has up his sleeve?"

"An arm!" suggested Jacobs with an attempt at humor, but a look from his employer brought him to his senses with a jerk. "He is doubtless bluffing," was the man's suggestion.

"Possibly so, but I notice his shoulders did not sag in despair nor his step falter when he left the office," commented Maddern.

"Well, what can he do?" said Jacobs. "You have him sewed up so he can't get a loan. If he can't get a loan he can't pay the notes!" All of this was quite true, and correctly summed up the situation.

"What can he do?" repeated Maddern. "That's just exactly what I want to know and it's up to you to find out. Now get out." Jacobs "got out" as he had many times before—hurriedly.

CHAPTER IV.

AT THE ELEVENTH HOUR.

BROWNING'S outward appearance was not in accord with his inward feelings as he left the office of his powerful rival. He had known from the first there was no chance in that quarter, but the curt refusal, even though spoken quietly enough, grated; there was menace in every word and it was not lost on Browning.

It took him three days to search out all local possibilities, but in the end he could find no one who would lend his firm the one hundred thousand dollars. Several who did have ample funds preferred securities of a stationary nature to ships which never remained long in one place and always were subject to the elements, even if the ships were fully insured.

His various attempts were duly reported to Maddern and each refusal caused Old Dick to buzz for Jacobs and to comment gleefully:

"Well, they failed again, Jacobs; looks to me as if the Motor Ship Company will soon pile up on the rocks—a nice bit of salvage, Jacobs, a nice bit of salvage."

"Shall I arrange for additional desk space, Mr. Maddern? Taking over the motor ships will add considerably to our force. Unless, of course, you think there is a possibility of their making a new loan."

"None in the world," said Maddern. "Make the arrangements by all means." He paused, then broke forth into laughter. "That's fine, Jacobs, one of the finest jokes I ever heard of; the two young upstarts will be down on their knees begging before the final crash comes. I'm not going to them, so they'll have to come to me, and naturally they'll notice the preparations for a big increase in the office force. Jacobs, do it at once; they'll be around again most any time now."

Perhaps Maddern believed he had good reason to laugh first, for he had made it certain that a loan could not be secured locally.

Three days before Chadwick returned from his vacation the gloom that overhung the Motor Ship offices, when the confidential clerks and Browning were alone, was suddenly dispelled. A letter from San Francisco was the cause. It was an answer to one of several that Browning had sent out, and while the senders made no promises, they left many things unsaid. This, Browning thought, was as good as saying that the necessary funds would be forthcoming.

Chadwick was naturally delighted when he heard the news, as it was a fitting climax to his vacation.

"I couldn't quite forget business," he told Browning, "but I felt right along you would find a way out. Now we'll hit the line together and see if we can't get the company's affairs on an even keel once more. The first thing the senior partner will tell the junior partner to do is to take the first train for San Francisco and close this loan deal. If you work fast you can come back on the *Wenatchee,* as she'll be due to sail North about that time. If I may be facetious, for a moment, Maddern is going to be madder'n the deuce when he hears the news, for he's sure he has us in a corner."

While the two partners were discussing their apparent change in luck, Old Dick himself was moving as he never had moved before. His San Francisco office had advised him of Browning's negotiations by wire the day the first letter had arrived at the city of the Golden Gate. How many similar letters had been sent to men of finance in San Francisco he did not know, but he reasoned that Browning had sent out more than one, and he proposed to know the exact number and to whom they were sent; then he would act accordingly. A fleet of motor ships was too hard to obtain in these days of sharp competition, and Maddern did not propose to let the Chadwick-Browning Company's four crack ships slip through his fingers at the eleventh hour.

Thus it happened that Maddern arrived in San Francisco just twenty-four hours before Browning put in an appearance, and twenty-four hours was

quite sufficient. One of Old Dick's confidential clerks already had ascertained, by a few well-put inquiries among business associates, the identity of the firm with which Browning was communicating. This done, he left the "fixing" to be looked after by Old Dick himself who was an expert in that line.

"Fine work," said Maddern when the man had reported, "but I have always understood that company was above—er, deals of that sort." He finished a bit lamely.

"The company is, but the fellow who advises them on their water-front investments will listen to reason. He won't sink the hooks into his own people, but for a price he will keep them from advancing the money to Chadwick-Browning."

"His name?"

"Gibsen!"

"Never heard of him," said Maddern in the voice of one who was surprised because he did not know by name all high-class crooks.

"That's not his right name, I guess; but it serves the purpose."

Mr. Maddern lost no time in making an engagement with Mr. Gibsen, and in this individual he found a man just as slippery as he was himself. Mr. Gibsen talked very slowly, and as he talked he searched Old Dick with his eyes, until the shipping man felt that he had been taken apart, then examined, then reassembled.

"Why should we conform to your wishes in this matter?" he inquired softly.

"Because it is to my advantage for you to do so, and being to my advantage I can afford to make it to your advantage," replied Maddern.

"Very interesting," commented Gibsen, then after a moment: "Well?" It was put as a question, but was really a request for Maddern to state his proposition.

"Interesting to you personally, or to the firm?" queried Maddern boldly. "I want to know with whom I am dealing?"

"I represent the firm in all shipping matters, and myself in personal matters," replied Gibsen who, now that he had classified the other, felt sure of his ground.

"Then we'll leave the firm out of it and get down to business. It is worth one thousand dollars to me if you will turn in an adverse report on the Chadwick-Browning loan." Maddern had reached the point at last.

For a full half minute Gibsen looked Old Dick squarely in the eye, and the latter felt himself coloring for the first time in years.

"My dear Mr. Maddern," Gibsen said in a silky voice, "I am not now, never have been, nor never intend to be engaged in the peanut business."

"But——" began Maddern.

"Let's be plain, Mr. Maddern; we are both out in this world for all we can get. In the end both of us will lose out, but we'll have had a lot of fun in being crooked"—Mr. Maddern winced, at this point—"being crooked while it lasted," continued the remarkable Gibsen.

"Two thousand!" interrupted Maddern.

"As I was saying," continued the other, ignoring the latest offer, "we'll lose in the end, but until the end comes, so long as I have elected to be crooked, I'm going to get all the traffic will bear. I have a code of my own. I'm loyal in a way to my employers, but my loyalty to any man, including myself, ends there. If I was loyal to myself I would throw you and your proposition out of the office. I ought to any way, for you're a hog at best; but I won't, for you can use me and I can use you. You intend to gouge these honest young men out of a paying business, simply because it is within your power to do it. You'll make thousands of dollars on the deal. For myself you offer a paltry thousand or so——"

"Well, how much do you want?" blurted Maddern.

"I read an interesting little article in the water-front news of to-day's paper," Gibsen continued. "The motor ship *Alki* has logged some twenty-five thousand miles since she has been in service. She has semi-Diesel en-

gines and not one red cent has been spent for repairs. I don't wonder at your desire to add the Chadwick-Browning fleet of motor ships to your own. Having a fair idea of what you'll make on the deal and being fairly certain that the Chadwick-Browning people cannot obtain the money elsewhere, my fee will be the trifling sum of ten thousand dollars."

Maddern protested, groaned, nearly wept, threatened not to consider it even as he was considering it carefully, and in the end did just exactly as Mr. Gibsen with the misdirected talent expected he would do—paid it.

"Oh, well, I'll write out a check," he groaned at last.

"Oh, no, you won't!" replied Gibsen. "You'll pay me in cash."

Old Dick left Gibsen a moment later and he was fuming, angry clear through, but helpless. He returned an hour later and paid the fee in one-thousand-dollar bills, and as Gibsen coolly gathered in the neat roll, Maddern felt as if some one had stuck him with a knife and then turned and twisted the knife ten times. He hoped that Gibsen would immediately deposit the bills in his bank, so that if future trouble arose, he might succeed in involving that cool scoundrel in trouble, for Old Dick, still running true to form, had the number of each bill.

"I don't suppose he'd be fool enough to deposit 'em for months to come!" he grumbled as he departed, and his surmise was correct; and when he did deposit the money, this unusual young man would doubtless do as he had done in the past, spend it on a long list of worthy charities he kept in mind for that express purpose.

On the way out Maddern bumped squarely into Browning, who was coming in. The surprise was mutual.

"Oh, hello, Mr. Maddern!" exclaimed Browning, but adding to himself: "Now what's that old rascal doing here at this time of all times?"

"Why, er, howdy do!" returned Maddern shortly. He felt better, vastly better in fact. Perhaps the ten thousand was well invested after all; any way he felt a thousand dollars' worth better.

CHAPTER V.

THE ONLY WAY.

BROWNING entered the offices of the financial institution with many misgivings and sent his card in to the manager, who in turn conducted him to the office of the president.

"Oh, yes, Mr. Browning; very glad to meet you I am sure," said the officer; then turning to the manager he inquired: "Has Gibsen filed that report on this matter?"

"No, sir; not yet."

"Tell him to get it in at once!"

The manager left quietly and Browning immediately plunged into the subject.

"It is entirely up to Gibsen," explained the president. "I know very little of shipping matters, but if he says it is satisfactory we'll take his word for it."

"You don't happen to know Mr. Maddern, do you?" inquired Browning.

"I've heard of him, but never met him!"

Evidently whoever it was that Maddern had been to see, thought Browning, it was not the fine-looking old man who headed the financial institution.

After a short interval the manager returned with word that Gibsen had just left the office. Expressing regrets at the delay occasioned, the president requested Browning to call the following day.

Browning spent the remainder of the day running down leads which might prove available in case Gibsen's report was adverse. The following day he was on hand at the appointed time and was immediately referred to Gibsen.

"I am very sorry, Mr. Browning," explained Gibsen, "but I can't see my way clear to recommend this loan, particularly as we can turn all of our available funds into channels ashore with equally as good security. We would like to help you out, but it is a matter of judgment. Possibly we are wrong, but such is our decision."

"But," protested Browning, who was bitterly disappointed, "I understood from your letter——"

"We made no promises in our letter," interrupted Gibsen. "We never make promises until we have made a final decision, though, frankly, at the time, we looked at your proposition in a most favorable light."

"Well," said Browning as he slowly reached for his hat, "this is a severe setback in our plans, but of course, you must look after your own interests first." Browning left fighting mad, for though he had not said so, he was positive that Maddern was at the bottom of it all.

And so it was wherever he went. Either Maddern's influence had made it impossible to make a loan, or else the firm was not in a position to advance money in such a large amount on such short notice. He even tried, but without success, to obtain several small loans that would reach the desperately needed one hundred thousand in the aggregate.

In the end he knew that so far as saving the Chadwick-Browning Company from the financial rocks was concerned, it was hopeless. "The salvage will be little enough for us, and great for Old Dick, but whatever it is, we'll take it and start over again. Thank Heaven, the wreck doesn't include our youth and ambition."

At the hotel he met Maddern again. Apparently it was a chance meeting, but in truth Old Dick had roosted, like a vulture, in the lobby the better part of the day, that he might see his latest victim, and learn for himself whether or not Browning's quest had been successful. One glance at the young man started Maddern to purring with satisfaction.

"Well, Browning, what luck?" he inquired pleasantly. "I take it for granted you're down here on that loan matter, money being a bit tight up North."

"Thanks to you, down here as well as up North!" snapped Browning.

"Now, now, young man, you know that I'm the last person in the world to put any obstacles in your way," said Maddern purringly.

"I know exactly the opposite." Browning spoke hotly but quietly. Now that all chance was gone, he determined to have the satisfaction of freeing his mind. "With money everywhere, in spite of government loans, there's no reason why we can't raise a hundred thousand, unless it is to somebody's interest to prevent it—somebody with influence. You're that somebody!"

"Why, you poor, young fool," blazed Maddern, throwing off his mask and showing his true self as he had done many a time before when he was sure of his man, "you might have known that you couldn't fight me, and win! Nobody ever has and nobody ever will. I didn't believe in the motor ship when you started in the business, but was perfectly willing to let you experiment, because I knew if it was a success I'd soon crush you. That's the reason I didn't bid in on the *Wenatchee*, for I knew that by waiting I'd get her and three more ships with her for a song. Well, you see I've got 'em."

He laughed unpleasantly, but if he thought he had hit the all-but-down young man so hard that he would beg, Maddern was badly mistaken. Browning had nothing to lose and nothing to gain, and for the first time in weeks felt absolutely free.

"You haven't youth, Mr. Maddern, nor the fighting qualities of youth. We have. You have our ships, or soon will have, but the rest we keep, and we'll keep our customers as soon as we can take care of them—which we'll be finding a way of doing as soon as you get through salvaging our financial wreck. There's business enough on the coast to live and let live. That was our policy from the first, though with motor ships we knew we could give you a merry run had we so desired. Evidently you prefer it otherwise. Very well then; from this day forward we will conform to your wishes in the matter."

"My, my, how brave our little man talks!" sneered Maddern, and turning on his heel he walked away.

"I wonder if I said too much," Browning commented to himself, half aloud. "I was about to say: 'Right will prevail in the end.' Well, it's a good thing I didn't, for though I firmly believe it, he would only have laughed at me. The only way to argue with men of the Old Dick type is to do—not talk. Good-by, Old Dick! Good-by, Chadwick-Browning Company, for a while. We're like the fellow that was going to be hung—it'll be a lesson we'll never forget."

Whereupon Browning strolled over to the telegraph booth, as though he had one hundred thousand dollars in his pocket and knew where he could get another like sum, and sent a day letter to Chadwick.

There was but one thing left to do and that was to salvage what they could after the Maddern salvor had taken all that the law allowed. The four ships would doubtless be sold to the highest bidder, the value of the notes and the costs of the sale deducted and the remainder turned over to the Chadwick-Browning Company. Knowing Old Dick, Browning knew that he would use every possible influence to prevent others from bidding, in order that his might be the only bid, and therefore as low as possible. Even with strong competition, the ships would not bring anywhere near their value, and with none whatever, the Chadwick-Browning Company could regard anything turned over to them after the sale as a gift, and Old Dick was not presenting gifts to the Chadwick-Browning Company at least.

Browning instructed Chadwick to get in touch immediately with any one he thought might care to bid against Maddern, and to do everything possible to prevent Old Dick from buying up bidders in advance, which the autocrat could well afford to do. The letter written, Browning took a taxi for the dock and told the captain of the *Wenatchee* that he would have a passenger on the northward trip.

Captain Nelson, an old-timer, was delighted to have one of his owners aboard. Nelson could have had, at one time, any ship on the Pacific coast that he desired, but for one thing—too much whisky. Just when he was on the point of becoming master of the finest steamer of her day he began to slip. The slipping continued until at last he was discharged from a Puget Sound tugboat for drunkenness. Browning it was who had salvaged the wreck of the promising skipper, and he was now on the upward climb—had been, in fact, for two years—and was both loyal and grateful to his employers.

"I'm still on the water wagon, Mr. Browning, thanks to you," he said; "and I'm mighty glad you're going north with me."

"Yes, captain; it'll probably be the last trip of the *Wenatchee* under our flag!"

"H-m-m!" mused the captain, "I've been hearing things along the water front, but didn't want to believe them. Old Dick, I suppose!"

"Yes; Old Dick, as usual!"

"Well, as much as I love the *Wenatchee*, I love the Chadwick-Browning Company more, so if you figure on staying in the shipping business and need a skipper I'm ready any time—even if it's only a sound tug."

"Thank you, captain!" Browning was touched at this loyalty, coming as it did after so many setbacks.

CHAPTER VI.

INTO THE DARK WATERS.

SEVERAL hours after the *Wenatchee* crossed Golden Gate and headed for Puget Sound with one of her owners aboard and flying her house flag for the last time, the crack passenger liner *Castle Rock* of the Maddern Line backed out of her slip at San Francisco.

On the bridge, highly pleased with himself and affairs in general, was Old Dick. He chatted with Captain Fremont, the steamer's skipper, and watched the maneuvering of the big craft with interest.

Suddenly from astern came a dull crash. An instant later the slowly mov-

ing engines came to a stop, while the steamer drifted slowly into the stream.

"What's wrong, captain?" Maddern demanded with a worried look. Accidents meant delay and delay money.

"Sounded to me like a submerged bit of driftwood had fouled the propeller!" returned the captain.

And so it proved. A bit of waterlogged wreckage had been sucked into the propeller, and for a moment had threatened to create a bad mess. After the propeller had been cleared, the steamer, with engines slowly turned over, worked her way back to the dock, in order that a thorough investigation might be made.

"Frankly, Mr. Maddern," said Captain Fremont some time later, "we should go into dry dock rather than take a chance!" He looked inquiringly at the owner.

"Isn't the propeller cleared now?" snapped Maddern. "Isn't the engine turning it over properly?"

"Everything seems to be satisfactory," replied the skipper, "but I am merely telling you what the safe course would be."

"Do you advise going into dry dock?"

"Yes; I do!"

"Well, we'll back out into the stream and if everything is running satisfactorily when we pass through Golden Gate, then we'll continue to Puget Sound. If not, we'll signal a tug and be towed back if necessary. Dry docking means a wicked expense. We'll have to send our passengers by rail, or charter another ship and that's not to be thought of," said Maddern firmly.

It was not the first time the owner had risked a ship and passengers to save a few dollars. And against his better judgment, as more than one sea captain has done on orders from his owners, Captain Fremont put to sea.

Aside from a loud thumping in the vicinity of the tail shaft which developed twenty-four hours out, nothing unusual happened. The ship logged her usual number of knots an hour. The wireless operator posted the usual reports, while the usual stewards cared for the usual seasick individuals and received the usual tips.

When off the Oregon coast the outline of another vessel appeared dead ahead. Captain Fremont sent a boy to call Maddern to the bridge. Old Dick appeared twenty minutes later.

"The *Wenatchee* is ahead, sir; thought you might like to watch us pass her," said the captain. "Give you an idea the way a motor ship looks at sea!"

"Thank you, captain, thank you," returned Maddern. "You know, of course, that she'll soon be a part of the Maddern Line?"

"I've heard the rumors. Fine piece of business, Mr. Maddern. She'll return you a neat profit on freight to say nothing of carrying a few passengers who are willing to put up with the accommodations on a smaller vessel than the *Castle Rock*."

Maddern walked the bridge until the *Wenatchee* was overhauled, then made his way to the stern of his vessel and watched her slowly pull away from the motor ship. During the time his binoculars were on the smaller ship, Maddern had managed to identify the passenger on the *Wenatchee's* bridge as Browning.

"His last trip on his own boat!" he commented grimly; "unless"—and Maddern chuckled evilly to himself—"he pays the usual fare!"

During the day a brisk wind, which grew stronger toward evening, kicked up sufficient sea to send the honorable Nicholas Maddern to his room. He was not exactly seasick, but neither was he his usual self, and on the safety-first theory, Old Dick deemed it wise to retire.

He fell asleep to the pleasant throb of the engines. When he awoke he instantly realized a state of affairs that concerned him deeply. First, he was decidedly seasick. This ship, that he took so much pride in, was rolling like a log, while even the sag of springs and mattress of one of the few rooms so equipped on the ship, failed to keep him on an even keel. Old Dick was undoubtedly rolling about, himself, and

each roll brought him face to face with death according to his feelings. And then, of a sudden, he realized that the engines had ceased their throbbing.

He leaped to the floor, swayed dizzily about, wondering what to do, and in an instant his mind began to grasp the situation. Possibly the ship was in danger. He, himself, might even be in danger. He turned a sickly white at the thought and began to dress rapidly. Thoughts of danger to himself, possibly, and danger to his pocketbook, certainly, soon banished seasickness, and when he dashed from his room and lurched along the deck toward the bridge, save for a paleness he was almost his normal self.

"What's happened, captain?" he asked breathlessly.

"Because you refused to spend money enough to have the ship docked at San Francisco, what I expected might happen, has happened—we've dropped our propeller!"

"Is—is there danger?"

"Not right now, but possibly there will be before morning. For your information, alone, and not for publication among the passengers, I'll state we're drifting toward a rather nasty reef. If we hit, we're lost! I've sent out a radio and have received replies from our tug, which is now entering Puget Sound with a tow, and the motorship *Wenatchee* which we passed yesterday."

"Which," Maddern quavered, while his face turned ashen, "will reach us first?"

"Oh, you don't need to be alarmed," explained the skipper. "I'm expecting the *Wenatchee* will have a line aboard us in plenty of time!"

"The *Wenatchee!* The *Wenatchee!*" he screamed. "Good heavens, captain, that'll mean salvage. That'll ruin me. Thousands and thousands of dollars in salvage. Why, they might be able to collect salvage equal to half the value of the ship, cargo, and freight!"

He paused, and stared into the dark waters alongside. Then, with a moan of anguish, he suddenly realized another angle of the situation. With startled eyes and ashen face, he stretched out his grasping hands toward the captain. The clawlike fingers that had throttled many a competitor, clutched the officer's arm. "With the salvage money," Maddern said in a hoarse voice, "they can pay off their debts, and I lose, forever, those motor ships! Lose them forever!" The last was almost a scream.

"Well?" The captain was disgusted and showed it.

"Can't you do something? Can't we do something? What's our tug doing now?"

"Legging it down the straits for the Cape!" returned the captain; "she radioed that she'd drop her tow at Port Angeles, but at best the *Wenatchee* will be here first. We've rigged out a sea anchor to reduce drifting, but"—and the captain became impressive—"we'll take the first tow line that is offered, salvage or no salvage!"

There was something about the way the captain spoke which indicated that he meant what he said. Maddern sensed that the good-natured skipper who smiled at babies, bowed to the ladies, and smoked with the men was an entirely different man in an emergency.

Nevertheless, the owner determined that the rocks actually would have to be a menace before he would permit a line from the *Wenatchee* to be sent aboard. "For," he reasoned, "this is my ship, and Captain Fremont is working for me, and such being the case he'll think twice before he ignores my suggestions."

Having settled affairs for the time, Maddern paced the deck hour after hour awaiting the arrival of his "bridge" before he crossed it.

The jagged Washington coast was dangerously near when the *Wenatchee* at last hove in sight. The motor ship had been running at top speed for hours, but her engines had stood the test magnificently. On the bridge, Captain Nelson and Browning had walked and debated the question of whether or not they would arrive in time to save the big passenger ship. Being con-

cerned over lives and not dollars, the thoughts of salvage had not occurred to Browning. It was Captain Nelson who first mentioned it.

"I've an idea Old Dick is squirming as he never squirmed before!" commented the captain. "He's had it coming to him for years, and it is a just and fitting punishment that you, whom he intended to squeeze, should be the one to collect the salvage from him. It'll just about put you onto your feet and a neat balance over. If no lives are lost, the incident will cause more grins along the coast than has happened in many years."

"I don't care a rap about the salvage right now. It's the people I'm thinking of!" replied Browning.

"I'm thinking we'll make it," said Captain Nelson; "we're doing a knot and a half better than we ever did before."

And make it they did, and none too soon either, as both officers and seamen realized.

To the north, a full hour away, a smudge of black smoke marked the position of the Maddern tug speeding to the rescue also, and it was this that told Old Dick that it was time to act.

He quit his walk on the main deck and hurried to the bridge. "Well, captain, guess we won't need the *Wenatchee* after all. There's our own tug!"

"What!" snapped the captain. "Why, man alive, we'll be on the rocks before the tug can get a line aboard!"

"Now listen to reason," pleaded Maddern; "it'll mean the difference of thousands of dollars to us if we take a chance."

"Mr. Maddern," said the captain calmly, "I never measure lives against dollars. Remember, you are a passenger aboard this ship, and I'm responsible for the safety of not one passenger, but all."

"And remember this, Captain Fremont: I'm the owner of this ship, and it is within my power to discharge you if you don't listen to reason," snarled Maddern in reply.

"Granted!" said the captain evenly; "but as long as I command this ship I'll do as sound judgment dictates. Sound judgment dictates that we take the tow the *Wenatchee* offers us and we will!"

"Very well then, Captain Fremont, you are discharged!" He turned to the first officer, "Mr. Raymond," he said, "take the bridge. Captain Fremont is no longer in command of the *Castle Rock*. And, Mr. Raymond, my orders are that unless we are about to strike that reef—and in my opinion there is no immediate danger—you are to refuse all offers of assistance from the *Wenatchee*. They won't steam away and leave us—depend on that."

Mr. Raymond paid not the slightest attention to Maddern.

"Well?" snapped the owner, after waiting a moment for a reply.

"Captain Fremont is in command of this ship until she is safely docked at Seattle," replied Raymond without even glancing at Maddern.

Then it was that Captain Fremont took a stand that he should have taken earlier, but did not simply because Maddern was owner of the line and distressed over the prospect of heavy salvage.

"Mr. Maddern, you'll take your place with the other passengers. I'm surprised at your ignorance of the code of the sea." It was plain the captain was fast losing his patience, in spite of the fact that he was a man of family and could ill afford to lose command of the *Castle Rock*, but he knew his duty and was doing it.

"How dare you order me off the bridge of my own ship?" Maddern asked angrily.

For reply Captain Fremont caught him by the collar and, with little ceremony and less gentleness, propelled his employer to the bridge ladder, then dropped him to the deck below. Mr. Maddern went sprawling. He leaped to his feet instantly, started up the ladder, but a look in the captain's eye made him change his mind.

"Suppose he thinks I'm beaten! Well, I'm not. I'll save salvage and get

those motor ships yet. I've never been beaten and I don't intend to be."

Ignoring the glances of the surprised passengers about him, the owner made his way aft to the radio station. "Here, boy," he said shortly, "send this message to the *Wenatchee!*"

The operator took the message down hurriedly, then looked inquiringly at Maddern as he realized its import. "Captain send this?" he asked.

"Yes," snapped Maddern. "I'll wait for a reply!"

CHAPTER VII.

ORDERS FROM THE OWNER.

THE operator on the *Wenatchee* brought the message to Captain Nelson a few minutes later. The contents caused him to whistle, then explode.

"The infernal lubbers!" he bellowed at Browning. "The *Castle Rock* refuses all aid, unless we stipulate a price for towing them until their own tug can take care of them. Why, the hounds!" Here the captain stated his opinion of Maddern and the Maddern Line in the characteristic language of the sea. At last he stopped for breath.

"Well," said Browning quietly, "this is no time even to think of money. Radio back that we'll get there as soon as we can. We'll first save lives; I guess we can come to terms afterward."

"I can't believe Fremont ever sent that message," said the captain after a moment of thought. "No, sir! No real sailor would, and Captain Fremont is a sailor, every inch of him. Old Dick is at the bottom of it! We'll be alongside in a few minutes, and this business will be settled by the two skippers!"

Captain Nelson did not propose, now that a kind fate had made it possible for the Chadwick-Browning Company to continue, to permit Browning to toss it aside to the profit of the scoundrel who had planned it all, and was willing to risk his own and others' lives for a few dollars.

A glance told him that the *Castle Rock* was in grave danger. There was a considerable sea running, and it would require very skillful maneuvering to get a line aboard and tow the passenger ship out of danger as it was.

When within speaking distance, the motor ship slowly backing in toward the liner, Captain Nelson bellowed through a megaphone: "Shall I send a line aboard?"

The reply from Captain Fremont left no doubt in Nelson's mind as to the immediate necessity of a line. He had long since broken out the *Wenatchee's* largest hawser for this very purpose. A seaman, with coiled heaving line, stood by awaiting the order.

Upon the forward deck of the *Castle Rock* was another hawser laid out ready. Several of the crew were gathered, also waiting. With smoke belching in black clouds from her stack and rolling heavily in the rough sea, the Maddern tug was bearing down.

Maddern took in all of these details at a glance. A rope barred all passengers from the forward deck, but Maddern was pressed against the rope as he debated in his own mind whether or not he dare climb over. The experience of being foiled at every turn, and, by his own employees, too, was a new one. That, coupled with the huge salvage that he surely would have to pay if his rival got the first line aboard, drove him to desperation.

Aboard the tug was a captain who fully understood the situation and who would be ready with a line once the tug was within heaving distance. Should it develop into a contest, Maddern was sure the tug could maneuver and get a line aboard before the heavier motor ship could. He determined to risk all, rather than permit the *Wenatchee* to tow him from danger, when his own tug was so close at hand.

If the men on the *Castle Rock* missed the line the first time, then additional maneuvering would be necessary. Maddern would see to it that the men missed it the first time, maybe even a second or third.

In his excitement over the whole affair Maddern did not notice the looks of concern on the faces of the seamen,

nor did he realize that hardly two fathoms beneath the keel was a sunken reef, a pinnacle of which might pierce the bottom of the liner at any moment. All he saw was the man on the stern of the *Wenatchee* with the coiled line.

Suddenly, as the singing lead shot high over the water from the *Wenatchee* to the *Castle Rock,* Maddern leaped the rope and dashed to the forward deck. A seaman deftly permitted the lead to whiz past him, then caught the line. An instant later a wild-eyed man sent him sprawling on the deck. He made another desperate clutch at the line, but failed.

A second seaman caught the lead just as it was about to go over the rail. A boatswain, who did not know Maddern from the other passengers, turned as the irate man rushed for the second seaman. The boatswain was not concerned with what it was all about, but he was concerned over getting that line aboard. His hard fist shout out, caught Maddern squarely on the jaw, and put him down not only for the "count" but for a considerable space of time afterward.

It was not until the motor ship and the *Castle Rock* were connected by two huge hawsers and were safely on their way to Puget Sound that Captain Fremont took the trouble to ascertain the condition of the owner.

"Captain," groaned Maddern, "I want that brute placed in irons for assault on the high seas!"

"Very well, Mr. Maddern," returned Captain Fremont grimly, "you can prefer your charges if you wish, but remember there were a number of things that occurred on the high seas that would make an interesting trial. Think it over!"

Old Dick thought it over all the way from Cape Flattery to Seattle, and the more he thought of it the more he worried. He peeked through his stateroom window and caught sight of the Smith Building on the distant shore. At last he sent for the captain, his own condition making a personal appearance on deck embarrassing, though not exactly impossible.

"Captain Fremont! Orders from the owner that are to take effect as soon as the *Castle Rock* is docked!"

"Yes, sir!" said the captain; then to himself: "The old rascal has learned that orders while underway don't amount to much."

"You are to continue in command of the *Castle Rock* at an increase of fifty dollars a month."

"Yes, sir!"

"The brute who assaulted me on the high seas is also to continue in our employ, provided he doesn't mention the reason for the assault!"

"Yes, sir!"

"That's all!"

CHAPTER VIII.

AT ATTENTION.

THREE days later the office boy announced that Messrs. Chadwick and Browning had called and were waiting admission.

"Admit them!" growled Old Dick, as he experienced a sickening sensation.

Chadwick and Browning entered. They were both very serious-looking young men, but Maddern was positive each was holding back a laugh with difficulty.

"Good afternoon, gentlemen!" said Maddern.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Maddern!" they chorused; then Browning added: "Some fine-looking office furniture you've added out there—business must be good!"

The wealthy owner snorted.

"Well, Mr. Maddern," began Browning, "we seem to have a lot of business with each other lately."

"Yes. Well, what are your terms?" Maddern asked, unable to wait longer for the bad news.

"I'm going to speak right out," replied Browning; "I'd hate to think what would happen to us if the situation were reversed, but thank Heaven, it isn't. Neither Mr. Chadwick nor myself has been in business long enough to want to squeeze the other fellow to the last drop, which seems to be so popular with you. Rather, our policy, for the present at least, is to live and let live. Our

attorney advises us that we can collect a neat bit of salvage for the *Wenatchee's* work.

"However, as I have said," Browning went on, "we can't bring ourselves to do that now, nor in the future do we intend to do more than demand what is reasonable; but, inasmuch as the future of the Chadwick-Browning Company will be menaced so long as you hold a dollar against us, we feel it necessary that prudence and caution demand the cancelation of our indebtedness to you. In return we will relinquish all claims for salvage against the *Castle Rock!*"

Old Dick was wise enough to know that he had been let off easy, and fearful that some attorney might talk the young firm into making even greater demands, he hurriedly agreed to the proposition.

He watched them pass out of the office; then he buzzed violently for Jacobs. The latter came with a speed that broke all previous records. Well he knew that the boss had been losing sleep of late and probably would not slumber soundly again for the better part of a year. The man was feeling a bit nervous when Maddern was about.

"Yes, sir!" he said, standing at attention.

"Jacobs, get that extra furniture out of my sight at once!" he growled.

"Yes, sir!"

"And, Jacobs, cut your salary fifty dollars a month!"

"Yes—sir!" said Jacobs, recovering manfully from the blow.

"And, Jacobs"—the last was almost tearful—"somehow get me a framed picture of the *Wenatchee;* I want to smash it up!"

"Yes, sir!" And Jacobs departed to execute orders.

The Way It's Done

MRS. FERGUSON: "George, what do you have to do when you want to draw some money out of the bank?"

Mr. Ferguson: "You have to put some money in the bank beforehand. That's always been my experience."

Candle Trees

CHINA, India, and Africa each has a native tree yielding tallow from which candles can be made. The one growing in China bears a fruit whose seeds are covered with a waxlike substance. This wax is scraped off, melted, and made into candles by the natives. In the high altitudes of western India, about four thousand feet above the sea level, is a variety of evergreen tree producing a yellow-tinted fat. This substance is obtained by boiling the seeds, which then exude the fat, used for making soap, as well as candles.

The African butter tree derives its name from the yellow, oily juice of its fruit. This fruit is boiled to bring out the juice, the fatty portion of which rises, and is used in the same manner as that obtained from the other trees mentioned.

The bayberry bush of the United States bears a small, greenish gray berry, the wax from which, extracted by boiling, makes excellent candles. These candles are pale green in color, and burn slowly and evenly, emitting a pleasant, slightly aromatic fragrance. They are especially prized for use during the Christmas season.

A Thoughtful Answer

A YOUNG lady recently sent this question to the editor of a ladies' weekly journal.

"Do you think it right for a girl to sit in a man's lap, even if she is engaged?"

The editor spent some time in thought, and then answered her as follows:

"Yes; if it were our girl and our lap. Yes, again, if it were some other fellow's girl and our lap. But if it were our girl and some other fellow's lap, emphatically no. We don't approve of such frivolity."

Tails You Lose!

By Archie Martin

BILL BLAKE occupied the next bookkeeper's desk to mine in the office of Frank & Fearless, Incorporated, the celebrated prune exporters. I had not paid much attention to Bill; in fact, I hardly knew he existed until one day he leaned across his desk and said confidentially:

"Do you smoke?"

Wondering at the question, I nodded. "I do—anything from cigarettes to fish. Why?"

Blake ran a hand over a head as full of hair as a billiard ball. "I'll bet you ten dollars," he said, "that you can't quit smoking for a month—thirty consecutive days."

Perplexed, I stared at him and finally managed to pipe a weak question. "What's the idea?"

"Well, it's this way," Blake said thoughtfully: "My doctor orders me to give up smoking, but I hate to do it alone; in fact, I'm afraid I can't. I was thinking that if I could get someone to go through the ordeal with me it would be easier. What about it?"

I grabbed his hand enthusiastically. "You're on," I hollered. "I always did want to cut it out and save money."

II.

BLAKE put me on my honor and I put him on his. Once the bet was made, I tossed my pipe out of the window and handed the elevator boy two big cigars I had in my pocket, thereby gaining his friendship for life. When I got home I distributed the three packs of cigarettes and two cans of tobacco in my room among my fellow boarders. Again I put myself in solid, though one of them, a thin little shipping clerk, asked me if I felt sick or something.

The first day I didn't have any trouble abstaining from smoking. The thought of winning ten dollars helped me to forget my after-breakfast cigarette, my after-dinner cigar, and my after-supper pipe. The second day, too, wasn't so bad, although I felt a trifle uneasy. Three days more and the craving began. Following the advice of some of my friends, I began to chew gum to allay the demon nicotine. At the end of the day I found my gum

chewing cost me forty-five cents. Aside from this it made me so dry I was compelled to drink at least twenty glasses of water; I quit only when the bunch at the office began calling me "Camel."

I didn't know how Blake was making out except that he was grouchier than ever. Several more days went by. By this time I felt about as cheerful as a man with a jumping tooth when the dentist is drilling around it; again my sympathizers who knew of the bet rushed to my assistance. This time they told me to eat fruit, and, desperate enough for anything, I followed their advice. Peaches, apples, pears, bananas, oranges—I was so full of them that I felt like a canning factory.

The days dragged by until at last I resolved that if I didn't have a smoke I might just as well plug up my keyhole and make the gas trust richer.

III.

THE next morning I arrived at the office a little early, and as I glanced at my desk there, in full view of my sunken eyes, lay a cigar—a panetela of the finest brand of tobacco, wearing a golden-rod band that nearly made my eyes pop out of my head.

It was no use. Imagine a starving man who hasn't had a meal in days, a baseball fan who hasn't seen a game in years, a race horse who hasn't seen a track, or a chauffeur who hasn't smelled gasolene. My sensations were no different. Perhaps the spirit was willing to keep the bet, but the flesh was weak.

With a yell I grabbed the cigar, looked around, and guilty as any schoolboy, broke a world's record getting into the washroom, where I lighted up. Oh, boy!

What a sensation! I puffed and puffed like a steam engine. Certainly no cigar had ever been made as delicious as that one. I puffed and puffed until there was only one inch left, and I was regarding this inch lovingly when the washroom door opened and in walked my betee, Bill Blake, with a cigar in his mouth as big as a policeman's club.

He looked at me and I looked at him. "Aha! So you're smoking!" he murmured through a cloud of blue smoke.

I laughed. "It seems so. But—er—how about yourself?"

He removed his cigar and looked at it as if he was going to kiss it. "Bets," he said, "are foolish; so are doctor's orders." He looked at me. "Inasmuch as we have both lost, I guess the only way to decide who's to win is to toss up a coin." He dipped a hand into his vest pocket and produced a bright, shiny half dollar. "I'll toss her up. Heads you win; tails you lose." This seemed fair, and he flipped it up deftly, catching it on the back of his hand. "Tails!" he cried. "You lose."

I handed him ten dollars, and we had two more cigars together.

IV.

LATER, as Bill and I sat together at our desks, he reached into his vest pocket for the ink eraser he always carried there, and pulled it out, together with the bright shiny half dollar that had cost me ten bucks. It fell to the floor with a jingle directly under my chair, and I reached over and picked it up.

I had often heard of trick fifty-cent pieces, but this one was the first I had ever seen. It was some freak. I looked for the head. There wasn't any It was tails on both sides. Never mind the rest of the story. It isn't pleasant.

A Handy Neighbor

THE man in the next flat was pounding on the wall. "Look here," he cried, "I can't sleep with your baby yelling like that! If you don't make him stop, I will!"

"Come in, sir; come in!" said the father. "You'll be as welcome as the flowers in spring!"

—Tale of Varsity Football—

The Player and the Man

By John L. Swope

CHAPTER I.

THE TEST OF FIRE.

NOW and then the Westerly yell would set the windows rattling; again it would be a class cheer. It was all one to these men as they sat in the crowded cars of the train as it sped on its way to the college town. Class distinctions had been annihilated for the time, and the men were all common devotees of one love—their university.

Hunched down in his seat in the rear corner of a coach, absolutely apart from the boisterously merry crowd that filled it to overflowing, "Bugs" Hull tried to absorb himself in a huge, musty-looking volume that bore a title sufficiently studious to make him an object for all good students to shun. The words upon the pages of this advanced treatise on biology danced before his eyes.

He looked up as a heavy hand fell upon his shoulder in genial greeting. Then he grunted a monosyllabic answer, his eyes dancing with a pride which he tried to hide. Already the man was three seats beyond him, his hands being snatched and wrung by all alike, his shoulders poked and examined anxiously. His handsome face was suffused by a broad grin which showed a wonderful set of teeth, and his gray eyes smiled a radiance that could come only from the very soul.

The incoming class were in a ferment of excitement as they stared at this popular idol, querying each other as to his identity, yet shamed to admit themselves so much a thing apart as not to know him. He was coming toward them, his eyes narrowed at the corners, as though he searched out some one of their members.

"What's wrong with Tiger Townsend?" boomed a mighty voice from the end of the coach.

"Why, noth-ing—nev-er-r!" drawled the dinning answer from some scores of throats. There was a note of affection in even the diapason of sound, such a note as did more to cause the freshmen's hearts to flutter than even knowledge that this was the great and only Townsend, captain of the varsity team and tackle on the All-Western the season before.

Townsend bowed slightly, smiling with his lips alone at this tribute, then continued his scrutiny of the young class. Being very young and very conscious, the entire group averted their eyes and tried to appear supremely unconscious. This was the beginning of their collegiate career. Many knew that they were now passing through the first test of fire, that this young man

staring at them so masterfully would be for a few months the biggest man in the university, that he held in his keeping the right to make of some one of them the biggest man of the university's future. It was up to Tiger Townsend, now, to take a first impression of the new material for the football squad, the novices who would be the veterans and hopes of Westerly's future.

"Is Gates of Morganville in your herd?" The tone of the young man's voice was stern and mandatory. It impressed most of them unpleasantly, for they had just come from high schools and fitting academies where they themselves were seniors, accustomed to adopting the same tone of voice when addressing those of lower grades.

"Well, well, well!"

Whatever their feelings might be in regard to the manner of his speaking, there was no denying the power to command it held.

A brawny, red-haired youth loafed sulkily to his feet and held out his hand.

"I'm Gates," he answered, trying to put into his grip sufficient pressure to make his mandatory collegian squirm, instead of which, he felt the tips of his fingers tingling with the blood pressure which ensued when Tiger Townsend accepted his fist. He felt a certain vague respect for the football captain when, at last, his hand was dropped; the respect always inherent in the naturally powerful man for the one who had artificially trained his physique till every muscle is brought into instant play at the call of sympathetic nerve tips.

"Gates," snapped the captain, "I hear that you have shown some kid talent at full back. Look over the bunch in your class and bring them to the gymnasium to-morrow at three-thirty. And, Gates," he added grimly, as the red-haired youth turned to reseat himself, "don't ever try that grip on a regular squad man. In the first place, it's crude, and, in the second place, you're likely to get a bat in the jaw that will teach you manners. Get that!"

He turned away at the little titter of laughter that arose from the freshmen at this sally, turned away, while Gates himself scowled angrily at his back, and slunk into the seat, ignoring the smiles of his fellows.

Across the aisle, he was conscious of a most ironical grin upon the lantern-jawed Bugs Hull. He resented this more than he resented the remark of Townsend, more than he did the jeers of his own classmates. He started to make a remark, but changed his mind as the train lurched around a sharp curve and brought the university into clear sight.

Intent, he stared out of the window, flattening his nose against the pane. There was the hill he had heard so much about from the old graduates who lived in the Short Grass section of Kansas. There was the great stand tower coated with its class numerals, almost to the very top.

He drew a long breath of wondering delight. Could it be possible that he was at last a part of all this, that he was on the verge of being one of the dominant figures in this wonderland of enchantment which, he knew, held itself dear to all its graduates throughout the passing years? He tingled with delight now, as he knew that he had been brought to the attention of the varsity captain.

Another lurch of the train, and it all was shut from view, only to reappear in a short instant, almost directly upon the station platform of Westerly, a platform crowded with students, professors and others. The upper classmen were eagerly crowding toward the front and rear platforms, ready to jump down even before the train halted.

Gates rose and shoved his huge shoulders through the bunch of freshmen, thrilling with a sense of his own power as he felt them give way before his gigantic strength just as so many lines had given way when he hurled himself at them. Why, he could hurl these puny beings aside as chaff! He stared a bit contemptuously at the upper classmen who were before him. He could work through them quite as easily.

It was even easier than he had ex-

pected. Now was the time for him to gain respect from these old students, to show them that he was the fierce Gates of Morganville who respected nobody, nothing, when it came to working his way to the front.

He stopped abruptly and glared around as a lean hand was rested lightly upon his shoulder, to find himself looking into the mild face of the bookworm who had occupied the seat opposite him and had seemed so aloof from all the others.

"Back, freshie!" murmured the voice of Bugs Hull. "Back with the drove, you amœba, and keep there till your betters are off the train."

A sneer curled the corners of the freshman's mouth, narrowed his eyes. He started to work his shoulder loose from the hand resting lightly upon it. Why, this fellow was a nothing, a being of perhaps a hundred and forty pounds, soft and lazy of speech, and yet he dared address the mighty Gates in this fashion!

Then slowly he slunk away before the mild expression in the man's eyes, an expression which seemed to take no heed of him at all. Without even smiling at his triumph, the studious one edged his leisurely way through the crowd and took his place alongside Tiger Townsend.

Gates of Morganville felt an overmastering rage possessing him, a desire, fierce and almost ungovernable, to get at the bodies of these supercilious ones who treated him as the dirt under their feet. He saw the pair exchange a laughing jest, and his blood boiled as he assured himself that he was the subject of their talk.

The wheels screeched down upon the rails, and the train labored to a halt, disgorging its passengers into the great drove of dancing, shouting students in waiting. There was a riot of color, of waving pennants, of discordant sounds that always blended into the inevitable Westerly yell, so familiar to the ears of every student at the college.

Gates of Morganville felt his resentment swallowed up in something bigger, something almost holy, something that made him feel very puny as he caught the fraternity of feeling which bound all these young folks together.

Alone he stood in the swirling jam. The line of waiting hacks and taxis had gradually disappeared, melted away, filled to overflowing with students. Arm in arm he saw many more wandering up the street toward Elm Avenue. Almost in a trance, he caught all this, realized that he was alone in an abode of friends. Almost in a dream he realized that he was no hero, that, instead, he was nothing, a nobody.

Slowly he leaned down and gripped the handle of his suit case, and walked steadily up the street. Even his own classmates-to-be had scraped acquaintance, and had herded together, while he, in his pride, had held himself aloof, He only was alone. No——

Immediately ahead of him, walking a bit unsteadily because of the intent manner in which he read the book in his hand, was the man who had insulted him a moment before. Here was another who was lonely.

He grated his teeth fiercely, and plodded ahead of the man. And in his heart was the determination to compel recognition, to make it an honor among all these men to walk with him, to feel pride in gaining a nod from him. He squared his shoulders once more. His eyes wandered up toward the Hill, dotted with the great, graystone university buildings. A laugh broke in his throat. There lay the University of Westerly, and here was he, Gates of Morganville, about to become a part of it. A part of it, he repeated to himself, and such a part that even the university itself would be compelled to recognize and glory in the strength he added to it.

CHAPTER II.

MASTER OF COACHES.

"HEY, freshie!" bellowed a voice from behind Gates, as, the following day, he came down the Hill from the painful ordeal of registration. He halted, angry at himself for doing so. He did

not like the tone in which he was continually being addressed. A short, thickset little fellow came alongside him and laid a heavy hand upon his elbow. Gates had to look down upon him.

"What do *you* want?" he asked.

"Get back on the Hill, man!" sharply commanded the junior. "I've had my eye on you. Don't you know the bulletin board is put in the hall to be looked at and read? Now, get in there, and attend your class meeting, molly pronto!"

The man did not wait for an answer, but swung off. Gates scowled after him, but obeyed. He wished he had known enough to have thought of looking at the bulletin board. Somehow, he resented the fact that he had not known there was to be a meeting of his class.

He entered the great lecture room at the rear of Munn Hall's ground floor with a scowl upon his face. The place was packed with earnest freshmen, engaged upon the business of electing officers. Only a few perfunctory nods greeted his appearance, and he took a seat in the front, directly under the presiding officer's nose.

The class yell had already been adopted, all the officers elected, and business had been rushed in such fashion that he knew leading spirits had already shown themselves in the class of Twenty-three. He did not resent this so much as the fact that he had not even been considered of sufficient importance to have his vote solicited.

"All the business of the meeting having been transacted," announced the newly elected president, "all that remains is the announcement that candidates for the football squad will report at the gymnasium promptly at four o'clock, where Doctor Ashley will look them over before passing them on to Coach Jones and Captain Townsend. Immediately afterward, those candidates who have been ordered to report for practice will appear before the committee of juniors for selection of wrestlers for the matches with the sophomores to-morrow." His gavel descended with a thud upon the desk, and the newly organized class promptly swarmed from the room and into the broad reaches of the hall, eagerly discussing their experiences with the registrar.

Gates moodily allowed himself to be herded into a corner of the hall along with some dozen others of his class. In the center of them he caught sight of the lantern-jawed Bugs Hull. That gentleman had no book in his hand now, and his eyes held an eager light which narrowed them speculatively at the corners.

He read their names from a sheet of paper in his hand, then paused impressively and regarded them with stern eyes.

"Men," he said slowly and impressively, "I have brought you together to inform you that you have been elected members of the Arch Club, at No. 1717 Berkeley Avenue. The purpose of this club is primarily to provide food and lodging at practically cost rates to students. Its second purpose is the bringing together in closer bonds of fellowship those who might otherwise take a full term to get acquainted. Remember the number is 1717 Berkeley Avenue."

Puzzled, yet faintly delighted, the recipients of this honor looked at one another, then at the retreating figure of the man who had bestowed it upon them. When he was quite out of earshot, eager discussion arose. Gates' quick-working brain sized up the advantages of the situation. "I don't know anything about you fellows," he began, "but I do know that I have seen an election pulled already, and found myself bound to officers whom I do not even know by name. Now, the reason for that is evidently that *they* did know enough of the class not to act like sheep. The only thing for us to do is take this chance in a hurry."

That afternoon at lunch, he found his advice had been universally taken, for the thirteen were gathered about the second table in the great dining room. There was another and smaller table, at the head of which sat Bugs Hull, who now and then would leave to wander

into the kitchen, sharply directing operations there.

The silence of the older men at the first table cast something of a damper over the eager souls of the freshmen. So much had happened to them in this new world into which they had been precipitated that they could have spent days narrating and speculating upon the meaning of things, but no one cared to display ignorance before the silent, inscrutable older classmen.

The food was remarkably good at the price paid, and the rooms were well furnished. The meal over, they swarmed by themselves, giving free rein to discussion. It was quite half past three o'clock when a heavy hammering upon the door of Gates' room preceded the appearance of the lantern-jawed visage of Hull.

"Remember the football candidates must be at the gymnasium by four," he said, ducking his head back as quickly as it had appeared.

Gates thrilled. Already he was warming to these men about him, getting the feeling that he would find them comrades whose shoulders would press against his own in many fierce combats with their natural enemies, the sophs. And now he was to go to the gymnasium. At last he would have the chance to be examined and passed upon by the mighty ones of football. And after that—the wrestling matches.

"Football!" he sighed. "That's my meat. Come on, fellows! Tiger Townsend asked me on the train to get a bunch of you together."

He felt the thrill of power at last, the thrill that comes to one who reads in the eyes of comparative strangers the glow of admiration and envy. He, Jim Gates, was asking them to appear before the physical director.

Only three of them joined him in that trudge up the Hill and into the gym, where a thin stream of freshmen were wandering. Gates saw Tiger Townsend standing at the entrance, speaking with a thin, lanky man. He nodded to the captain, but Tiger stared at him with no light of recognition in his eyes.

As he stripped in the great locker room along with his fellows, unconsciously his eyes sized up their proportions, exulting as he saw none there even to compare with him. He smiled as he thought how gladly Tiger Townsend would receive him when the physical director sent him on as a likely subject.

Swiftly Doctor Ashley looked the freshmen over as they swarmed about the huge gymnasium floor, lining them up before him according to size, with three-feet spaces between each man. In quick, simple language he explained the setting-up exercise he wished them to go through, illustrating himself before starting the count that accompanied each move:

"One, two, three, four; up, down, forward, back; one, two, three, four; up, down, forward, back!"

For what seemed an eternity, his stern lips moved, while the panting men before him tried to keep pace with that inexorable count. Seventeen exercises there were, and each one of them called into play muscles which they had never known existed in their young bodies.

At times, Gates thought he would be obliged to stop, but always would the impulse be repelled by the curl of contempt he fancied lurked on the director's face, as, in answer to a pleading glance, he would nod some one from the line. Gates tightened his lips and fought against the screaming of his muscles and nerves.

"Up, down, forward, back; one, two, three, four!"

Like some crazy marionette dancing on a string, he threw out his brawny arms and legs and shoulders, ran and squatted and thrust and wrenched, until his body grew numbed, and he automatically worked, his body moving but his brain completely at rest. He was not conscious of the men about him, did not realize that only three remained until the director, a grim smile playing about his mouth, thrust up a hand peremptorily.

"Halt!" he snapped. "Dixon, Canfield, and Gates will remain. Excused till four to-morrow afternoon."

Instantly all the pain and ache left the muscles of the man from Morganville. He gloried in the envious glances of the ones who had not stood up under the test, then promptly lost this feeling in speculative interest in the ones who remained with him.

"To the scales!" commanded the doctor, taking the weight of the three as they jumped upon the Fairbanks, then down again.

Ashley studied the figures on the slip of paper a moment, then looked up. "Wait here until I call you!" he snapped, and retreated briskly into his private office.

The three men did not look openly at each other. They knew instinctively that Captain Townsend was in that office, waiting for the report. Now and then they would glance at one another with covert, cunningly appraising eyes.

The door opened sharply, and Dixon was summoned by the director.

Gates breathed freely as he turned to Canfield, who was a long, rangy man, lean in the hips and heavy across the shoulders, with the legs of a sprinter. He knew there could be no possible struggle for position between himself and this chap, who was obviously, from the muscles on his legs, a sprinter. Dixon had been heavy and symmetrical and springy—just the sort one would put in at tackle or full back; Dixon he knew for an opponent, one to work against.

"Out for end?" he queried.

"Yep," the candidate nodded; then, with a warm smile: "The old doc certainly knows how to work up a little dickens of his own, doesn't he?" He ruefully grimaced as a muscle kink suddenly appeared plainly in his right calf. "You're Gates of Morganville, aren't you?" he continued in friendly fashion. "The correspondent of the *Star* had a boost for you last night."

"Me!" Gates thrilled. It seemed to him that the acme of his ambition had been reached. Then, after all, he had made some impression upon the university; he was not a nobody, but was considered even by the great city papers of the outside world.

Unconsciously he swelled his chest, when the door opened and Dixon reappeared, a chagrined expression on his face, while the director summoned Canfield within.

Left by himself, Gates had the first feeling of uneasiness regarding his chances which had assailed his overconfident nature since his decision of the year before to enter Westerly. There had been something fateful about the expression on big Dixon's face which warned him things would not be easy sailing behind that mysterious door.

Canfield emerged, and Gates' heart seemed to leap up into his mouth. As he stared into the ominous face of the physical director framed in the doorway, he felt every muscle drawing him forward in obedience; yet, curiously enough, his feet remained glued to the spot. Canfield grimaced wryly at him as he passed.

"Old doc's treatment is a mild Turkish bath compared to the one in there, Gates. I tell you, boy, it's going some!"

How he got there, the Morganville freshman had no means of knowing. It seemed to him that he had not moved. His hand reached out and trembled upon the chilling doorknob. Something heavy rested in the pit of his stomach; very much the same feeling he always experienced in a game, when the *plunk* of leather boot against leather pigskin announced that the game was on. He felt himself trembling, felt the muscles about his mouth, eyes, and cheek vibrating. Then he slowly loosed his hold and rapped—a timid rap.

The door burst open, and Tiger Townsend stood to one side, beckoning him within. He looked about him.

The physical director sat beside the window, while, at a large table, the long, lanky man he had observed in such close conversation with the captain of the team outside the gym door was busying himself over some papers.

Ashley shoved a chair forward with the toe of his boot, and the freshman seated himself.

His eyes wandered to those of Tiger Townsend. The captain loomed as a mighty man to him. But there was

something disappointing about his manner now. Perhaps it was the modesty of an undergraduate before a member of the faculty.

Townsend turned to Doctor Ashley. The director's face was cold and indifferent, just as it had been all afternoon. In his hand was the slip of paper upon which he had written down the three men's weights. But, somehow, there was something unsatisfactory about the manner of the doctor. What could cause this uncertainty possessing him?

"James Gates, of Morganville High; played; weight, one hundred and eighty-nine pounds," read the director in a listless tone of voice.

"How long did you play, Gates?" asked Townsend curtly.

"The four years, sir."

He hated himself for that "sir" immediately it slipped his lips. What was there about this youth that he, Gates of Morganville should "sir" him?

"What position?"

"Full back." He stifled the respectful prefix, an obvious effort.

"Full back!" Tiger's voice echoed his answer incredulously. "Nothing else?"

"No."

"What time do you make the hundred in?"

"Eleven and a half seconds."

"In gear?"

"Yes, sir."

"Back up the line or play safety on defense?"

"Either."

A derisive grin contorted the handsome face of the captain, a grin which he suppressed guiltily as the man at the table lifted his face impatiently from the papers over which he had been poring. And then Gates knew what had caused the strange feeling in the office, then he knew who was the real master in this room as he felt the boring, sharpshooter's eyes of blue fastened upon him as though they would gimlet through to his very soul.

The voice of the man was sharp and staccato, his hand gnarled and hard, as he impatiently slapped it upon the table with each word, his long, ugly head thrusting itself forward and back with the motion of a turtle.

"Gates, it isn't in you to make eleven and a half in football togs. You can't back up the line and play safety equally well. Report for uniform at four tomorrow. That's all!"

He resumed his study of the papers, and with complete understanding of the expression he had observed upon the faces of Dixon and Canfield, Gates turned toward the door, his hand eager now to turn the knob. Unconsciously he turned to nod good-by, when the man at the desk looked up angrily.

"And you, Gates, if anybody says anything against your manners, just you tell 'em that 'Hurry-up' Jones is your boss until he cans you off the squad. Understand?"

Somehow, Gates of Morganville did not feel enraged. He had been in the presence of the master of all coaches, the mental giant of the game, the man who had put Western football on the map. He felt himself just plain Gates, freshman, now.

Canfield was waiting for him outside the gymnasium door. He smiled understandingly, and linked his arm in that of the crestfallen one as together they strolled across the campus.

"Isn't he a one, that coach!" muttered the candidate for end.

Gates nodded his head slowly, then turned to his companion, his teeth clenched, his fists balled. "No wonder his teams win!" he said slowly. "You know, Canfield, I believe I'd be afraid to lose for Jones."

CHAPTER III.

THE HAND OF THE RUBBER.

AS Gates, in football togs, ran out onto the gridiron at Pierson Field, that scene of so many battles, he felt a sudden overmastering pride.

Like the shifting sands of a kaleidoscope, pictures rose before him, visualizations of scenes he had heard reverently described by old graduates in his beloved Short Grass country. He had always felt so confident that he could

easily make the team, had felt so certain of his prowess before, yet now he knew, as he looked at the veterans and saw the way they handled themselves, that he had played but an amateurish game before, that he was unfit to cope with them save in strength.

And a great reverence for the heroes from the Short Grass whom he had known and rather patronized grew within him. He realized now why big Shrant, of Clay Center, never tired of telling about the time he made a touchdown against Iowa from the kick-off. He knew now what it meant to Kilvert, of Morganville, when he always flaunted that golden football watch charm in the eyes of other collegians.

The very ground seemed to have such tales to tell. He was standing on Pierson Field, the warm earth seeping into his blood, carrying with it an ozone of iron that made his heart throb, bearing with it a pulsing measure of the past that made him instinctively turn his eyes toward the Hill and the university upon it, and promise himself that nothing should daunt him in his efforts to make Westerly mean all to him it had meant to these others.

And then he had no further time for thoughts regarding such matters, for Jones got to work upon him. It had been understood that the work would be easy—no tackling, no lining up, nothing but catching and booting the ball, running and falling on the ball, and tackling the dummy. That seemed quite simple.

Quite simple under the tutelage of any one but Hurry-up Jones! Like a rat terrier, he was at the heels of each and every member of the squad every minute of the time, snapping, snarling, poking fun at their attempts to do the most elementary things.

Now it was stand in a line before the dummy, suspended from an upright, hurling oneself at the thing with all the force of the body. Gates found that he knew nothing about the fine art of tackling, that there was a certain absolute position in which to catch a man, a certain mandatory position with which to go into him, and a certain system for turning loose at the instant of collision without appearing to take both feet off the ground, which he had never dreamed of before.

He discovered, also, that the fact of his being sure death on punts made no difference when he was up against the low-flung, cannon-ball corkscrew spirals which the toe of Tiger Townsend sent at him. The thing almost hurled his great mass of bone and sinew over backward, and seemed to continue to spiral in his arms, almost always escaping, even after he had it squarely in the pit of his stomach, with both arms tenderly clasping it.

It was all very dissatisfying to find that he was deficient in these things, but far more so to discover that it would be only when he knew them perfectly that he would be allowed even in the scrub line-up against the varsity. If only Jones would permit him to get in a few scrimmages he would show what he could do with his speed and bulk and gigantic shoulders and sturdy legs, which were so short his torso appeared built upon the ground!

Round and round and round the field he ran, breath coming in whistling sounds through his teeth, with the coach always at his heels the instant he showed any signs of soldiering. And at last he was compelled to lie upon his stomach, unable to move, almost unable to think.

For the shortest five minutes he had ever known in his life, he was allowed to remain there, then Jones' voice cracked in his ear. He turned on his back, and saw that many others had fallen besides himself, and that all were scrambling painfully to their feet.

"Hurry up, there—hurry up!" impatiently insisted that querulous voice. "No time for love affairs, men! This is a nice little beginning, I don't think! Hurry up, you bums! That's what you get for living like mollycoddles all summer instead of working for the season. Come along, now, and run into the gym—hurry up!"

Barking at their heels, he drove them at a dogtrot through the Ordway Arch and up the steep hill. In the

locker room, it seemed that every muscle in Gates' body had been wrenched and tortured till it was screaming in protestation. About him limped the hot, tired men, muttering deeply and profoundly, shivering with anticipatory dread before the showers, then making the final lunge beneath.

Down, down, down struck the streams of water, mauling Gates, hammering him, picking out particularly fragile portions of his anatomy to play their damnable work upon. Then gradually he grew accustomed to it, and the hot blood shot through his body, deliciously painful as is the agony of ropes being removed, which have bound one tightly for hours.

He hopped out and seized a towel. It was snatched from him, and the rough tape fell upon him, backed by the powerful arms of one of the rubbers. He compressed his lips at the torture, wondering how it was possible that the skin remained upon him under such drastic treatment. Once more the blood began to surge through him, and he hurried to a marble slab.

The room reeked with the odor of steam, of alcohol, and liniments. Face downward he lay, while the rubber began a pitapat upon his body which preceded a more violent rubbing. The alcohol streaked to his nostrils, and he found a curious liking for the smell. The hand of the rubber slapped between his shoulders.

"Right-o! Throw on your duds! Next man!"

Gradually a broad grin stretched his mouth, brightened his eyes. He had never felt so well in all his life! He could feel the muscles and tendons rising and stretching and writhing under his skin, could feel the nerves responding to their every call, could feel the impulse to shout aloud for sheer joy of living, sheer pain of delight at the pulsing blood that surged through him. He was so alive—and it was so wonderful to be alive—to be alive the way he was now!

"Gates, where do you grub?" asked Jones, as he stepped out of the door and opened his mouth to the fresh air of the twilight, laving his throat with it, filling his lungs with it.

"The Arch Club," he answered.

"Tell Hull I want to see him," said the coach simply, and turned upon his heel.

The freshman from the Short Grass slowly wandered toward the walk that led down the Hill, wondering at this question even after he entered the dining room. There was a curious elation about his own table, an elation for which he felt himself partially responsible. It hurt him that his classmates were indisposed to inform him of the reason for this mystery, hurt him until he went to his room and found the president of the class and a bespectacled junior informally sprawled upon the bed, filling the room to suffocation with the emanations of their evil pipes.

The junior removed his pipe long enough to point it inquiringly toward the owner of the room.

"Heard anything?" he questioned vaguely.

"About what? No." The freshman felt a queer, delicious curiosity overwhelming him. There was something in the expression of the upper classman's face that told him the "something" referred to would be pleasant. He waited expectantly.

The junior rose and lazily approached him, running his hands approvingly over his muscles, puckering up his lips, and letting out stray comments to himself. It reminded Gates decidedly of the way he had been wont to look over a horse. Only his teeth escaped examination.

"You're not so worse!" at last murmured the man, as he finished and turned to the door. "I've seen lots worse beeves than you, freshie."

Jim turned to the president of his class when the door closed behind the back of this strange young man.

"Well," he queried, "what's it all about?"

"You're to wrestle Bull Carter, the heavyweight soph champion, to-night," slowly answered the president.

Gates turned and walked to the window. Somehow he could not see much

below him, could hear but few of the words which straggled up to him from the group of students on the porch directly beneath. A few days ago he had expected that all such things would be his, had taken it for granted that he would be selected to represent his class in all affairs of strength and physical ability. But the short time had wrought wonders with him.

He turned and stared at the president of the class, who was watching him with a bit of alarm, puzzled at his silence.

"You feel fit, of course?" he questioned anxiously.

"It's a wonderful place!" Gates murmured absently; then, recalling the question, blushed. "Oh, of course, I'm fit as I ever was in my life."

"Good!" The man slapped him heartily on the back, and stepped out of the room. Gates knew that his classmates of the club were waiting below to congratulate him, knew that he wanted their praise to come to him. But somehow he wanted to think, to sit there at the window and think—and just look at the shadows tenderly enshrouding the Hill, blanketing it for the night as they had blanketed it for so many years that it might emerge fresh each morning from its slumber, glad and ready to work its miracles on the never-ending stream of men who came to it, came so needful of the miracle it exhaled.

CHAPTER IV.

WITH A GREAT CRASH.

IT was half an hour later, when the darkness that precedes the starlit night had fallen, that a low whistle from under his window brought the Short Grass lad to his feet with a start. He peered down, and made out an exaggerated shadow on the lawn, a shadow which reached far down to the bushes where were many fantastic shapes. And then he knew that a portion of his class waited to escort him to the main body, that the time had come for him to defend the honor of his class and make for himself a name which should go down, not alone in class history, but in that of the university.

He slipped stealthily out and tiptoed down the hall and stairs. The mysterious part of it appealed vastly to his boyish imagination. The fact that everything must be done under cover, that there would be decided effort to prevent his reaching the scene of combat by sophomore skirmishers—these were delicious to his palate.

A whispered murmur of cheers greeted him as from out the very ground sprang dark figures. The freshmen, about thirty, formed a cordon, wherein he held the exact center.

There was a low command; then the body moved swiftly down the deserted street. Lights glinted in the windows of townsfolk, but the houses where the students lived were given over almost completely to darkness. This was the first big event of the year, and no one wished to miss it.

At street corners there would fall into line from the shelter of fences and walls and lilac hedges other bodies of classmen, silent, stern, grim of purpose. Out from the town limits, down the rocky streets, where houses grew few and far between, they marched. A last body met them, and they halted.

The president of the class drew a bit apart, while he was joined by the minor officers who had commanded the smaller bodies. He peered through the darkness, then lifted his hand. In a tremendous burst of sound, the freshmen class yell broke the silence.

As though it were a signal to the heavens, miraculously the lazy moon broke from cover of the clouds and rolled idly from side to side, beaming benignly upon the scene. The spirited lamplighter of the heavens moved about, touching his taper to the stars until they studded the black canvas of the night like scintillant jewels twinkling, dancing, expectantly delighted at the scene they were about to witness.

Then in a tremendous volume the university yell thundered forth from Pierson Field. Ending with a mighty "Rah, rah, rah! Westerly, Westerly, Westerly!" it assailed the rock-ribbed

Hill, which thrust it back to the sophomores as it would a shuttlecock, never losing a single one of the deafening cadences.

Gates reached out and gripped at the arm of the tall, lanky fellow beside him. He felt his other hand grasped by a midget of a lad with rosy cheeks and curly, golden hair. Both men were clad in fleshings. He had not noticed them before. Now he knew that they were to uphold the class honor with him, the lightweight and the welter.

Then the freshmen hurled the yell back; before the echoes had opportunity to toy with their voices, the men burst into the snappy, staccato version, crackling each syllable off in the exact center, catching each syllable and hurtling another into it before it had time to spread.

These cheers, Gates suddenly realized, would be given for him should he win. His name would be tacked alongside the name of the university, which was already becoming almost a sacred thing to him. He clenched his fists. It must be—*it must be!* He could not lose, with that reward dangling before him; and he was representing not alone his class but the Short Grass country as well, the Short Grass country that had provided Westerly with many of its athletes.

The president was making a speech, urging the men to work to their utmost, orating on what it meant to the class. But none of the contenders heard a word of what he said. Words counted for so little against the appeal in that Westerly yell.

Tramp, tramp, tramp!

With no regard for anything save reaching the field where the combat was to be held in the shortest amount of time compatible with orderliness, the solid body moved on. Gates wished he had thought to attire himself as had his fellows, but that was his one regret.

They passed through the arch, and, looking over the heads of the front ranks, he could make out a black, restless blur exactly in the center of the field. He knew this blur for the sophomore class. Round and round, like terriers harassing a great mastiff, swept a few seniors, keeping solid the ring which had been formed.

A cheer was started, instantly hushed by the disapproving silence of the body of men. Grimly, steadily the freshmen marched forward, being taken in hand instantly by a few juniors, who aligned them opposite the sophomores, completing a circle from a crescent.

Gates felt himself shoved into the fore ranks, taken in charge by two juniors. He looked stolidly before him. His face betrayed no emotion, and they regarded him curiously, and with some misgiving, for not to the phlegmatic athlete goes the laurels in the writhing art of wrestling. So flexed was the man, however, that he even caught this feeling; caught it, and forced back a smile at the folly of it.

Little Harlow, the lightweight, was shoved into the great ring, listening, with pallid face, to the words whispered in his ear by his junior second. Water buckets and sponges appeared at both poles of the ring, presided over by upper classmen. The little fellow circled warily, arms outstretched, while a lean, brown-bodied youth stood perfectly still, watching him.

In a second Harlow thought he detected an opening, and lunged forward. The sophomore representative stepped aside, and, with one arm, caught the flying body, whirled him around, put one on heel, and brought him to his face. In a second he had whirled him about and planted the pink shoulders squarely to the ground. A buzz of applause rose from the sophomores, quickly quelled by their mentors.

The second fall was more difficult, but the soph won on a half nelson in five minutes, not even panting when he turned and went to his corner, accepting the sponging of his mouth with a smile, and disappearing into the center of the group. This was the beginning, and there was still much work to be done. Little Harlow almost wept as he perched on the knee of a most unsympatheic junior.

Gates did not turn a hair. He looked

intently before him. not even seeing Canfield as he fought stubbornly against his opponent. Not a muscle of his naked back quivered, not a change of expression marred the stolidity of his countenance.

He had felt a bit sorry for little Harlow, but that was only because of his youth. He had the Short Grass man's contempt for anything that even looked soft.

"Good old boy, Canfield!" muttered his classmates. He stared at the panting figure lying at his side with a start of surprise. He had not even been conscious of the bout. Somehow, his thoughts had centered on his home country. He felt a curious surging forward, felt hundreds of eyes upon him, then squared his jaw at a whispered comment from behind:

"Gates is too much of a cow to wrestle. He's big, but wait till that vicious bull of a Carter lands on his neck."

He did not hear any more. He only stretched out his arms and lifted his great lungs in a huge sigh.

"Even up, Jimmy—and they're a cinch!" gulped Canfield, as the junior shoved him forward into the center of the ring.

He felt the tensity of watching in the lines. It did not bother him. He saw only a monstrous leonine figure darting forward and backward about a yard and a half away. He knew it was the figure of Carter.

Gates slowly turned on his heel, great legs slightly spraddled, moving with every jump of the sophomore. His eyes never left the fierce eyes of his opponent. He knew the old principle of every game of strength: The eyes invariably betray the movement in advance. Something like a spark of respect kindled itself in Carter's eyes as he noted that this man could not be betrayed into looking at his agile feet, his weaving hands. Thereafter he immediately adopted different tactics.

With the bound of a leopard, carrying him off his feet, but not sufficiently to leave him unbalanced when he came in contact with the freshman's massive frame, he leaped across the intervening space, his lashing arms encircling the waist of Gates and bearing him back across the ring. With a swift twist, Carter brought one arm up, the wrist encircling his opponent's neck, then drew sharply back. Gates was hurled to his face.

He twisted about with a superhuman effort. A little sigh of delight escaped the throats of the sophomores. Gates heard that sigh. It was the one thing he had consciously heard during the night. Strangely enough, it recalled another remark he had heard without realizing its import. His second had spoken to him of this leaping attack, the swift release of hold from waist to neck, the sharp withdrawal. He realized, in one agonizing second, that he had not only fallen into the trained wrestler's trap, but that he was assisting in his own defeat. Without an effort he lay flat upon his stomach, his wrists heavy upon the dirt.

All he could do was to try to wear the man out by compelling him to put forward a maximum of effort in gaining this inevitable fall. There were two more falls yet left the freshman, and he would not be so careless again.

A little groan of rage and disgust rose from his fellow classmates. They thought he was acting true to the rôle of the cow that he had been dubbed. Slowly, slowly but inevitably, Carter wormed his way about until he had the hold he wished. Now he would spin the freshman about upon his head, again he would waltz him about upon his shoulders, and then he would twist and tear at the giant neck.

Only Gates knew what tremendous effort the man was putting forward, what a nerve-wracking ordeal he was going through to gain this first fall; and, as he lay there, absolutely on the defensive, his heart beat high with hope, with certainty. He knew that his strength outmatched this fellow's, that he was equally vicious, and that he would win. This was the thought that made him grin in that last instant, when, slowly, surely but inevitably, his shoulders were turned and twisted until they tore into the ground.

"You stupid fool!" grated the junior second, as he sponged his man's face wrathfully. "Why didn't you listen to what I told you?"

Gates did not answer save by a confident smile. He was not even going to waste the muscular effort required to put forth a sentence.

The senior referee snapped his fingers.

This time Gates leaped across the space that separated him from the grinning sophomore. Carter, taken completely by surprise, staggered back. He felt the bearlike arms of Gates about his ribs. He knew he could break that hold of the backwoods easily, but waited one second too long. The heel of the Short Grass man caught behind his right leg, crotching him in the simple, yet deadly, crook that every village schoolboy learns in his first assault.

A howl of delight arose from the freshmen as, clutching wildly at the air, Carter was brought to the ground, his shoulders sending up a little spurt of dirt.

A burst of laughter greeted him, as, sheepishly grinning, he perched upon his second's knee. Every one laughed, friend and foe. Few of them knew the modern game of wrestling, but they all knew that primitive fall, and were startled into mirth at seeing it successfully used against such a scientific marvel of the game. Only Gates' face was set in the same grim lines of determination.

His eyes and face had the expression of a man who earnestly believes he has a duty to perform, and has not the slightest doubt about his ability to do it. That look made many pause. The junior second even ceased his babbling advice and shoved his man to the center.

The third fall would decide the first and greatest encounter of the year between the two rivals, the classes which from time immemorable had been rivals, and were always destined to be.

Carter rushed to the attack. The Short Grass man, not to be outdone, and flinging aside all advice as to playing a waiting game, met him halfway across the circle. Their bodies fairly thudded with the shock of impact. Both men bounded back, clutching impotently for a hold.

A second they waited, glaring at one another. In that glance was something primitive, primeval, terrible. Then they hurtled together once more. Their mouths were open as they struggled about the center space, their nostrils dilated, their hands clutched and gripped, and the fingers bit into the hard flesh with a ferocity which made one think of tiger and bear.

Round and round they fought, now one man having a hold that appeared unbreakable, now the other. Carter had all the science, but Gates had the strength, and the advantage of a build which put his torso so close to the ground it was useless trying to work upon his massive, oaklike legs.

Then they separated once more. Gates drew away, his right hand catching Carter's shoulder with a straight-arm jolt and half turning him around. Carter instantly saw his opportunity. He lunged at the half-turned neck, and caught it with both hands, drawing Gates forward to his face. Swiftly he straddled the freshman's back, holding his face into the ground, so he would have difficulty in breathing, while he himself might get both legs to the right of the giant panting frame, and work at that advantage.

As he gained it a sigh of relief sounded from the entire circle. There had been an appalling atmosphere about this third round which struck a chill, damp fear to the heart, and even the freshmen felt relieved to see it drawing to a safe conclusion, though it was to their own disadvantage.

Skillfully his hand reached down and clutched the right ankle of the Short Grass man. The long, muscular fingers opened, and moved another inch. Gates squirmed, but a jolt from Carter's other hand upon his shoulder made him lie quiet once again. Another inch moved the fingers of the sophomore. Then, with a swift turn, he clutched at the toe. It was the deadly toehold.

Gates lay upon the ground. His nose

was rooted into the dew-damped earth, but he managed to breathe despite that. A terrific, throbbing pain shot through his body. It was so agonizing and so abrupt that he could not tell where it started from. It did not leave off. Unconsciously he turned his side. He tried to kick with his foot, only to find that all strength had left it; that it seemed paralyzed. Once more he felt that unendurable pain. He looked sideways, the expression of a wounded doe in his eyes. They met the pitying ones of little Harlow.

Curiously enough, that look enraged him. That he should be pitied by this soft child who had given such a feeble account of himself in the bouts was a bit too much. With a wild bellow of rage he managed to throw one arm about Carter's body, breaking the shoulder hold. Gates' hand, lashing wildly down, caught about the chin of the sophomore. With the added frenzy of his pain, he hauled up, swift, ferociously. He had broken the hold, but Carter was crawling after him, groping, groping. He leaped lightly to his feet and charged. The sophomore ducked to one side.

A shout of wondering admiration, impossible to quell, sounded against the rocky slope of the Hill. And then another sound:

"Westerly, Westerly, Westerly!"

"Gates, Gates, Gates!"

Through a mist the Short Grass man heard it, through a mist that made only his own name come to him in conversational tones. Carter was weaving about him again. The man was still full of fight, while he was tired, and painracked.

And through the narrow slit of time that elapses between a thought and the realization of its propulsion, he saw that Carter had caught his feeling, and was renewing his strength and courage because of it. It maddened him.

The sophomore lunged at him. Gates ducked his head and bore forward all his weight. His arms closed about the knees of the man, while his great shoulders went forward notwithstanding the impact of Carter's body.

There was a fraction of a second when a shudder passed through his frame. In that second he braced himself, and lifted his opponent into the air. Then, with a great crash, he hurled the man to the ground. He had no thought of whether he was upon his legs or face or back. Nothing mattered but that he must crush the fellow.

Carter's frame met the earth with a racking sound. A grunt of sympathy came from the spectators. He lay there a second, his legs spraddled hideously to his sides. Then he sank slowly forward upon his face, rested there, kicked convulsively; and some instinct of the brain, some message to the brain before he lost consciousness, still lived within him, for he made an abortive move to get to his feet, then fell back again.

Gates, taking the limp shoulders of the man in his great paws, turned him about and planted his shoulders fast to the ground. The freshman had won.

CHAPTER V.

THE MISSING NAME.

"TWENTY-FOUR, forty-five, A, eight, six!"

The crackling voice of the quarter back shrilled the signal. There came a thud of leather as the pigskin popped into his stomach from the alert center.

With snakelike speed, he held the ball to his right; then he passed it to the flying right half. The left half of the line surged forward against the stubborn scrubs. The right side swung in behind the quarter back and half. The full back led the attack, to which there was a giant sweep. Great holes were rent in the subs; but at the center of the line, where the play was directed, there was a long delay. The varsity rose in the air for a second, swayed there, then tumbled in a heap.

The lean, lanky figure of the coach was in the midst of the tangle instantly, tearing at the men with both hands, and fairly spurning them with his feet and knees. His face was working with incoherent disgust as he tossed them to their feet.

"Hurry up there, you would-be football players! Get in line there, and run off that play again. Run that play off until you do what I told you—make ten yards at a crack. What's the matter with you, you snails? Hurry up now, and into them!"

"Twenty-four, forty-five, A, eight, six!"

The quarter back passed the ball with brilliancy, but the half back was limping slightly as he went into the center of the scrubs once more. Behind him surged his secondary attack, but there was less force in it than before. There came a fraction less force, a fraction more resistance, and the line was tossed as it hit.

The varsity sprang back into place. They bent low for another attempt. Their faces were grimy and grim, stern and set. They glowered as they looked at the place where they had been blocked so many times.

Jones halted the quarter back as he started the signal again. His voice was drawling, disgusted, scathing. "Is this a Westerly varsity or not?" he questioned of no one in particular. "Here I send you five times at a measly scrub freshman, who can't even make the team, and he stops you cold. You're a bunch of quitters; that's what you are! Now I'm going to turn my back on this thing and wait until you get through that center there. Hurry up, now, and don't keep me waiting to turn around."

"Twenty-four, forty-five, A, eight, six!"

The scrubs' left guard lurched forward his shoulder. It was the eighth time in succession that he had been called upon to resist this attack, the eighth time that he had met the brunt of the play, with no assistance from his fellows. His face was streaked with perspiration and dirt, but his eyes glowered with an inflammable desire to conquer. He had tossed aside his head and nose guard, his jersey was so completely torn that but a strip covered the nakedness of his mighty torso. But Gates played on.

His heart was filled with hatred. It was not the hatred that made him wish to quit, but a hatred that made him delight in the injustice of what the coach was doing to him. a hatred that made him work the harder that he might again thwart the man. He knew that the object of the whole thing was to put him out of commission, and thus avenge the laying out of Carter, the boss guard, who would not report for several days.

He knew nothing about the fine points of the play at this position, and cared greatly less. He was a full back, and he knew that he could outplay the man who occupied that position on the varsity. He had lost all respect for these men, for everything.

The mass came at him, and he lunged into it with both hands outstretched, his arms encircling all the legs in sight, and drawing them to his breast. His short, thick legs absolutely refused to leave the ground, and his massive neck would not be budged. Again the play was stopped. The quarter back tossed his men to their feet, then halted as he came across one figure that lay very limp and still. He bent to his knees and pressed his face close to the white-faced half back's mouth.

"It's my knee, Carrots!" snarled the injured man. "That beast of a freshman bruised it with his shoulder."

Gates grinned into the face of the one who accused him, met the scowl of the quarter back with a leer.

"When I puts 'em, they stays put," he said. "That's the way we play the game in the Short Grass. Are you quitting?"

The injured man glared as he tried to gain his feet to get at his accuser, then sank back again with a low groan. The quarter yelled for the coach, who turned reluctantly.

"Well, well, well!" he snapped. "What's the trouble with the play? Hurry up there! Hurry up!"

"Damon's laid out!" The little player jerked his thumb in the direction of the defiant scrub who was responsible for the disaster, but Jones cut him short with an irritable snarl.

"Well, well! Take him to the lines for doc to look over and plaster, then.

Hustle up the play, Carrots! You're directing it. That's what I put you there for, isn't it? Well, then, what's the matter with you? Hurry up, now! All together! Hurry up, and bust that center!"

The quarter back threw out his hands in gesturing disgust, then leaned over, and, with Tiger Townsend, knelt until the injured half back was able to get his arms about their shoulders. Tenderly they lifted him and hobbled off the field to the side line.

A substitute darted eagerly into the line of scrimmage. He wished the university nothing but the best, had always liked the half back he replaced, but this was the chance for which he had waited so long, and his heart leaped with delight.

Gates glowered at this fresh one to be pitted against him. He could not understand why the coach wished to see him battered to pieces. Surely, Jones knew that flesh and blood could not stand up forever against such an assault as was being directed at him. What was the use in laying out a man who was showing all the time that he was the superior of almost any man on the varsity?

"Get him!" snarled Carrots viciously, as he snapped the signal. The full back hurtled himself forward, shoving his body into the frame of the freshman as though he would wipe him from the earth, avenging the last man who had been injured. But he was hurled aside. The new half back, eager to show off the best that was in him, and knowing that he was having one of his last chances, tossed himself, indifferent of life or limb, into the body of the guard who so desperately had blocked the passage. Carrots tossed up his elbow and handed it squarely at the exposed throat of the boy from the Short Grass. Gates grunted at the impact. Then he reached out his arms automatically and sank below the great mass of humanity, carrying it with him, on top of him, and holding on.

When they got back to their positions he lay as he had fallen, a crumpled-up heap. The scrubs, proud of the prowess he had shown, which reflected glory upon themselves, rushed forward; but, all the animosity of a moment before departed, little Carrots hurled them aside, and, with Tiger Townsend, knelt beside him, lifting arms and legs in swift, rigorous, artificial respiration.

His head was twisted to one side in a way that looked serious, and Carrots turned aside from him, knowing that the elbow jolt had caused the man to lie in such wise. He lifted his hand, and the doctor came darting upon the field, little black bag in hand. Beside him dashed another figure, a lean, long-limbed, lantern-jawed senior, who had been watching the work from an obscure corner of the stand.

Jones and Townsend stared at each other, a meaning glance of delighted approval in their eyes as they recognized the solicitous student kneeling beside the doctor, for Bugs Hull, the leading student of the university, a man who had always stood aloof from everything in the university save class and lecture room, had an influence against athletics which even the most ardent enthusiast could not gainsay.

Together the captain and coach watched this man as he worked with the physician upon the injured shoulder of the Short Grass man. At last his face took on an expression of delight. Gates looked up, then glared fiercely around him. He attempted to get to his feet, but the strong arms of Hull were about him. He fought them away and staggered up, waving his fist, his mouth opened in a great, mirthless laugh.

"Come on, boys! Hurry it up!" he grated. "Shoot it at me! I don't need but one arm to stop you infants! Shoot it at me, I tell you! You're not playing croquet. This is football. Hurry it up!"

Tiger Townsend looked at Jones for instructions, but the coach stepped forward without a glance at him. Moving into the line, he waved his right hand in the air.

"Sub left guard of freshmen!" he bellowed.

A headgear hurtled into the air as a delighted lad on the side lines rushed forward in answer to the summons. Jim Gates glowered at the coach, doubling his fist threateningly.

"No, you don't!" he howled angrily. "I can hold this line just as well now as ever. Let me play it out. Hurry it up, you dubs, and see what you can make out of me! Hurry it——"

He stopped; even in his blind rage he stopped, as a heavy hand grasped his wrist, and very cold blue eyes stared threateningly into his own.

"Get to the lines, kid!" commanded Jones shortly. "And don't be all day about it. Take a run around the field, if you feel so good about it. Get rubbed down, and don't catch cold. That's all; except, remember that I'm giving instructions as to the running of this team. When we want freshmen for that work we'll take up a subscription and hire 'em. Hurry up, now!"

The rage died out of the freshman's eyes. Not a man spoke in either line. The coach simply turned on his heel and stepped outside the zone of scrimmage. Carrots took the signal, and there was a rush, so quickly made that Gates was hurled to one side. He half turned, as though to go back, when Bugs Hull caught him by the hand and drew him away toward the side lines.

"Mind about keeping that shoulder warm," indifferently remarked Jones, as the pair passed him.

Neither man answered. There was no answer to be made. The brutality of the whole practice had driven them both to a point where their blood boiled at a dangerous pitch.

"Come to the club, and I'll fix you up with the rubs, and all that," suggested the senior, his harsh voice very kindly and sympathetic.

Gates reached out and touched the tips of the upper classman's fingers, shyly, awkwardly, embarrassed at the knowledge that Hull understood. Here was the one man who had given him anything like a square deal from the time he entered the university until now. They both seemed pariahs, in a curious sort of way; and yet they understood each other perfectly, knew that each one was willing to give his very heart's blood for the weal of the college; and each one morose over the fact that he could not show anything except a sulky attitude toward the place, an attitude which the more demonstrative insisted on misunderstanding.

"If it's all the same to you, Bugs," slowly decided the freshman, "I'd rather go to the gym. You see," he added, "the list for training quarters will be made up and posted to-night."

The senior did not answer as they walked slowly up the steep, rough path that led through the woods to the gymnasium. He understood exactly the feelings of the younger man, and there was no need for words.

At the gymnasium, Bugs made a more careful examination of the injured shoulder, whistling at the magnificent physique and muscles which had turned aside such a blow, and done nothing more than make a bad muscle kink out of what should, nine times out of ten, have been a broken bone. Carefully he kneaded the place, working over it gently, yet firmly; working as no physician or professional rubber would ever work.

A little later the squad entered noisily, with a great chattering and laughter and horseplay and clumping of cleated shoes. Under the showers, their noise grew worse, the gayety more infectious, and Townsend smiled as he looked them over.

For, at the head of the room, was a closed door, through which the coach had disappeared immediately he entered the building, and the captain of the varsity knew that every eye was fastened intently on that door, the men realizing that behind it their fates were being worked out at a very speedy rate. The note of hysteria in their mirth was not nearly so intense as he had observed it in other teams during the afternoon when the first detachment for training table was being made up.

He superintended the scales, care-

fully marking down the weights of the men as they hopped lightly on them, their brows furrowed with anxiety to find out whether they had lost or gained the precious brawn so necessary to their best efforts.

Now and then his eyes would glance in the direction of Gates and his devoted senior, Hull. What a curious combination it was, to be sure! He had been a star athlete in every branch since entering the university four years ago, and never had he known his classmate, Bugs, to appear on the field until this Short Grass demon showed up.

Since then he had not missed a practice. The captain knew that Hurry-up Jones had observed it, also, and was greatly delighted thereby.

But why he could not guess—any more than he could figure out the reason for the drastic treatment accorded Gates by the famous trainer. That there was a reason, he knew well; that it was useless trying to solve the riddle he knew equally well, from remembering other men who had been worked out peculiarly by the great master of the gridiron, who always figured in the future as well as the present.

"Gates, I don't see your weight marked down," he said quietly, when the last man had gone to his locker and started putting on his clothes.

Without a word, the freshman stepped forward, his shoulder showing stiff even under the heavy woolen blanket, stepped upon the scales, and adjusted them.

"One eighty-nine," murmured the captain, as he marked it down upon his pad.

A curious noise filled the room, a noise that cannot be duplicated—the sound of many men sighing relief as they see a period of suspense coming to an end. The closed door opened, and the lanky figure of the coach was framed there a second, a long slip of foolscap paper dangling in his right hand. He stepped forward and jammed it carelessly upon the black bulletin board, then pivoted upon his heel and went out of the door.

There came a mighty surge forward, such a surging as brought a sympathetic smile to the face of Tiger Townsend, who had known the time when he himself had quivered to learn his fate, had quaked for fear that he might be overlooked.

He stood aside, watching the men as they crowded and jammed each other for a glimpse of the fatal paper. Some walked away crestfallen and grumbling, others slipped out, sad and sore, and some few laughed aloud exultantly, and gripped hands with their lucky fellows.

Only twenty-two men were considered fit to be in the first division. They would eat at the training table.

Tiger started to leave when the crowd had departed. It always saddened him, this period when the men with whom he had fought shoulder to shoulder were disappointed and humiliated. He always wished to be alone for a little while with his thoughts, and get over the blue spell that oppressed him, but something in the attitude of the pair at the head of the room, the silent pair who remained, made him draw back in the shadows of a shower cover and watch.

Quietly Gates rose to his feet and made his way to the board. Bugs Hall was but a little behind him, reading over his shoulder. The face of the senior dropped visibly, while a bitter laugh came from his lean throat. The Short Grass freshman, however, merely read the announcement, turned upon his heel, and left the room. Despite his extraordinary ability as a player, his name was not on the board.

The succeeding chapters of this novel will appear in the next issue of TOP-NOTCH, dated and out November 15th.

Good Morning!

FORGIVE me for asking, dear, but father says you can't meet your creditors."

"It is false, dearest. I meet them every day."

"Bless you, dearie! I knew it wasn't true."

TOP-NOTCH TALK

News and Views by the Editor and Readers.

NOVEMBER 1, 1919.

Without Romance.

THE scrap heap is the place upon which the world ever has its eye, toward which it is ever hurling something. Everything material, also much that is mental, gets there sooner or later. Science is the great discarder. It loves to scrap some romantic legend with which folk in many lands delighted to scare themselves almost to death.

How the merry villagers of olden times used to people the woods and the streams and the marshes with creatures of their fancy! How fond they were of projecting these pretty or weird beings into their daily life! That's how Will-o'-the-Wisp got into the game. You have seen him and his friend Jack-o'-Lantern at night; they take the shape of bluish flame dancing over the marshland. And Jack-o'-Lantern for ages threw scares into superstitious people. They were quite sure he was an evil spirit whose particular job was to lure unwary ones into his clutches. This he accomplished by enticing them to follow his fascinating flame into the swamp, and there dragging them down to their doom, while the rushes quivered with his blood-curdling laughter.

Gas for Poor Jack.

UP sprang science to hurl Jack and his lantern on the scrap heap. There is a gas called phosphoreted hydrogen, which is given off under certain conditions by decaying animal and vegetable matter. This gas has the quality of instantly catching light when it comes into contact with air. The phosphoreted hydrogen is generated in the depths of the marshland, and finds its way to the surface in bubbles.

As these bubbles burst they flash into flame. Coming, as they do, one after another, here and there, all over the bog, and bursting, the bubbles give the appearance of a bluish, ghostlike figure hopping about from place to place.

Thus it came about that merry villagers conjured up the mythical chap whom science compelled to take the count. But not everybody knows this, and he has not lost his power wholly to keep up the fear that he was able to inspire throughout the centuries.

A Pleasant Exercise.

IT is so with many another Jack-o'-Lantern of fear which we love to entertain. Where fact, in the revelation of science, has failed to dispel terrifying illusions, fiction often has stepped in to accomplish the task. It has done so by means of the impressive examples set by the characters in a story.

And that is one of the best qualities of the right type of adventure and other fiction—that while it entertains and delights the reader it can inspire him as well with ideals of courage, decision and energy.

It can help, and has helped, to combat the Jack-o'-Lanterns of fear that keep so many from hitting the trail of success in life.

These remarks are suggested by some of the stories that you will get in the

issue of TOP-NOTCH to follow this. You will find in them several men and some girls, who enjoy the exercise of tossing the Jack-o'-Lanterns of fear on the scrap heap.

In the Next Issue.

THE long complete novel will deal with the adventures of a young man who entered into an agreement not to talk for twenty-four hours. That would not have been a very difficult feat for Robinson Crusoe alone on his desert island. But this man's environment was nothing like that. On the contrary, he was living where many human beings were assembled, and chats and general conversation were one of the chief indoor and outdoor sports. It was a summer colony of light-hearted and high-spirited people, among whom a chap who held his tongue was a target for all sorts of wonder.

You might not think, at first blush, that refusal to speak for twenty-four hours would entail any stirring adventures; but read this story and you will see. It is called "Noisy Silence." In that title you may get an idea of the turmoil that his undertaking incurred.

The novel is a lively one, full of wit and abounding in the dramatic. The author is L. H. Robbins, who gave us some time ago that spirited tale entitled "The Man Who Saw." Your letters show that you like that story. "Noisy Silence" will run to something over fifty pages, and there is not a dull moment.

Tales of Sport.

THE next issue will be found notably rich in sport stories. Foremost among them is one by Burt L. Standish. It is a novelette of baseball—a sequel to "Something Stirring," which appears in the number that you hold in your hand. Larry Brown, or Laughing Larry, as many call him, holds the center of interest, both as to the baseball part of the story and the part that develops a spirited human comedy. Quite an interesting chap, he is turning out to be, this big, good-natured Larry of the center garden, with his pink-tea hair. This story is called "Rookie Luck," and it has a lot to do with the fellows who, by a shake of the managerial dice, find themselves suddenly lifted out of the bush and set down in big-league company. Without doubt one of the brightest tales of the diamond Standish has ever written.

There will be a boxing story of the United States navy, written by that clever exponent of this branch of fiction, Frank R. Pierce. He calls it "Navy Made," and it is well named. Mr. Pierce is not a stranger to the life of Uncle Sam's naval service; certainly he is not a stranger to the art of story-writing. His many excellent tales of the men-of-war's men, particularly in their relation to athletic activities, have won for him widespread popularity.

Roland Ashford Phillips contributes a story that is a delightful medley of golf and picture-play making. "Ninety and Nine" it is called, and is in Phillips' best vein.

The closing chapters of John L. Swope's vivid football story, which begins in the number now before you, will be found the best part of this thorough-going college tale.

With the Lumberjacks.

A LONG complete story of extraordinary power is one by Hapsburg Liebe. In no walk of fiction does this writer move with surer step than when among the big, strong fellows who bend the forest to their will. It is among them this story takes you. "Rainbow

Jack," as it is titled, is well up to the Liebe standard in this field.

Shorter Stories.

THERE will be an unusually large number of them in the next issue, and they will cover a lot of interesting themes. The story that "packs a laugh" will be there in several varieties, as well as the story that makes you feel—but not blue. We are trying to keep that blue feeling out of TOP-NOTCH.

And That's All.

THE recent Toronto story by William Wallace Cook, which has called forth much favorable comment, is taken up by George E. J. Williams, of the Dominion Theater, Ottawa, Canada. He says:

I have just finished reading your complete novel by William Wallace Cook, "Left Is Right." It's a dandy, and he surely must know Toronto pretty well to write it. The story is entirely correct, with one little exception ,and that is where he refers to a trial for stealing in Osgoode Hall. The only trials held in Osgoode Hall are the high court trials. A thief would be tried in the police court in the City Hall.

However, the story is like the magazine, top-notch in every other respect. I know both Harry Burnett, whom he mentions, and Luigi Romanelli well, and I know of Arthur MacDonald. Toronto is my home town, and I was certainly impressed with the way he wrote the story, as I could almost see all of it while reading.

I really have not had time to form my opinion who are my favorite authors. If I like the story—and there are none that I really dislike—I just like it, that's all. I read every one of them. I came to read T.-N. by a sort of an accident seven years or so ago. I was with a minstrel show, and our property man passed on a copy of your magazine one lonesome Sunday. It contained a rattling good story of theatrical life, and I have only missed two copies since, and that was while on the road.

Well, if I write any more you will think it is a novelette instead of a letter. I wish T.-N. and its staff and authors all success.

A Room to Let.

FROM R. F. Allen, of Yonkers, New York, we have this interesting letter:

It is about three years since I began reading your excellent magazine, and I take this opportunity to add my testimonial to the many that you receive. Let me speak, first of all, of the good taste that pervades the magazine, and this despite the fact that some of your stories lead us into walks of life where it would be quite easy for the author to commit offenses against good taste. But I suppose the editors have something to do with the general tone of the magazine. It must be so. Surely no collection of authors could be found to work in such noteworthy harmony in this regard without a guiding spirit.

No theme seems to be beyond your inclusive scope. It is the widest range of fiction I have ever seen presented in a single publication. I think sometimes it would be better not to attempt such a wide range, for in doing so I think you make some of the mistakes that I find in TOP-NOTCH. You and your assistant editors and your authors, including the proof readers, cannot know everything. It is not to be expected. But it may be hoped, however, that you will keep off of ground on which you are not at home, or take greater pains to be sure you are right before going ahead.

This suggests, of course, that I have caught you napping in some of the stories—caught you showing your ignorance now and then about technical matters—matters, perhaps, that I happen to have a special knowledge of, an intimate acquaintance with. Well, that is not so. I catch you napping now and then, permit me to say, in regard to matters that are of common knowledge—that any fairly well-informed person ought to be posted on.

Now the cat is out of the bag, you say. All that nice, pleasing purring at the beginning, and well on in my letter, was only leading up to a vicious scratch. Some tabby, am I not? I like you, Mr. Editor, without knowing you personally, and it is because I like you that I make this little snap at the publication in which I can see you take so much pride, and take it seriously.

Generally speaking, that pride is well taken, for you have the best story magazine published. But that doesn't mean there is no room for improvement; far from it. And the greatest room for improvement is, I should say, along the line pointed out—the line of accuracy of detail, greater care in

the verification of statements pertaining to fact.

I think you yourself said once in a talk: "Artistic fiction is the highest form of truth." And that is one-hundred-per-cent correct. But fiction can't be artistic unless it is accurate where things real are woven upon the web of fancy.

You stray farthest from the straight and narrow path, I should say, in stories that deal with railroad life, the sea, certain branches of industry, mining, and some sports. Surely you ought to be there with the accuracy when it comes to sport—your specialty. Well, you are not always.

I know something of the stage, and I don't remember ever seeing you go wrong there; nor in a picture-play story. And in your tales of Western life, business and military doings you seem to cleave pretty close to the line of accuracy. Also—— But no; to point out the cases where you are without reproach would take up more space than I think you would care to allow me. To enumerate your stumbling blocks, you see, did not take many lines.

I hope you will bear with me, and understand that it is a friend and devoted admirer of TOP-NOTCH and all its works—inaccuracies included—who pens these words.

It cannot be denied, of course, that the need of accuracy in romance where it touches points of reality, is recognized by writers who do their work well. In a railroad story it would not be at all out of place for the author to show some knowledge of a railroad. Every reader would forgive him. The same may be said of any other theme—the sea, shoemaking, tobogganing, airplaning, tunneling, et cetera, et cetera. It might shock the reader to find the author knowing something about any of these; but probably he would recover from the effects.

Sometimes an author cares more for accuracy than he does for a good story; then the shock comes to him upon getting his work back from the editor. Moderation seems to be the life of trade in almost anything. It is because we see room for improvement that we keep striving to give you a better magazine; and letters like the one from this reader in Yonkers, New York, help along the good work, you may be sure. Everywhere in the world there is a room to let—room for improvement.

Thinks It the Best.

Editor of TOP-NOTCH MAGAZINE.

DEAR SIR: After reading that delightful story published in your last magazine under the title of "Rogues of the Air," I thought I would drop you a few lines to express my appreciation. I think it is the best long story you have ever published. Don't neglect the sport fiction. It is this feature that places TOP-NOTCH above all others.

With best wishes, I remain, sincerely yours,

Granville, N. Y. WESLEY HAYES.

Strong for the Sports.

Editor of TOP-NOTCH MAGAZINE.

DEAR SIR: Have been a delighted reader of your T. N. for many years. That football story, "Darius the Second," by John Milton Edwards, was bully. I would like a few more football stories and other athletic tales. I am a lover of that type of fiction. Yours sincerely, BEN BENIS.

Toledo, Ohio.

Looking Ahead.

Editor of TOP-NOTCH MAGAZINE.

DEAR SIR: I wish to say that I appreciate more than any other point the fact that T.-N. looks ahead. I distinctly remember that a T.-N. fiction story has preceded a real invention by only a few short months—twice since I have been a reader.

The story "The Man Who Saw" is, in my opinion, one of the best you have published. Tell Mr. Robbins to come again. It may seem to some far-fetched and improbable, but it has been my privilege to personally know a person who was gifted as was Gordon Brock, though not to the extent as given.

Now Mr. Editor, I am going to hurt your feelings by saying my heart (?) has changed, as I used to think B. L. Standish the best writer on the T.-N. staff. But I now have to give the palm to Will Sebelle. But their writings are all so good, it is difficult to choose between them.

I for one would be pleased to hear from Berthram Lebhar with a detective story.

J. L. HERNDAN.

North Street, Benton, Arkansas.

The Great Outdoors.

Editor of TOP-NOTCH MAGAZINE.

DEAR SIR: I have been an interested and enthusiastic reader of TOP-NOTCH for the last five years, although not a subscriber. Your magazine certainly lives up to its name. I have read numerous other magazines, but have still to find the equal to T.-N., much less its superior.

I enjoy all the stories, but most of all the great outdoor stories by the Dorrances, W. W. Cook, et cetera. I also enjoy the "Slash Triebault" baseball stories and Harold de Polo's animal stories.

I saw in a recent number a very good suggestion by L. S. Maya in regard to saving and binding the continued stories. They certainly are worth the trouble, as there are mighty few continued stories printed in T.-N. that are not worth saving.

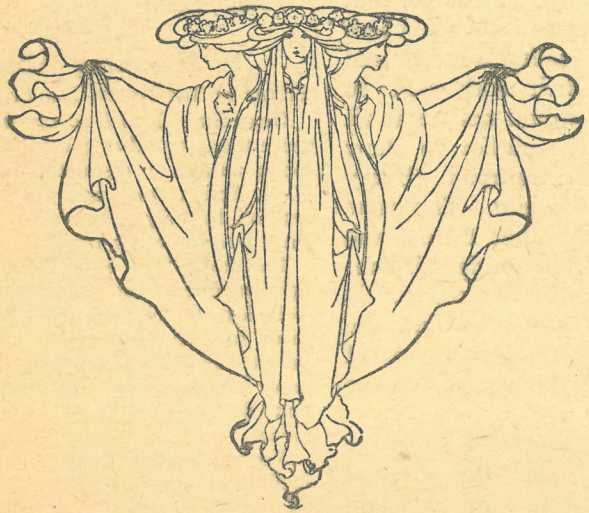
The only one I have ever read in T.-N. that I wouldn't care to save or see again was "The Atlantic City Riddle." That is the worst story and, in fact, *only* bad story I have ever read in T.-N. It was so slow and long drawn out that one lost all interest in it long before the end. If it had been half as long and with more snap like other T.-N. stories, it might have been good, no doubt.

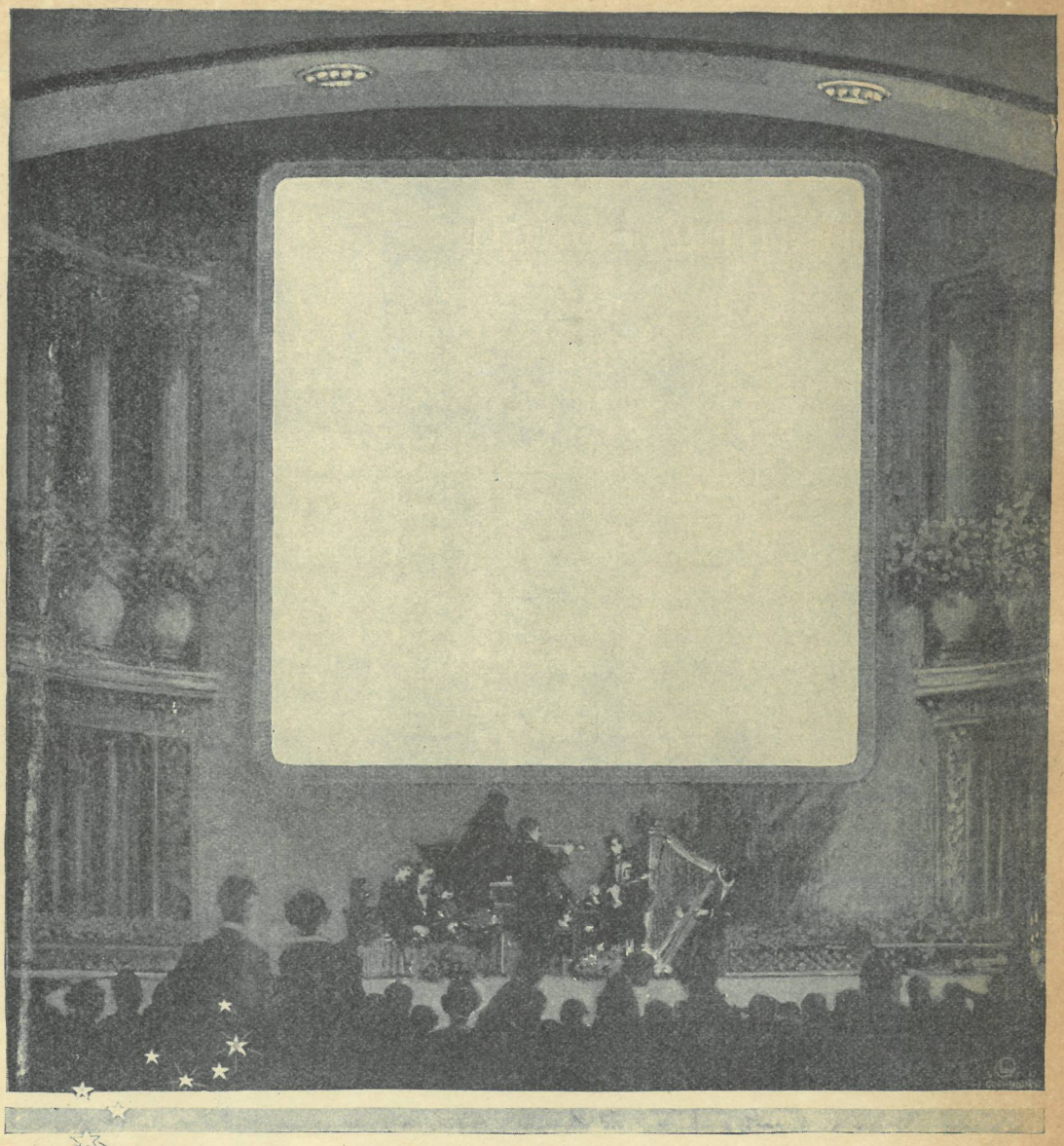
I have been a motor-cycle rider for the last two years, and of course, as is natural, greatly enjoy the sport, and would like to see some motor-cycle story in T.-N. The only time I remember reading a motor-cycle story in T.-N. was the one about "Bill Starbuck" in France.

I hope to see some more good stories by the Dorrances, W. W. Cook, B. L. Standish, and R. A. Phillips; it certainly seems they can write nothing but good stories. Wishing TOP-NOTCH every success, I remain, truly yours,

C. T. HARRJE.

Southampton, N. Y.





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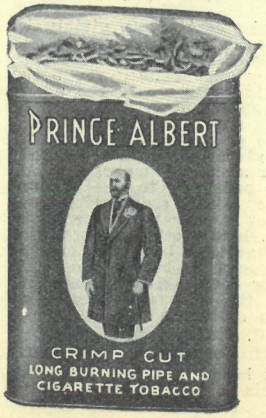

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Statement of the Ownership, Management, etc., required by the Act of Congress of August 24, 1912, of the TOP-NOTCH MAGAZINE, published semimonthly, at New York, N. Y., for October 1, 1919:

State of New York, County of New York, (*ss.*)

Before me, a Notary Public, in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared George C. Smith, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is Treasurer of Street & Smith Corporation, publishers of TOP-NOTCH MAGAZINE, and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management, etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, embodied in section 443, Postal Laws and Regulations, to wit:

1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are: *Publishers,* Street & Smith Corporation, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.; *editor,* Henry W. Thomas, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.; *managing editors,* Street & Smith Corporation, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.; *business managers,* Street & Smith Corporation, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

2. That the owners are: Street & Smith Corporation, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y., a corporation composed of Ormond G. Smith, 89 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.; George C. Smith, 89 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.; Annie K. Smith, 89 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.; George C. Smith, Jr., 89 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.; Cora A. Gould, 89 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.; Ormond V. Gould, 89 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

3. That the known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 per cent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are: None.

4. That the two paragraphs next above, giving the names of the owners, stockholders, and security holders, if any, contain not only the list of stockholders and security holders as they appear upon the books of the company, but also, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting, is given; also that the said two paragraphs contain statements embracing affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner; and this affiant has no reason to believe that any other person, association, or corporation has any interest direct or indirect in the said stock, bonds, or other securities than as so stated by him.

GEORGE C. SMITH, Treasurer,
of Street & Smith Corporation, publishers.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 20th day of September, 1919. Francis S. Duff, Notary Public, No. 239, New York County. (My commission expires March 30, 1921.)

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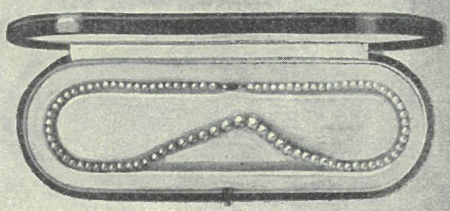

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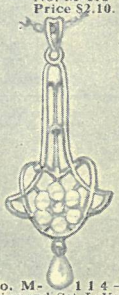

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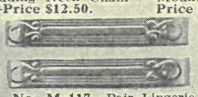

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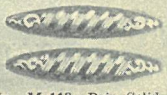

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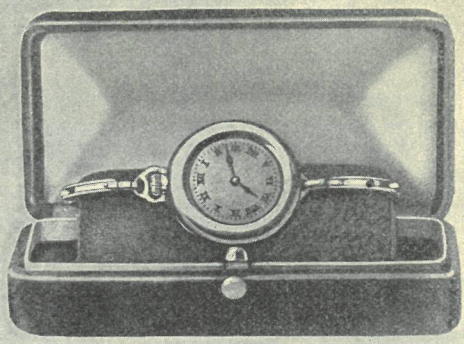

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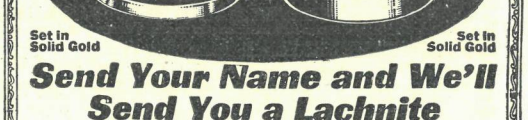

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