

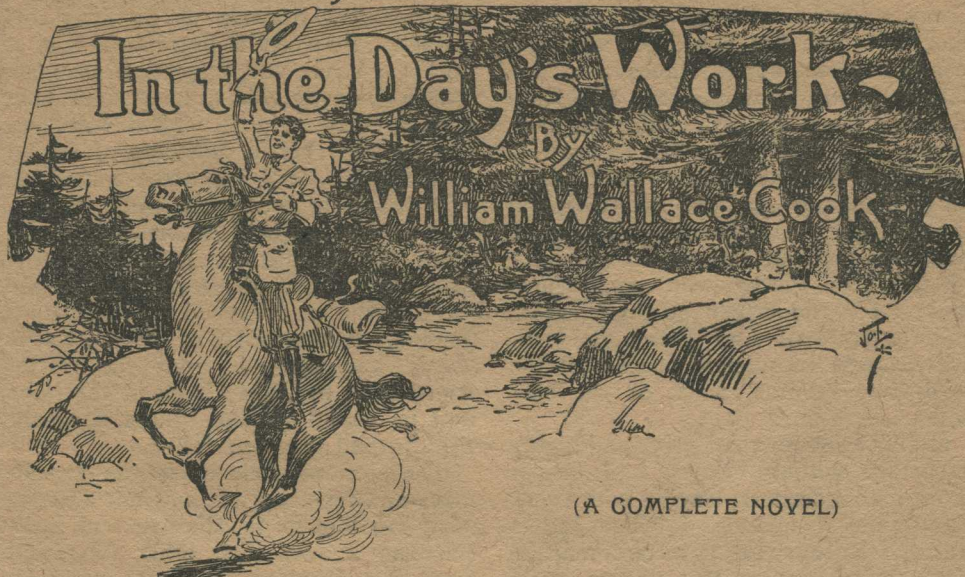
TOP-NOTCH MAGAZINE

VOL. XLV

Published April 15, 1921

No. 6

❖ *Tale of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police* ❖



(A COMPLETE NOVEL)

CHAPTER I.

WITNESS FOR THE DEFENSE.

IT was hard for Corporal Corey to believe his eyes; and when he had somewhat recovered from the mental shock and persuaded himself that his sense of sight was wholly dependable, he fell to doubting the evidence of his ears.

"Miss Benning—Ora!" The startled exclamation formed itself but never reached his lips. Deeper down in him, like a faint, bitter echo of days long gone, something whispered that other name for her—"Iskwao." Corey pulled at his jacket collar, clamped his jaws, and turned his narrowed, probing eyes on Sergeant Stillson.

Ever since opening court for that preliminary hearing Stillson had been largely in evidence. "Largely" is the word, for he was a big man; big, physically, and having a way with him that caused him to dominate scenes and situations. Even Inspector Bradford, who was sitting with Cunningham, the local J. P., seemed dwarfed by the rugged personality of the sergeant.

All the machinery of the court had an appearance of hanging upon Stillson's beck and nod—an appearance Corey had admitted to himself while, at the same time, he had laughed at it as altogether ridiculous and far-fetched. The sudden appearance of the girl, gliding lightly into the room as her name was called, had not surprised Sergeant Stillson. Corey made a note of it.

The little courtroom of the Wolf Creek detachment was a bit crude as to furnishings. There was the long deal table, behind which sat Their Worships, Inspector Bradford and the storekeeper and justice of the peace Cunningham. In front of the two were writing materials, legal blanks, books of man-made law, and the One Book of the Greater Law, on which witnesses were sworn.

A few straight-backed chairs faced the table—one for Stillson, another for Corey, a third for Piegan Jake, the prisoner, a fourth for Haskison, who had lost the thoroughbred, Ronceval, and a fifth and sixth for witnesses. Ora Benning had taken the fifth chair; but now, having been sworn, she was on her feet and giving her testimony—most unsettling testimony so far as Corporal Corey's case was concerned. The sixth chair was for Tete Jaune, that wanderer of the Far Places who could have spoken for the crown at this hearing and, in spite of Ora Benning's testimony, made completely successful the hard, two months' work of the corporal.

On his hunt for the elusive and highly important witness, Corey had beaten about the wilderness, leaving with every man he met a summons for Tete Jaune. But the word could not have reached Tete Jaune, for he was not at Wolf Creek on this forenoon when he was most needed.

Three or four benches around the walls were occupied in part by cattlemen, and in part by spectators of mixed blood—friends of the half-breed prisoner, Piegan Jake. The representatives of the Stock Growers' Association saw in this horse-stealing case a possible reaching back into a pest of cattle thieving, in which, naturally, the association was intensely interested.

Let into the wall and facing the bench of the magistrates was the iron door of the cell from which Piegan Jake had been brought. Jake was a hard-looking person, tall, lithe, active as a cat and equally quick. The redskin showed in his high cheek bones, and the white man in his fair hair and blue eyes. The worst of both strains was in evi-

dence, too—cunning, duplicity, and a boldness for black deeds in the open or a panther leap in the dark. He was not young, and neither was he old. His powers of body and brain would never serve him better than now.

The coming of the girl was clearly a surprise to Piegan Jake. He stared at her, and, sudden as lightning, hope flashed in his sullen face. The looks he cast at Corporal Corey were full of hate and defiance; and his air was one of impudent bravado as he faced his judges. Between a buttonhole and a pocket of his vest sagged a peculiar watch chain of gold nuggets, and Jake was twisting at this with his fingers—a habit of his in moments of stress.

Corporal Corey had made something of a record in nosing out cattle thieves. The Stock Growers' Association of the Wolf Creek district had asked for Corey, sending a written request to the O. C., who in turn had referred it to Regina. In the course of several weeks Corey had arrived from the north, transferred to Wolf Creek in the hope that he would succeed where Sergeant Stillson had thus far failed.

The corporal rode up to the detachment and reported. It was not an easy thing for him to do, since he and Stillson had known each other long and were not friends. Personal grudges, however, had to be ignored in favor of the day's work. Coincidentally with the coming of Corey to Wolf Creek, Haskison was at the detachment reporting the loss of his thoroughbred b. g. Ronceval.

Corey, in a flash of divination such as came to him at times, was of opinion that the cattle thieves were in need of swift saddle stock and had run off this horse of Haskison's. Sergeant Stillson scoffed at the idea. What the sergeant thought had no influence at all on the corporal, for cattle had been stolen steadily and systematically for months almost from under the sergeant's nose and not a man had been brought to book for it. Although Stillson was Corey's superior in rank, he had nothing to say about the work for which Corey had been especially detailed.

Corey learned very quickly that Piegan Jake had been seen in the district. Knowing that Jake had been a disturber and under the eye of the police, Corey went looking for him and ultimately ran him down. Piegan Jake, at the moment of capture, was riding Haskison's Ronceval—a clear case of having been "caught with the goods."

The testimony seemed conclusive. Yet it only "seemed." The cunning of Piegan Jake had pulled him through tighter corners in his conflicts with the police, and Corey, who had a way of drawing his evidence tight and taking a half hitch over all for good measure, sent the word far and wide for Tete Jaune. Yet, even with Tete Jaune missing, the corporal felt sure of himself—until the girl came and began to speak.

Corey's evidence, as offered before the inspector and Cunningham, was brief but convincing. It covered thoroughly the two points upon which Piegan Jake was arraigned—having a weapon upon his person when arrested, and horse stealing. The prisoner pleaded "not guilty" to the last count and "guilty" to the first. Being the desperate man that he was, Piegan Jake, it occurred to their worships, would have tried to use the weapon he carried at the time of his arrest. That would have constituted another count.

To a question by the inspector, it developed that Corey had fallen upon him so quickly that Jake, swift in movement though he was, had had no chance to draw a gun. At this bit of evidence, drawn from the corporal, the inspector had smiled knowingly, and Cunningham had nodded brightly. Corey of the Mounted was a man who did things like that—not occasionally but habitually.

Piegan Jake had not engaged counsel. There was a shortage of lawyers at Wolf Creek; and Jake's contention was that if he were committed to stand trial at the next sitting of the supreme court he would call on the legal talent for help at that time.

After Corey's evidence was in, and Haskison had identified his thorough-

bred as the animal Jake was riding at the time of capture, one of the stockmen present whispered to another that "it looks like a cinch that Corey's got that breed; later, if he can be made to talk, there's a chance of getting a line on the cattle rustlers."

Piegan Jake admitted that he was riding the thoroughbred when arrested; but he declared he had not known the horse was Haskison's and had been stolen from him. Piegan Jake averred loudly that he had bought the horse, fair and square, from a man he had met near the Calthorpe Ranch.

This was the half-breed's defense, and it was about the only one, in the circumstances, that he could put up. But no one believed him—not even his half-breed friends. His known character was not such that his word, even when under oath, carried weight. He would have been committed out of hand had not the big surprise been sprung and Miss Ora Benning called.

Miss Benning walked composedly into the room. She was a picture of freshness and beauty, thrown against that sordid background of frontier justice. A Girl of the West she was, in her tan boots and leggings, her short riding skirt, her blouse with its flowing tie at the collar, and the small Stetson hat nestling on her shiny, dark hair. Hanging from a loop at her right wrist was a quirt of many thongs.

A richer color touched her cheeks as she smiled into the wide eyes of Corporal Corey. It was a smile of the old-time friendliness, and in no way barbed with a hint of what was to come. From the corporal the girl's glance moved to the sergeant; and the latter, calm and unruffled, allowed an expression of smug satisfaction to cross his face. There fell a deep silence, and the droning of flies at the windowpanes, and even the lapping of water against the police skiff in the creek, could be heard in the courtroom.

Then came the testimony that brought down Corey's little house of cards, and scored against him the first failure he had known in the service.

"I was in the corral by my Uncle

John Calthorpe's barn," came the liquid voice of the girl, enunciating each word distinctly, "catching up Silver Heels, my pinto riding horse. It was the afternoon after the horse belonging to Mr. Haskison was stolen. The prisoner"—and here the girl nodded toward Piegan Jake—"came walking along the trail from the north, while another man came riding alone from the south. The man on foot and the other on horseback came to a halt when they met. The prisoner offered fifty dollars for the horse, and the man on the horse asked for three hundred dollars. At last the animal was sold for one hundred and fifty dollars, riding gear and all, and the prisoner mounted and rode south, while the man who had sold the horse tramped away north on foot."

This was the bombshell, the unexpected testimony given in proof of Piegan Jake's story.

"You are positive," inquired the inspector, "that the man who bought the horse was the prisoner?"

"I cannot be mistaken," the girl averred.

"You know this horse Ronceval? You are sure it is the same animal that changed hands, there by the Calthorpe Ranch?"

"I am sure it was the same animal, although I did not know at the time that it was Mr. Haskison's."

"Who was the man who sold the horse to the prisoner, Miss Benning?"

"A half-breed, a stranger I had never seen before. There was a knife scar on his face and he wore little gold rings in his ears."

This also tallied with the statement made by Piegan Jake. A few more questions, relatively unimportant, followed; after that, Piegan Jake was fined twenty-five dollars for carrying concealed weapons, and the charge of horse stealing against him was dismissed. Jake had money and paid his fine on the nail; thereupon he walked out of the room in the midst of his rejoicing friends, a free man once more.

The girl had gone as quietly as she had appeared; the cattlemen smothered their disappointment and filed away; the

storekeeper, having finished his judicial duties, returned to his store; and the inspector, after clapping Corey on the shoulder and wishing him better luck next time, moved off toward the little hotel where he was to have his noon meal.

Alone together in the deserted room, the corporal turned on his superior officer. "You could have saved me this flash in the pan, Stillson," he said through his teeth.

"How?"

"You knew what Miss Benning knew—before this morning; you could have tipped me off."

Stillson grunted. "You're havin' a brain storm, Corey," was his gruff response as he turned on his heel. "And this isn't the first time," he added, from the door.

CHAPTER II.

THAT NUGGET CHAIN.

AND this isn't the first time." Corey said that over to himself, there in the empty little courtroom, brows wrinkled and eyes glittering. The old feud was still running warm in Stillson's blood, he decided. It was influencing him so much, it seemed, that he could play dangerously with his police duties. "He wouldn't give me the tip," thought the corporal savagely, "because he wanted to discredit me. It's good to get a man's measure, but I never guessed Jeremy Stillson would be that low-down."

With the black frown still on his face, he left the room by a side door and climbed a flight of narrow stairs to the sleeping quarters. A sergeant and two constables composed the regular representation of the force at Wolf Creek. Both constables were away on patrol, and the red-serge jacket of one of them had been borrowed by Corey for his court work of the morning. He now got back into his trail-worn brown duck, filled and lighted his old brier, and dropped reflectively into a chair by a window. For a few minutes he tried to put himself in Stillson's place.

A corporal from another division had come to Wolf Creek to clear out

a gang of cattle thieves—Stillson's own particular job. If he were sergeant, Corey asked himself, would his professional pride have been touched by the transfer to the detachment of an outsider who had orders to take a bit of work out of the local sergeant's hands and see it through to a finish? Corey decided that he wouldn't have liked it; but he decided, also, that no feeling of jealousy, chagrin, or hurt pride would have caused him to mess up the work of a corporal on special detail, even though he considered the corporal an interloper.

Stillson had a figure that filled the eye—pleasantly, for he was rugged and handsome, smart with no hint of swagger; and he had undeniably a way that dominated situations, but not always pleasantly, for he hewed to the line of duty and cared not a rap where the chips fell. He was large-souled. Corey gave him credit for that, in spite of the fact that they had not been on friendly footing for two years. What, then, was the matter with Stillson that he should juggle affairs as he had done at the hearing that forenoon?

"Cherchez la femme!" Corey muttered the phrase, old as man and stale as such pitiable truisms have become, with keen distaste. And where should he look for the woman? No farther than the Calthorpe Ranch—and Ora Benning!

Corey drew a hard breath as the cleverness of the sergeant dawned upon him. To be dealt such a blow, by the hand of a woman to whom a man had given his heart and whom he had spent two years at Vermilion trying to forget, was staggering. Circumstances had played into Stillson's hands, but certainly it had taken skill to bring them to such a climax.

At the time of his capture Piegan Jake had protested loudly that he had bought the Ronceval horse and paid good money for it, and he had described the stranger half-breed who had worked off the animal on him in the vicinity of the Calthorpe Ranch. Although Corey had not considered the story worth investigating, while hunting for Tete

Jaune he had also sought information regarding a man with a knife-scarred face and rings in his ears. Nothing could be learned about that vender of stolen property, and the fact seemed clinched that he existed solely in Piegan Jake's imagination. Corey saw now that he had made a mistake in not carrying his inquiries to the Calthorpe Ranch.

Corey reflected, with a touch of bitterness, that while he was riding far and wide hunting for evidence, Ora Benning had known this thing about Piegan Jake and had held it back. She had reserved her evidence for the preliminary hearing, thus smashing his hard and careful work in the most dramatic manner possible. It was not like her. That the matter had fallen out in such a way was because, undoubtedly, Stillson had brought some uncanny influence to bear on the girl.

And yet, seeing Corey in front of the magistrates and across the courtroom for the first time in two years, what friendliness had she shown apart from that old-time smile? She had not lingered, when the hearing was over, for a word of greeting, of apology, or of explanation, but had hurried away and left him to draw his own conclusions.

Ora Benning at her uncle's ranch, and Sergeant Stillson at the neighboring police detachment! Chance—if, indeed, it were chance!—had worked in a weird and wonderful manner to bring this about. And the last amazing touch had been given the situation by the transfer of Corporal Corey to Wolf Creek.

Anything that widened or deepened the gulf between Ora Benning and Corporal Corey would, of course, be welcomed by Sergeant Stillson. Corey could not shut his eyes to that. But that the sergeant should deliberately bring such a matter about took him so far out of his character, as the corporal had known it, that it was difficult to believe. For all that, the circumstances and the fact spoke for themselves. Two years had worked a vicious change in the sergeant!

A door opened below and a cheery voice drifted up the stairs: "Grub

pi-i-le!" That was Antone, the detachment's cook, interpreter, and handy man, announcing the noon meal. Corey went down and joined Stillson at mess.

There was a noticeable constraint between the two. After a silence the sergeant remarked:

"Snap judgments are tricky things, Corey."

"I was four weeks working up my 'snap' judgment in this Piegan Jake business," said the corporal.

"And about four minutes figuring out where I stood in the matter of Miss Benning's testimony," came stiffly from the sergeant. "You'll have to revise yourself all around. Overplaying your hunches is no way to clean up on a bunch of cattle thieves."

"You ought to know how not to do it, sergeant; you had four months to learn before I got here." Corey was not given to digs of that sort, but he was raw and smarting from certain conclusions he had worked out in the bunk room.

A slow color worked up through the bronzed face of Stillson. "Up North, for the last two years, you've been picking your friends from the wolf pack, I'm told," he countered slowly. "That makes it none too easy to have you around."

"I know the fangs when they're bared in my face, sergeant," the other scored, "and that helps to make rough going at this detachment."

"You ought to know," the sergeant tossed after the corporal, who was on his feet and starting for an outside door, "that I'm trying to be a help rather than a hindrance to you here. It will not be an unpleasant day, Carcajou, when you finish your blessed business at Wolf Creek and put back to Vermilion."

Corey halted his steps a moment. "I guess, in looking forward to that day," said he, "our pleasure is mutual; but such help as you gave me to-day, through Miss Benning, delays rather than hastens my blessed business."

Stillson jumped to his feet. What he had to say, however, stuck in his

throat, and he merely watched wrathfully while Corey left the room.

Corey caught up his roan, Shoofly, in the detachment corral and cinched on the riding gear. As he rode off through the clutter of houses that comprised the settlement of Wolf Creek, he looked over his shoulder at the Union Jack fluttering from its short staff on the gable of the police detachment and laughed shortly. He had got a "rise" out of Stillson—and there were not many who could boast of it.

He pulled the roan down, when he got into the old tote road through the woods, and fell to wondering about his next move. The person whom he had conceived to be a figment of Piegan Jake's fancy, the half-breed with the scarred face and rings in his ears, had suddenly taken upon himself all the characteristics of solid substance. Miss Benning had seen the man with her own eyes. Corey's belief was not shaken in this, that the theft of Haskison's horse was a part of the maneuvers of the mysterious gang of rustlers. The corporal could go on a hunt for that half-breed, now, while waiting for a more promising clew.

His thoughts were busy when, abruptly, he encountered another horseman at a turn in the trail. This second rider was proceeding at speed in the direction of Wolf Creek, and Corey recognized him as Blandon, a rancher.

"Great glory!" shouted Blandon, drawing a quick rein that brought his horse back on the haunches. "A policeman, and right in the nick o' time! Corp'ral, there's a man in the trail, half a mile along, face up and stark as any you've ever seen. I was on my way to the detachment—"

"Then keep on, Blandon," cut in Corey; "it's the sergeant's business, but I'll go and have a look. Half a mile, you say? Well, get word to Stillson as quick as you can."

The rancher, in his excitement, would have lingered for useless talk; Corey, however, rattled his spurs and was off. He came to the spot presently, just where the early afternoon sun flung its

rays into the forest aisle and brought out brightly a gruesome spectacle.

A form lay in a sprawl, face up, across the road. The form was that of a man, slender, rather florid of face in life but now with a ghastly hue over cheeks and forehead. His eyes were wide and staring—a fearsome sight, but one to which the corporal was hardened. One look downward, and the corporal gave vent to an exclamation and slipped from his saddle. He knelt and tried to find a pulse in the limp wrist, and a pulsation under the cotton shirt, clammy and red-stained at the breast.

There were evidences of a struggle. A slouch hat lay at the side of the trail, a few feet away. Yellowish hair, worn rather long, was so matted with dust that its color showed in streaks.

"Te' Jaune!" muttered Corey.

He had never seen Tete Jaune, but from description he recognized him as he lay there, stark in the trail. His life had gone out recently, there could be no doubt about that. It seemed clear to Corey that the man had been hurrying to Wolf Creek when waylaid. A study of the vicinity proved to the corporal's trained eyes that Tete Jaune had been coming on horseback, that a man on foot had stopped him, that there had been a sharp struggle hand to hand, and that the man on foot had taken Tete Jaune's horse and fled along the back trail.

There was something in the calloused hand whose wrist Corey had but a moment ago pressed with his sensitive fingers. That something in the hand was clutched rigidly. The corporal made a closer examination and saw the dull gleam of a small nugget in the rough. He did not attempt to pry the object from the stiffened fingers, for the sergeant would want to see the state of affairs just as found. Nevertheless, Corey saw enough. There was more than one nugget tightly clutched in the hand; in fact, there was a small section of a nugget chain.

A look of grim satisfaction crossed the corporal's face. "It's a bad business for poor Yellow Head," he mut-

tered; "but he held on to a bit of evidence that will help the police in squaring his account. I commend that evidence to you, Stillson!"

Certainly, Corey reasoned, that evidence was a part of Piegan Jake's nugget chain.

CHAPTER III.

EXHIBIT "B."

IN order not to foul the tracks and the other trail evidence any more than necessary before the sergeant and the coroner had a look at things, Corey tethered his horse at a distance and then sat down at the trailside.

His thoughtful eyes roved over the poor huddle of humanity that had come to so sudden an end. With mind professionally alert, he began building up his theory. The release of Piegan Jake on the sole testimony of Ora Benning had turned out a bad business. If Stillson had schemed for it, he would now have a chance to pester himself with second thoughts.

All at once the corporal gave over his reflections. The form in the tote road was lying on some object—a bit of it could be seen writhing clear of the unbuttoned jacket, which had been twisted and hunched up about Tete Jaune's shoulders.

Upon impulse, Corey did something then which he should not have done. Rising and stepping to the side of the still form, he bent down and, with a steady pull, drew the object into view. What he found in his hands he studied with staring, unbelieving eyes. A startled exclamation escaped his lips.

"Now, how in the fiend's name——"

His voice, in a husky whisper, did not finish. A patter of hoofs, approaching swiftly, fell on his ears; and, still under the whip of impulse, he quickly thrust the object he held into the front of his brown police jacket. The next moment, Sergeant Stillson came charging to the scene.

The sergeant left his horse at a distance and came the rest of the way afoot, studying the signs of tragedy with keen eyes and professional calm.

"Don't muddle the tracks any more

than you have to, Corey," he admonished; "get back. How much messing around have you done here?"

"No more than enough to satisfy myself that first aid couldn't help," said the corporal.

Stillson had to be convinced in his own mind. Carefully he made his way to the gruesome form and undertook the usual examinations. "Your missing witness," he grunted.

"On his way to testify," supplemented Corey, "and knifed before he could get to Wolf Creek."

"Maybe yes, maybe no; you're jumping at conclusions, as usual. Ah, here is the inspector! He stopped to pick up Swayne, the coroner."

Bradford was in a testy mood. He had planned to be riding toward Duckworth, at that moment, en route to the railroad and so to divisional headquarters. Now that important schedule had been interfered with. He arrived with Swayne in the latter's democrat wagon; and, while the coroner was hitching the team, proceeded toward the place where Stillson was continuing his examinations and making notes in a memorandum book.

"Well, well, here's a nice how-de-do!" growled the inspector. "To cattle thieving and horse stealing, this district has begun adding homicides. Who's the man?"

"They call him Tete Jaune, sir," answered Stillson.

"Ha! The witness Corporal Corey tried to find. Well, Piegan Jake couldn't have been convicted of horse stealing in face of what Miss Benning saw and swore to. Why were you so keen for this Tete Jaune, corporal?"

"He was once a close friend of Piegan Jake's, sir," said Corey, "but the two split over something or other and were at daggers drawn. I believed Te' Jaune could have let in the light on this rustling business."

"It's Corey's idea that Haskison's horse was run off by the cattle thieves," struck in the sergeant.

"Possible, but not likely," Bradford said, grunting. "Here's your subject,

Swayne," he added to the coroner, who came up at that moment.

"What have you learned, sergeant?" asked Swayne, turning from the grisly form to toss the query at Stillson.

"Corey was first on the scene after Blandon," the sergeant returned. "He was busy when I got here. It may be well to hear what he has to say."

"Well, corporal?" urged the inspector.

"I had hunted for Te' Jaune and passed the word for him," said the corporal. "He was a bit late, but he was on the way to testify. He was riding rapidly along this tote road, coming from the west. Piegan Jake, on foot and just released from custody, was coming from the east. Just here at the turn, Jake attacked Te' Jaune, killed him with a knife, took his horse, and—went on west."

The inspector flung a startled look at the sergeant. "Why? What was Jake's motive? The old grudge against a man who had been his friend?"

Stillson shrugged, threw out his hands, and nodded toward Corey. It was as though he had said: "There's a sample of the way this corporal takes a leap in the dark. Don't ask me; pass the buck to him."

Corey stepped promptly into the breach. "It wasn't the old grudge, sir," he affirmed. "Piegan Jake was afraid of the evidence Te' Jaune could give in the matter of the stock stealing. Incidentally, he satisfied the old grudge and got a horse. Piegan Jake needed a horse, sir."

"What do you know, sergeant?" inquired Swayne.

"The trail signs are not difficult to follow," returned Stillson. "A horse came at a good clip from the west—undoubtedly Te' Jaune riding toward Wolf Creek. A man on foot came from the east, but his dim tracks cannot be identified as Piegan Jake's. The man on the horse and the man on foot met here and there was a tussle; the evidence of that is spread all around this part of the trail. After the fight, there were horse tracks westward—the killer, we'll suppose, making his get-away. It's a

far call, though, from what we find to the statement that Piegan Jake settled for Te' Jaune."

"I should say so," remarked Swayne. "You're too quick with hard and fast opinions, corporal," growled Bradford.

The coroner satisfied himself of a number of things; first, of the quick, keen stab which had sent Tete Jaune over the Long Trail; then, by a search, brought to light the fact that nothing of importance was in the man's pockets; and, at last, uncovered the damning evidence gripped rigidly in Tete Jaune's right fist. Corey held off while the inspector and the sergeant crowded close. The stiffened fingers were pried from the palm and four nuggets, linked together, were passed around for inspection.

A blaze of wonder struck the sergeant. His dominating air, for the moment, suffered an eclipse. He shot a look at Corey.

"That's a piece of Piegan Jake's watch chain!" averred the inspector.

"Without doubt," the sergeant said grudgingly. "I fancy there's not another such chain in all this district—perhaps in the division. I'll revise myself—this indicates the work of Piegan Jake." He whirled on Corey. "Take the trail west, corporal," he said. "If you fail to find Piegan Jake this side of Bitter Springs, you'll find Constable Bright there. Start him on the trail and return to the detachment."

Corey could have refused the work and the inspector would have upheld him. For Corey was more or less "on his own," and supposed to confine himself to the affairs of the stockmen. However, this order of the sergeant's was in line with the corporal's affairs, as he read the signs, so he went for Shoofly, mounted, and rode west as only Shoofly could carry him. The form in the road was rolled in a blanket and laid in the rear of the wagon, and the inspector, the coroner, and the sergeant returned to Wolf Creek.

Corey's fifteen miles to Bitter Springs brought no results so far as Piegan Jake was concerned. That wily culprit knew the country as he knew his two

hands and was busy effacing himself. Bright, at the Springs, heard what Corey had to tell him with interest. His work was watchful waiting in a matter of moonshine whisky, and he could be spared easily enough. He took his commission from Corey and started his man hunt, with a request that he also keep an eye out for a half-breed with a scarred face and rings in his ears. In the evening Corey returned to Wolf Creek, cared carefully for the roan, and, about nine-thirty, entered the detachment.

He came in by the office. A door from that room leading into a common living room was open, and Corey could see Stillson in a rocking-chair, smoking his pipe under a hanging lamp and reading a magazine. The corporal would have gone on to the stairway and up to his bed had not the sergeant called to him. He turned aside and passed into the living room.

"What did you find?" Stillson asked sharply, laying aside the magazine and giving the corporal his full attention.

"Bright," said the corporal briefly; "he's doing what he can."

Stillson got to his feet. "You found something else," he declared.

Resentment flashed in Corey's eyes. "What do you mean?" he demanded.

"I saw you slip something under your jacket as I came around the turn in the tote road," pursued the sergeant.

"Why didn't you say so, then, before the inspector and Swayne?"

"Little thanks I get for trying to spare you, Corey." Stillson's face was hard set, but just here a mellowing touch softened it strangely. "There were old days, Garde, when you and I were friends," he continued. "I thought of them, there in the tote road; and I was hopeful that on your way to the Springs and back you would take thought of what you were doing and make up your mind to be frank with me. We have our differences, but they can never wipe out the thought—in my mind at least—of what you and I were once to each other. You knew what Tete Jaune had in his hand before I got to you, this afternoon; and you handled me very

prettily for a fall, with the inspector and Swayne for an audience. I could have scored on you then, Corey, but I did not. Meet me halfway in this. What did you find?"

"Well, how did you handle me for a fall, this morning?" returned Corey. "If Piegan Jake had been held a few hours, Te' Jaune would have come safely with his information——"

"He had already been held for four weeks."

"And I believe in my soul," continued Corey, not heeding the other's remark, "that we would have had this cattle business all wrapped up and tied. Now I am back at the start again—thanks to you and Miss Benning."

"That is all beside this question of what you are holding out on us," said Stillson severely. "It must be produced at the inquest, but I demand to know about it now. Exhibit A is the bit of nugget chain; if you have Exhibit B, and it is important, come over with it."

"You don't know what you are demanding," Corey responded. "If the old days have any appeal to you, Jeremy, take my word for it."

"I can put you under arrest, if I see fit," snapped Stillson, "and appeal to Inspector Bradford. You know where that will get you. Do you want that?"

Corey was thoughtful for a moment. "No," he answered at last; "I don't want that. We two are alone here." He pulled from under his jacket the object upon which the form of Tete Jaune had been lying—an ebony-handled quirt of many thongs. "There you are," he said huskily, and passed the quirt to Stillson.

The latter took it in his hands. A little silver plate, let into the ebony top, bore the initials, "O. B." Stillson fell back a step, his face working strangely.

"It's another fall, eh?" queried Corey, with a touch of irony. "You got more than you bargained for, Stillson. You'll bring her name into this again, will you? Or will you be man enough to chuck that whip into the discard and so eliminate Exhibit B?"

Stillson was shaken, but he remained captain of his own soul. "It is police evidence," he asserted, "and will go into the record. Good heavens, man, did you think it meant anything against Ora Benning? She can explain the loss of the quirt—and it will not be at all to her discredit. You remind me of certain persons who strain at gnats and swallow camels," Stillson added, with a gruffness that proved rather than disproved the turbulence of his own feelings.

"It's up to you, then," said Corey quietly, "for I have done all I could. Good night."

As he left the room, Stillson still held the quirt in his hands and was looking down at it—like one whose troubled eyes behold a most unpleasant mystery.

CHAPTER IV.

PROBING THE UNKNOWN.

CORPORAL COREY was abroad early next morning, riding to the bend in the tote road long before daylight served for the observations he had in mind. After waiting patiently for the sun, he began to investigate. His heart was in the work, which gave it an intimate personal touch that made for earnestness and determination; and he brought to the undertaking, as well, all the resourcefulness of a brain schooled in the reading of "signs," and in the interpretation of lore so elusive as to seem written by nature with invisible ink.

Few had come and gone along the tote road since Tete Jaune had been felled at the turn; yet those few had muddled things badly. Tracks overlaid tracks, blotting out most of those in which the corporal was interested. The earth was sandy in spots, and in other spots it was clayey and held a measure of dampness. There was dust where Tete Jaune had been unhorsed and had fought for his life. Here the obliteration was greatest, just where the trail should have told the clearest story.

Below the turn, Corey went over the ground on hands and knees. He found a confusing clutter of prints in soil that

was somewhat clinging, the most pronounced marks having been made by the wheels of Swayne's wagon. Which prints had been made by Swayne's team, by Stillson's mount, by Shoo-fly, by the horses of Blandon and others, and which by Silver Heels?

Along the tote road lay the course to Calthorpe's Ranch, and Ora Benning had surely passed that way. The evidence left by Silver Heels had become of vast importance, and with every atom of his trailwise knowledge Corey sought for it. Foot by foot he went over the whole half circle of the turn. Here and there he picked up his faint clews, pigeonholed them in his memory, and at last came back to the roan, sat down, and began dovetailing together the nice points of his theory.

In the midst of his mental effort, he heard a sound of galloping toward Wolf Creek. Forthwith he led Shoo-fly deep into the underbrush, cupped the crown of his Stetson over the roan's muzzle to prevent a possible whinny of greeting to a passing horse, and waited. But no horse passed. The galloping ceased around the timber masking the turn, and presently a figure on all fours crawled into sight.

Sergeant Stillson! And he was going through the same motions that had characterized the corporal in his painstaking search for further evidence.

A grim look crossed Corey's face. He put on his hat, sank comfortably to the ground, and watched his superior officer through the bushes.

For an hour the sergeant was busy; and when he came walking back from the western side of the trail's bend, Corey stepped out into the open and faced him.

"I knew you had been here," said the sergeant easily. "Carcajou left a plain spoor as he crawled along the road. You had the best of it. The inspector dropped in and I couldn't get away as soon as I wanted to. What did you discover?"

"Less than I should have discovered yesterday, if you had not sent me to Bitter Springs," answered Corey. "The evidence is nearly a day old now."

"But you found something! What was it?"

"Silver Heels passed the place where Tete Jaune was found before Piegan Jake and Tete Jaune met at the turn," Corey reported.

"I had gathered that much. By a coincidence, Miss Benning lost the quirt at just the spot where the fight occurred. Tete Jaune saw the quirt, drew rein, and got down to pick it up. That was Piegan Jake's opportunity, and he was quick to take advantage of it."

Corey's short, mirthless laugh held a jeer in it. "Your eyes aren't as sharp as they used to be, Stillson."

The sergeant's face was drawn as though he had passed a sleepless night. Temper rose in it now, and he was plainly nettled by the laugh and the words that had accompanied it. "You, with your infernal crawling, blinded the best of the evidence for me," was his acid comment. "What better theory have you got for the inspector and the coroner?"

"One, you may be sure, that tests their credulity less than your story does. A small, buckskin loop doesn't loosen itself so easily from a woman's wrist. Silver Heels passed here"—he indicated the ruffled sand where the struggle had taken place—"a minute, let us say, before Jake and Tete Jaune came together. Miss Benning must have passed Tete Jaune a few rods west of here. Around the turn, let us say, she heard the sound of a yell when the fight started. You know, as well as I do, that Miss Benning has courage. She was curious as to what was happening; so she dismounted, tethered the pinto, and came back here."

"Very pretty," said the sergeant ironically, "but she must have floated back without a footprint. At least one impression of her foot would have remained in that long stretch of trail."

"She did not come by the trail," returned Corey. "She was in a hurry, and presumably she did not care to show herself. Miss Benning returned through the timber, cutting the half-circle turn of the trail straight across."

And that," the corporal finished, "brought her out about there."

He indicated a spot directly across from them, at the side of the trampled sand.

"You found where Miss Benning's horse was tied?" queried Stillson.

"Didn't you find it?" countered Corey. "It's mighty plain."

"Possibly I didn't go far enough westward," muttered Stillson.

"And possibly, too, you were anxious to prove your theory that Miss Benning lost the quirt which Te' Jaune, being in a hurry, would never have stopped to pick up. Look at that!"

At the trail's edge, on the side toward which Miss Benning would have come on her way crosslots, was a dim yet unmistakable footprint—small, and clearly that of a woman. Just one impression, no more, pointing toward the spot where Tete Jaune had lain. If the girl's feet had left other impressions, they had been obliterated by later activities on that tragic spot.

"Well?" Stillson asked breathlessly.

"Piegan Jake had gone, let us suppose, when Miss Benning got here," proceeded Corey. "What did she see? Why, Te' Jaune, breathing his last! Knowing her as we do, what do you imagine Miss Benning would have done? My belief is that she went to him, knelt at his side, pushed her right arm under him, and lifted him up. The quirt was looped about her right wrist. As she laid him down and withdrew her hand, the loop slipped off. It was an exciting moment and Miss Benning did not notice the loss of the quirt. That is my theory," added the corporal, "and I think it does justice to her courage—and humanity."

"But mighty little justice to her regard for the law," said Stillson. "You would have me believe that she found Tete Jaune foully dealt with, and then went back to her horse, mounted, and rode on to Calthorpe's. Why didn't she hurry back to the police detachment with her news? Was it like her not to do so?"

"No, it was not like her," admitted Corey, "but what evidence we have we

must take as we find it. I can't understand why she did not report at once to the police. There must have been a powerful motive to prevent it—a motive that has still to be discovered."

"Show me the place where she left her horse," snapped the sergeant.

Corey conducted him straight through the woods to that spot in the trail. The evidence seemed conclusive. A sapling was rubbed, the ground trampled, and the trail showed more footprints, small like a woman's.

"They'll be waiting for us," said the sergeant quietly. "Get your horse, Corey, and we'll go back."

"They" proved to be Swayne and the inspector. They were sitting by the sergeant's desk considering the written report of Doctor Beesley, who had described the mortal wound of Tete Jaune in professional terms.

"You have not seen some of the evidence, inspector," announced Stillson.

"Hey? What's that?" demanded Swayne.

The sergeant produced the quirt and laid it on the table. "This," he said, "was in the road. The body was lying upon it."

"Why didn't I find it?" cried Swayne. "Where did it come from? Who had it?"

"I had it," put in Corey, making things easier for Stillson. "I was first on the scene, after Blandon; and I took charge of the quirt."

"Rather highhanded!" grumbled the coroner.

The inspector's eyes narrowed. "You took a good deal upon yourself—for a police corporal." His voice was stern with reproof. "What was your reason?"

"The quirt belongs to Miss Benning," struck in Stillson. "She had it with her in this courtroom yesterday."

"Pon my soul!" Swayne said excitedly.

"Ha!" murmured Bradford. His manner softened a little. He knew something of the sergeant's and the corporal's past—not a great deal, but just enough to afford him a glimmer of understanding. "Well, the evidence is in,"

he went on, "and what is to be said about it?"

"Corporal Corey has a theory," answered Stillson. "We have both been out on the tote road making further investigations."

Corey propounded his theory, and came plump into the stone wall: why had not Miss Benning reported to the police, instead of leaving the report to Blandon, who happened along later? There was no answer to this.

"You police officers are taking a lot of unnecessary trouble, it seems to me," observed Swayne fretfully. "There's only one way to untangle this knot, and that's the quickest and shortest way. Let Miss Benning speak for herself. I'll issue a summons for the inquest, and let you serve it. Miss Benning will appear in person. Didn't you think of interviewing Miss Benning, sergeant? So simple. And you fellows wasted your time searching and theorizing! Great Jove!" The coroner laughed huskily.

"You will take the summons to the Calthorpe Ranch, corporal," the inspector instructed.

"Very good, sir," said Corey.

But it was not good for him. It was a decidedly unpleasant bit of duty. Before he could leave on his mission, however, fate snatched the disagreeable errand out of his hands. A man rode up to the detachment, dismounted, and stepped into the room.

"Calthorpe!" exclaimed Stillson.

Calthorpe was excited and troubled, and plunged straight into the business that had brought him to the detachment. "My niece, Miss Benning, is missing, Stillson," he burst out, "and I'm terribly worried about her. She came in to Wolf Creek yesterday, but didn't return to the ranch. She had said something about spending the night with friends of hers, the Braymers, and so we thought she had gone there. Less than an hour ago I learned that she wasn't at the Braymers at all. Can you tell me anything about her?"

The rancher's apprehension was reflected in the face of Corporal Corey. The sergeant gave an involuntary start.

Calthorpe's announcement had affected both police officers profoundly; but after the first moment they held their emotions, whatever they were, in firm check.

"Her horse—did the pinto return to the ranch?" There was a huskiness in Stillson's voice as he put the question.

"No," said Calthorpe, "Silver Heels is missing, too. If anything had happened to Ora the pinto would surely have come back; unless there—there was an accident involving both her and the horse. But I can't imagine what accident could happen—in broad day and so close to the police detachment."

Swayne muttered in displeasure. "A carnival of general cussedness seems to have struck this country," he growled; "cattle stealing, horse stealing, murder, abduction—where is this going to end?"

"We don't know that there's been an abduction," said the inspector tartly, "so let's not make the calendar any blacker than it is. Even in this district of Wolf Creek young women can't fade into thin air or go up in smoke. There's an explanation and it may be very simple; we'll try and get at it."

CHAPTER V.

MAKING HIS CHOICE.

BRADFORD squared around and settled himself to take the inquiry into his own hands. He never allowed sentiment to stand in the way of police business. Both the sergeant and the corporal knew his reputation for picking clean the bones of evidence. By his more than six feet, Stillson continued to overtop the men around him; but, by an odd twist of the circumstances, he no longer appeared to overshadow his surroundings. He was plainly worried and uneasy by the turn events were taking. Corey was restless, and his face was set in tense lines.

"Sit down, Calthorpe," said the inspector, waving his hand toward a chair. "And compose yourself," he went on. "This isn't so serious, possibly, as you imagine. Every case has its simple explanation, and we can only get at the facts of this one by proceeding calmly.

You say that Miss Benning is your niece?"

Calthorpe had seated himself and was making every effort to tranquilize his nerves. "Yes," he answered; "her mother was my only sister."

"And her father——"

This line of inquiry, it struck Corey, was beside the matter and utterly uncalled for. Inspector Bradford, however, was noted for his thoroughness when he went groping in the dark.

"Her father," said Calthorpe, approaching the subject with evident reluctance, "was Brydon Benning."

He would have stopped there in the family history of his niece, but the inspector was not to be shaken.

"H'm," mused the inspector reflectively, stroking his chin and looking away. His eyes presently came back to the rancher. "Years ago there was a 'Uchie' Benning, 'Bullet' Benning, who trapped and traded and hunted for gold in the North. Was this Brydon Benning the same man?"

"He was," Calthorpe told him, and made it still clearer that he did not relish this talk of Benning.

"Brydon Benning came from what place originally?"

"Ontario—and his family was one of the best in that province. Brydon was always a rover, but tried to settle down and be a farmer after he married. The death of his wife sent him wandering again, so that as long as he lived no place knew him permanently. Pardon me, inspector," the rancher broke off, "but are we not wasting time?"

Calthorpe was a man of culture and education, there could be no doubt of that. Police methods, however, as exemplified by the inspector, were all dark to him.

"We are not wasting time," countered Bradford a bit testily. "Was Miss Benning the only child, Calthorpe?"

A moment's silence, in which there was something vaguely tragic, followed. "Brydon Benning had only one child," said Calthorpe slowly.

"In Edmonton, if I remember," pursued the inspector, "it was said that he had two daughters."

Calthorpe shifted uneasily in his chair. "One was an adopted daughter," he explained.

The subject was a painful one. Homer Bradford was the only man in the room who seemed untouched by the grisly shadows he was conjuring out of the past.

"I ask you to excuse this probing if it goes rather deep," he said in a half apology, "but we are looking for a clew to Miss Benning's disappearance. We must leave no stone unturned. This adopted daughter, now," he added briskly—"just who were her people?"

Calthorpe pulled a handkerchief from his pocket and passed it over his moist forehead. "Her father was an Englishman," he said, "and her mother a French Cree woman."

"H'm!" The inspector sat back and drummed on the desk with his fingers. "Is Miss Ora Benning the adopted daughter?"

Calthorpe put away the handkerchief and got to his feet. "The two girls are Ora and Lilith Benning," he stated, "and they are of about the same age. Lilith has made her home with me ever since she was six years old, but Ora was cared for by Mrs. Lothway, widow of a Church of England minister. At first, both girls lived at a mission on Peace River; then Lilith came to us, and Ora went with Mrs. Lothway to Calgary. There, as the years sped, Mrs. Lothway died, and Ora went to Edmonton to make her home with friends. She teaches music. For the past two years she had been coming North to spend her summers at my ranch——"

"But is Ora or Lilith the adopted daughter?" persisted Bradford. "This may prove an important point."

"I do not know for a certainty," said Calthorpe, like a man pushed to the last ditch, "and in view of the mystery Brydon Benning made of it I doubt if any one knows."

"That's queer," muttered the inspector.

Swayne betrayed an odd embarrassment, and began collecting papers as though he would relieve his feelings by drifting away. At this moment a soft

voice floated in from the open outside door.

"May I come in, please?"

Every eye sought the door. Framed in it was the form of a girl, lustrous-eyed and darkly beautiful. The tassel of a stocking cap coquetted with her olive-hued cheek; and, although her words were probably directed at Inspector Bradford, her eyes were on Corporal Corey. The latter, startled and annoyed, shifted his glance to Sergeant Stillson, meeting a look from the sergeant that was grim and searching.

"Lilith!" exclaimed Calthorpe, his tone one of sharp protest; "why are you here?"

"*Vous venez trop tard*, my uncle," said Lilith composedly, "but perhaps I have something to say that will help. It is about Ora—and I can't keep it any longer."

Her eyes still sought Corey, again and again, but they never found his. Something akin to pain, and later of resentment, flashed in the girl's face.

"What do you possibly know about Ora?" demanded Calthorpe. "And if you really know anything important, why haven't you told me?"

"My sister wished it to be kept a secret; but I am alarmed at last and feel that I must speak. So I rode into town. Eh, *bien*! M'sieu Inspector, I have a little news."

Bradford was studying the girl closely. "What news, Miss Benning?" he asked.

"Why, yesterday morning, after Ora had come to the detachment, I was out by the corral at the ranch when a half-breed, a man I didn't know, came along. He asked for *ma soeur*, for Ora. I told him she had gone to Wolf Creek. 'I have news for her,' he said, 'for her and nobody else. She has wanted this news a long, long time. It comes,' he said, 'from Athabaska Landing. Get word to her that I will be at the cabin of Baptiste, on the creek. She must come there at once, so get word to her.'"

"He left then, without another word," Lilith Benning continued, "and I started for town, met my sister, and told her

what the strange half-breed had told me. I have not said a word about it until this minute. Now I must speak, for I am greatly worried. We are all worried at home."

Corey indicated that he would like to put a question. Bradford nodded for him to proceed.

"Did that strange half-breed have a scarred face," he queried, "and rings in his ears?"

"No," answered Lilith, her eyes sparkling as they won the corporal's look and recognition; "this man was not at all like that."

"He said nothing more?" proceeded Bradford.

"Not of importance, M'sieur Inspector," answered the girl, but in a way that suggested she was withholding something.

"Tell us everything," insisted Bradford sharply.

A look of distress filled the pretty, olive-hued face. "You will make me?" Lilith's voice trembled.

"If you wish to help the police find your sister," returned the inspector gravely, "you will not keep anything back."

"Then the man by the corral said this," went on Lilith reluctantly and in a broken voice: "'It is about her brother, Piegan Jake.' And that is every word," she finished passionately, "as *le bon Dieu* knows!"

A pin could have been heard to drop in the courtroom. After a moment, apparently overcome by the fateful words she had spoken, Lilith gave vent to a stifled sob, whirled, and rushed from the place. A patter of receding hoofs drifted back.

Swayne fumbled with the papers he had been collecting. A grief-stricken look crossed the rancher's face. One of Stillson's hands rested on the desk as he bent over with the intention of speaking to Bradford. Apparently he thought better of his intention, but the hand gripped the desk top, and the knuckles showed white. Corey stepped to the open door and looked out.

Inspector Bradford cleared his throat. "One can rely on the girl's

statement, Calthorpe?" he asked in a dry voice.

"She is a woman," the rancher said, "and apt to be mistaken."

"Not necessarily," remarked the inspector. "If Piegan Jake is the brother of Miss Ora Benning, then we have uncovered a matter of the greatest importance. And, incidentally, the matter which you called a mystery is cleared."

"On the word of a strange half-breed, sir?" put in Stillson tensely.

"It is not hard and fast evidence," admitted the inspector, "but it is something to work on. We will go a little deeper, Calthorpe," he continued. "I will ask you for further information about Brydon Benning. What——"

"Sir," broke in Calthorpe, "I do not recognize the authority of the police to go deeper into a matter that concerns Brydon Benning, his family, and friends so intimately. You will kindly excuse me." He spoke respectfully but firmly, and turned and left the room.

More hoofbeats receded in the distance, toward the tote road. Inspector Bradford was nettled.

"I have nothing to do with this line of inquiry," remarked Swayne, pulling a drawstring about the leather bag that held his papers and getting out of his chair. "I will see you later, inspector."

Then he, too, went his way. Bradford was alone with the sergeant and the corporal.

"The evidence is drifting into rather somber channels," said Bradford, "but I consider that further information about Benning is important. I believe," he went on, "that you and Corporal Corey can supply it, sergeant."

"May I suggest, Inspector Bradford," returned Stillson, "that I should be on my way down the creek to the hut of Baptiste?"

"All in good time," the inspector said raspingly. "Tell me about Benning, about Calthorpe, about this mystery of Benning's own and his adopted daughter. Sergeant!"

"If you will excuse me, sir——"

"Corporal Corey?"

"Sir, what I know is hearsay," answered the corporal, a faint white steal-

ing into the tan of his face; "and it concerns a woman. I have no right to tell you more than Calthorpe did."

"You have every right that inures to a corporal of the Mounted Police under a command of his superior officer," cried the inspector. "If you prefer to be placed under 'open' arrest, however, and give your answer to the officer in command of the division, very well; but such a course would cut short your activities here and might prove a decided loss to the interests of law and order. Make your choice, corporal." Bradford was now the martinet. Relentlessly he was pressing his point.

Out of so small a matter as apprehending a gang of cattle thieves fate had evolved this wide and tremendous situation. Corporal Corey set his jaws, and it was plain enough that he considered open arrest preferable to putting on record a detailed answer to the inspector's question. His duty as a police officer was at war with what he conceived to be his duty as a man. Any one who knew Corey could have guessed easily what his course would be.

"I know all that Corporal Corey knows," spoke up the sergeant quietly, "and I will no longer ask to be excused from giving the information. Too much hangs upon the corporal's work here."

Corey shot a glance of protest at Stillson; but the latter allowed the look to go unheeded. It was a case of needs must, and he made the best of it. Perhaps his determination to tell what he knew was inspired by a wish to spare the corporal. It would have been like him—remembering the camaraderie of the old days.

CHAPTER VI.

GETTING THE FACTS.

IN his devotion to the service, Inspector Homer Bradford held nothing above the law. In his private life he was kindly hearted and considerate of others, but when he set out on the trail of duty he traveled it roughshod. And if he did not spare others, neither did

he spare himself. He motioned to the sergeant and the corporal to draw their chairs close; and he offered them cigars and fired a weed of his own, for tobacco was soothing to nerves too tightly drawn.

"What I pass on to you, inspector, was not given to me in confidence," said Stillson, whiffing at the cigar for a moment and then removing it from his lips and watching the fire die at the end of it, "but it is of such a nature that a man, if he could, would hold it as sacred."

"This is between ourselves," put in the inspector, "and is not to be published broadcast. We are threshing the chaff for grains of evidence, and for no other purpose than to be of help to Miss Ora Benning."

Stillson nodded to indicate that, whether he personally approved of it or not, he had the inspector's point of view. "To begin at the beginning, then," he said, "we find Brydon Benning trying to settle down and farm it on Peace River. Ora was so very young that she remembers little of that. Benning's wife died, and two little girls were brought to Grouard and placed in charge of the widow of the Church of England minister, Mrs. Lothway. One of the girls was an adopted daughter, but he would not specify which one. No partiality was to be shown to either of them, but they were to be treated on an equality and considered as sisters."

"A man's own blood has rights," the inspector said with a grunt. "I should call Benning a most peculiar person, to say the least."

"Dark-skin Crees, some full bloods and some mixed, had a way of dropping in at Mrs. Lothway's, while she was in Grouard, and leaving beaded moccasins, leggings, and soft furs."

"For which little girl?" queried Bradford. "Did the full bloods or the mixed bloods make any distinction?"

Corey looked straight at Stillson. What there might or might not have been in that level stare influenced the sergeant not a whit.

"Their gifts were all for Ora," he

went on, "and they took no notice of Lilith."

"Trust the Indians to know their own!" commented Bradford.

"When next Benning came down from the North and heard about the calls and the presents," proceeded Stillson, "he had Mrs. Lothway leave Grouard and get back to civilization—at Calgary. She took Ora with her, but Lilith came to Calthorpe, here on Wolf Creek."

"Another straw in the wind!" murmured the inspector. "The child of Calthorpe's sister must have been the one Benning left with him."

"Calthorpe has no information to that effect. I happen to know that Benning was as mysterious with him as he had been with Mrs. Lothway, and that there was a scene between the two of them on account of it. What Benning had was put into cash, and left in trust with Calthorpe to be equally divided between Ora and Lilith. Benning was not a well man at this time; he felt that he had not long to live, and he promised before he died to make it clear which was his real, and which his adopted, daughter. The two girls were six years old at this time. A few months later, Benning died at Athabaska Landing—his only companion a half-breed comrade named Jacques Courteau."

"Did he carry out his promise, before he died, of making clear the status of the two girls?"

"No one knows," answered Stillson. "Mrs. Lothway died when Ora was seventeen, and after a few years Ora went to friends in Edmonton, and has made her permanent home with them ever since."

"Did Benning leave much of an estate?" asked Bradford.

"Not a large estate, but enough to keep both girls in comfort."

"Why, then, is Miss Ora Benning teaching music?"

"She refuses to take any of Benning's money until she knows absolutely whether she is Benning's real, or adopted, daughter. The evidence, so far, favors Lilith; and Ora is independent, and has her own ideas of what is right and just."

"That is puzzling," mused the inspector. "No one with a strain of French-Cree blood would take such a self-sacrificing attitude."

Stillson welcomed this comment. A quick brightness broke through the gloom of his face. "Heredity always leaves its evidence," he said in a burst of feeling, leaning toward Bradford; "and you have seen both girls. Which of them appeals to you as being Benning's own daughter?"

"Which one appeals to Calthorpe?" countered Bradford.

Stillson shook his head. "Only Calthorpe knows that," he said, "and he is keeping his own counsel."

"But for the beadwork trinkets, and the attentions given Ora by the Crees at Grouard, I should say that Calthorpe is harboring the adopted daughter."

"I believe that is the truth," the sergeant said; "but the burden of proof is upon Ora. And where can she find proof?"

"What a mess Benning made of things," exclaimed Bradford indignantly, "by making such a mystery out of a mere matter of justice! But here is the point, in the light of what Lilith Benning said: The strange half-breed—we are running into a number of them, seems to me!—came looking for Ora. He had news Ora has wanted for a long, long time. It comes from Athabaska Landing; and it is about her brother, Piegan Jake—"

"There is not one line of resemblance between Ora Benning and Piegan Jake!" cut in Corporal Corey with sharp emphasis; "and that is a black lie—by indirection."

Inspector Bradford turned his head to study the face of Corey. "Lilith Benning seemed to know you, Corey," he remarked.

Stillson's eyes narrowed. Corey frowned.

"I knew her, and the sergeant knew her, in Edmonton," explained Corey, "two years ago when she was visiting Ora there. That is all."

"Very good," said the inspector briskly. "Now, you see, we have developed considerable evidence," he went

on. "Finding Ora Benning's quirt at the place where Tete Jaune was killed, indicates that Ora was on the spot. Why did she not come back to the detachment and report? This, you will recall, was the weak point in the corporal's theory. We know why she did not come back. Lilith met Ora and told her about the strange half-breed who was waiting at the cabin of Baptiste on Wolf Creek—waiting there to tell her about things that happened at Athabaska Landing. Ora considered an interview with the man who had sent for her more important than returning to report the unfortunate affair in the tote road."

"No matter how anxious she was to get to Baptiste's shack," interposed Corey, "it was not like Ora to leave the scene of the murder without sending Lilith to the detachment to report it."

"Score!" admitted Bradford. "This girl Lilith must be questioned about that. You men are now free to go about your work, and the quicker you start the better. I shall be here until after the inquest, and will look after the detachment. One of you must join Bright in the search for Piegan Jake, and the other will take up the case of Ora Benning. If she went to the shack of this Baptiste, why has she not returned home? Inasmuch as it's your theory that the horse stealing is connected with the cattle-rustling affair, corporal, it seems to me that you are pointed straight along the trail of Piegan Jake. Sergeant, your work will be to look for Ora Benning."

Corey hurried upstairs to the bunk room and returned in a few minutes with his kit over his shoulder and his rifle in the crook of his arm. He might be gone for days or weeks on his patrol.

As he made his way to the pasture, back of the detachment, he saw Stillson launching a canoe, not a dozen yards from the police skiff, bobbing at its painter by the creek bank. After Corey had saddled Shoo-fly, he had his last glimpse of the sergeant rounding rapidly a turn in the creek and drop-

ping down with the current toward the hut of Baptiste.

Corey would have preferred that work himself, for his worry about Ora Benning was keen; he had a foreboding, however, that his trail and Stillson's were destined to cross, and that he might be first to pick up traces of Ora, after all.

Vaulting into the saddle, he pointed the roan toward the tote road—and Bitter Springs.

CHAPTER VII.

BEST BLOOD OF THE DOMINION.

CORPORAL GARDE COREY had time to quiet his rebellious feelings as he rushed Shoo-fly through the timbered lands and toward the "bald-headed" ranch country that lay beyond. The inspector's probing had not been barren of results that might prove practical. Nevertheless, the pages of an ugly chapter in the life of Brydon Benning had been turned once more; and Stillson—of all men!—had read from them, for the benefit of Bradford, certain passages that should have been suppressed. For that, Corey's resentment had flamed against Stillson; but now, as his wrath cooled and he was able to think more calmly, the corporal was finding excuses for the sergeant.

Stillson was not a man to be cowed by threats of "open" arrest. He had a fearless mind and a will of iron, and he tried at all times to do what he conceived to be the right thing. By dipping into Benning's affairs, as he had done, he had rescued Corey from a difficult situation.

Canadian though he was, in his own right Jeremy Stillson was but three generations removed from a proud old English title; not that he would have had any of that even if fate had played him for the part—he was ridding the Dominion of titles and consecrating it wholly to democracy—but the mere fact that a title was knocking around in the family chest spoke well for the family. He had gone in for the Mounted because he liked the life, and it had always cheered him to do as he pleased

—and particularly so when some people called him a fool for following his bent.

Corey himself had an uncle who was a member of Parliament, and a father who had gone out in glory during the South African War, leaving behind him an heirloom in the shape of a Victoria Cross. Like Stillson, he had quit the Mounted Police, as he expressed it, "to take his whack at Armageddon;" and after—again his own words—"messaging around a bit on the Western Front," he was back in the Mounted once more with a corporal's stripes. But he and Stillson had known each other before they "went across;" and in those days, which now seemed a world away, they had known Ora Benning.

The stories about Uchie Benning were of a past epoch and dimly remembered. Yet, vague though they were, they remained unpleasant. Corey regarded them as unlovely legends, and let them go at that. Stillson, on the other hand, combated them. He pointed to the proud stock of the Ontario Bennings, and asserted that what was bred in the bone could always be depended upon to give the lie to post-mortem yarns that were no more than rumors.

The facts, so far as they went, were made known to Stillson and Corey by Ora herself; and this had been in Edmonton, two years before. By all the evidence as she saw it, she was Benning's adopted daughter. Stillson argued against the evidence, building up doubts that did more credit to his heart than his head. So far as Corey was concerned, the mystery made no difference. He followed his heart unflinchingly wherever it led. But the mystery made all the difference in the world to Ora Benning.

Ora was with Mrs. Lothway in Calgary when Corey and Stillson were two of the fifteen constables assigned to that Mounted Police post. Corey's uncle, the M. P., had known the Ontario Bennings, and he had sent a letter to some one in Calgary who had made Corey acquainted with Ora. Then Corey had presented his best friend, and the old complication of two men and a woman had its beginning for these three.

Nothing to ruffle friendships occurred before the Big War. During four years of army life, however, Corey and Stillson allowed cherished plans to take shape. It was a time for acute realizations, and the two friends realized that they were in love with the same woman.

This, of course, was unfortunate; yet, given the right sort of men—and these two were the right sort—there was nothing in the situation to build a barrier between them. Each wrote a letter, detailing his ardent hopes and asking his important question; and each received a gentle answer that contained a rejection, and also a promise to explain if fate ever made the explanation possible.

The friends remained friends until fate carried them back to Canada, back into the ranks of the Mounted as sergeant and corporal, and to Edmonton. It was winter, and Lilith had come from the North for a visit with Ora. And here it was that Corey and Stillson met Lilith for the first time.

Ora, with a firmness characteristic of her, gave the explanation she had promised in the letters sent to France. Stillson considered the revelation a bombshell; and he fought hard to prove that the revelation could not be based on fact. In truth, he made so much of the havoc such an explosion would cause if the evidence for it were admitted, that Corey was out of patience with him.

"Can't you see, Garde," fretted Stillson, in those days when just the tip of the wedge had been driven into their friendship, "can't you see that if Ora is the adopted daughter it means that her father was the Englishman, the friend of Benning, but that her mother was French Cree?"

"Why all your horror about that?" retorted Corey. "In spite of your harping on democracy, Jeremy, you still shy at the barriers of caste. Forget it!"

This point alone, however, did not force the break between the friends. It remained for Lilith to do that. Innocently enough, Garde Corey was placed in a false position. He could have explained it all to Stillson in half a dozen words, but his pride would not have it

so. He asked for a transfer to some other post and was sent to Vermilion, to help out the single constable there who was hard pressed with police work. And Stillson, at his own request, went to Wolf Creek. There was canny maneuvering in this, Corey thought, for Wolf Creek was hard by the Calthorpe Ranch, where Lilith lived and where Ora visited during the summer months.

It was a cruel mystery Brydon Benning had left behind him. In a father it was more than cruel, it was heartless. Benning, no doubt, had been well intentioned. For some reason which he alone seemed to know, he was determined that Ora and Lilith should be treated on an equality, and that neither should suffer from the prejudice which a strain of Indian blood would arouse in the Calthorpes, the Bennings, and others in the world. The trader-trapper-gold-hunter had promised Calthorpe that, before he died, he would make known the truth; but, if he had done this, years had passed without the evidence coming to hand.

Circumstantial evidence pointed to Ora as the adopted daughter, the girl of mixed blood. The grisly shadow lay across her life at all times, and just what it meant to her Stillson realized perhaps better than Corey. So it was possible that Stillson, as Corey believed, had been eager to go to Wolf Creek so that he might try to settle the status of Ora and Lilith.

"Working for himself," thought Corey darkly. "There'd be a high old time among the Stillsons of Canada and England if one of the family married a girl with Indian blood in her veins. Sacred codfish—sacred tommyrot!"

Corey was puzzled as to the appearance of Ora at the preliminary hearing with the evidence she had given in support of Piegan Jake's story. If Stillson were responsible for that, then what Lilith had said must have turned the tables on him. If Piegan Jake proved to be Ora's brother— But this was all hearsay, and Corey would not admit it for a moment. The suggestion must have been even more of a stab for Stillson than for Corey himself.

"We'll know all about everything some day," the corporal muttered to himself as he galloped along the tote road, "and for now I'll just give my attention to the business in hand. I'll follow this Piegan Jake to Herschell's Island, if I have to, but I'll get him!"

Toward evening he halted at a settler's shack for his supper, which to him had to be two meals in one, since he had missed his dinner. Shoofly was bountifully rationed with oats and hay and left for several hours to rest and refresh himself. After finishing his meal in the shack, Corey smoked, idled, and chatted with the settler. A mounted man following a trail can be no swifter than the hoofs of his horse, so it was necessary to make haste slowly and give Shoofly proper consideration. It was under a bright moon that Corey resumed his journey, pushing at speed through the prairies of the cattle country.

Bitter Springs was not a settlement in the usual acceptance of the term. A squaw man of unsavory reputation, known as "Hardshell" Glover, lived there and ran a frontier store. He fed and lodged any travelers who chanced that way and wanted such accommodations, and he also had a few hundred head of cattle. His stock seemed charmed, for it had not been subject to the depredations that had afflicted his neighbors'. This fact had aroused suspicion until Corey had taken in hand the search for the rustlers. His idea was that half-breeds were stealing the cattle, and that the thieves respected the property of the only squaw man in the district.

But Hardshell Glover's "wikiup," as his squalid store and rough hotel were called, was the scene of noisy gatherings and now and then a shooting; and it was almost certain that moonshine whisky was on tap, either there or in the vicinity. For this reason, Bright had been lodging at the wikiup and doing his watchful waiting. With Bright away on a search for Piegan Jake, Corey fancied that if Glover was really up to any lawlessness he might, just then, be giving it a free hand.

He sighted the wikiup from a mile away, a pool of dark in a swale of the level ground, with yellow lamplight streaming into the night. Turning from the trail, Corey made his approach cautiously from the north, pulling down two strands of wire from Glover's shaky fences so that Shoofly might cross the wide pastures. In due course he came to a horse corral which held Glover's saddle stock. A "soddy" used as a stable was not far from the corral, and under the lee of this structure the corporal left Shoofly temporarily.

There was a hitching pole at the front of the wikiup, and there four horses were tethered. Corey looked them over as well as he could in the dark, and then stole to the lighted windows of the ramshackle store-dwelling-hotel and reconnoitered the interior.

The room given over to the store was a large one, but the counters and stock in trade occupied only a small part of it. Beyond the counters was an open space equipped with chairs and tables. Here there were card playing and gambling. A five-handed game was in progress, Glover himself "sitting in" with four others—all of a caliber with Hardshell and his unlovely reputation.

Corey turned away from the window and went back to the sod stable. There were horses in there, too. He struck a light and gave the animals a swift sizing. There were three, each with riding gear dangling from pegs at the rear of its stall. There were four men with Glover, and four mounts at the hitching pole; but where were the riders of these three horses in the stable?

Corey examined the gear. Two of the saddles were battered and worn, but the third was of a different sort—brass trimmed, small patterned, and with shortened stirrups. The corporal went back to the horse behind whose stall this saddle hung. It was a pinto.

"Silver Heels!" the corporal muttered.

Yes; undoubtedly this was Ora Benning's pinto. Here was a discovery as unexpected as it was startling. The lighted match burned to Corey's fingers as he stood staring and thinking. He

pinched out the small blaze and his face set in hard lines as he moved from the stall to the stable door. His rifle, sheathed, swung from his saddle; but he had no need of that. His service revolver was better at close quarters.

Moving swiftly around to the front of the wikiup, he threw open the door and ran in between the counters and on back to the card players.

"Don't move—not a man of you!" he ordered, lifting a hand authoritatively.

Cards were dropped suddenly by all save Hardshell Glover; he pushed his hand together and laid it face downward on the table, then coolly started to his feet.

"What's botherin' y'u, corp'ral?" he inquired.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN THE DARK.

THE room was lighted by a large lamp that swung from the ceiling. A tin shade overhung it and reflected a strong glow over the card players. Corey's eyes ran rapidly from man to man.

"Who are these, Glover?" he asked.

"Punchers from Carl Reefer's place, corp'ral," was the answer. "Square guys, every one of 'em. They jest dropped in for a little 'draw.'"

The quartet had the look of cowmen—the hard-bitten, ready-for-anything sort who, as Corey knew, Reefer was hiring as a guard against cattle raids from which he had suffered.

"Where are their horses?" went on Corey.

"Out in front, corp'ral. Y'u must 'a' passed 'em as y'u came in."

"All right, then; but who rode in on the three horses you've got in your stable, Glover?"

Hardshell's nickname fitted him like a glove. The fiber of him was of that tough variety that chokes the feelings and keeps them down.

"Them bronks," he explained readily, "was left here by three men who said they'd call for 'em in a few days."

There was an upper floor to the combination store and dwelling, and the

alert corporal noticed that the hanging lamp swung a little. Some one was moving around overhead in moccasins, or in bare or stockinged feet. There was no sound, no creak even of floor boards, but the telltale swinging of the lamp proved there was at least one restless guest in the Hotel Glover.

The stairs leading to the sleeping loft clung to the inner wall of the store-room. On previous visits to the Springs Corey had informed himself pretty thoroughly regarding the squaw man's premises. The family's quarters were in a lean-to shed, near the kitchen.

"Where did the three men go?" went on Corey.

"Search me, corp'ral. They hoofed it west. Seemed queer, and I was hop-in' Bright would drop in ag'in."

"One of the men didn't have a scarred cheek and wear earrings?"

"I've had an eye cocked for that breed—the one you told Bright to keep a lookout for—but nary of the three was him."

"How about the small saddle on the pinto, Glover? No man would choose that riding gear of his own will."

"That's one o' the p'int's," averred Glover, "that filled me with suspicion. I'm gladder'n blazes y'u looked in, corp'ral."

"How long since the three horses were left with you?"

"Toward evenin'."

Corey started for the stairs. "I'll have a look overhead," he remarked.

His keen ears detected a movement behind him. He whirled about at the stair foot just in time to glimpse one of the card players throwing a right arm forward. Quick as thought Corey had a gun in his hand and had launched a bullet at the arm; but, at just that instant, some one hurled a chair that caught him back of the knees. Although he staggered he managed to keep upright.

Several things happened at once, for the rattle of the chair, the dull roar of the revolver, and a quick tramp of booted feet were accompanied by a crash of breaking glass. The hand the corporal had seen dart forward had

thrown a revolver at the lamp. There might have been a conflagration, but there was not. The light was snuffed out and the long room was plunged in darkness.

All this, so far as appearances went, came as a mighty surprise to Hardshell Glover. His roars of wrath and indignant protest rose high above the other sounds.

"Corp'ral, this hyer's an outrage! Which one o' y'u smashed that lamp? What y'u tryin' to bring down on me? I'll wipe up the floor with you blamed trouble makers! Corp'ral! Where are y'u, corp'ral?"

There came a scramble on the stairs. Unseen forms descended in a rush, colliding with Corey and endeavoring, plainly enough, to sweep him out of the way. He knew treachery when he saw it, and the raucous protests of Glover did not fool him for a moment. Right and left he struck at the press around him, and closed at chance with one who uttered imprecations in his face. He stumbled and went down, his antagonist under him. There were blows in the dark, some wide of the mark and a few reaching it. Luck was with Corey, for the man under him went suddenly limp and ceased to struggle.

Making his way among a number of frantic figures, darting around haphazardly through the gloom, Corey gained a door leading into the lean-to. Dragging his captive after him, he was presently in the kitchen, and a minute later clear of the house entirely.

He heard a pounding of hoofs and, under moon and stars, saw two riders in silhouette fading among the shadows to westward. These had pitched their flight from Glover's soddy barn. While he stood over his prisoner and peered after the two racing men, there reached his ears another pattering of hoofs—this time from in front of Glover's house. The four, ostensibly from Reefer's, were on their way and spurting hard.

Silence had fallen over the hotel-store-dwelling of Hardshell Glover. Then out of the stillness broke the frightened cry of a child. "Tapwa,

tapwa," came a soothing voice, the voice of Mrs. Glover, and went on unflutteringly to croon a Cree lullaby. A door was flung open.

"Hey, corp'ral!" boomed the voice of Glover through the night. "Where are y'u, corp'ral?"

"All right—no thanks to you," snapped Corey. "Get another light in your store, and be lively about it."

The way the corporal spoke brought Glover mighty little comfort. "Right-o," he said, but the sound of it lacked much of being hearty.

Corey watched the windows until he saw another light glowing within the big room; and then he swung his limp prisoner over his shoulder and went back into the house. Glover's moon-faced Cree wife, an untidy figure gowned in calico and shod with moccasins, was working with a broom and shovel, cleaning up the mess of the broken lamp. She never lifted her eyes as Corey lowered his unconscious burden but kept stoically to her work.

The corporal got his first clear look at his prisoner. A grunt of surprise and satisfaction escaped him, and he bent down with a pair of handcuffs and secured the man's wrists.

"You've been lying to me, Hardshell," he said sharply. "Here's the half-breed with the scarred face and the rings in his ears. You told me you hadn't seen him, but after the lamp was smashed he came down in the dark from the loft of your shack."

"So help me, Bob, corp'ral," protested Glover, wide-eyed with seeming astonishment, "this here's the fust time I ever sot eyes on that breed! I never knowed he was up there. Moosta," and he whirled on the woman, "you ever seen that breed before?"

The Cree woman threw a glance at the prisoner. "Nah, nah," she said, shaking her head.

Corey gave a jeering laugh. "You're a first cousin to Ananias, Glover," he remarked. "How'd the fellow ever get in here without your knowing it?"

"Sneaked in," persisted Glover. "He could 'a' worked it without either Moosta or me knowin' a thing about it."

"Where's the white woman who rode the pinto?" went on Corey.

Glover's jaw fell open and his eyes widened. "I never seen no white woman," he declared. "A man was ridin' the pinto."

"This man?" The corporal indicated his prisoner.

"I'll kiss the Book on it, corp'ral," returned Glover, "that I ain't never set eyes on that breed till now."

"And the three men who rode to the Springs on the three mounts in your barn 'hoofed it west' and weren't upstairs in this house—will you also kiss the Book on that?"

"I don't know a thing about them three men."

Corey was annoyed by this continued and foolish prevarication in the face of such plain facts. "Bright ought to be here," he said; "but, as he isn't, I'll take charge of you. 'Moonshine' is not your only weakness, for I'll miss a bet if you're not up to your eyes in this cattle stealing. You'll go back with me to the detachment."

He had another pair of handcuffs and started toward Glover with them. The Cree woman dropped her broom and jumped between her husband and the corporal with a screech like a catamount.

"Okimow, you not take my man away, non! Akaweya! I let dose men in de house when Glover he not know."

"Why did you do that?" demanded Corey. He had hoped to develop some information by threatening Glover, but he had expected to get it from Glover and not his wife.

The woman pushed a greasy hand into a sagging pocket of her skirt and brought out some silver money. "Dose men gave me dat," she said.

Glover struck his wife's hand savagely and scattered the coins on the floor. "So they paid y'u to git me into trouble with the police, hey?" he belted savagely, and gave the woman a rough push toward the kitchen door. "Git out!" He turned to Corey again. "That's the worst o' having a full blood for a squaw," he continued, "they're allus helpin' the breed that a way. I'm

playin' square with the law, corp'ral. Them three went west on foot, but they must 'a' turned back, while I was around the place some'rs, and Moosta packed 'em away upstairs. There wasn't no white woman, though, and that's straight goods."

Corey was not convinced. It looked as though the Cree woman had taken everything upon her own shoulders just to save her husband. However, Corey put away the second pair of handcuffs.

"My horse is tied out behind your sod stable," he told Glover. "Strip off the riding gear, put the horse in a stall, and give him a good feed. Walk chalk, now, because I'm keeping an eye on you and it won't be healthy for you to try anything else to queer my work."

"You're wide o' yer trail in suspectin' me, corp'ral," said Glover, moving toward the door. "I got too much at stake here to play fast and loose with the law—y'u ought to know that."

He left the room and Corey heard him pass out of the house by the kitchen door. The prisoner was showing signs of reviving and the corporal turned to give him closer attention. But he had no more than bent over the man on the floor than he straightened suddenly again and wheeled to an about-face.

He had heard a light footstep, so light that it might have escaped his ears had his nerves not been so tense and his every faculty so keen at the moment. A slender figure advanced toward him, then halted and stood motionless a few paces away. It was the form of a woman, wearing moccasins, leggings, and a skirt of soft tanned buckskin. A bright new blanket covered her head and the upper part of her body, the blanket held close about her face with one hand.

"Well?" queried Corey. "I don't remember having seen any one like you around Glover's before. Are you some near kin of Moosta's?"

"No, corporal," answered a soft voice; "not of Moosta's."

The blanket fell back, revealing glossy black hair, in two long braids, hanging forward over the slender shoul-

ders. Corey recoiled a step, and brushed a hand dazedly across his forehead.

"Ora!" he exclaimed, wondering if he could believe his eyes.

"Iskwao," she said. "I am here, corporal, to do what I can to help you."

CHAPTER IX.

ON THE BLIND TRAIL.

COREY made a swift comparison of the girl who now faced him with the one he had seen the day before in the little courtroom of the Wolf Creek detachment. Yesterday Ora Benning was a "Girl of the West" and representative of that ruling race whose work was to conquer and build empires out of the wildernesses of the world; to-day she was of another race, having stepped completely out of a bright picture into a darker one. In the background of this scene was Moosta, with her moon face, greasy hair, and slatternly, half-civilized clothes. A feeling of violent protest arose in Corey.

That he had found Ora was the supreme fact and of most importance. But his mind was not dwelling on that so much as upon the startling way in which he had found her.

"Why are you here—like this?" he demanded.

She smiled wistfully and a little sadly. "I have wondered for years how I would look as an Indian girl," she answered. "You have seen a great many Indian girls, corporal; tell me, could I carry off the part?"

"No!" he told her emphatically. "You have not an Indian girl's face and are out of character completely. You must know how worried they are at the ranch, Ora, because you failed to come back from Wolf Creek yesterday."

"Didn't Lilith tell Uncle John where I had gone?"

"This forenoon, yes; but that didn't explain why you had failed to come back at all."

The prisoner was grunting and trying to sit up. He had been knocked out very effectively by the corporal's hard fist, but the damage was not extensive. Corey lifted him by the shoulders so

that he could sit with his back to the wall. Then he turned again to the girl.

"The sergeant is looking for you, Ora," he went on. "I'm on the old trail once more, after Piegan Jake."

"Why, I thought he had been set free!" Ora exclaimed.

Corey was puzzled. "Didn't you see Te' Jaune lying in the road," he asked, "killed, according to the evidence, by Piegan Jake as he was leaving Wolf Creek by the tote road?"

There was blank astonishment in the girl's face. "I saw no one," she answered, "except Lilith. I met her just after I rode into the timber on the tote road. She told me I was wanted at Baptiste's, so I let her take Silver Heels and I got into the canoe which she had used in coming up the creek."

Corey saw a light. "You gave Lilith your quirt when you let her take the pinto?" he queried.

"Yes."

Corey grew thoughtful. It was Lilith, then, and not Ora, who had found Tete Jaune in the trail and failed to report the discovery at the detachment. And it was Lilith who had left Ora's quirt on the scene of Piegan Jake's blackest crime.

"Well," he said, conscious of a feeling of relief so far as Ora was concerned, "my missing witness was on his way to Wolf Creek when Piegan Jake, just discharged from custody, was making his way on foot along the tote road and met Te' Jaune. Piegan Jake killed him—it's a plain case. So that's why I'm running out the old trail again. Why didn't you go back to the ranch, Ora, after going to Baptiste's?"

The girl was slow to answer. She glanced at the prisoner, whose snaky-black eyes were regarding her intently, and then shifted her gaze to Corey once more.

"Baptiste wasn't at home," she said, "and neither was the man from Athabaska Landing who said he would meet me there. I found Baptiste's wife. She was to take me to the place where I would see this man from the Landing; but, first, I was to put on these clothes," and here Ora put out her hands and

looked down at her Indian finery. There was an elk-tooth necklace about her throat and bands of beaten silver about her wrists.

"Why was that?" Corey asked breathlessly.

"I wanted to know that, but Baptiste's wife only shook her head and insisted," Ora returned. "I was excited and anxious, so I just did what I was told."

"Why were you so excited and anxious?"

"For years, Garde," said Ora in a voice that quivered with emotion, "I have waited for word from Athabaska Landing—waited until hope had all but died within me. I was perfectly willing to masquerade as an Indian girl if it would lead me to the thing I wanted to find out most in all the world. I rode away with Baptiste's wife on Baptiste's old horse. It was night, and we traveled miles—out of the woods and over the prairie to an old abandoned dugout in a hillside.

"Baptiste's wife stayed with me until morning, but no one came," Ora went on. "It was a bleak night and, for me, an anxious one, that we passed in that old dugout—and nothing came of it. Baptiste's wife took the horse and went back home in the morning. She left some food for me and told me to stay and wait, that the man from Athabaska Landing would surely come, and that she would ride back for me toward evening. Well, she didn't come, Garde—no one came—and when it began to grow dark I—I felt afraid to stay alone any longer. This was the nearest ranch and I came here."

Corey's sympathy for the girl was deep. This would have been the case even if his heart had not been so hopelessly entangled. He knew—none better!—just what word from Athabaska Landing Ora had waited and hoped for all her life. It was his conviction that it would never come, and that only the girl's fierce desire to establish her birthright kept her hopes alive. She was being preyed upon, it seemed to him, by ruthless forces seeking some lawless end.

What woman, not laboring under a great delusion, would have acted as Ora Benning had done? She had gone to the cabin of Baptiste, and, under the direction of Baptiste's wife, she had garbed herself as an Indian girl and embarked blindly upon an adventure to the notorious Sparrow Hills. Here was demonstrated the power of an idea as against the promptings of reason and better judgment.

"I believe, Ora," said Corey, "that a snare of some kind was laid for you, and that, by coming to Glover's, you walked out of it. I'm glad I happen to be here."

"I was out by the corral," Ora went on, "when trouble of some kind happened in here. I heard the shot, the sound of breaking glass, and then saw men rush from the house and ride away on horseback. Later, Glover came to the kitchen door and called—and you answered. I knew your voice, Garde, and I was glad I had found a friend. I believe I have information that will be of help to you."

"About Piegan Jake?" he asked quickly.

"No, about the cattle stealing, and about the strange half-breed you have there—the man who sold Haskison's horse to Piegan Jake."

The glittering eyes of the prisoner held to the girl unwaveringly. The fog had cleared from his wits and he was listening intently to every word.

"What is the information, Ora?"

"While I was at the dugout," Ora went on, "a dozen head of cattle were driven past the place, through a little valley and deeper into the hills. That man"—and she indicated the prisoner—"was driving them; and he was riding my pinto, Silver Heels."

Here was news so directly to the point that Corey was startled. "You had turned the pinto over to Lilith," he said, "and when you next see the horse he is in the hands of this partner of Piegan Jake's. Have you any idea how that could happen?"

"No," Ora answered, "unless the man met her and made her give up the pinto."

"Lilith said nothing about that when she was at the detachment this forenoon. Silver Heels has not been at Calthorpe's since you rode him away from there."

Ora wrinkled her brows perplexedly. "Strange!" she murmured. "But what had I better do, Garde?" she asked. "Would you advise me to go back to the dugout?"

"By all means, but not alone and not to-night. This is a poor shelter for you, but it's the best we have and will have to serve. We'll pass the night here, and in the morning we'll go together to the Sparrow Hills."

Glover came into the room at that moment. "Yore hawse has been took care of, corp'ral," he reported, peering curiously at the girl. "I'm mighty sorry you've had all this trouble at my place, but it was none o' my doing and I'm ready to help y'u in any way I can."

"This lady, Glover," said the corporal, "is Miss Ora Benning. She will have to pass the night here, and I want you to have your wife do what she can to make her comfortable. I shall hold you personally responsible for Miss Benning's safety. I'll find a bunk upstairs, and in the morning Miss Benning and I will leave the Springs and take this man with us." He finished with a nod toward the prisoner.

"Miss Benning will have the best we've got in the place," returned Glover heartily. "She'll be comfortable, and as safe here as she would be at her uncle's. Moosta!" he called.

Mrs. Glover appeared and received her orders regarding Ora. The two went away together.

"Has the half-breed told you anything, corp'ral?" inquired Glover.

"I haven't tried to get him to talk yet," said Corey. "Did he ever work for you, Glover?"

"I'm tellin' y'u straight, corp'ral," protested Glover, "that I never laid eyes on that man till you dragged him in here."

"Take the lamp," ordered Corey, "and lead the way upstairs."

Glover picked up the lamp, which he had lighted to take the place of the one

that had been broken, and started for the loft.

"Get up!" said Corey, standing over the prisoner.

The man struggled to his feet. Corey stripped him of a revolver that swung from a belt at his hip, and of a murderous-looking knife that hung in a scabbard under the breast of his coat, then gripped his arm and led him up the stairs to the loft.

There were half a dozen cots in the loft, a pine table, and a bench. Three of the cots had been occupied. Like the rest of Glover's establishment the loft was none too clean, but police work had carried Corey into worse places.

"Put down the lamp," said the corporal to Glover, "and make sure that no danger comes to Miss Benning under your roof." He thought best to repeat this warning, in view of the unseen forces that seemed gathering mysteriously to threaten the girl's welfare. "Good night," he added laconically and motioned Glover to the stairs.

The prisoner had been dropped unceremoniously on one of the cots. As soon as Glover was gone, Corey whirled on the handcuffed man with the sharp accusation:

"Why did you steal Haskison's horse?"

The prisoner blinked. "Me, I not steal 'um!" he protested.

"Who are you?"

"Neesnetasis," the other grunted, "but more tam I been call' Jules."

Neesnetasis, the "Twin," was not so keen-witted as the average half-breed. Already the corporal had gathered so much.

"You sold Haskison's horse to Piegan Jake, so you must have stolen the animal. Otherwise, Jules, how could you have sold the brute?"

"Nah!" insisted Jules; "odder man steal 'um."

"Piegan Jake stole the horse," went on the corporal.

"By gar, what dat Piegan Jake tell on me, huh? *Nom de chien*, he go lie 'bout me I make plaintee trouble. He steal dat 'orse, corp'ral, den geeve 'um to me and say I pretend to sell 'um by

Calthorpe's ranch. *C'est vrai*, I tell you for sure."

Piegan Jake was clever, but he had made a mistake in conspiring with such a dull wit as Neesnetasis. He had planned the pretended sale in the presence of a witness—Ora.

"Good!" muttered Corey. "Now finish your sleep, Jules. To-morrow will be a busy day for us."

Pulling a cot to the stair head, Corey stretched himself upon it. He was a light sleeper, and any move on the part of the prisoner would not pass unchallenged. The lamp was left burning on the table. For a time, Corey watched the shadows in the loft corners and gave his mind to the odd situation in which he had found Ora. It had not been for Stillson, who had gone to the cabin of Baptiste, to find Ora, but for him, who had taken a blind trail after Piegan Jake. In that, he reflected with satisfaction, fate was at work.

CHAPTER X.

OUT OF WHOLE CLOTH.

IF his loud snores were any indication, Jules, the prisoner, had slept soundly. He was awakened with a rough shake, and this question boomed in his ears: "Where did you get the pinto from Calthorpe's ranch? The pinto! Where did you get the pinto? From Piegan Jake?"

"Nah!" mumbled Jules, dazed by the suddenness of the question; "from dat *iskwao*——" Words died on his lips when he saw the keen gray eyes of the corporal bending over him. Gray dawn filled the room and the lamp had burned itself out. "Me, I find dat pinto in de trail, corp'ral."

Jules had bethought himself too late. "Iskwao" meant woman, and Corey caught at the idea that the prisoner had used the term generically. He had food for reflection.

"Get up," he ordered Jules; "we're going down."

Moosta had breakfast ready, and Corey experienced a measure of relief on meeting Ora. She had passed a safe night under Glover's roof.

"The prisoner, Ora," Corey remarked, "says he got your pinto from the *iskwao*."

"What woman, corporal?" queried the girl, surprised. "He could not have meant me."

"I know that," said Corey. "So that's the question for us: What woman?"

"These breeds'll lie faster'n a dog kin trot," put in Glover. "You ought to know that, corp'ral."

"I've known squaw men to mishandle the truth as readily as breeds," Corey commented, with a significance not lost upon Glover. "The pinto's in the barn?"

"Sure, but them two other hawses is gone, corp'ral."

"After breakfast, Glover, get the gear on my horse, the pinto, and one of your own. I'm borrowing a mount for Jules, here."

"Correct," agreed Glover. "The police kin have anything I've got, corp'ral. I'm law-abidin' and allers willin' to help in any way I kin."

The rim of the sun was just showing in the east when the three set off for Sparrow Hills, uplifts of ill omen in which, in an earlier day, there had been more fights with whisky runners, cattle thieves, and others who were lawless-minded, than in any other section of the Wolf Creek district.

Jules, the Twin, was mounted on a good riding animal which was made fast to Shoo-fly by a quarter length of reata. Silver Heels seemed to recognize his mistress in spite of her Indian garb. Could he have talked about his recent experiences, there would have been a mighty interesting and important story for the corporal's ears. The corporal's mind, however, was busy with the known facts, and as his thoughts probed deeper and deeper a theory developed that brought a hard light to his eyes and a stern expression to his face.

"You have wondered," said Ora, when they were well away toward Sparrow Hills, "why I didn't tell you what I knew about Piegan Jake before the hearing. Well, for one thing, you never came near the ranch——"

"I felt sure Piegan Jake was lying when he said he had bought that stolen horse," cut in Corey.

"And for another thing, Garde, all the time you were looking for the horse thief I was away from my uncle's—thirty miles away, at a ranch owned by the father of a girl friend of mine from Calgary. When I heard that Piegan Jake was to have his hearing at Wolf Creek it was long after you captured him, and I rode back to Uncle John's. I got there on the night before the hearing, completely fagged. You see how it was, don't you? When I learned that what I knew about Piegan Jake was important, it was too late to give advance information either to you or to Sergeant Stillson; so I could only ride to the detachment at the last moment and give my testimony."

"Then Stillson did not know about it beforehand?" queried Corey.

"He knew just before he opened court that I was waiting to testify—and that is all."

Corey was quick to see that he had done the sergeant an injustice by suspecting that Ora's abrupt appearance in the court had been deliberately planned; also, he had done Ora an injustice by thinking she would lend herself to such a plan even had Stillson contrived it. He was glad that this disagreeable point had been cleared up.

"Piegan Jake is pretty smooth, Ora," said Corey. "He schemed to have that pretended sale of Haskison's horse take place near Calthorpe's, and in sight and hearing of a witness. That was deucedly clever. But he's the one who stole Ronceval, then turned the brute over to Jules, here, and camouflaged the business with a fake sale. The worst of that was, Piegan Jake was discharged just in time to meet my star witness on the tote road and send him 'west.' Now we want him again, even more than we did before, and I have my work to do over."

"I'm sorry, Garde. All I wanted was to be just—even to a man like Piegan Jake."

"Did Lilith, when she stopped you in the tote road and told of the half-breed

who wanted to see you at Baptiste's, say anything about Piegan Jake? Did she tell you that the man from Athabaska Landing had mentioned him at all?"

"No, nothing was said about Piegan Jake."

What the strange half-breed from the Landing had said about Piegan Jake's being the brother of Ora, Lilith may have kept back from the girl whom she had been taught to look upon as a sister. She had been urged to tell it before the inspector, however. And from that scrap of testimony it had been made to appear that Ora had known of the supposed kinship with the prisoner, so that the inference could be drawn that she had helped him because of that alone.

"It was false—made out of whole cloth!" muttered Corey.

"What was false?" asked Ora.

Corey shook his head. "I was merely turning something over in my mind," he answered.

They came to the low hills, entering them by a little valley. There were indications in plenty to prove that cattle had been driven through the valley, and Jules began to show signs of uneasiness.

"There's some one at the dugout!" Ora said excitedly.

A little way up the hillside could be seen the ruinous sod wall that had closed in the front of the excavation. At the foot of the slope a spring bubbled out of the ground, overflowed a basin, and trickled away through a growth of lupins and wild mignonettes and phlox. Many old buffalo wallows were in evidence; and hitched to a lone cottonwood at the springside were three horses, one of them a police mount.

Corey gave vent to a low whistle. "There's Sorreltop, Stillson's horse," he remarked.

"And Katoo, the bay horse Lilith uses at the ranch," added Ora, amazed. "What can Lilith and Jeremy be doing here?"

The third horse was a scrubby, undersized animal which Corey recognized as one he had seen the night before in Glover's sod stable.

"There's something interesting going on at the dugout, if I'm any prophet," observed Corey. "We'll leave our horses here, Ora."

They dismounted, Corey added their three horses to the ones at the cottonwood, and then, with his prisoner, he and the girl moved quickly up the slope. Stillson heard them coming and stepped out from behind the tumbledown sod wall. Lilith followed him; then another followed Lilith—a wiry man with beady eyes, swarthy face, and long, straight black hair. Jules, it was noticeable, avoided the eyes of the other half-breed.

The sergeant stood staring at Ora. A sharp cry escaped Lilith.

"Mon Dieu! Ora, is it you? In a blanket and moccasins and— Oh, what has happened to you, *ma chérie*?"

Lilith ran to Ora and took her in her arms; then, withdrawing, Lilith whirled on Corey, her eyes glowing.

"Ah, corporal, it was for you to find my sister?" She seized the corporal's hands in both her own. "You did this for me! I shall never forget, never!"

A hard look filled the sergeant's face.

"Not for you," said Corey, withdrawing his hands almost roughly, "and not for anybody in particular. It just happened that I found Ora—at Glover's."

"At Glover's!" exclaimed Stillson. "We expected to find her here. Why this masquerade, Ora?" he asked.

She explained as she had already explained to Corey that Baptiste's wife had insisted upon her dressing herself as an Indian girl and had brought her to the dugout to talk with the man from Athabaska Landing. After spending a night and a day at the dugout, Ora had wandered over to Glover's, and there had met Corporal Corey the evening before.

The sergeant turned stiffly upon the corporal. "You seem to have had a good deal of luck," he remarked. "Where did the half-breed with the scarred face and the earrings come from?"

Briefly, Corey told him about the capture of the prisoner. "How did you and Lilith manage to find this dugout?"

he asked. "Was it Baptiste's wife who—?"

"I got the tip, but whom I got it from we needn't consider just now," the sergeant cut in. "We are all mighty fortunate, it strikes me. This man here"—he indicated the half-breed with the beady eyes—"says he comes from Athabaska Landing with important information for Ora."

"Is he the one you met on the day Piegan Jake had his hearing?" Corey questioned Lilith; "the one who asked you to find Ora and send her to Baptiste's?"

"*Oui*," returned Lilith; "the very man, Garde."

The two girls stood side by side, one in Indian garb and the other in a riding skirt, a sailor waist, tan riding boots, and stocking cap. They were wonderfully attractive, both of them, darkly beautiful, but as unlike as two women could possibly be. One had Cree blood in her veins, yet the Indian strain was so skillfully hidden that no person could have said, "Ora, there, is the adopted daughter of Brydon Benning." Nevertheless, Indian finery emphasized the difference between the girls and, to a great extent, gave Lilith the advantage.

Both young women appeared to realize that they had drawn the close attention of these two men of the Mounted, and that their eyes, kindly but none the less keenly, were appraising them for the hidden traits of mixed blood. In spite of its kindness, Stillson's gaze had a touch of severity, as though he considered a faultless judgment of vital importance. In Corey's face, on the other hand, one merely read deep interest, with no weight whatever attached to the decision at which he might arrive.

Lilith drew her graceful figure to its full height, her dark eyes sparkling and her full, red lips wreathed in a confident smile; but Ora, on whom rested the burden of proof, bowed forward with her small hands clasped in front of her. All her past was filled with circumstantial evidence against her, for had the Indians who came to Grouard not given her all their attention?

"This man," came the voice of Stillson, breaking the dramatic silence, "says his name is Jean Lafarge. He claims to be able to tell you, Ora, what you have wanted to know all your life."

Ora's bowed head was lifted quickly. A flash of hope crossed her face. "What—what has he to tell me?" she asked.

CHAPTER XI.

IN BLACK AND WHITE.

AS though feeling that Ora was to need support and comfort in a trying hour, Lilith placed an arm about her waist and drew her close. Lafarge groped with one hand in the breast of his grimy shirt and drew forth a packet wrapped in soiled brown paper.

"Ha!" he murmured. "Me, I haf here w'at Uchie Benning wrote in his own hand, yes."

"Just a moment," put in Stillson, as Lafarge began unwrapping the paper. "Benning died seventeen years ago and——"

"Sure, I know," interrupted Lafarge, nodding.

"Where has that statement been all this time?" asked the sergeant.

"Dat been fonna business, sergeant," went on Lafarge. "Jacques Courteau him frande Uchie Benning; him along with Benning w'en he go die at Athabaska Landing. Me, I know dat Jacques; so w'at I tell you, by gar, I get from him. Benning, he tell Jacques, 'You ta' dose paper to Ora, *ma petite fille*, at Calthorpe's ranch.' But he not do dat, sergeant. W'en Benning die, Jacques feel so bad he drink hard to forget. You know."

"W'en Jacques come to himself," Lafarge went on, "he on a brigade bound North. So, ever' tam he get back to Athabaska Landing he think, 'Now I tak' dat paper of *mon cher* frande to Wolf Creek,' but he go get drunk and ever' tam he wake up on anoder brigade. At last Jacques he die, too, up at Churchill. He have ver' bad time at Churchill, sergeant. Oooh! He got forty dollar and he give dat forty dollar to me and mak' me promis' to take dat letter to Wolf Creek."

"Bymby, after long tam', I get ready and come. Me, I see dat girl"—he nodded toward Lilith—"and I tell her she find Ora and send her to Bateese's place; and Bateese I tell him have Ora come to dat dugout."

"Why didn't you wait at Baptiste's?" struck in Stillson. "You could have given Miss Ora the letter there, couldn't you? What was your idea in having her come to Sparrow Hills?"

Lafarge shrugged. "Bateese say police look for strange half-breeds dat steal cattle and horses," he explained, "and I not like to get mixed up in such business. So I come away to Sparrow Hills."

"Made a run of it, eh, before anybody had a chance to suspect you?" spoke up Corey. "I guess there's a little fire back of that smoke," he added. "That scrawny bronk down there," and he motioned toward the cottonwood, "is that your horse?"

"*Oui, corp'ral.*"

"Then——"

"Let's get back to our muttons," snapped the sergeant, "and not go roaming all over the place. Let's see the letter, Lafarge."

Lafarge went on unwrapping the brown paper, and presently a scrap of folded white paper, grimy with much handling, dropped into his palm. "Voila!" he said.

Stillson snatched the paper and unfolded it.

"Jeremy!" murmured Ora, reaching out her hand.

Stillson gazed at her without lowering his eyes to read what lay under them. The white had run into Ora's face, and her outstretched hand was trembling.

"It is your right, Ora," said he softly, and put the paper in her hand.

She read with wide, eager eyes; then, the next moment, her face cleared. It was a hopeful sign, and Corey drew a sharp breath of relief. Stillson seemed puzzled.

"I am glad to know the truth—at last," Ora murmured.

"Do you recognize the handwriting as your father's?" asked Stillson.

She smiled wanly and shook her head. "I would not know my father's handwriting if I saw it," she told him. "Uncle John might—he has a letter or two—but it has been so many years, Jeremy, and in all those years I have not seen a word written in my father's hand. Read it—aloud."

She gave the paper to him. He read:

"I must make it known, now that I am near my end, that my adopted daughter is Ora; and it is my wish that what property I have left in John Calthorpe's hands as trustee shall go to Lilith. Ora can find her people by getting track of Jake Monteith, her brother, who, at last accounts, was at Grouard.
BRYDON BENNING."

Stillson's big hand closed on the paper and crumpled it fiercely. "This," he said angrily, "is all a lie!"

"Jake Monteith is the man called Piegan Jake?" asked Ora quietly.

"Yes," answered Corey.

"Then, it seems," the girl went on, "I am Ora Monteith and not Ora Benning. You see?" she added, turning her glance from Stillson to Corey. "It is fate, and I must find my own people. Piegan Jake"—there was a catch in her voice, but she conquered her emotion bravely—"I am not interested in him; but there may be other Monteiths and it is my duty to find them."

"*Mais non, mam'selle,*" spoke up Lafarge; "dese Monteith people are gone; but me, I tak' you to your moder's people——"

"There's no truth in this Lafarge, sergeant," put in Corey, his wrath ablaze with this spark. "He's a black swine and two-faced on his own showing. The horse he claims as his, down there by the cottonwood, was in Glover's stable last night. That means he was one of the two from upstairs who made their get-away. I want him held on account of the cattle stealing, for he was with Jules—and Jules, I've fair evidence, is up to his eyes in these ranch robberies."

Stillson studied Corey for a moment. There had been a bleak change in the sergeant dating from that evening hour when he had demanded of the corporal the evidence he had seen him secreting under his jacket in the tote road; but

now he was expanding into his old form and was again the fiercely dominant personality of his past traditions.

"I know what I'm to do," he said with harsh emphasis, "and it's not because Lafarge is a cattle thief, but because he's something else, that I shall hold him."

Lafarge made a lightning-quick movement with his right hand; but the sergeant, even quicker in his movements, had the fellow by throat and arm before his revolver was half drawn. A second later Lafarge, like Jules, the Twin, had his wrists decorated with bands of steel.

"I've a question or two to ask Lilith, sergeant," remarked Corey. "You'll give me credit, perhaps, for having discovered a few things that may be important."

"I'll give you all the credit you're entitled to, Corey. Go on."

The corporal faced Lilith, who, by then, had stepped away from Ora. Lilith's attitude toward Corey was something more than friendly. There was a melting light in her eyes whenever they sought his, and a liquid softness in her voice whenever she spoke to him. His own manner was a rebuff at every point—but that had seemed to make no difference. The two confronted each other now, Lilith in a gentle, half-appealing spirit, and Corey iron hard.

"Why didn't you come back to the detachment, Lilith," queried Corey, "and tell us how you found Te' Jaune dying in the tote road?"

There was no answer to this.

"You had just seen Ora, sent her by canoe, to Baptiste's, and taken her pinto," proceeded Corey. "You were first to discover the evidences of a brutal murder. Why did you fail to return to the detachment and report the news?"

She shrugged. "I was frightened, Garde. Anyhow, the Yellow Head was only a rifle shot from the detachment. I knew you must find it out soon."

"Why did you leave Ora's quirt where we found it?"

"I did not know where I lost it!" she cried. "*Dieu!* And it was there? The loop must have pulled off my wrist."

"Why didn't you take Silver Heels back to the ranch?" Corey went on. "Why did you turn the pinto over to Jules?"

The smile had changed from appeal to bitterness, and now it vanished altogether. "Don't be so cruel, Garde!" she muttered between her white teeth. "Who says it?"

"Jules there."

In a flame of passion Lilith sprang toward Jules, her small fist clenched and her arm drawn back. The prisoner leaped away, protesting wildly.

"*Tais'-vous!*" she screamed. "*C'est abominable!* I could kill you!"

Sergeant Stillson stood back, made no attempt to interfere with the cross-current of primitive emotions, and seemed to be making a study of events as they proceeded. Lilith collapsed at the height of her fury and sank to her knees with her face in her hands.

"Garde, why are you so brutal?" cried Ora, her voice seething with indignation and reproach. "Have you changed so much in the two years since you left Edmonton?"

Corey flushed. It was not in him to be brutal to a woman. He felt, however, that Ora was the victim of black treachery and he was trying to seek it out. His motives should have been clear enough. He stood staring, while Ora sank to her knees beside Lilith and sought to console and comfort her.

"A word with you, Garde," said Stillson. His voice and manner, strangely enough, were like echoes of their old days of comradeship; Corey followed him a little apart. "Now tell me," requested Stillson, "just what you have discovered. We must do a little quick planning."

The corporal rapidly sketched developments of the night at Glover's. He finished with a report of what Ora had seen from the dugout—Jules, on Silver Heels, driving cattle past the foot of the hill.

"Good!" approved Stillson. "Follow the cattle—that's your main affair. Bright is at Glover's—I met him as Lilith and I rode toward the hills. I'll take the girls and the prisoners over

3B TN

there and put them in Bright's charge; then I'll come back here and we'll work this out together."

"Why together if it's my business?" returned Corey.

"Incidentally because, if you are successful, you may have more on your hands than you can manage; but, principally," he added with a sharp incisiveness, "because I am minded to go with you for a purpose of my own."

"That's up to you, of course," said Corey. "Leave Jules with me, though—I'm going to need him."

Stillson's arrangement was one of which Lilith did not approve. "I'm not going to Glover's," she asserted. "When I leave here it will be to go back to the ranch."

"Sorry," returned the sergeant coolly, "but you're going with us."

"So?" she asked breathlessly, every muscle of her slim young body tense as a bowstring. "You will make me do what I do not want? *Non!* We will see."

She drew a small revolver from a pocket of her riding skirt and stood at bay. Stillson passed her without another word, took Lafarge in hand, and made his way down to the cottonwood. There he began getting the horses in readiness. Corey could see him making two horses fast to Sorreltop's saddle, Lilith's mount on one side and Lafarge's on the other.

Ora was trying to argue Lilith into a more tractable frame of mind. She made little headway, however, and Corey took her gently by the arm and drew her to one side.

"You will not leave Glover's until I get back there, Ora?" he asked. "This Lafarge is all wrong. Don't take anything for granted—yet."

"I may go with Lilith to Uncle John's," the girl told him; "I can't see why we're to stay at Glover's."

"For one thing, it isn't safe for you to go back to the ranch alone."

"But with Lilith?"

"I couldn't trust you with Lilith."

His eyes, his voice, surely told Ora that, in one way at least, Corey had not

changed since leaving Edmonton. Ora drew a quick breath and turned away.

"I must know my place," she said, "and if I have people I am going to find them. But I'll wait, either at Glover's or Uncle John's, until you come back."

She made her way down the hill and climbed into the saddle. Stillson, with Lafarge riding beside him and Lilith's horse following with an empty saddle, spurred up the slope. He drew rein and dismounted.

"Now, Lilith," he said.

"*Mais non!* I'll not go! If you try to lay a hand on me I'll shoot." Lilith's eyes were blazing.

Stillson, unmoved, walked straight toward her. The small revolver was leveled. It barked spitefully, but the bullet struck the ground and sent up a little flurry of dust. Corey had caught the girl's arm and forced the point of the weapon downward. He finished by offering the diminutive firearm to Stillson. The latter waved it away.

"Give it back to her," ordered Stillson; "she's beside herself, for the moment, but will think better of this later on."

Corey "broke" the revolver and dumped the remaining cartridges on the ground. Then he presented the useless weapon to Lilith. With an angry exclamation she struck it from his hand, ran to her horse, and climbed into the saddle.

"*Nom de diable,*" she breathed, "I'll go anywhere to get away from him!" She shot a baleful glance at the corporal.

When they had left, Corey turned to Jules. "Now we'll be about our own business," he said, and led the way to the two horses that still stood by the cottonwood.

"For w'y you say dat 'bout the pinto, corp'ral?" fretted Jules. "By gar, dat iskwa'o might have kill' me wit' dat li'l gun she got."

"It was the truth, wasn't it?"

"Between ourselves, yas, but better we keep it still wit' dat iskwa'o 'round."

"You've no one to fear now but the police," said Corey. "Lead me to the

place where you drove those cattle, Jules."

"Dose not my cattle——"

"I'm wise to that. Show me where you took them, that's all."

CHAPTER XII.

WHERE THE SPIRITS DANCE.

JULES, the Twin, had a mind that worked slowly and not very shrewdly. Information of value could be surprised out of him before his wits counseled caution. Corey had discovered this and made the most of it. Having admitted that he had driven cattle into the hills, the safest course for Jules was to lead the corporal along their trail. So the two started, following the crooks and turns of the valley in the general direction of Wolf Creek. The latter stream, in its lower reaches, cut through the rough country, and had helped to blind the trail of many a fugitive from the law.

Corey's alert eye read signs in abundance to prove that Jules was leading him along the right course. Swales and dry washes opened into the valley from left and right; after a half hour in the saddle Jules would have turned into one of these.

"No, you don't, Jules!" said Corey sharply. "There's no indication that you made a turn here, but every indication that you kept straight on with the stock. Don't try to be funny with me because it won't get you anywhere."

Jules muttered to himself and proceeded along the valley. "You comprenny dat Pahkugh ka Neematchik?" he inquired.

"Sure," answered Corey, lifting his eyes to the northern skies.

"Nah," continued the other, "I not mean dose lights in de sky but dat odder, w'at is call' 'Dance of Spirits' by Wolf Creek.

"I've heard of it, but haven't seen it."

"I no like 'um, by gar," said Jules, shaking his head gruesomely. "Planty men, white, Injun, and breed, go die in dat place, corp'ral. Dey dance under-

ground; you see 'um ground move while dey dance!"

Sparrow Hills were haunted with grisly legends—childish, many of them, as was this superstitious "Dance of the Spirits." Those who believed in the yarns gave the hills a wide berth, unless compelled to enter them by force of circumstances. Jules undoubtedly was a believer; nevertheless he had come into the haunted region—sinking his fears, as Corey believed, in the hope of unlawful gain. There was a point, however, beyond which Jules would not go.

"I not go funder as here, corp'ral," he declared. "Mebbyso you lak' have a better look, den we leave de horses in dat coulee and go up by Pusquatenao."

After a moment's reflection, Corey decided to leave the horses in the coulee and do a little reconnoitering on foot. On the left of the coulee was "Naked Hill," the Pusquatenao of Jules. Up this the two climbed, quartering their way around to the opposite face. Here, halfway between base and crest, there was an erosion which Jules called the "Pocket."

From the lip of the Pocket Corey looked down on Wolf Creek and the scattering of trees along its banks. To the left, at the foot of Pusquatenao, was a stretch of level country, wide between the hill slopes and reaching far back into the mouth of the valley through which Corey and Jules had been traveling.

For a space of several hundred feet along the water's edge, and running into the hills for a like distance, there was a level, sandy stretch which heaved and rippled and jumped across its whole surface. This was a quicksand and said to be bottomless. How many lives of man and beast that wide, bubbling pit had claimed there was no way of computing. A low bank of hard ground, pitching off steeply, surrounded the quagmire in an irregular half circle. Here the spirits of those trapped and buried had their "dance," shaking the surface of the treacherous earth continually.

Corey's keen gaze passed beyond the quicksands to a patch of timber. Above

the tops of the trees there arose the thin white smoke of a wood fire.

"Who's over there, Jules?" Corey asked.

"I not know, corp'ral," said the prisoner.

Once more Corey dropped his eyes to the creek opposite the Pocket. Between the trees he saw a skiff, low in the water, a man with an oar on the rear thwart; on the bank was another man in a tracking harness, pulling the skiff upstream. The corporal quickly opened the handcuff on one of Jules' swarthy wrists, pushed the man to a tall sapling that grew just beyond the lip of the Pocket, pulled his arms around the stout, slender bole, and snapped the handcuff into place again. Then, taking the handkerchief from the prisoner's throat, Corey twisted it and tied it between his jaws.

"You'll do for a while, Jules," remarked the corporal. "I'll be back for you before long."

With that, he left the Pocket, slipped down the bare, steep hillside to the timber, and came hurriedly to the sweating man at the end of the towline. The man halted and straightened his bent back. An uneasy look crossed his swarthy face.

"*B' jour*, Baptiste," said Corey grimly.

"*B' jour*, corp'ral," answered the other uncertainly.

Baptiste was in his bare feet, with trousers rolled well above his stocky knees. A corduroy vest overlay his soiled cotton shirt; down on vest and shirt dripped the perspiration from his face. There was a sash about his waist. He lifted a loose end of it to mop the water from his eyes.

"I heard you were away from home, Baptiste," went on Corey, fixing his eyes on the scow. "That your boy, Henri?"

"*Oui*, corp'ral."

"Hot day for tracking a loaded skiff, Baptiste. What's aboard?"

Baptiste was slow to answer. Corey walked back to the boat and waded out to it. While Baptiste and Henri watched with fearful eyes, he threw

back an old tarpaulin that concealed the cargo.

"A fresh beef, quartered!" exclaimed Corey. He looked the scow over carefully. "Where's the hide, Baptiste?" he called.

"No got de hide, corp'ral. Me, I can't bodder wit' de hide."

"Where'd you get the beef?"

"Buy 'm, corp'ral, from dat foreman for Hardshell Glover. Me honest, corp'ral. Look." He produced a dirty scrap of paper from his vest and handed it to Corey.

In a few scrawled, misspelled words, H. Glover stated over his own signature that he had that day sold to Baptiste Tradeux one fresh-killed beef.

"What will you do with all that meat, Baptiste?" asked Corey. "It won't keep long in this weather."

"Some is for me, corp'ral," returned Baptiste, "and w'at I not want I sell to half-breeds up and down de creek."

"All right, go ahead; but to-morrow afternoon, Baptiste, you come to the detachment. I've got a few questions to ask you."

"*Bien*, corp'ral." The expression on Baptiste's face was not wholly one of relief. "Henri!" he called.

"Achipitamook—haul away!" answered Henri promptly.

Baptiste settled into the harness and moved slowly onward. He could not look behind, but Henri found ample opportunity for that. When the scow had vanished around one of the many turns of the creek, Corey made his way cautiously downstream. He came at last to the edge of the quicksand, on the creek side; almost at the same moment, a man appeared, not more than a hundred feet away around the half circle of the low bank. He had a heavy bundle, compactly bound, and this he rolled from the bank. It sank into the heaving sands and presently vanished.

"There goes the hide that Baptiste failed to get!" thought Corey. "This cattle case is coming to a head in one-two time."

Having presented the 'telltale hide to the dancing spirits of the quicksands, the man sat down on the bank

and lighted a pipe. Apparently he was in a reflective mood.

Corey slipped out of the brush and, crawling on all fours, made his slow and noiseless way across the open, between the base of Naked Hill and the bank edging the tossing sands. When he rose erect he was not more than a dozen feet from the man with the pipe.

"Steady, Jake!" he called. "Here's where I land on you again."

Piegan Jake was on his feet in a flash, whirling to an about-face and staring into the muzzle of Corey's leveled revolver.

"What's your business with me?" he asked gruffly. "That horse deal——"

"That's another matter, Jake; it's the cattle deal we have ahead of us now. How many hides of stolen cattle have you tossed into the quicksands, eh? It makes 'em mighty hard to find. Come this way and come peaceably; you're going back to the detachment with me and——"

Not until that moment had Corey the faintest idea that a trap had been set for him. A quick whisper of moccasined feet sounded at his back, and before he could turn, there were hands about his throat and a writhing form on his shoulders. As he staggered under the weight of the man who clung to him and slowly throttled him, Piegan Jake gave vent to a mocking laugh and ran forward.

It was the first time in his long police career that Corey had ever been caught in such a way. By a blunder he had sprung the trap.

CHAPTER XIII.

SHOULDER TO SHOULDER.

DRIPPING his revolver, Corey seized the hands that were clutching his throat. Quick work was called for if he was to free himself before Piegan Jake reinforced the man who had made the attack from the rear. Rallying every ounce of his strength, Corey gave a heave of his shoulders while he pulled savagely at the encircling arms. The maneuver was successful, for the load on his back went writhing over his

head and struck the ground in front of him.

As the corporal stooped to recover his revolver, however, the man on the ground laid hold of one of his knees and pulled him down. Jake, by that time, was within arm's reach.

"Hang to him, Mose!" shouted Jake. "If he slips through our fingers now he's the best prairie cop in Alberta!"

With that, the blond half-breed fell upon the corporal, so that he was flattened out between his two foes. With his hands, his feet, his knees he continued to fight, and so furiously that all three combatants rolled in a tangle on the prairie sod. Poisonous imprecations escaped the two rustlers. Not until Piegan Jake hauled a knife from his coat and struck with it did the strain of resistance ease at all—and then only partly.

Corey, out of the tails of his eyes, had seen the hand emerge with the knife. He was not minded to let Jake deal with him as he had dealt with Tete Jaune, and when the blade fell a quick twist of the body had deflected the point to his left shoulder. The sharp steel was like a searing flame, and a quick weakness ran through Corey's left hand and arm. Nevertheless he managed to kick the knife hand of Piegan Jake, sending the dirk flying and bringing a gasp of pain from the half-breed's lips.

"Now we got 'im, Jake!" panted Mose.

"The quicksands! Drag him over there! It's our only move, Mose, after this. If the police can't find him there'll be no score against us."

Corey had one good hand and he continued to use it. Half-dragged and half-carried, but fighting at every step, he was brought to the lip of the bank that overhung the quicksands. There he managed to land an able blow full in the face of Piegan Jake, to slip eel-like from the hands of Mose and to roll for half a dozen feet back toward the hill. Staggering erect, he made a heroic effort to reach his revolver, where it lay and glistered in the sun.

A weapon barked behind him and a bullet fanned his cheek. He came to

the six-gun but fell upon it as he reached to pick it up. Then, before he could rise, the infuriated rustlers were upon him again, striking, kicking, and holding him pinned to the earth. The revolver was wrenched from his gripping fingers and tossed away, and the struggle toward the quicksands began all over.

Foot by foot Corey, disabled but doing his best, was brought back to the edge of the quicksands. Again and again he would have been forced over the brink, but at the critical moment his right arm wrapped itself about a foot or leg of his antagonists and held tenaciously.

The unequal contest could not last long. Corey, weakened by his wound and spent by his efforts, realized that. He wondered why Piegan Jake did not fire again, then pitch him into the bubbling pit where the sands would hide him forever. Why were these two harrying him like timber wolves when it was within their power to close his account at once?

There are men who will struggle in a hopeless cause so long as there is a flicker of breath, or an ounce of strength, in their bodies. The dogged determination to fight to the bitter end is part of their duty. This law is not written in the code of the Mounted, but it is a part of the very soul and fiber of that force of Empire Builders. "The day's work—go do it!" is the order. And the day's work, to the everlasting credit of that brave constabulary, is always done.

Corey gripped hard on his ragged edge of life, the blood pounding in his ears, his fight for breath tearing at his lungs, and the dust of the crumbling bank blinding his eyes.

Although he could not see it or hear it, he sensed abruptly a lessening of the savage force that sought to kill and bury him at one operation. No longer was he kicked and prodded and pushed. He dragged himself unhindered over the edge of the bank, and groaned as he rolled on his left side. The crimson knuckles of his right hand dug the perspiration and earth from his eyes.

Then his faint pulses quickened at the scene which burst, all unexpected, upon the screen of his freshly awakened senses.

Mose was down and feebly supporting himself on one elbow while he gasped for air. And Piegan Jake was being manhandled by one who knew his due and was giving him the limit. The half-breed tried to get at his gun, but was bowled over by a fist that found his jaw with the impact of a pile driver. On his feet again like a cat, he charged bull-like at his new enemy, only to have his neck caught in the crook of a mighty arm while he was lifted bodily and cast over a shoulder like that of a Hercules. The half-breed crashed to the ground, and lay there stunned and wheezing heavily.

"How bad is it, old chap?" asked a voice as the newcomer sank down at Corey's side.

"Not so bad as it looks, Jeremy," mumbled Corey.

"Can you get up? Try. More of these devils are coming from the timber."

Corey sat up, tucked his feet under him, and managed to rise. The broad level of the quicksands grew tangled with the distant hills and trees, and the creek stood on end like a cataract, all doing a dizzy dance. An arm leaped to his support.

Then a rifle roared and a bullet bit into the earth at his feet. Stillson muttered. The hills gave back a second report, and a third, tossing the echoes about until they suggested a machine-gun battery. Stillson muttered again.

"Dunderhead!" he growled; "all our horses are in the coulee. Shank's mare for it, and we've got to look sharp. Pull yourself together, Garde, for this is going to be a tight squeeze."

Corey got to his revolver and gathered it in. He made a fierce call on his flagging powers, and they responded to the needs of the moment. Stillson had jerked Piegan Jake to his feet and, with the half-breed in front of him, had crowded close to Corey. The rifle fire died out. Evidently no chances were

to be taken where Piegan Jake was concerned.

"Never mind the other man," said Stillson. "Back up, Garde. There's a shelf on the slope behind us, and if we reach it we can stand off this crowd."

Piegan Jake was an unwilling shield, but the strength of the sergeant mastered him. Five men were advancing from the timber over which Corey had seen hanging the smoke of a fire. They came rapidly around the curve of the bank edging the quicksands, plainly bent on the recapture of their leader. Stillson launched a shot over the half-breed's shoulder. It was close to the man in the lead and the whole party of would-be rescuers hung back.

Corey crawled on hands and knees up the slope of Pusquatenao, making himself a fair target above the heads of Stillson and Piegan Jake. The guns boomed at him, but their lead merely framed him in geysers of dust. Fate must have reckoned that he had had his share of calamities for that day. Tumbling over the shelf, he rolled into a depression as wide and deep as a buffalo wallow. Here was safety, at least for a time.

Stillson joined the corporal, heaving Piegan Jake after him with hands none too gentle.

"If that gang of yours take us at a disadvantage, Piegan Jake," he remarked, "you'll be the first one to suffer for it. Where's that gaudy nugget chain you used to wear twisted across your breast?"

"Lost it," grunted the half-breed sullenly.

"We found four inches of it in the hand of Te' Jaune, where you left him in the tote road."

Piegan Jake narrowed his eyes but held his tongue.

"Sorry I have no more handcuffs with me," Stillson went on. "Is that a crossbelt under your coat? Off with it." The crossbelt with its swinging knife sheath was unbuckled and handed over. "Where's the knife?" demanded the sergeant.

"Down below, Jeremy," put in

Corey. "He dropped it after he used it on me."

"That'll do—I'm not letting him hold out a thing. Now, Jake, your waist belt."

With these two bands of leather Stillson secured the prisoner's hands and feet.

"Now we're set fair," went on Stillson, and took a look at the men below. "They're counseling with the man who was helping Jake pry you into the quicksands," he reported to Corey. "We've got time for a little first aid, I guess."

He removed Corey's jacket and slit his shirt down the shoulder, laying bare the wound. Then, with a handkerchief of his own and one of Corey's, he made a crude bandage and knotted it in place.

"No water, old chap," he said regretfully, "but that's a penalty you have to pay because of my failure to bring Sorreltop around the hill with me. Are you bucking up?"

"Feeling first chop," returned Corey. "You followed me in a hurry, Stillson."

"John Calthorpe was on the way to Glover's and we met him halfway from the dugout. He was looking for Lilith, and hoping at the same time to get some trace of Ora. Calthorpe was so pleased that he volunteered to take Lafarge to Bitter Springs. The girls went with him and I turned back this way. Found Shoofly and Jules' horse in the coulee, and I left Sorreltop to keep them company and went looking for you around Naked Hill. Discovered Jules in the pocket. After I had released the gag he told me where you had gone. Left him and went down to the creek. No signs. Then I heard a report—and that drew me here."

"Piegan Jake scored a miss as I went after my revolver," explained Corey.

"That was a lovely scene we had at the dugout," growled Stillson. "The gentle Lilith quite surprised me with her burst of temper. What did that suggest to you?"

"Cree blood," said Corey, and noticed that Piegan Jake had cocked an ear so that nothing should escape him.

Stillson sat where he could look over

the top of the small depression and watch the men below. "There was no one at Baptiste's when I got there," he continued, "but I was hailed by a wounded man who dragged a game leg into the path leading from the cabin to the river. That man was Pierre, a dead ringer for your Jules if we except the scar and the earrings. Pierre is the brother of Jules, but with an altogether different character. *He* was the strange half-breed from Athabaska Landing, Garde, and was supposedly put away by Lafarge. He was swimming in the creek when Lafarge fired at him and, having his head about him, he immediately sank and did the rest of his swimming under water.

"The letter he had at Athabaska Landing, written by Benning, was taken away from him by Jules—stolen at the bidding of our mutual friend there, Piegan Jake," Stillson went on. "Pierre came to tell Ora about his loss, when he ran into that vipers' nest at Baptiste's. I got all this while making my way upstream in the canoe. When Lafarge talked with Mrs. Baptiste, Pierre listened in—having got out of the creek and dragged himself as close to the cabin as possible. His wound was bad and, later, his wits failed him. He came around, though, in time to hail me.

"That was one case, I'm wagering, where the sight of a police uniform was mighty welcome. Pierre is in comfortable quarters at the detachment, now, and I on-saddled with the first daylight and headed for the dugout. When I cleared the timber I met Lilith. She explained that she was out on her own, looking for Ora, and was bound for Hardshell Glover's. That was hard to swallow, but I let it go at that. When I turned from the trail and pointed for Sparrow Hills, Lilith came along. I knew Lafarge for a liar the moment he began to talk. For hadn't I seen, with my own eyes, the real man from Athabaska Landing? I kept that back, at the dugout, to see how far the fellow would go and to note the effect of his story and his fake letter upon Ora and Lilith."

Corey almost forgot the smart of his

injury in listening to this report of Stillson's. "And Benning's letter—where do you think it is, Jeremy?" he asked eagerly.

"About Piegan Jake, there, if it is anywhere. I'm going to find out."

He moved toward the prisoner, but, at that precise moment, was called back to the bit of ridge that formed their screen and breastwork. A volley of shots was launched against the hillside. Two bullets found the overhang of the burrow and sprinkled all inside it with loosened earth.

Stillson lifted his revolver, rested his elbow on the shelf of earth before him, and let loose the full cylinder. "Just by way of discouraging them," he remarked to Corey, facing around, ejecting the shells and refilling the chambers. "With them, I take it, it's out of sight out of mind so far as Piegan Jake is concerned. If they get too mischievous down there we'll set Jake on the edge of this hole in the hill and let them use him for a target."

"I can be in on this," said Corey, and crawled forward with his revolver.

CHAPTER XIV.

ACROSS THE YEARS.

THIS was like the old constable days when Stillson had played Jonathan to Corey's David. The wound in the corporal's shoulder filled his body with a thousand pains, yet there was a gladness in his heart that lifted his soul above every physical discomfort.

The barriers between him and his friend had suddenly been leveled. From the moment Stillson had left the dugout with Ora and Lilith and the man Lafarge a change had come over him. What was the cause of it?

Corey guessed that some word from Ora, or some unspoken, mystic message straight from her heart, had reached the big-souled sergeant. Even there, pent in a miserable hole on the hillside and surrounded by enemies, a glow of happiness smoldered in Stillson's eyes.

"Old Jeremy!" thought Corey. "I'd sacrifice anything on the altar of this

friendship of ours. Not even you know, I think, what Ora means to me; but I can turn from that, old pal, and comfort myself with the knowledge that life's big prize has gone to the better man!"

He looked over the rim of earth at the edge of the hole. There were six at the hill's foot, five from the timber who had joined Mose, Piegan Jake's right bower in laying the snare for Corey. The half dozen were spreading out, taking places and sitting down comfortably on the ground, rifles across their knees.

"Squatting there like a bunch of coyotes, Garde," remarked Stillson with a chuckle. "They're aiming to get us, and rescue Jake, when thirst and hunger drive us out."

That was the plan, Corey said to himself, but he could see nothing in it to chuckle over. Stillson had something at the back of his head. What was it?

"All's quiet for now," the sergeant went on, "so we can still give thought to personal matters."

Making his way to Piegan Jake, he felt in his pockets. The first object he dug up had a bearing on Exhibit A in the case of Tete Jaune. It was two sections of nugett chain, riven apart.

"So you 'lost it,' eh?" he jeered. "This trinket means a hanging for you, Mr. Monteith."

He searched further, coming at last upon a soiled envelope addressed to "Miss Ora Benning, in care of John Calthorpe, Esquire, Calthorpe's Ranch, near Wolf Creek." The envelope had been sealed, but some one had run a knife under the flap and opened it. Stillson merely glanced at the contents to make assurance doubly sure, then whirled with an exultant laugh on Corey.

"This proves that Jake Monteith was the head and front of all the scheming, Garde!" he declared. "For seventeen years and longer it has been his hand that pulled the wires. Lafarge gave us a little of the truth, there at the dugout. Jacques Courteau dallied over the work intrusted to him by Benning; and when, long after, he died at Churchill, it was to Pierre and not to Jules

that he gave the letter and the forty dollars.

"Pierre has a conscience," Stillson went on, "and he planned to carry out his trust, but in the North, as you know, plans wait on circumstances; and it was years before circumstances were right for Pierre to make his way to Wolf Creek. Then, on his way 'out,' he met his twin brother at Athabaska Landing. Blood is thicker than water, even mixed blood, and the brother who was 'square' and the brother who had gone crooked fraternized as brothers who have long been separated have a way of doing. When Pierre awoke from his reunion with Jules—it had lasted for days and there had been drinking—the letter was gone. Jules had it, and Jules had disappeared.

"Jules, of course, was a mere puppet of Piegan Jake's. He took the letter to him and Jake wrote another to which he signed Benning's name. Jake has had a fair education at the mission schools, so he handled the proposition plausibly. He turned the fake statement over to Lafarge, and gave Lafarge orders to follow Pierre, eliminate him, and take his place as the messenger from Athabaska Landing. You and I, Garde, do not have to read this letter of Benning's to Ora to know that Lilith is the adopted daughter.

"Lilith was hand and glove with her brother Jake in working the scheme. It was aimed at Benning's money, which Calthorpe holds as trustee. Lilith will pay for this!" declared Stillson darkly. "She's as deep in the mire as Jake. Her every move was calculated to place Ora under suspicion. Lilith said nothing to the police about finding Te' Jaune, nothing about having taken the pinto from Ora, nothing about turning the pinto over to Jules, nothing about the quirt she left in the tote road with Te' Jaune! This, believe me, is mighty dark for Lilith."

"Not so fast." It was Jake, speaking his mind at this point. The best of the Monteith blood was rising in him. The Cree strain that had spurred him on for so long was submerged by the rising white tide. "If I know those

boys below," continued Piegan Jake, "they'll have you dead of famine and thirst up here if it takes a week. Probably it will mean the same for me; but you'll have to revise yourself in the matter of Lilith, sergeant. I'll not sit here and have you condemn her out of hand. We can all cash in, knowing the truth."

"I'd rather set out on the Long Trail armored with truth, Monteith," observed Stillson gravely, "than pitch for the Unknown with only a few scraps of mission dogma for a shield—especially if my life had been like yours. Go clean, man."

"It's better to die here than to stretch a rope," returned Jake, with a wry smile. "As for an armor of truth, mission dogma, and all this—*n'importe*." He shrugged; then, being in a mood for frank speech, he proceeded: "My father was as good as you'll find, comb the Dominion as carefully as you will. My mother was more Cree than French. Monteith was Benning's friend, up to the time the two were spilled out of a boat while running the Grand Rapids of the Athabaska. My father saved Benning, but was so badly smashed by the rocks in doing it that he died. His last request of Benning was that he care for his boy and girl, and see that they had a fair start in the white man's world.

"Benning tried to do that," Jake continued, "but the boy was nearing fifteen and would have none of it. The girl was too young to know, and she went to Grouard. But Jake kept an eye on her, and in his young mind he formed his plans. He lived Cree and thought Cree. His father had died for Benning, so what Benning left belonged to those of the Monteith blood. That was his guiding principle, for the heart of the boy Jake was bitter.

"By his direction, the Crees who called on the widow of the minister at Grouard gave all their attention to Ora. That was the beginning, for Jake was launching his bolt across the years and had an Indian's patience. Meanwhile, he kept after Benning for money until Benning died; and, after that, he trailed Jacques Courteau for the last letter of

Benning's. Courteau was long dead when Jake came to Churchill looking for him. Following that, Jake hunted Pierre, the brother of Neesnetasis; then he set Neesnetasis on the trail. So, at last, Jake got what he wanted and planned the rest of it.

"While events were maturing Jake came to the Wolf Creek district. He had to live—and the ranchers' cattle were loosely guarded. He——"

"I'll warn you," said Corey, just here, "that what you say will be used against you. You're talking to members of the Mounted Police Force."

Piegan Jake laughed. "Neither of you will ever leave this hill to use anything I may say against me," he answered. "This talk is merely to make things clear before we cross the Divide; when we are on the Other Side, who knows what we shall be, if anything? Jake gathered his few men about him; and, mostly, they were Reefer's cowboys, and could work under cover of a registered brand; also, our output could be disposed of under cover of Hardshell Glover's brand, if we found difficulty in running the stock from the country."

"Lilith had no part in that. She may have suspected Jake, but she knew nothing absolutely. There was but one cry in her heart, and that was Corporal Corey." Monteith scowled. "She had his picture, and she showed it to me. Corey suspected her to be of mixed blood—not Ora. He turned from Lilith. I could have killed Corey to-day for being a police officer, tracking me; but, more, I could have killed him for rebuffing my sister because of her Cree blood; and——"

"You need not go into that," interpolated Corey.

"I had a pride in Lilith," resumed Monteith, "and I wanted her to rank with the highest. If she got all of Benning's money I would have my share, of course, but that was not all my motive. Pierre met Lilith and asked her to send Ora to the cabin of Baptiste. The wife of Baptiste was Lilith's friend. She furnished the Indian clothes, and it was Lilith's plan to have

Ora wear them. Who knows the heart of a woman, white, or French, or Cree? Not I, and I have lived a long time.

"She gave the pinto to Jules, for he was afoot and needed a mount; she did not report the killing of Te' Jaune, because she knew him as a witness for the crown, her brother's worst enemy; but when she left the quirt belonging to Ora in the tote road, we come to accident and not design. Give Lilith her due."

Piegan Jake stopped talking and relaxed against the earth wall behind him. He had been so frank in his talk that both the sergeant and the corporal were amazed. Yet Monteith must have known he was at the end of his course. Either there on the hill, or at the headquarters post, his finish was plain. Silence or speech were nothing to him.

"What about Te' Jaune?" questioned Stillson.

"You have the missing links in that nugget chain," said Piegan Jake; "figure it your own way."

"And there's Haskison's Ronceval," spoke up Corey.

"Ronceval was for Lilith, in the event that she might need the swiftest horse in the district; for me, if she did not." Piegan Jake laughed. "I fooled you there!"

He was still laughing when there came a fusillade from below. The laugh died on his lips and he watched curiously while Stillson and Corey turned hastily for a reconnoitering look over the long earthen mound. A cry of astonishment burst from Corey. Stillson faced Piegan Jake with a faint smile.

"And now, at the end, it is you who have been fooled, Monteith," he said. "I was to find Corey and, if I could hold your crowd here until the inspector and Bright arrived with enough men for a clean-up. While your outfit of rustlers has been trying to starve us out, the forces of law and order have been busy. The inspector and Bright have made good time—they are hours ahead of the schedule. Keep an eye on Jake, Garde," the sergeant added, and got up, climbed over the ledge, and started down the slope.

CHAPTER XV.

THE FRIEND WHO KNEW.

THREE days later Corey, confined to his cot in the detachment bunk room under the doctor's care, learned of the coup by which all the rustlers had been taken. From Pierre, occupying another police cot, Stillson had gathered news of the number of men engaged in helping Piegan Jake in his cattle operations. The inspector considered it necessary, from the standpoint of law and order, to make a clean sweep of the gang. If Corey's work promised results, Stillson was to let the inspector know, so that he could take the field personally with as large a volunteer force as the occasion might demand.

Stillson had passed the word by John Calthorpe that Corey was closing in lone-handed, but that he—Stillson—was about to join him. The place was Sparrow Hills. Bradford was ready for prompt action. With three cattlemen from the settlement he set out toward the hills. Other ranchers joined him, and Bright came on from Bitter Springs. The day was closing when the party divided and one contingent under the inspector and another under the constable moved up and down the creek, coming together near the quicksands with Piegan Jake's half dozen rustlers between them.

Reefer's cattle were found in the timber where Corey had seen smoke of a fire. Brand blotting had been going on. One steer was missing, but Baptiste could account for that.

All the stockmen of the district were rejoicing over the successful foray, and the two cells of the detachment were crowded with prisoners. Other things had happened, too. Stillson, on the third day of Corey's confinement to barracks, sat beside his cot and gave him the news. The corporal's injury was sufficiently serious to keep him in bed for many days longer, and he chafed at the inaction. Stillson, again the pal of old days, consoled him as best he could.

Bright, on reaching Glover's establishment at Bitter Springs for the last

time, had found a new owner in charge. Glover, his moon-faced Cree wife and all their numerous progeny, had decamped. And he had taken his leave, undoubtedly, directly after Corey had left with Ora and Jules, the Twin.

Baptiste, Mrs. Baptiste, and Henri were also among the missing. Baptiste, it seemed, thought this the best way out. Calling at the detachment, as Corey had ordered him to do, was not to his taste.

And Lilith, also, had vanished. "I have gone to my own people," was the burden of the note she had left behind. There was something pathetic in that. "Her own people!" Where would she find them?

"It's a blood call, Garde," said Stillson, "and no more to be resisted than the voice of fate. And to think," he added regretfully, "that I thought you were taken with the girl in Edmonton! You were together a great deal——"

"I thought she knew something of the Benning mystery," put in Corey. "I believed all the time that she was the adopted daughter, but there was nothing between us, Jeremy."

"I was blind, I guess," muttered Stillson. "The suspicion ground into my soul. And especially," he added, "after Ora had told me that the only one in her heart was you——"

"Me?" Corey started up on the cot, amazed. "Man, is that the truth?"

"You know it is, Garde, or I would not be telling you. But there was the shadow across Ora's life—the mystery of her parentage. You would overlook that—you never showed any great concern about it—but Ora could not. My business, from that time on and apart from police work, was to find how you stood and to lay the Benning specter. So, at my own request, I was sent here where I could be close to Calthorpe's ranch and Lilith. There were no developments until you came. It was worth ten years of my life to be at the dugout in Sparrow Hills and get the first inkling of my mistake regarding you and Lilith. It was worth more to be in the hillside and hear Piegan Jake express himself on the same question. I have been a blind fool, old chap."

He put out his hand and Corey clasped it. Two years this friend had been working for him! Two years he had known that Ora's heart belonged to Corey, and he had fought to clear the path between the two!

"I—I know what this means to you, Jeremy," mumbled Corey.

"No, you can't know," answered Stillson, "but I want you to realize this, Garde: no blood brother could be nearer to me than you are. In your happiness I shall find a great happiness for myself. Yes, I shied at that Cree blood. It was in me and I could not help it. Some day you will read that letter of Benning's—the letter written seventeen years ago. Monteith died to save him; and he paid his debt to Monteith by rearing Lilith as his own, making a mystery of her parentage so that Calthorpe would make no distinction between her and Ora.

"This was rather fine, in a way, but it came near proving disastrous," Stillson went on. "That letter, after these long years, has laid the specter. Only the machinations of Jake Monteith and the untrustworthiness of Jacques Courteau stretched the mystery over the years. Benning himself was as good as his word."

There was a knock at the bunk-room

door. Stillson smiled in his quiet way, got up from his chair, and went out. Never had he dominated a situation more than he had that one—nor at such cost to himself.

Ora came into the room, not as a Girl from the West, nor in the trappings of a Girl of the Crees, but as he had known her in Edmonton. She took the chair vacated by the sergeant.

"Out of all this sorrow and misery, Garde," she whispered, "there comes ——" She paused.

"A perfect happiness, Ora," Corey told her. "The most perfect happiness, I think, is one that is touched by sorrow. Jeremy has told me——"

"He said he was going to," she murmured. "Ah, Jeremy, Jeremy! A man in a million, Garde!"

"A friend who knew!" Corey said; "a friend who worked for a friend and sacrificed his own happiness. Ora!" He stretched out his hand to her.

And Pierre, from his cot, saw the iskwao bend over the corporal and press her lips to his. Then Pierre turned his face to the wall and heard nothing but the birds outside the open detachment windows. For that was the month, not August, but "Ogaphao pesim," the days when the birds begin to fly.



THE BAD START

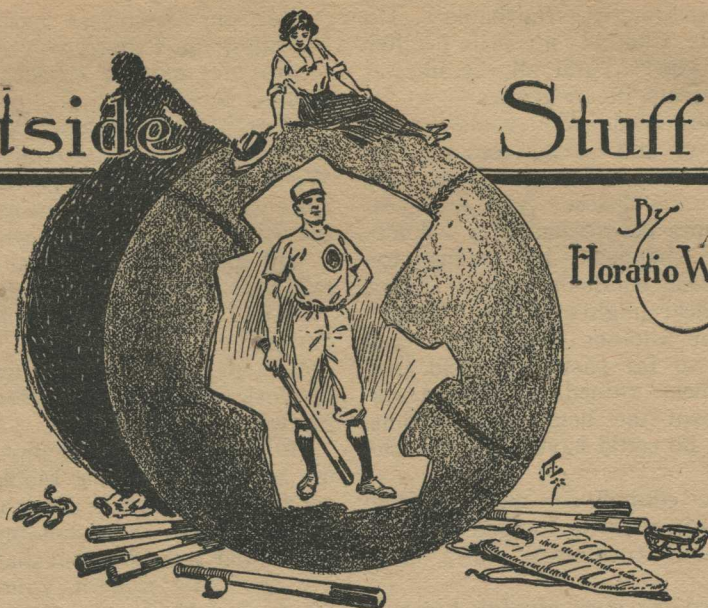
By Charles Horace Meiers

A BAD start is to be deplored—
It makes a strenuous race;
But many a victory has been scored
By strong and steady pace
Continued with courageous heart,
Despite some time lost at the start.

And so it is in life's great race—
If, dreading to begin,
We lose time ere we strike our pace,
The race is hard to win.
But many a grand success is won
Despite a bad start in life's run!

Outside

Stuff ~



By
Horatio Winslow

(COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE)

CHAPTER I.

A MATTER OF PSYCHOLOGY.

T was noon of a Thursday when I said to myself, "I'm tired of batting averages. I'm going to loaf for an hour where the good people of Chicago come to rest their minds and eat ham sandwiches. I'm going to the Lake Front to see if the wild waves aren't talking about something besides baseball."

A ball tosser, however, is a good deal the same as an actor; he would like to think about something else, but he can't. I had no sooner crossed Michigan Boulevard to the Art Institute than I spotted a bunch of boys in shirt sleeves desecrating the national pastime; and within two minutes I'd forgot Lake Michigan and was nestling close to the ringside, where I could see all the revolting details.

It was the way one of the chaps handled himself that got me first. There he was in this bunch of fifteen-dollar clerks, showing up like a gold eagle on a collection plate. He didn't freeze out in the field, waiting for something

to drop into his glove; he played the batter. In his sleepy, lazy way he seemed to have every man on the other team sized up. When old Blue Shirt, the heavy hitter, swung a bat, our young hero walked back into center field and waited for what he knew was coming. And he shifted to right or left, or came in close to back up second, just as the doctor ordered. No grand-standing, mind you; just a slow, easy, get-there that made you think of old Nap Lajoie.

It wasn't however, till he stepped into the batter's box that I knew he was the grand special prize in this year's grab bag. You know how the usual amateur boob hooks on to his bat as if he was afraid the umpire would take it away from him. Well, *he* didn't. Waiting for the pitcher's first ball, he was just as easy as he had been out on the field. And when, reaching for a wide out, he stumbled over the raised plate and fell flat, I knew as well as he did that it wasn't his fault, and that it was just a miracle that his lazy swing hadn't connected.

But the wise boys in the crowd knew better.

"Oh, you Douglass Fairbanks! Do it again, Mr. Chaplin; my little brother didn't see you!" And all the like of that came from the side lines.

It got him mad. You could see he was mad—up and down, from the tips of his red ears to his toes, that kept twisting in his shoes. And his eyes, that a minute before had that I-don't-care - what - happens - it's - going - to-bore-me look, suddenly blazed like a pair of searchlights. The pitcher lobbed over another, and blam! that ball sailed so far past right field that it pretty near ruined an auto truck coming down the boulevard. Home run? Say, he could have made the circuit twice!

That was enough for me. "Young fella," I said, when he romped in from third without turning a hair, "I'm Murph."

He looked me over careful, but not curious, just as if I'd told him, "I'm Oscar, the Educated Seal."

"Are you?" he asked.

"Murphy's my name," I explained.

"Tip' Murph."

"Is it?" he said.

At this I began to see a little red myself. Pride, maybe, isn't a popular vice, but there's a lot of it. And I couldn't help thinking of the ten million people in this broad land who don't know the name of the secretary of State, but who daily look over the sporting pages to see what Old Murph is doing.

"My baseball team," I said, speaking calmer than I felt, "is playing the Cubs in your beautiful little city."

You would have thought that would start something. But no!

"Are they?" he came back.

Then, just as I was on the point of speaking up nasty, the whole thing dawned on me. You can't much fool a man who knows pikeology—*sike*-ology, I mean. By his eyes, by his shoulders, by the way he stood and looked, I could see what was the matter with him. He didn't care. You had to get him mad to make him care. That's why, after the nit-wits begun their catcalling, he had slammed out such a hit.

"Murph," I says to myself, "if that boy signs up, I guess you're competent to get him mad as often as the team needs a hit."

"Yes," I said out loud, very calm and deliberate; "we're playing the Cubs. We're going along very satisfactory." This was a lie. "But we're always on the watch for young men who can catch a ball and hit one. That's why I'm talking to you. What d'you earn?"

"Are you taking the census?" he inquired.

It struck me that now was the time to work my little pike—*sike*-ology and get what I wanted.

"Oh, fair enough!" I piped up, looking as wise as Connie Mack. "Now I get you. First off I didn't understand. I thought you were holding back for some other reasons. But that's all right, my boy; it's more'n your privilege, it's your duty, to stay out of anything that's too rough for you. I would tell my own son the same thing. It is rough, and a boy like you is showing good sense when he stays out of it." With that I started to turn away.

But no chance! He caught me by the shoulder, his eyes lighting up just the way they'd done when he made his home run.

"Who told you it was too rough for me?"

I smiled at him, using the same smile that was good for a fight any time John McGraw and I came together in the days of the Orioles. Once "Silk" O'Loughlin told me that smile of mine used to drive him to the edge of manslaughter.

"Oh," I said, still smiling, "I haven't been thirty years in baseball for nothing. We'll shake hands and call it off. I didn't understand how you felt about it. Rough games for the rough ones."

"When do you practice?" he snapped.

"Every morning at ten, but I'm glad you've decided not to—"

"I'll bring my own bat," he said.

Just a little pike—*sike*-ology, you see. The best of them fall for it.

The upshot was that after giving him a little more information and another smile or two, I went away feeling that

maybe we might finish the season on top of Philadelphia, even if we had started out like sand-lot yannigans.

That night I said to young Rex Gath, who owned the team: "Mr. Gath, I've got under my hat the wickedest pinch hitter that ever busted a fence."

He looked up from the letter he was writing to his girl. "You need him," he growled. "And after you get him, all you have to do is to train the team till they can manage to get somebody to first base. How many games did we lose out of the last seven—was it eight or nine?"

He carried a mean tongue in his head, did Mr. Rex Gath. And the worst of it was that I had no comeback.

But after all, deep down in my heart, I knew that the Murphs were on their way to something that would help them out of the cellar, providing my pike—excuse me—*sike*-ology kept working.

CHAPTER II.

WORKED TO A FRAZZLE.

NEXT morning, out at the ball park, I slipped a bug into Luke Hennesy's ear, and when the young star, looking like any other fifteen-dollar clerk, came up to show what he could do, the pitcher was ready for him.

The first ball shot so straight at the boy's head that even with his quick duck it parted the hair on his neck.

Easy and lazy and careless that youngster had stepped up to the plate; but after the barber-shop trick you could see he was ready to bite a chunk out of the hard rubber.

"Come again!" he yelled to Hennesy.

And when Hennesy pitched again, the ball bounced off the bat so hard that the boy came pretty near winning a hat from Aaronson's Hat Store.

"That's what I get for tossing 'em," muttered Hennesy, losing his temper. "What do you think you're doing? Showing off to some sweet patootie in the grand stand?"

It couldn't have come out any better. The more Hennesy said, and he said a lot, making it up from his own head

as he went along, the madder the boy got. In fifteen minutes he had landed on every pet curve in Hennesy's collection.

At that he might have got away without signing up, but once more I brought out the old stuff.

"Beat it, young man!" I said. "I'll take back all I told you about signing you up. I apologize. You're all right, but you won't do." And I smiled. It was the smile that got him.

"I won't do?"

"No, my friend; you won't do. You can't stick in the same gang with this man Hennesy. He's a little too rough even for me to handle. Now that he's taken a dislike to you, there might be murder. You look like a promising boy; prob'ly there's somebody waiting for you at home that doesn't want to see you playing the star part in a coroner's inquest. Maybe sometime after Hennesy quits the game——"

"Can't I bat?" he yelled, with the old live look snapping in his eyes.

"Sure, you can bat!" I smiled some more. "But Hennesy——"

"Get out your contract," he said between his teeth. "And don't think for a minute that Hennesy or anybody else is going to keep me from doing what I want to do."

Ten minutes later Oliver T. Jones wasn't working for his old employers any more, and the Murphs had a new pinch hitter.

That's how Jonesy came to us, and it was the finest thing that ever happened to the team. In the first place, Jonesy did well; there wasn't anybody who could say he didn't. It may not be much to lick the Giants, but we trimmed 'em four straight, and Jonesy did his bit in every game. As a regular nine-inning player he wasn't any star. He showed flashes, but his calm, lazy way of playing didn't quite get him a ticket to ride first class. But when the Murphs needed a hit in the break, all I had to do was to whisper the right words in his ear before he stepped into the box. Right there the game was won.

I tell you, a man can't know too

much about this *sike*-ology. For instance, how did I keep Pete Dixon happy and contented while he was so far away from his little cabin on the sunny Suwannee River? Why, by making special arrangements with every hotel chef and seeing that he got genuine corn pone and New Orleans molasses three times a day. "Hetty" Green went through six seasons with the Murphys, never knowing that the extra twenty-five I slipped him every time he pitched a shut-out didn't come from my own pocket. I guess there's more than one fan that's watched me talking to "Trix" Tinkham between innings and wondered why I kept nodding my head every time Trix spoke. All the time I was asking Trix's opinions about everything from base hits to dentists. Trix didn't have much above the collar, and it tickled him to have me begging for his advice. And I didn't have any doubt that three times a week, anyhow, I could get Jonesy good and mad.

It wasn't long before everybody on the team was wise, and keen for slipping me stunts to pull on Jonesy. Of course, they appreciated the boy and were anxious to do anything to help out the team, but there was another reason, too. Jonesy wasn't, so to speak, a howling favorite with the gang. He ate and he slept and he played ball, and that was about all you could say for him. When Pete McClintock asked him to go and see Norma Talmadge, Jonesy came back with, "Who's Norma Talmadge?" And when Gus Freeman said, "Don't you ever go out anywhere to dances or anything like that?" Jonesy replied, "No; I might get lost coming home." That ended him with Gus.

After all, however, the business of a ball player is to play ball, and if he can do that you excuse a lot of other things about him. And Jonesy did play ball. We would get runners on; then I would whisper to Jonesy something nasty that Hennessy had said the night before; or Doc Harris would hide Jonesy's favorite bat; or "Booster" Ahearn would drop a handful of sand down his neck. Then the clean-up!

We won the games, and everybody admitted that when we needed him Jonesy was there, even if the rest of the time he did show like a dead one. But the best of the whole business was the effect he had on the team. You know how it is when a man feels he's no good and can't get to be anything else. Well, that's the way our whole outfit was feeling when Jonesy showed up. But before he'd played three games, there wasn't anybody at all, from Rex Gath down, that didn't *know* we were hell-bent for the pennant. The team was stuffed full of the spirit that wins games.

It made me so cheerful that we were back on the home grounds before I woke to the fact that Jonesy was slipping into his old self. Somehow, the things that had stirred him up on the road weren't working as well as they had at first. Jonesy must have begun to realize that old Luke Hennessy had never taken a swing at anybody in his life, and that outside of the baseball season he was a quiet man, with a wife and three children somewhere in New Jersey. As for the rough stuff that had sent Jonesy tearing crazy the first time it was pulled—well, he seemed to have figured that it was only a frame-up, and he let it all go by with a shrug of his shoulders. Even my smile didn't get results; Jonesy just put on a smile of his own that was pretty near as good as mine.

"Alexander's got it in for you," I told him, before he went up to knock in a couple of runs against the Cubs. "He says he can whiff you one-two-three, just like that. And he says he's going to prove it."

Jonesy stretched and yawned. "Well, probably Grover Alexander is right," he replied. And going up to the plate he beat the atmosphere one-two-three, just like that. The game was over.

"Do you know what you're doing?" I banged at him as he walked away from the plate. "You're throwing us down, that's what. And if you're not doing that, you're playing such natural rotten ball that it's a crime to let you on the diamond."

"Oh, very well," he said, as cool as a Los Angeles evening. "Why don't you fire me? I won't get out an injunction, so don't worry. This business is getting a little tiresome, anyhow."

What could I say? All right, I said it.

"What's the matter with this man Jonesy?" young Gath complained that night. "He was going along so good that we copped fifteen games out of the last seventeen. And this afternoon he didn't even try. I tell you, Murph, that sort of stuff has got to stop. You wise him that if he doesn't brace up we'll give him the gate."

"I did," I said. "Now, what do I say to him after that?"

Rex Gath looked at me as though he were trying to read my mind, and, beginning to realize that he didn't know the whole story, put a couple of questions. Before I got through I'd told him everything: how Jonesy was by nature, what it took to get him mad enough to play *AI* ball, and all that stuff.

Rex Gath listened. Then he laughed till I got afraid he was going to lose the diamond pin out of his tie.

"He wants to get mad, huh? He can't bat unless he gets mad? Is that it? Well, leave it to me; I'll get him mad—good and mad."

"There's no use calling him, Mr. Gath. That's been worked to a frazzle."

"Leave it to me, Murph," he said. "I've got something better than anything you've tried yet. I've got the king-pin stuff. Kid him into coming with me to-night to a little parlor party; after that, you can lie back and watch the medicine work."

CHAPTER III.

READY TO SPRING.

IT was sure some job persuading Jonesy to accept young Gath's invitation. He wasn't going out, he said, and he would like to see anybody make him go out.

4B TN

"That's right, Jonesy," I put in; "you're showing the proper spirit. I guess maybe the family Bible at home proves you're the nephew of old 'Hunks' Jones, the Omaha tannery king, and you have to be careful because Rex Gath might introduce you to somebody who wasn't in the Omaha social set."

That turned the trick. When the time rolled around for Rex Gath's party, Jonesy was waiting in the lobby. He didn't come back till late that night.

"Now," said Gath, the next afternoon, as we started our double-header with the visiting Pirates, "he's had his medicine. You don't have to say a word—just lean back and watch it work."

It didn't take much of an eye to see that Jonesy was in a peculiar mood that afternoon. In the first place, he came up to me, which was unusual, and asked—asked, you understand—to be started in the first stanza of the first game and played all the way through. When I did shove him in for a clean-up, believe me, he did some cleaning! Before he got through Pittsburgh looked like Hitless Town.

I let him play all through the second, and you might have thought he was getting side money from a sporting-goods house, because every time he came to bat the club was out the price of a new ball.

Well, that was the beginning of Jonesy's come-back. Nobody on the team understood it; the kidding and horseplay had stopped, yet every time Jonesy stepped up to the plate the fielders first squinted back at the fence and then swore under their breaths at the pitcher.

Off the field Jonesy seemed to be about the same let-me-alone young bird he'd always been, except for one difference. He had gone into society; anyhow, that's the way McClintock figured it.

"It stands to reason, Murph," Mac said, "that he's getting to be a social butterfly—the big hunk of cheese! He's like all these yaps from the West." Mac was raised in Kingston, New York. "When they meet regular city people,

they just tumble all over themselves—the big boobs!”

“How do you make it that Jonesy’s in the butterfly class?”

“It stands to reason, doesn’t it? Look at the clothes he’s buying. Why, last night he was all dolled up in a dress suit; and when I asked him if he didn’t want me to go along—you know, Murph, I was always willing to help the crow out and show him how to act in society—he said no; he guessed not. ‘All right, Young Hunks Jones,’ I said to him, ‘only don’t drink out of the finger bowls.’ I guess that stung him, eh?”

As for me I didn’t care whether he went to tea fights or dog fights, so long as his batting average kept soaring. And soaring it kept. That old light in Jonesy’s eye was burning now about twenty-four hours a day. Rex Gath had certainly started something big, because Jonesy never minded my smile any more, and he didn’t care how much the boys called him the “Millionaire Kid” or “Young Hunks” or suchlike monickers.

I never got wise to what Rex was working till after we’d come back from a little side trip to Smoketown and Cincy, and were playing Saint Looley on the home grounds again.

Rex Gath was sitting in the grand stand with his girl, Darcy Woods. Specializing in big-handed ball players and owning a wife and five children in Wilkesbarre, Pennsylvania, maybe I’m not much of a judge of feminine beauty. Just the same, I’m willing to go on record as saying that Miss Darcy Woods could have played in the same league with Mary Pickford and Marion Davies; yes, and given them an awful run for the pennant. High class, too! Her folks didn’t approve of Rex Gath, though he was a college graduate and son of a railroad magnate, just because of his mixing in baseball. Well, there was Darcy Woods in the box, alongside of Rex Gath, and so far as I knew, watching us play for the first time.

Jonesy looked at her. All through the game he looked at her. And every time he came to bat he massacred that

ball. It was a typical Saint Looley slaughter.

“Mr. Gath,” I said that night, “I’m beginning to understand your system.”

“And maybe it isn’t some system!” returned Gath. “You see, I told Miss Woods all about it. ‘He seems to have decent manners,’ I said to her. ‘Let him call on you. You’ll find him a poor, shy nut who probably never saw a good-looking girl before. Get him interested in you,’ I said, ‘and then keep him dangling in the air.’ And you’ve seen for yourself, Murph, how well she’s doing it. Why, when Jones saw us together in the box this afternoon, he went crazy. I tell you, we’ll cop the pennant if I have to postpone the wedding.”

“You mean that you’re going to keep it up?”

“Keep it up! You bet I’m going to keep it up. I’m going to make a record for this team of mine”—yes; he said *mine*—“and if you want Jones to do something extra against Brooklyn next week, slip me the word, and I’ll have Miss Woods tell him that we’re engaged. Oh, boy! he’ll get so sore he’ll break the fence!”

I can’t say I liked the idea. Kidding is legitimate, but I’ve never been partial to using brass knuckles or clubs. Still, Mr. Gath owned the team, and it was a matter of business for me to go after the bunting. Jonesy was just plumb unfortunate.

So far this season the Trolley Dodgers had our number, and it was only ninety-nine and forty-four one hundredths per cent pure luck that we grabbed the first three games of the series at the wrong end of the Brooklyn Bridge. But the fourth looked bad. Our pitching staff was mostly out of commission, and Brooklyn was starting its fifty-seven-thousand-dollar beauty against us. We’d never beaten him yet.

“I want to make it four straight,” I told Rex Gath. “Let’s leave this pleasant little rubber-plant suburb with a good-by win. So any time you please you can spring the mine under Jonesy.”

"You're on," he said. "Now watch the fireworks."

Fireworks was right. Pale and drawn and vicious was Jonesy's face when he climbed into his uniform that afternoon.

"You'd better not play to-day," I said, solicitouslike. "You don't look rugged. What you need is to lie down somewheres and——"

"For Pete's sake, Murph," he groaned, "let me get my fingers around a bat! I want to hit something."

That day Jonesy not only played through nine innings without an error, but he wouldn't even let the fifty-seven thousand dollar importation give him a base on balls. He hit everything. The team Pullmaned home acting like a bunch of colts. Things couldn't have looked sweeter; all I asked was that Jonesy keep on feeling just as mad as he felt that afternoon.

But no! Instead of nursing his grouch and taking it out in daily doses of base hits, Jonesy just slumped. It was easy enough to see what had happened; afterward, in fact, he admitted it to me himself. As long as Darcy Woods was a possibility, why, he got mad every time Rex Gath made it a triangle. But when he found out definitely that she belonged to the owner of the Murphs he had one last explosion, and then quit trying.

CHAPTER IV.

THE LAST TRICK.

AS we headed West on our final swing around the circuit, everybody was playing like clockwork—that is, everybody except Jonesy. Once or twice he connected, but it was as much accident as anything else. Still, as I wrote to Mrs. Murph at Wilkesbarre, Pennsylvania, "There's nothing short of a miracle that can keep us from kissing the pennant." And the letter she wrote back was the sort that would nerve any man to go out with a blackjack and get the flag, or die trying. They say that old Murph has pulled a few baseball miracles in his time; well, let me tell you that I've used up a lot of

sike-ology, but, more than that, I've always had Mrs. Murph back of me. No wonder I've cleaned up!

But, of course, it takes all kinds of people to make a world. I realized that Murph was one kind and that Jonesy was another. So before we played Cincy I got Rex Gath by long distance, and I told him all.

"Jonesy's quit," I explained. "He's so discouraged that he hasn't got a kick left in him. Now, Mr. Gath, why don't you let the lady write to him that all isn't lost yet, and that he shouldn't give up hope because——"

Right there the break came. If the president of the telephone company had been listening in he could have had Rex Gath pinched for life for using such language.

"You take your team," roared Rex Gath—yes, he said *your*—"and tie a rope around its neck and throw it into the Great Lakes!"

"What's the matter?" I asked, surprised to hear the owner of a winning team use such language.

"What's the matter? Suffering umpires! Here's your pinhead Jones, with his celluloid collar and his reversible shirt——"

"Yes, yes," I broke in. "What's he done? You said——"

"Never mind what I said. Who owns this team, anyhow? Do you think I'm going to stand for any half-baked yahoo from the backwoods trying to make love to my girl?"

"What do you mean?" I interrupted. "He hasn't been talking to her, and he hasn't been talking about her."

The answer came back in a screech. If Rex Gath had possessed the self-control of a rabbit he wouldn't have said it. But he was so mad that he spilled the beans all along the wire:

"No; but she's talking too blank-blistered much about him!"

That was the secret. It had been easy enough to separate Jonesy and the girl, but Rex Gath had gone a little too far in his experimenting. Not only had he made Jonesy fall in love with Darcy Woods, but he had made Darcy Woods fall in love with Jonesy.

I woke up in time to get Rex Gath's parting word of cheer.

"I wash my hands of him," said Rex. "I'm through. If he can't play ball the way a normal fellow can play ball, then kick him out or sell him to Des Moines, Iowa." Then he hung up.

Well, that might be all right for Rex Gath, but it wasn't all right for me. I had an interest in getting to manage a world's champ team, even if Rex Gath was sick and tired of the whole baseball business.

So on the day we finished our schedule in first place, I called Jonesy aside for a little heart-to-heart talk. It was low; it was mean; it was raising his spirits with malice aforethought, just so I could jump on them later; but I had to do it.

"Jonesy," I said, "if I'm going to talk to you about one of your personal affairs, it's because I come to you as a friend."

"Can that chatter, Murph!" he flashed. "I know how much of a friend you are."

"Listen to me," I said, "and when I get through talking, you can judge for yourself. The little lady," I went on quickly—

His face turned white, while his lips began to roll back from his teeth till he looked as pleasant as a bulldog. "Leave her out of it," Jonesy snapped.

"Sure," I said; "in just one minute I'll leave her out of it. But the trouble is she won't leave you out of it. She may be engaged to Rex Gath—I guess she is; and her folks may not let her read your letters or write letters to you—that's what I've heard; but they can't stop her from thinking about you, and she's thinking about you hard. I can't tell you how I found this out, but I know it just the same."

There was a minute when I wasn't sure whether to put up my guard or duck. Then the whole story came out.

Rex Gath had certainly treated Jonesy rough. After letting him know that the girl was spoken for already, he had seen old man Woods, and

Darcy's pa had acted just as I figured he would do.

"She wrote me just once," said poor Jonesy, "and in the letter she told me that she didn't care to hear from me again. But she put a postscript on the envelope. Somebody had scratched it out, but I'll bet a home run to a foul tip that the postscript was different to what she said in the letter."

"You bet it was different, Jonesy!" I said, slapping him on the back. "And you just put your trust in old Murph, and you won't go far wrong. I'm looking after your best interests and don't you forget it. Before this world's series is over, you're going to hear from that girl direct."

And, Heaven forgive me! I meant it—though not in the way he did.

It was a hard battle we had to face, and I wasn't a bit sorry we had a string on Jonesy. I felt for the young folks, of course, but I would have sacrificed my grandfather's watch to win four of those seven games. It was just a case of waiting for the right time to land on him.

Accidentally, I had found out from Rex Gath that the marriage was just two weeks off; a quiet affair, invitations to near relatives only. Even the papers didn't have the news yet.

"She wanted to go to some of those world's series' games," said Rex Gath, "but nothing doing. She's not going to see that Jones again until she's got a 'Mrs.' in front of her name."

Well, that didn't matter. I wasn't going to let Rex Gath in on my scheme; I was going to work it all myself. Mrs. Murph had a sister in town, and after telling sister this and that, enough to give her a right line on the case, she and I framed up a little fake message from Darcy to Jonesy.

Eat it up? Say! He made you think of a starved cat that's found a saucer of milk. He wanted to believe it, and he did.

So every day after that Jonesy got a message from the girl, saying in effect that it would ruin everything if he should try to see her now, but that if he would just be patient everything

would come out all right. And not a word, of course, about the fact that the wedding cake was already ordered.

During the first games I kept Jonesy on the bench, a little worried, but happy. I didn't risk him even once, though twice I was pretty near driven to it. But on Tuesday of the second week of the series, playing on the home grounds, with the score three games all I made my plans for taking the last trick.

CHAPTER V.

"EYEFUL IS RIGHT."

EXACTLY eight o'clock that night found old Murph standing in a room that made you think of those moving-picture palaces, only this one was maybe a little more decorated. Darcy Woods' folks had made theirs, and believe me they knew how to spend it right. While I was waiting there, admiring the picture, in came Darcy herself.

Say, if she looked pretty in the grandstand box, it was nothing to the way she looked here. Some lucky boy, Rex Gath! Only you could see by Darcy Woods' eyes that she wasn't quite as happy as she might be. She didn't quite measure up to a girl on tiptoe because of her first wedding. No; not by a good deal!

"Miss Woods," I said, after I had explained things, "I take it there's no real secret about the fact that you and Rex Gath are going to be married next week."

"We've kept it from the papers, but it's not really a secret. To-day the announcements came from the engravers."

That gave me the best idea I had thought of yet. "Young Mr. Jones," I said, "is a friend of yours?"

She nodded, turning her head away, so I couldn't look at her eyes.

"Miss Woods, if you've really got his best interests at heart, you want him to make good. And the best way he can make good is by slamming the ball over the fence to-morrow. I've told you, and Mr. Gath has told you, what that boy needs to make him play like

a star. Now, will you do your part to—help?"

She bit her lips. "What do you want me to do?"

"I want you to take one of those wedding announcements, address it to him in your own handwriting, and give it to me. To-morrow, just before he goes to bat, I'll hand it to him. After he reads it, believe me, Miss Woods, he'll tear the cover off the ball. If he doesn't—well, then, I'll burn every book I got on pike—I mean, *sike*-ology."

The girl stood up, her eyes shining with tears. "You ask me to do so cruel a thing as that?"

"You like him?" I said.

She nodded her head.

"He acts as though he still thinks you care more for him than for Mr. Gath."

"What makes you say that?" she came back, breathing hard.

"By the way he acts. I know that's the way he thinks. All right! You like him. You want him to succeed in life, in the profession he has chosen. Well, then, you can't do a kinder thing for him than to make him succeed to-morrow. Afterward, when I tell him the whole business, he'll thank you for it."

For a long moment she stood there, staring at me, her lips parted; then, without a word, she turned and beat it out of the room. When she came back her face showed that she was trying to master her feelings and look at things in the right light.

"Here, Mr. Murphy," she said, handing me a big cream-colored envelope. "The announcement of the wedding is inside. Give it to him just—just when you need him to win the game. I—I—"

Then she broke down and cried, the way any woman is apt to when she's made a decision. That's why there'll never be any women umpires. She was still crying when I left the room.

Now, don't think I'm going to tell you the story of that last game of the world's series. You can find it in the newspapers; yes, and in the magazines, and tucked away in the skull of every

man, woman, and child that saw it. More than once, the reporter boys have written me up as Murph, the Human Iceberg; but during that game I lost four pounds that I've never got back since. It was the most awful seesaw that ever wore a manager's nerves.

When the ninth inning drew toward the end, with the Murphs one run behind, two out, and a man on second, I was ready to bite tenpenny nails or pinch pieces out of a horseshoe.

Through all those innings I had been wavering as to whether to send in Jonesy; but with Monahan, our other pinch hitter, as nervous as a rookie, and with Sheean due to contribute his usual one-two-three whiff, I had no choice.

"Batter up!" yelled Evans, as McClintock left the plate, grinding his teeth and throwing his bat at the goat mascot.

"Go in, Jonesy," I said. "Here's your first chance in a world's series. Go in and slam the pill. But before you step up to the plate, take a look at this letter from a friend of yours."

I handed him the cream-colored envelope.

Jonesy looked at it. As he read his name and recognized the handwriting, I could see his teeth jam hard together. With a nasty grip of his nails he tore it open.

The umpire pulled out his watch. "Come on, batter!" he yelled.

As though he was frozen, Jonesy stood staring at the engraved announcement.

"Play ball! Too late to take a correspondence course in batting!" somebody yelled from the bleachers. All around there was a growing, growling yell from the fans.

"Well, Jonesy," I said, smiling my worst, "it looks like the engraver has written you an eyeful."

"Engraver! Eyeful!" screamed Jonesy. Yes; *screamed*, I said; they heard it a hundred and fifty yards away. "Eyeful is right! Gimme a bat! A bat! A bat! Any bat!" He dropped the card to the ground and

made a sort of airplane swoop for the plate.

Ten seconds later the pitcher had dashed his glove to the ground, and the center fielder was doing a hundred-yard dash toward the fence.

The Murphs were champions of the world!

But while Rex Gath in his box, the birds in the grand stand, the boys in the bleachers, the fans on roofs and telephone poles, and everybody else were warwhooping it to a fare-ye-well, Old Murph, the man that fixed it all, was picking up the dropped wedding announcement.

CHAPTER VI.

THE OTHER WAY.

IT was just exactly like any other wedding announcement. It told how Mr. and Mrs. William Wendell Woods announced the marriage of their daughter Darcy Evelyn to Rex Hollinshead Gath. But at the very bottom of the sheet, underneath all the engraved stuff, somebody had written a postscript with a pen. The handwriting was the same as that on the envelope; it was Darcy's.

"I'll never marry him!" it said. "I don't care what mother does. Never! Never! And I don't care if you haven't a cent, and if Mr. Murphy won't have you on his horrid old team. I know now that I can never love anybody but you, and you will find me waiting for you at home right now. Darcy."

And what would you say to that, now?

I kept my mouth shut till about nine o'clock the next evening, when I was one of the guests at a hurry-up wedding. The bride was Miss Darcy Woods, all right, but the groom wasn't Mr. Rex Gath; no, he wasn't.

Still, after all, that was Rex Gath's fault: you see, he never took the trouble to study feminine or any other kind of pike—I mean, *sike*-ology.

"Well," says Jonesy when he saw me, "I dunno whether to take a punch at you or shake you by the hand; so

I'll introduce you to my father and see what you can do to him."

And there I was mitting a red-faced, white-haired old boy, who grinned at me over his soup and fish like a good-natured gorilla.

"Well," yelled old man Jones, "you did a good job on the lad, and speaking as a father I'm much obliged to you."

"Between you and me and the sporting page," I said, "I haven't got it figured out yet. Jonesy couldn't bat until somebody got him mad. I discovered that, same as Columbus discovered America. Yet yesterday he knocks a home run because the lady says 'yes.' My theory is all upset," I said, "and it'll take me a while to figure him out; but I'll promise you he'll make good at baseball if I have to stay up all night studying him."

"You can stop worrying," returned old man Jones. "I've got him figured out already. And he won't have to play ball, because he's going to start tanning hides in Omaha."

I looked at him. "You don't mean," I asked, "that you're 'Hunks' Jones?"

"That's what some of my particular friends and all my particular enemies call me," he came back.

What do you know about that! After all our kidding, here it turns out that, after all, Jonesy is the son of old Hunks Jones, the tannery king; the son of a man with more money in his pocket than Rex Gath had in the bank. No wonder old man Woods had stood for a hurry-up wedding!

"Well," I said, "since you know all about it, will you be kind enough to tell me what it was that made him hit the ball for four bases yesterday?"

"Simple enough," replied Hunks Jones. "In the first place, he was always a natural star ball player from the time he wore short pants till he finished college. Yes; he could always hit or do anything else, as often as he felt really interested. But it was a case of getting him interested."

"Yes?"

Hunks Jones held up a couple of fingers. "When a man doesn't care

whether he does his job or not, there are only two things that'll make him care. The first is hate. A year ago, when I turned him out of my house, it was more to get him mad than for any other reason. It didn't work with me, but it did with you."

"It sure did!" I agreed. "I got him mad, and I almost kept him mad. But what's the other way?"

"The other way," Hunks Jones answered, lowering his voice from a roar to a quiet bellow, "the other way isn't like hate, that flames up and dies down; the other way lasts. It's the opposite of hate. It's—well, look at the two of them over there and dope it out for yourself."

And as I saw Jonesy and Darcy smiling at each other across the punch bowl, and making love with their eyes, I knew that the Jones' tannery was going to be in safe hands, and I—well, I sort of choked up and excused myself to go to the phone and ask the information bureau when the next train left for Wilkesbarre, Pennsylvania.

Always a Chance

I REFUSED this poem six weeks ago," said the editor. "Why do you again submit it?"

"I thought perhaps your taste had improved by this time," replied the poet, with a gleam of satisfaction in his eyes.

Perhaps, Bella

BELLA: "I think Harold must have loved before."

Gladys: "What makes you think that, dear?"

Bella: "Oh, I don't know, but he seems to search carefully for pins before he puts his arm round my waist."

Never Begins

TOMMY: "Pa, what do you do at the office all day?"

Pa (who has answered about a hundred other questions): "Oh, nothing!"

Tommy: "Then how do you know when you've finished?"

Proof of the Pudding—

By
Thomas Thursday



(COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE)

CHAPTER I.

PUT TO THE TEST.

DOC, there's three things that make me sore—one is the woman who uses 'wonderful' every other word, and the two others are the birds called self-made men. If you'll listen to those flippers for a second they'll chirp that they reached success by nothing less than pure brain work and sixteen gallons of midnight oil supplied by the Horatio Alger Petroleum Company.

"And if you'll linger in their vicinity a moment longer they'll start in to compare themselves with Julius Cæsar and a complete set of Oliver Hoptic's heroes; and then wind up by showing you a photo of a log cabin that they've never been nearer to than the north pole is to a radiator. They'll tell you that they never had any luck or opportunity since the day they was born. Yes, sir; those birds figured out everything right in their little beans with no trouble at all.

"Doc, take it from me, that copy-book stuff is all wrong. Brains, without nerve, luck, and assorted action, is as useless as a ream of frozen fly-paper, and I can prove it!"

The above raving was uttered by no less than my pal and hotel roommate, Mr. Keen McCoy, known to the carni-

val and circus trade as "Everready." And if you'll ask any showman from here to the League of Nations they'll tell you that Everready is the king of circus "fixers," both past, present, and what's coming. But for the benefit of the boys and girls who don't know whether a circus fixer is a yard of inches or a pound of ounces, let me say that the same is the chief diplomat of the canvas show world.

For example, any time one of the troupers gets into trouble it's up to the fixer to get him out with the aid of a little diplomacy and compound nerve. And when it comes to the diplomacy stuff I'll stake a circus fixer up against any of the red-ribbon-around-the-chest birds who cluttered the table at the Pieces Conference. However— But let's hop back onto the track.

When the Move-A-Long Circus and Side Show quit for the season, Everready and me decided that the rising little town of Catch-As-Catch-Can—known to the map makers as New York—would be a good place to eat, drink, be merry, and try. Hitherto, McCoy had never been any nearer to Little Old Scrambleville than prohibition is to Broadway, and he was anxious to see what it was all about, if anything.

Soon as we landed off the train we started in to find a room—which was just like finding the laughs in a movie

comedy. After walking three hours' worth we at last got a room at a little less than one eye a week, after which we began to wonder whether the reports of Jesse James' demise were not greatly exaggerated.

In fact, when Everready heard the rates at the Hotel Gypdorf he raved like the Atlantic in a typhoon and got as sore as a night's sleep on an oak plank. And to make things worse, as the chap said as he skidded on a banana peel into a mud puddle, the first time we dashed into the hotel robber shop, the razor slingers must have mistaken me and Everready for Ali Baba and Aladdin's Lamp, judging from the dimensions of the bill they slipped us after the performance. Not only that, but every time we had an idea that we were hungry the restaurant department soaked us like a sponge for nothing more than a slice of fried leatherino and a cup of coffee that would no doubt make great sawdust if they didn't dip it in water. And so—— But let's short circuit the essay and light up the action.

On our third morning in the town, Everready became as restless as a cat in front of a row of mechanical mice and let forth the outburst aforementioned.

"Take it from me," he went on, as he hopped over a chair for morning exercise, "I'm going to put a few of my theories to the test this a. m. As far as I can figure it out, this burg is as soft as a row of feather beds. All you need to get by is a little nerve, luck, opportunity, and action. That's the stuff—action!"

"How about brains?" I asked, as I slid into my socks.

"Brains your uncle!" he snapped. "What good are brains without action, hey? Why, a bird can sit down and conquer the world in his mind—and wind up by holding down a park bench. In other words, a thinker who doesn't act is like taking a vacation on a merry-go-round—you move, but at the end you get off at the same station. I don't claim to have any more brains than the average fellow, understand; but I might have a little nerve and a fair amount

of energy. And any time that I can get my nerve and energy mixed up with Old Boy Opportunity, I'm gonna blaze a trail to some place. You can have that brain stuff, Doc; I'll take my share in Opportunity and the breaks of life."

"But listen, Keen—isn't luck nothing but hard work?" I asked, remembering my copy-book education.

"Well, you poor flounder!" he tossed back. "Believe me, if work was luck then ninety-nine birds out of a hundred would have nothing but luck. And the gazabo who first made that yokel-yanking remark must have got his idea of life by studying the relation of web-footed eels to the Rise and Flop of the Roman Empire.

"Take my good friend Christopher Columbus, for example," McCoy went on. "Did Chris have any luck? You know it! Suppose he hadn't convinced those two royal numskulls, King Ferdie and Queen Isasomething, that there was a certain amount of land on the other side of the water. And suppose that, even after the royal birds gave him the send-off, a regular twenty-four-carat typhoon knocked his trick ships for a triple over the center field of the Atlantic. What then! Could Chris stop the wild waves and the riot of wind with his brains? I'll say he couldn't. In other words, Doc, Our Country 'Tis of Thee was discovered with the aid of ten per cent of brains, forty per cent opportunity, and fifty per cent luck! And that's that."

"Maybe you're all wrong," I mumbled.

"Well, considering the shape of your head, it's a mystery to me how you have sense enough to eat. However, I'll wager a slim little ten-spot against yours that I can leave this hotel this morning and, with the aid of a little luck and Old Boy Opportunity, return before the sun sets with a little loose change. Where's your ten?"

"Do you mean to say that you, a stranger in this big town, can go out without knowing where you're going, and cop off some coin?" I asked, dropping the brush for a period. "It can't be done. I know this town, and you've

got all kinds of competition, no matter what you do."

"Live wires don't recognize competition!" purred Everready. "Put up your ten!"

"It's up!" I snapped. "Where are we going?"

"Makes no difference, Doc; guess we'll hop a car and glide downtown as far as she goes. Come on; let's go!"

CHAPTER II.

FOR THE LOVE OF PRETZELS.

EVERREADY and I boarded a south and snailbound Eighth Avenue car—which was competing with the Erie, I'd say—and seated ourselves comfortably by hanging to a couple of straps. The wheeled sardine can was as crowded as a Jersey summer resort with mosquitoes, and every time the car swung around a curve I landed up, against some bird's breath.

"Hey, Keen, how far down are we going?" I asked, getting tired of doing the monkey act.

"As far as she goes, Doc. Never can tell what you're liable to——"

Bang! Crash! Right away I guessed that the nickel Pullman had hit nothing less than the world's supply of bricks. Everready bumped into me, I crashed into a fat flipper, the fat bird landed neatly into the lap of a hysterical lady, the lady poked her umbrella through the window for luck, or something, and so on, and so off, and et cetera. While I was busily engaged disentangling my shins from somebody's personality I heard Everready pass a few remarks to a string-bean sort of flipper who had made arrangements to use my pal's toes for a waiting room.

"Mister," said Everready in that quiet tone of his, "if you'll remove your big feet from my anatomy, I'll go outside and see whether this car hit Kansas or the Panama Canal. Follow me, Doc."

We eeled our way through the assorted brands of hysteria and raced up to the front to see what happened. When we reached the disturbance we

noted the motorman having a debate with the driver of a wagon that was lying scattered in at least ten directions. About twenty reams of paper were nestling neatly in an equal number of mud puddles, and it didn't take an adding machine to figure that the same was a total loss, if not more.

Suddenly, I saw Everready duck down and pick up a slip of paper. After reading it, his face lighted up like Broadway after dark.

"What did you find?" I asked. "A Liberty Bond?"

"The driver must have lost this in the wreck, Doc; it's a bill for twenty reams of Q bond paper. Quite interesting, I assure you."

"Well?" I asked, not understanding Greek.

"My dear Doc, your imagination is out of order," he said, beaming. "Now, if you had something in your head besides cue-ball material, you'd recognize this here slip of paper as Old Boy Opportunity himself! All I need now to cop your ten dollars is a little luck. Quick—slip me your pencil!"

A moment later, Everready had copied the bill entirely—the name of the printer it was consigned to, the name of the bond, and the price. After which he dropped the bill right back into the puddle where he had picked it up.

"Follow me, Doc," he commanded. "We'll breeze across the street to that drug store and spend a minute or so reading the well-known telephone book. At the present time, the same is more interesting to me than the complete works of Mr. Nick Carter."

Inside, Everready leaped for the book like a greyhound out for a practice spin, and began looking under the "P's" for wholesale paper houses. "Guess I'll try my luck with the Bee Cee Card and Paper Company," he at last announced.

"Hey, what's the idea?" I asked.

"The idea, my dear Doc, is that I've decided to be a paper salesman. I'll admit that I haven't had any experience in the art of selling the stuff; but what's the difference?"

"Forget it!" I hurled back. "You don't know any more about paper than

I do about squaring the fourth dimension, or whatever the thing is!"

"Quite so, Old Fathead, quite so; therefore I trust to luck!" After saying which, he dashed into the 'Number-please?' booth, and, as soon as he got his party, asked for nothing less than the boss of the works.

"Hello!" I heard him say. "This is the Everready Printing Company talking—what? Sure, just started up for business. Listen, got any Q bond in stock? Great! Ten dollars a ream? Thanks. Goo'by!"

"For the love of pretzels who's the Everready Printing Company?" I demanded as soon he skidded out of the booth.

"Doc, I'm afraid you're hopeless," he said with a smile. "Just to ease your mind, however, I might say that the Everready Printing Company is located at 23 Imagination Avenue, in the City of Fairy Tales. Don't ask foolish questions."

"Well, where do we go from here?"

"We'll grab a taxi and flivver down to the Kokoa Press. I'm anxious to know how disappointed they are about muffing that load of paper."

"What paper?" I inquired. "Believe me, you speak English so plain that almost any Hindu could understand it!"

"The paper we hit, Old Funnyface. For the love of reason, weren't you on the car?"

"Oh, I understand—the paper. I see—you're going down there and tell 'em that we hit the paper in the right place, is that it?"

"No; it isn't. Come on—let's snap into it!"

CHAPTER III.

MOST EXTRAORDINARY.

WELL, sir—or ma'am—we hailed a passing taxi, and Everready ordered the successor to the Younger Brothers to speed around to the Kokoa Press. After the gasoline wrecker whirled us around the block a few times—just to warm up the meter, you know—he at last got off to a good start and, twenty minutes later, landed up within a few doors of the printing company.

"Now don't open your mouth, Doc," cautioned Everready as we opened the office door. "Just listen to me and look wise—if possible."

A red-beaned kid skidded up to us, and, after looking us over as if we were for sale or rent on uneasy payments, proceeded to walk around us for luck or exercise or both.

"Who'd yer wanna see, hey?" asked Red, giving us a full view of the world's supply of freckles.

"Your employer desires to see me, son," explained Everready. "Tell Mr.—er, what did you say his name was, young man?"

"Who, the boss? Name's Peets," said the kid.

"Then for Pete's sake, tell Mr. Peets that Mr. McCoy is calling and must see him immediately."

"Can't—got orders not to disturb 'im," Red said with a mischievous grin.

"Oh, is that so?" McCoy asked with a smile. "Er, is that his private office over there?"

"Yeah. Why?"

For reply Everready grabbed me by the arm, tossed Mr. Red out of the way as if he was nothing more than ten ounces of air, and then bounced into the very private office of Mr. Peets.

As soon as we got our pleasing personalities within the works, I slanted a little fat flipper—as baldheaded as a pound of teacups—studying a sheaf of papers.

"Have I the pleasure of meeting Mr. Peets?" cooed Everready as he eased himself quietly into a chair.

Apparently the boss failed to see the pleasure part at all. "What—— Who—— How'd you get in?" he barked, glaring over his hoot-owl glasses.

McCoy paid less attention to that sweet welcome than if Mr. Peets was delivering a short lecture to the ceiling. No, sir—or lady—so far as Everready was concerned the fat bird could have been out in southwest Canarsie.

"Mr. Peets," said McCoy, "I represent the Bee Cee Card and Paper Company. McCoy's my name, and the gentleman with me is a new salesman that I'm breaking into the business. I'm

leaving for a short vacation to Europe, and——"

"Well, don't let me delay you!" snorted Mr. Peets in a tone that suggested he was as pleased as a hooked perch. "I'll give you just two seconds to slam that door behind you. Why the——"

Just then the telephone buzzed. Mr. Peets grabbed the receiver, got an earful, then bounced up and down like a flivver going over the Catskill Mountains.

"What!" he roared into the transmitter. "No paper! Accident, you say? Smashed up? What am I going to do! I promised my customer that he'd have the order by Wednesday. What! No more Q bond in stock?" Bang went the receiver, bang went Mr. Peets' pudgy hand upon the desk, crash went his right foot upon the floor. Chaplin should have seen it.

Mr. Peets concluded his performance by racing around the room like a toy fire engine in high speed, and demanding of the air, ceiling, and points west, what was the world coming to, if anything.

"My dear Mr. Peets," purred Everready, catching the gent by the coat tail as he breezed by on the tenth lap, "sit down, won't you?"

"Oh, are you still here?" growled the boss.

"It's a mighty good thing for you that I am," said Everready, beaming. "What do you intend to do about some Q bond, may I ask?"

At the mention of the bond, Mr. Peets' business acumen came down to earth with a loud crash. His face brightened up like a flower bed after a spring shower. "By George!" he ejaculated. "Is it possible that you've got some of that stuff, Mr.—er—ah er——"

"McCoy, of the Bee Cee Card and Paper Company," said Everready with a grin that would have made Doug Fairbanks look like a tomcat in a snowstorm. "However, I'm not particularly anxious to do business with a man who is so lacking in common courtesy as to receive me in the manner you did. Yes;

we have the only supply of Q bond in the city. Good day!"

"Wait a minute, can't you?" howled the alarmed Mr. Peets, nabbing Everready by the arm. "Can't you take a joke, hey? Ha, ha! Funny how some of you salesmen misunderstand me! Ha, ha! And——"

"Well?" cut in McCoy, as stern as the rear end of a boat.

"Have you got twenty reams of Q bond that you could ship around within the next few hours, Mr. McCoy?"

"Yes—at ten dollars a ream," replied Everready as if he was bored to death.

"Fine—great—wonderful!" enthused Mr. Peets. "Y'know, I kinda liked you the very first time I saw you. In fact, you remind me a great deal of my son, Alferdo. Now, Alferdo——"

"It is understood, I trust," crashed in McCoy, "that the said twenty reams are to be delivered C. O. D., the same being shorthand for Cash On Delivery."

"Well, now, that is most extraordinary. Why, the credit of the Kokoa Press is good any place. We always get thirty days and five per cent off."

Everready took out his watch, gazed innocently at the wall for a moment, and then snapped the case. "Sorry, Mr. Peets," he cooed, "but I'm afraid we're wasting time. Anyway, I just happened to think that there's a party a few blocks distant who could use some Q bond."

"I'll tell you what I'll do," snapped the boss. "If you can get the paper around to this plant within the next two hours I'll have the cash waiting for it. How's that?"

"O. K. and correct," agreed Everready. "See that the two hundred is all counted out and I'll see that the twenty reams is here on time. S'long, Mr. Peets!"

CHAPTER IV.

HOME TO MOTHER.

THAT'S what I call great brain work!" I buzzed as Everready and I skidded down the stairs.

"Wrong again, Doc; I didn't use enough brain stuff to figure out the total

of nine times two. All I used was a small amount of grade-A nerve aided and abetted with a slice of luck."

"Believe me, if you aren't nutty, then I'm a direct descendant of the late Rip Van Winkle! You might get away with that stuff on the circus lots, but remember that you're now in the great city of New York where everybody is as wise as a regiment of Solomons. But, anyway, where do you get off to sell paper for the Bee Cee people when you haven't even got a job with 'em, hey? I can see right now that we're gonna wind up in the jail department sooner or later, if not before."

"My dear Doc," Everready replied as he stuffed some fancy-named sawdust into his pipe, "I'm afraid that your imagination is still running in low gear. Oblige me by stepping on the gas and letting it speed into high. Come on, let's travel!"

"Where?"

"Around to the Bee Cee Card and Paper Company, the same being my employers. Of course, they don't know it—yet."

Well, for the next ten minues we dodged up and down streets that were crooked enough to make a pretzel look like a plumb line. Everready breezed along as if he had been born and yanked up in the Big Town and I had to grab him by the coat tail to keep from being left at the post. By this time I was willing to bet an armful of gold against a wooden Mexican dime that he was suffering from softening of the brain works.

"Here we are, Doc," he at last announced. "According to that sign, which was no doubt neat and tidy when Milton was half finished with his dyspepsia classic, the Bee Cee Card and Paper Company is holding forth on the third floor."

"If it's all the same to you, I'll remain here on the sidewalk," I said. "I never was much good at landing on my feet. The bird up there might get excited and toss us through the window. One will be enough for a demonstration."

Without saying a word, Everready pushed me up the stairs. He then snapped open the office door as if he was nothing less than the chief stockholder of the company, and eased up to the big gazabo who was holding down the first desk. "Name's McCoy—like to see the manager—business—important business," rattled off Everready like a telegram.

The large flipper dropped his pen on the floor, got a neat bit of ink on his cuff, then gave us the up and down. "I'm it," he said crisply; "but I'm not in the market for any check protectors, handy telephone extensions, the 'Life of Riley,' or a subscription to the *Flafla Weekly*. What else have you got?"

"Glad to see you in good humor," Everready said with a grin, taking a seat—not that anybody asked him to take anything but the air.

"The door," went on the big chap, "is still where you found it—try your luck going out and give my regards to Times Square."

I started for the door as directed; safety first—that's me all over, and under.

"I'm afraid that you haven't recognized me," drawled Everready. "I'm your new salesman."

"I knew that that prohibition stuff wouldn't work," said the boss dubiously. "And—say! Is it possible that I understood you to remark that you're working for this firm?"

"It is. But let's not waste valuable time. I have already sold to the Kokoa Press twenty reams of Q bond, and guaranteed to shoot it around to their place within two hours—C. O. D. However, before we go into the matter further, I should like to know what my commission for the same amounts to. If it isn't satisfactory, I'll resign and give my order-producing services to a concern that is able to appreciate speed, nerve, and the greatest little opportunity grabber on or off the earth. It's your move—say something."

I edged a little nearer to the door.

"How do I know that I'm not listening to a fairy tale?" asked the boss,

looking as puzzled as a tenant when the landlord reduces the rent.

"Call 'im up!" commanded McCoy.

The boss did; and when he heard the truth his face lighted up like a torch-light parade at midnight.

"And ask him if the cash is waiting, Old Bean," put in Everready over his shoulder.

"My salesman, Mr.—er—McCoy tells me that it's a cash proposition," crooned the boss into the hello works.

For reply we heard a gurgle, coming over the wire, the big bird said he was much obliged, hung up, and then turned to us as if we were long-lost twins.

"I predict a great future for you, Mr. McCoy," he purred. "Although your methods are quite unusual, your personality and ability should——"

"Twenty reams of Q bond at ten dollars a ream," broke in Everready, who was busy figuring on a slip of paper, "is two hundred dollars. Right? The salesman's commission at ten per cent would total twenty dollars. Right? Well, if you don't mind, I'll take it now."

"My dear sir, this is most unusual," opined the manager. "However——" The boss opened up a trick little money box and slipped Everready a twenty-dollar bill.

"I thank you." Everready grinned, pocketing the money.

En route downstairs, I mournfully extracted a ten-bean bill from my vest pocket and paid off the bet.

"The same to you." Everready grinned once more.

As we reached the street, a shoe-shining kid, between eight years and a ragged suit, asked McCoy if he wanted a shine. He did. And when it was over, he gave the boy a bill.

"Hey, mister, I ain't got change for this tenner. Ain't yer gotta nickel?"

"Take it home to mother, son—with the compliments of my good friend, Doc Ramble, erstwhile manager of the Move-A-Long Circus Side Show," replied Everready McCoy as he gently pushed the kid out of the way.

Ancient Races of Siena

THE most peculiar horse race in the world is the famous "Palio" which takes place every summer at the picturesque Italian city of Siena. It is a performance that has been repeated annually for several centuries.

Magnificent medieval costumes are worn by all who take part in the proceedings. Before the actual racing begins, the jockeys, clad in glittering armor and their horses beautifully saddled, make a tour of the course, accompanied by cavaliers, pages, archers, heralds, and others.

The scene of the race is the huge public square before the communal palace. Here an oval course is fenced off for the occasion, and sand spread over the concrete. The public are admitted free to the center of the square, and the outer side of the course is surrounded by stands and houses for the use of those who are willing to pay for seats.

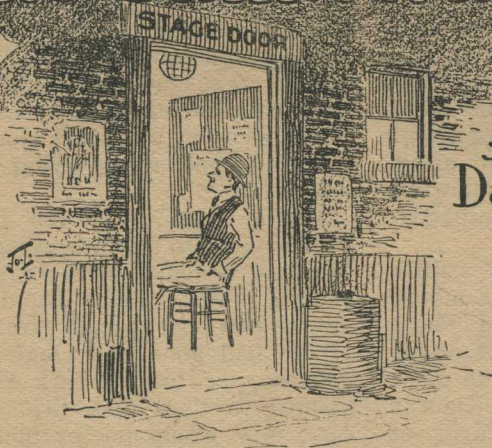
Every district of Siena is represented by a jockey and has an emblem, among them being the snail, unicorn, caterpillar, giraffe, and porcupine. Each contingent in the procession has a standard showing these emblems, and the bearers juggle with them as they march along.

Before the racing each jockey takes his steed into a church in his district, and both receive a blessing.

As soon as the procession is over, the jockeys retire to doff their armor. When they reappear they resemble our own jockeys, but the horses are without saddles, barebacked riding being the rule. Amid thunderous cheering they at last get away and race three times round the square. Every jockey is allowed to use his whip freely on any of his rivals within reach!

Directly the winner arrives at the post he is seized by the crowd, kissed, and embraced, and carried to the judges to receive the Palio or prize, which is an elaborately painted banner. This he bears off in triumph and deposits in the church of his district.

The Unknown Alibi



By
David Whitelaw

AFTER the death of her brother Noel, Nora Bendelow, left without property by reason of a wager Noel had made, assumed the name of Enid Belairs and obtained a minor part in a London stock company whose second leading lady was Agnes Costello. Duncan Brailsford, who had been attracted by Nora when she was in a convent, tried to find her. Brailsford knew that Jules Leville, a music master, had spoken disparagingly of the young woman.

One night Miss Costello collapsed; Nora, her understudy, took the part, saw Leville in the audience, and made a pitiable failure.

Feeling disgraced, she fled from the theater and the next day went to France, to visit Madame Renier, a friend. In the meantime, unknown to Nora, Miss Costello died. The coroner said it was a case of murder. Every clue led to Enid Belairs; the police of Europe were put on her trail. Later, Brailsford found Nora in Paris; in a few weeks they were married. When Nora told her husband she had used the name of Enid Belairs, he knew that his wife was wanted for murder.

Fearing to return to London with her, Brailsford took his bride to a secluded estate in Scotland; he determined to solve the mystery of the murder. One night Brailsford heard footsteps on the lawn, but he was unable to find the trespasser. The next day he rode by a small hotel near his estate; from the upper window Jules Leville was peering at him.

CHAPTER XV.

A DARK FOREBODING.

WHEN the Brailsford party had passed the hotel Jules Leville let the blind fall back into position, and proceeded leisurely with his toilet. He glanced somewhat sadly at the frayed linen and the shininess of his coat cuffs and the shapelessness of his shoes. But the glance was followed by a sense of triumph, for he told himself that the day was near when such garments would no longer disgrace the figure of Jules Leville.

The paragraph that had found its way into the paper to the effect that Mr. and Mrs. Duncan Brailsford had arrived in England from their honeymoon and had taken up their residence at Cloich House, had come none too soon. The third-rate music hall at which Leville had earned a living of sorts, had fallen upon evil days, and, it having been deemed expedient to curtail expenses, the management had reluctantly decided to dispense with the services of the second violin.

Jules might have shot his bolt earlier. Ever since he had seen the notice of the marriage in the Paris church he had looked forward to the day when,

World Film Rights in "The Unknown Alibi" are the property of The London Film Company.

at last, his secret would become of financial value to him. He would have liked to approach Duncan while the glamour of the honeymoon was upon the young man, but it was no easy matter for a musician with an income of a few shillings a week to put by enough to take an extensive tour among the hotels of the Isles of Greece and the Italian lakes. And so Leville had to rest content with anticipation of the future and await, with what patience he could command, the return to England of his prospective victim.

And now that the time of waiting was at last over, the ex-music master of the Convent of the Sacred Thorn was living in anticipation a life of leisured luxury. There was not so much revenge in his mind against Duncan Brailsford, although the thought of bringing trouble to the young man who had knocked him down was very sweet. Leville now regarded Brailsford almost entirely from a financial standpoint. Provided that the young gentleman was willing to pay handsomely for the keeping of a certain secret all would be well.

In that case Leville would be perfectly willing to let such a personal matter as a lacerated chin become a thing of the past.

He pulled up the blind and let the daylight fill the little bedroom of Baillie's Arms. He took from the worn leather hand bag that stood upon a chair some sheets of paper and an envelope and drawing the small table up close to the window, he set about the composition of a letter. And the composition would appear to be one calling for deep thought and consideration, and much careful choosing of phrase.

Perhaps for half an hour Leville sat there staring out of the window over the sun-bathed moors and the sparkling waters of the loch, and chewing the end of his pencil, his brows furrowed with thought and cunning. Now and again he would write a few words upon the paper before him, only to tear it up and start on a fresh sheet.

At last it would seem that the man was satisfied, for he read what he had written and, smiling evilly, folded it

and placed it in an envelope. With this in his pocket, he went downstairs and, passing through the little bar, entered the coffee room, where he partook of a light but somewhat expensive breakfast. But expense had ceased to be a matter of any consequence with Mr. Jules Leville. The landlord of Baillie's Arms need have no cause for alarm; there was a goose up at Cloich House whose powers of golden egg laying were considerable.

Leville rose from the table and walked out into the little village square. He gave a glance at the clock in the church tower. There could be little doubt that the people from Cloich House had gone into Oban—the luggage strapped on the back of the trap pointed to that—and, that being the case, they would not be home before four o'clock at the earliest. Leville was not likely to be disturbed in the program that he had mapped out for himself.

He lighted a cigarette and sauntered easily. There was plenty of time, and it was very pleasant walking in the crisp, cool air of the mountains. A few days of this, he told himself, would blow off the fumes of Soho and make a new man of him. He paused at the bend of the road and looked up at Cloich House, then, throwing away his cigarette, he crossed and pushed open the gate and walked up the path. A maid was standing, dust pan and brush in hand, just within the hall. Leville raised his hat.

"Mr. Brailsford—Mr. Duncan Brailsford?" The well-modulated voice denoted a mild query.

The girl nodded pertly. She had seen much service and had learned to distrust shabby-genteel strangers with soft voices who raised their hats to servant girls. "The master is out," she said.

Jules Leville bowed. "Ah, I am indeed unfortunate. Perhaps"—and he fumbled in the pocket of his coat—"you would be good enough to give him this. And—er—as the matter is private, perhaps I might ask you to give it into Mr. Brailsford's hand when he is alone."

The girl took the note, ignoring the half crown which the man half held out toward her, and placed it in the letter rack in the hall.

For a moment Leville stood irresolute, as though he would say something more, then with a "good morning" to the servant, turned on his heel and, leaving the garden, crossed the road and took a bridle path leading over the hills to the south. The girl watched him out of sight, then shrugging her shoulders, returned to her work.

Duncan returned home tired and out of spirits. He had slept but indifferently the night before, and the few hours of rest he did obtain had been haunted by dreams of men with great eyes like motor headlights, who stood and glared at him out of the darkness. He felt the loss of his friend Hewson, to whom he was doubly attached now that the solicitor shared his secret. The mere fact that he had been able to talk with some one of the terror which hung over his life had been relief unspeakable.

He was thinking, too, of the man who, he was sure, had been lurking in the shadows and watching the house, and he wished now that he had taken Hewson into his confidence. The old lawyer could see these things with so clear an eye, and he would have advised him what course to pursue if the intruder should come again.

Nora, too, was feeling far from happy. She had known for some time that a cloud rested over the life of her husband, and yet she had always hesitated to inquire the cause of it. She sat now opposite him at lunch in the dining room of Cloich House, and watched how each dish was sent away practically untasted. At one time she had had thoughts of confiding her fears to the old lawyer who had been so good a friend to her, but there was a feeling that she would be going behind Duncan's back in inquiring about his business.

She rose from her seat and leaned over the back of Duncan's chair, passing her fingers through the hair above his temples. He looked up at her hun-

grily and pressed his cheek to the shoulder of her dress.

"Why, Duncan, I do declare you are going gray. What's worrying you?"

He looked up in well-simulated surprise.

"Worrying?"

"Yes, dear. Are you quite sure that I am making you happy?"

Duncan drew her face down to him, pressing his lips to hers.

Nora was all smiles again. "Duncan, I feel so guilty sometimes at not writing to my old theatrical friends. I would like to find out where Agnes Costello is acting and send her a great bouquet between the acts—she was always so kind to me. I wonder if any one remembers my miserable failure? I'll never forget that night. It's hard to talk of one's failures, but after a little while they don't seem so important. One of these days," she looked at him teasingly, "when I have got tired of my old hubby I'll go on the stage again. I do really think I've got it in me."

Duncan smiled, and the girl drew herself up to her full height. "It's all very well to laugh. I didn't have a fair chance. One of these fine days you will miss me, and you'll see flaring bills outside the theaters telling a gasping public that Enid Belairs has returned to the stage. I wonder if anybody remembers that name?"

Her husband rose from his chair and stood looking out over the moors. "What nonsense you do talk, Nora."

He turned and held the door open, and when his wife had passed through he returned to the table with a bitter smile upon his lips. He poured himself out a glass of wine, sipped it, then sat, his head lying heavily upon his hand. "I wonder what she would say if she knew that for two months Enid Belairs' was the most talked of name in England. Come in!"

The door opened, and a maid entered. She held out to him timidly the note that Jules Leville had left with her that morning.

"I don't know whether I did right, sir," she said. "I was to give it to you when you were alone."

Duncan took the grimy envelope and turned it over in his hands, then drew out the folded paper. As he read the few lines the furrows deepened on his forehead, and with difficulty he checked the cry that rose to his lips.

This is what Jules Leville had written:

It will be to your interest to meet J. L. alone. He will be at the keeper's hut on Ben Archray at six this evening. Fail in this and J. L. will do himself the honor of calling at Cloich House, where his sudden appearance might cause distress to Enid Belairs, the murder of Agnes Costello, of course, being the reason.

"You did right, Annie," Brailsford said. "He glanced at the clock. 'Tell your mistress that I am going over to McNab's farm about a horse. I will be back to tea.'"

Ten minutes later Nora, from her little sitting room, watched her husband leave the garden and walk swiftly up the bridle path leading over the hills to the south. It was only when Annie had delivered her master's message that Nora remembered that McNab's farm was a mile along the road through the village, and could not be reached by the bridle path.

She rose unsteadily when the maid had left her and stood by the window staring out, as it seemed to her, upon the ashes of a dead world. Yet the sun shone as brightly as before, and the garden below her was ablaze with spring color.

CHAPTER XVI.

IN THE KEEPER'S HUT.

AS Brailsford made his way along the path he asked himself again whether he were wise in going alone and unarmed to a meeting with such a man as Jules Leville.

It was a very lonely spot, the man had chosen. The road had wound upward among the gorse and bracken, and Brailsford had been too much occupied with his thoughts to give heed to the distance he had covered. He remembered having seen an abandoned keeper's hut a few hundred feet from the path, and he could not have passed

it. He stopped and looked down into the valley. There was no sign of human habitation save the scattered buildings of a farm upon the other side of the loch. The mountains hemmed in on all sides.

"Good afternoon!" Leville was sitting upon a bowlder of granite half buried in brushwood. "Please sit down upon that stone there."

"I can speak as well standing," Brailsford replied. "Let us get to business, which, I presume, is blackmail."

Jules gave a little laugh. "Well I suppose one might call it blackmail. You see, Mr. Brailsford, I have a secret that touches very nearly your wife. No, don't get angry. Mrs. Brailsford enters very closely into the business on hand, and, believe me, it will be impossible to keep her name out of the conversation. I will be as careful as possible. I remember your wife very well. We had many a meeting in the old gardens. You remember the gardens, Mr. Brailsford?"

"I hardly think that you have brought me up here to go into the little episode in Devonshire."

"No, not altogether. And yet that little episode, as you are pleased to call it, is not unconnected with my purpose."

"Then perhaps you will be quick. What is it you want of me?"

Before replying Leville looked around him, then rubbed his chin a moment. "Suppose we go on a bit," he said, "to the hut, and talk it over, with no one to see us together."

Brailsford nodded assent, and they walked up the path. Rounding a shoulder of rock, they came upon the keeper's hut. It was a small structure and had evidently been out of use for many a day. Roofless, and with one small broken window, it stood perched upon the edge of a cleft in the mountainside. Before it, and but a few yards from its doorway the steep side of Ben Archray had, as it were, been sliced. Beyond the rough edge of heather the cliff of granite fell sheer for a hundred feet or more to the bed of a small river that swirled over the rocks to meet the waters of the loch.

Duncan advanced cautiously to the edge and peered over. Far below he could see the large boulders that were scattered over the river bed and the music of the swollen stream sang in his ears.

When they had entered the hut Leville began: "If it were merely a matter of keeping silent on what I know, I would say five hundred pounds a year, paid quarterly. But"—and into Leville's eyes came a glint of ferocity—"since, a year ago, you thrashed me, a man a head shorter than yourself, the price is a thousand. I thought I had forgiven you all that, Mr. Brailsford, I didn't think I harbored hard thoughts, but the sight of you revives them."

"And for what am I to pay this?"

"So that I shall not go to the police and tell them that Mrs. Duncan Brailsford and Enid Belairs are one and the same person. Ah, I hoped to surprise you, but I see that you know all about it. Well, the secret is just as valuable."

"And what security have I that, if I consent to your terms, you will keep silence?"

Leville bowed. "The word of a gentleman, Mr. Brailsford. Oh, the Levilles are gentlemen, but they are unfortunate. They have had many ups and downs. With my branch of the family it has been more downs than ups. You have a proverb, have you not, as to what happens when the devil drives?"

"And if I do not agree to your terms?"

"Well, there is a certain letter in London, addressed to Scotland Yard, which I have arranged to have sent off in case I do not return in a week or so." Then he added significantly: "It's a safeguard against danger, you know."

"You have certainly laid your plans well," returned Brailsford. "You seem to be an expert in blackmail." That brought forth an imprecation from Leville. But the other went on, in a level tone, after taking a step toward the door. "However, it doesn't alter matters in the least. The information would be sent to the police in any event, because I do not pay blackmail. Un-

derstand that. I don't bargain with crooks. It is quite possible, now that you comprehend fully how I size you up, that I may even find a way to force you to think better of that letter to Scotland Yard."

Brailsford took a cigarette from his pocket, but he never lighted it. And the reason was that something happened which made him stay in the hut somewhat longer than he expected and caused him to break his promise to be back at Cloich House in time for tea.

CHAPTER XVII.

A STARTLING QUESTION.

HATLESS, his hair matted with rain and dirt about his forehead, Brailsford opened the door of Cloich House and, closing it softly behind him, crept through the darkness of the hall and felt his way into the dining room. He turned up the wick in the lamp and stood for a moment gazing out through the rain-blurred windows into the night.

Then he drew the curtains with a harsh little clatter of their rings against the brass pole. He passed a hand wearily across his brow and moved over to the table. Here was spread a supper of cold meat, celery, bread, cheese, and decanters stood on a tray. He mixed himself a "stiff" drink; his hand trembled as he raised the glass to his lips.

Brailsford presented a decidedly unkempt figure. His clothes, drenched by the storm that had swept the countryside with its fury for the last hour, clung steaming to his body, and across his cheek ran a smear of scarcely dried blood. His face was gray and drawn, and in his eyes was the look of one who had passed through a terrible experience.

He stood gazing before him with heavy eyes, the empty tumbler in his hand, then placing it upon the table, he sank wearily into the embrace of a leathern armchair. Mechanically, he reached his hand out for a pipe and filled it from the tobacco jar.

There was no sound save the sonorous ticking of the steel-faced clock, the whipping of the rain upon the win-

dows, and the moaning of the wind among the trees of the garden. Once he raised his head as though listening to a sound in the room above, and as the thought of his wife crossed his mind, the gloomy stare left his gray eyes, and his face for a moment lighted up with pleasure. Then again the lines came into his forehead and he relapsed into his staring into space and the steady puffing at his brier steeped in the memories of the last two hours.

Before his mind's eye spread a stretch of moonlit moor, primitive and mysterious; in his ears rang the despairing cry of a soul hastening to its reckoning. How it had echoed across the desolate darkness, how the distant hills had taken up the sound, sporting with it and sending it afar, wailing, wailing, until the man who leaned panting against the rough stone wall of the hut had imagined that all the world must hear!

And then at last it had died away. A night bird had cried somewhere out on the moor, the reedy notes stabbing the darkness. Then had come the silence, than which the laughter of fiends had been more welcome, settling over the land and over his heart until it seemed to him that he must cry aloud for mere companionship.

He wondered how long he had stood there by the hut, alone with the spirit of Jules Leville. To him it had seemed an eternity, but as he looked up at the clock he saw that five hours had barely passed.

The rain had begun to fall as he had felt his way out of the hut into the open, and he had stood to let the wind play upon the furnace of his forehead. Below him he had seen the few isolated lights in the village, and he had hurried toward them, tearing his way through the undergrowth, heedless of danger and lacerated skin, anxious only to get away from the hut and the terror that lurked about it. He had fallen once or twice in his headlong flight, and it seemed to him that once he had lain for quite a while in the rain-soaked heather. Perhaps he had lost consciousness, for there was a troubled

dream through which he seemed to have passed, a dream in which two glowing eyes that were the eyes of a dead man had danced a devil dance with the distant lights of the village.

"Duncan!"

With a little strangled cry he leaped to his feet. The door had been opened softly, for he had not heard the sound of it, and now his wife stood by the table looking at him and smiling.

At first it seemed to the nerve-racked man that she was part of the half trance into which he had fallen. There was something unearthly, unreal, in the beautiful figure, with the face showing dimly in the gloom of the lamp. Then he passed a hand that trembled across his brow and sank back into his chair.

And now, with a little cry, she was on her knees at his side, holding his hands to her and looking at him with a world of love and tenderness in her eyes. The thankfulness that had been hers when she had heard her husband return to the house gave place to a nameless dread.

"Duncan, what is it? You are not hurt?"

"It's nothing, Nora." He stroked her hair with his nervous fingers. "You should be in bed."

She passed her white hands over the tweed of his jacket and up toward his face. "But, dear, you are wet through, and this cut on your cheek. You must change at once. Put on a dressing gown and come down here again. There is a lot we have to tell each other, isn't there, Duncan?"

"I?"

"Yes, dear. You have a story to tell me of your journey to-night. I, too, have a story. No, I will say nothing, hear nothing until you have changed."

He did not answer, but rose from his chair to do his wife's bidding. There was something in Nora's eyes that he could not read. He, too, felt that the time had arrived for perfect confidence—that important things would take place in that room before dawn again broke over the hills. He took his wife's face between his hands and kissed her without a word and went upstairs.

In less than half an hour he was back again. He had removed the stains of the night's work, and, clad in a blue dressing gown, was again the well-groomed Duncan Brailsford. Only in the whiteness of his face, with its evil-looking scar, and in the haunted dread behind his eyes, did the man show the traces of what he had passed through.

Nora, during her husband's absence, had kindled a fire in the grate and warmed up some soup which she had fetched from the larder. The room glowed with the cheerful blaze from the crackling logs, and again the man saw the look in his wife's eyes that he did not understand.

"And now, Duncan," she said, as her husband pushed his empty plate from him, "you are going to light your pipe, and we are going to sit here by the fire, and you are going to tell me everything."

They took their places, he in the big armchair, Nora upon a stool at his feet. For a moment she sat, her head resting against his knee, watching the play of the flames among the logs. Then she said suddenly:

"Where is Jules Leville?"

CHAPTER XVIII.

GLEAMS OF LIGHT.

IT was a decidedly startling question, and it brought Brailsford to his feet. "Jules Leville! What makes you ask? You mean that you know."

She looked up at him and smiled. "I have known since this evening, Duncan. You dropped Jules Leville's note, and I picked it up. Oh, why didn't you trust me? What a lot of misery and heartache we would have been saved! But I will tell you my story when I have heard yours. And to think, it was all because of your fear of Jules Leville. Thank Heaven we have nothing to fear from him now."

"No; we have nothing to fear from him now," he repeated.

But there was a note in his voice when he said it that made Nora raise her eyes to his searchingly. She noted the drawn look, the agony in his eyes,

and a tremor of fear passed over her. The meaning of the livid scar on his cheek came to her.

"What do you mean, Duncan? You speak so strangely."

"I mean that I have left Jules Leville up there alone on the moors."

She drew back from him with a little cry.

"He is dead, Nora."

She was on her feet in an instant, bending over her husband, one trembling hand on either shoulder. "Dead? Tell me what you mean. You have not——"

He looked up into her face with a wry little smile. "Oh, it isn't quite so bad as all that," he said. "I didn't kill him—Heaven knows I had cause enough. I was only an instrument in the hands of a higher power who considered that Jules Leville had cumbered the earth long enough. Sit down, Nora; I'll tell you. And afterward you will tell me everything about the—about Agnes Costello?"

"Everything. Poor Agnes!"

With a little sigh she sank down again upon the footstool at his feet.

Brailsford cleared his throat. He told her of his meeting with Leville, their walk together to the keeper's hut, their talk there, and Brailsford's declaration that he would not bargain with a crook; that Leville could not blackmail him out of a penny.

"I had just struck a match to light a cigarette," he went on, "when Leville sprang upon me. It was a ghastly fight, Nora, there in the gloom of the hut. He had got hold of a knife—from some farmhouse, perhaps—and his first blow caught me here on the cheek. Oh, it's not dangerous."

"The encounter was a hideous one, Nora. The place was inky black, and I could hear his hiss of hatred as we clinched and wrestled, he to keep, I to gain possession of the weapon. It seemed an age that we swayed together; then I had him down and pinned him with my knee while I felt for and tore the knife from his grasp."

"I imagine that he thought I would kill him. He lay still, as though he

had been stunned by the fall. I thought he had been, until I removed the pressure of my knee, and like a snake he wriggled away from under me. I heard the rustle as he crawled away through the weeds that grow over the floor of that hut. I waited, hardly breathing, expecting every moment that he would leap upon me. I tried to pierce the darkness, but could see nothing. Now on one side, now on the other I heard the elusive rustling of his movements, and I knew that he was feeling round the wall to make his escape. For an instant I saw his form outlined against a window opening—then there was a rush—and the thing happened."

Nora clutched her husband's knee. "I—I think I understand," she said.

"He must have taken the wrong opening, the one leading to the cliff. I heard the rumble of loose stones, and there was such a curious little cry—half a sob. Then a shriek such as I hope never to hear again. The silence that followed it was worse. It's a couple of hundred feet deep, that cliff, Nora, and the river's at the bottom."

He ceased speaking. There was no sound in the room but the ticking of the clock and the crackle of the logs upon the hearth. The woman stirred uneasily. "It is horrible, Duncan, horrible!"

He pressed comfortingly the hands that lay clasped upon his knee. "Horrible; but it seems to me the best thing that could have happened." And then, to divert her mind from the thought of the tragedy: "And now tell me about the other affair."

Nora did not at once speak. She sat staring into the fire, then: "It's a long story, Duncan, and it's all so strange to me yet. Till this evening I had no idea that Agnes Costello was dead. Everything had worked in so to keep me in the dark; my illness, my stay in France—and what you have done since we returned to England. How you must have suffered!"

"And you can clear away all these suspicions? You know who killed that poor woman?"

Nora shook her head. "I don't know, Duncan. But I think I know more than others know. She was a secretive woman, and a very unfortunate one. I think she liked me and told me more than she told other people. We used to sit in the dressing room and chat between the acts. She did not mix much with the others in the theater. They thought at the theater she was unmarried."

"Every one thought so, even the police. Wasn't it true?"

"No. Poor Agnes had suffered terribly by her marriage, and was not likely to speak much about her humiliation. I was so much with her as her understudy that she opened her heart to me. She feared her husband and stood in everpresent dread of him. I think I was the only one who knew of the marriage, and I was lying ill at Madame Renier's—miles from an English paper, even had I been well enough to read one. Agnes Costello was married on one of her tours—in Africa, I think—and her husband seems to have lived upon her earnings from the first. She was very popular abroad, and made good money. When things became unbearable she left him and returned to England, hoping that she had seen the last of him."

"And he followed?"

"Not immediately. Later he came over here a rich man, and then the tables were turned, and it was he who evaded his wife. It was said, and Agnes heard the rumors, that he was forcing himself by means of his money into society, and his name was even coupled with that of a daughter of one of the great families, and marriage was openly spoken of. It was then that he tried to buy his wife's silence."

"Agnes Costello was a curious woman. Although she was anxious to be free from her odious husband, she was not willing that another woman should hold the position which was rightly hers. Women are like that sometimes. There was a meeting and a stormy scene, and it was after that that she seemed to go in fear of him. I imagine that he threatened her."

"And you know this man's name, Nora?"

"No. She never told me her married name. What are we to do?"

"You have told me all?"

"I think so. It isn't much, is it? You know all about the evening when I made my failure."

He nodded and sat for a few minutes staring into the fire and trying to see in what way he could best use the thread Nora had given him. "We will go to Hewson in a day or so. We'll find a way out of all this."

"You—you will tell him about—up there?"

Brailsford started. During the time his wife had been speaking the hideous memory of the night's work in the keeper's hut had passed from him. Now, like an icy clutch at his heart it all came back. Again he was standing by the hut trying to pierce the blackness; again the cry that he knew would haunt him for many a long day rang in his ears.

"I—I must tell him, dear. I'll feel better when I have told him. One can't carry things like that on one's mind alone. I will always hear that cry—it's horrible."

"You mustn't think such things, Duncan. You are not to blame. It was he who attacked you."

He rose from his chair with a sigh, and, walking to the window and drawing back the curtain, looked out into the night. Brailsford looked straight before him, away over the garden, past where the path topped the brow of the hill, his mind busy with what he knew lay beyond. He bent and kissed his wife and held open the door for her. And when he was alone he filled and lighted another pipe and sat wondering what the future held for Nora and himself.

CHAPTER XIX.

SHATTERED HOPE.

THE houses of Porchester Terrace in London are structures of lofty rooms and generous windows and Adams fireplaces, and form-fitting abodes for such as Christopher Hew-

son and the maiden sister who had for the last fifteen years, since his wife's death, kept house for him, and taken the head of his table at such social functions as the worthy man of law felt incumbent upon him to give. No more restful sanctuary could Duncan Brailsford have chosen for Nora, upon their return to London, than No. 9 Porchester Terrace.

Christopher Hewson glanced at the large steel-faced clock on the library mantelpiece and compared it with his watch. "Is there a fire in Mrs. Brailsford's room, Rebecca? It is a little colder to-night, I fancy."

His sister looked up from her knitting. She was a woman of about Christopher's own age with a somewhat hard but not unkindly face. Rebecca Hewson looked what she was, a woman who had lived from her cradle in the backwaters of life, sheltered from the storms of the world. Some one had once said of Miss Hewson that No. 9 Porchester Terrace, with its severe mid-Victorian dignity, seemed to have been built around its mistress.

"I told Janet to see to it. They should be here soon. Ten o'clock did you say, Christopher, that their train got in at Euston? I feel so sorry for poor Mrs. Brailsford after what you have told me."

"I think, Rebecca, that the poor lady's troubles are nearly over. I'm sure I devoutly hope so. There's a lot of hope in the letter that Duncan wrote me, and I think the most hopeful point of all is that this Agnes Costello was a married woman. And yet these theatrical people are so elusive they make the hardest of tracing."

Miss Rebecca nodded her head wisely, but was silent. The stage was to her a thing of which she had no knowledge except in the matter of a few visits to the opera during the season. Of actors and actresses, save that they existed, she knew no more than she did of the inhabitants of Mars.

"Of course it may mean nothing. This Costello woman seems to have been, from all that I can gather, a roaming sort of person, and she may have

picked up a husband anywhere. It would be pretty difficult to trace a marriage, say in Peru, followed perhaps by a divorce in China."

"Christopher!"

"Sorry, my dear, but such things might have happened. But, joking apart, this may mean, as I have said, absolutely nothing, only I fancy it gives us a very useful starting point. Given a man and a woman, things may lead anywhere."

The lawyer rose from his armchair, and crossing the room, unlatched one of the long windows and stepped out into the little palm-filled conservatory. He stood there peering into the darkness of the street. Beyond the railings of the park he could see the wide sweeps of turf and the gleam of lights toward Portland Place. Now and again a low growl would sound from that dark cluster of roofs and trees that was the Zoölogical Gardens. The man had been standing in the conservatory but a few moments when the motor that had been sent to Euston to meet the arrivals turned in from the Albert Road and drew up before the portico beneath him. A few minutes more and the lawyer and his sister were greeting Duncan Brailsford and his bride.

But it was midnight before Christopher Hewson was at liberty to listen to the consecutive story that Duncan had to tell him. Nora had gone to bed and the house in Porchester Terrace was silent. The two men sat in the library, and the lawyer did not interrupt as Duncan told his story. He told of his meeting with Jules Leville and of the attempted blackmail. He hid nothing.

Old Mr. Hewson listened to the story with attention, and when at last Duncan had ceased speaking he sat drumming his fingers on the polished surface of the table.

Upon the face of the man who had been speaking showed an eager anxiety as to how his listener would take the story he had just told him. He knew that there were many points that would arise to the legal mind, and that cold logic would raise many a difficulty that

would have to be surmounted or circumvented before the happiness that Duncan and Nora had counted as almost within their grasp came to them.

Mr. Hewson crossed the room and took from a bureau a packet of papers. Returning to his seat by the table he drew toward him the green-shaded lamp and looked carefully through them. Here and there he would pause and read a few lines from some document or newspaper cutting. And when he had finished he turned to his guest.

"I am looking through the evidence that was given at the inquest, Duncan. I suppose that you have read it all carefully?"

"I'm afraid not, Mr. Hewson. You see, the affair was some time ago, and it is next to impossible to get back numbers of the English papers abroad. I had thought of writing to the office of the *Courier*, but somehow I thought that it might draw attention to—"

"I understand. Then perhaps it would not be amiss if you looked through this. You are not too tired?"

Duncan laughed shortly. "I don't think that we have time to get tired. Leville's body may be found at any moment, and although I do not quite see what there is to connect me with his death, it would complicate matters considerably if I should be arrested."

He took the folded paper that the lawyer handed across to him and, bending forward beneath the light of the lamp, read steadily through the report. Then he handed the paper back with a nod.

The other placed it among the heap before him on the table. He took a cigar from his case and lighted it.

"It appears that there was ample excuse for the warrant?"

Duncan nodded gloomily, and the lawyer went on. "Although we know, you and I, Duncan, that Nora is guiltless, I am bound to say that never did fate weave such a web about an innocent person. The circumstantial evidence is the completest that I have ever come across in my career, and that extends over half a century. You see, we can account for Nora's leaving the the-

ater secretly that night, and we can account satisfactorily for her remaining hidden. But it is not so easy to account for her running away from London on that very morning after the affair at the Odeon Theater. There was no need for so much haste. I am speaking, of course, from the standpoint of a jury, the only way in which we can judge cases such as these."

"But, Mr. Hewson, it's perfectly clear to me. The poor girl made a failure, and she wanted to escape from the condolences of her friends. You can imagine those condolences, the bitter sting beneath the pity. Suppose, Mr. Hewson, it had been you with your first brief. Oh, I can understand it. I think that any girl situated as Nora was, any girl with decent pride, would have done the same. It seems to me to be a perfectly logical and natural thing for her to do."

The lawyer nodded. "Quite so, perfectly natural. We know all that because we know Nora's temperament. You are losing sight of the standpoint from which we must look at this case. Would it be so perfectly natural to us if we were sitting with ten other men and no one among us had ever before seen or heard of the girl? You see, we would not be able to take one act of Nora's alone—every little insignificant act, every word, would have to be judged and dissected not upon its worth, but upon the relation that it bore to the other little acts and words. All these things can build up an impregnable wall of evidence."

"Yes, I know."

The lawyer leaned forward and tapped the other gently upon the arm. "It's not a bit of good our fencing with facts. You know as well as I do that the warrant was not issued upon supposition. You know as well as I do that there is one piece of evidence that is damning. We have been cowardly enough not to mention this to each other. It's got to be mentioned, my dear boy, and it's got to be demolished."

Duncan nodded gloomily. "I know what you mean. The poison?"

"Precisely."

Mr. Hewson again took up the folded copy of the *Courier*. "Listen, Duncan. I'll read the part that refers to it:

"Inspector Barry, in giving evidence, spoke of his visit to the rooms recently occupied by Miss Enid Belairs. He learned from the landlady, Mrs. Pratt, that the young lady in question had returned at the usual time from the theater upon the Saturday night and had bidden her good night on her way to her room, an apartment upon the third floor. There had been nothing noticeable in the girl's manner except that Miss Belairs looked a little more tired than usual, and did not eat the supper which Mrs. Pratt had left out for her.

"This, the landlady put down to depression at being alone. The next morning she had been surprised to hear that Miss Belairs was leaving at once. Evidently the decision had been arrived at hurriedly as the girl had not been prepared with any new address to which she could have letters forwarded to her. She fully believed that Miss Belairs would send her on the address as she had promised, because she had left a good deal of soiled linen for the laundry to be forwarded when that address was sent. On asking to see the rooms that she had vacated, the landlady appeared surprised, but raised no objection. There were no papers in any of the drawers of the chest in the bedroom, and Mrs. Pratt had taken no torn fragments or charred remains away. The rooms in fact were precisely as the actress had left them, even to the untasted supper upon the table.

"This Mrs. Pratt explained by telling Inspector Barry that she had been called to the bedside of a sick relative and the work of the house had had to wait. The inspector, hoping to find some mark that might aid him in his investigations, asked to see the linen that Miss Belairs had left behind, and was referred to a wicker receptacle in which he found certain articles. Hidden beneath these he came across a small package of white powder. This powder he took to the analyst attached to Scotland Yard, and he declared it to be arsenic trioxide."

"Well?" asked Brailsford.

"Arsenic trioxide," replied the lawyer gravely, "is the kind of poison that killed Agnes Costello."

The lawyer pushed the paper from him and fixed his eyes upon Brailsford. The latter had dropped his head

into his hands. Presently he raised a haggard face to the man across the table.

The closing chapters of this novel will appear in the next issue of TOP-NOTCH, dated and out May 1st. Back numbers may be obtained from news dealers or the publishers.



RUSHING THE SEASON

By G. G. Bostwick

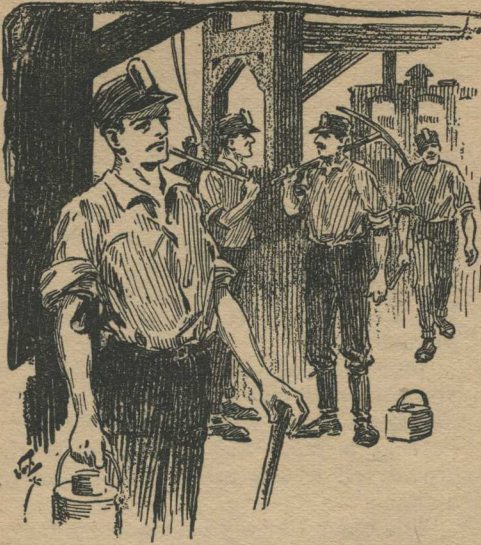
WHEN frost is gray upon the wind,
 'Tis then my gentle spring should come;
 If I would food and lodging find,
 My brain with lyric lines must hum.
 And so I sit with twirling thumb
 And think—for starving does appal!
 A poet's got to hustle some—
 Spring songs are written in the fall!

With coat all tattered, thin, unlined,
 I'm blue with cold. My hands are numb.
 I say, this is an awful grind!
 I feel like any wayside bum.
 I'm sure disgusted, sore and glum,
 Yet I must seek the muse and scrawl
 Some flowery stuff, my lyre strum—
 Spring songs are written in the fall!

My head is queer. I'm going blind.
 I'm sure I feel delirium,
 And yet fair garlands must be twined—
 That sleet is beating like a drum!
 (I hope this brings a decent sum!)—
 I'm scarcely able now to crawl
 But I must sing though I be dumb—
 Spring songs are written in the fall!

ENVOY.

Wise editor, 'twould be unkind
 To disappoint me, after all;
 Pray send a goodly check, for mind—
 Spring songs are written in the fall!



Out of the Void

By
Alice Garland Steele

(A NOVELETTE)

CHAPTER I.

THE GAUNTLET THROWN.

PUTTING an irritated thumb on a button, old Blakely wheeled around as his head bookkeeper showed an apologetic face at the half-open door. "Dawson," he said, "is my son in the outer office?"

"I think not, sir."

"Well, if he comes in say I gave him an appointment for three-thirty. Tell him this is a business firm and that we are not used to being held up. Do you get me, Dawson? Don't mince matters—and here, hand him these bills. Say I looked them over and that I'm not interested—that payment is entirely up to him." Gathering up a little pile of envelopes, he snapped them into an elastic band and tossed the packet across with a nod. "That's all, Dawson."

Old Blakely had his coat off. He looked, in front of the shabby golden-oak desk, as young Blakely's friends would have put it, "not much class." He had mined, in his Colorado workings, tons of bituminous since the first of the month, not to mention by-products, such as coke, washed slack, and iron pyrites. When it is added that he got his muscle, as a raw youth, from the

same source, you will understand that he was, in a way, a by-product himself; and that when he sent an order over the wires he knew by personal and intimate experience how it ought to be carried out. He was self-made, and it worried him that his only son was not having the same chance.

The preceding week, after puffing across the green campus, he had sat in a Yale audience and watched young Blakely take his diploma. The only thing he had against it was that Jerry hadn't earned it, any more than he had earned the money to pay his college debts. The whole course of young Blakely's life there had been gratuitous, and his father knew, by a ripe experience, that life doesn't go on handing out things to any man for nothing.

The head bookkeeper, about to back out of the room, found his way blocked by a young man in a loose silk duster.

"Hello, dad!"

Old Blakely, swinging around in his chair again, set his jaw. "I can't see you to-day, Jerry." He began to sort over the loose sheets on his desk.

"Not if you don't look my way," said the other, puffing at a cigarette in an amber and gold mouthpiece; he crossed the room with lazy grace and seated himself. "I got held up. For speeding. Had to bail myself out of court.

Crusty old judge fell to pieces when I mentioned your name. Literally crumpled up. All the same, I've got to appear in court to-morrow." He sent a blue ring to the ceiling.

"You hadn't any right to use my name. Look here, Jerry—throw away that cigarette. I don't allow my clerks to smoke and I can't make distinctions."

"Holy smoke!" exclaimed Jerry, but he prodded the lighted end on the desk lid and whisked it cleverly into a wastepaper receptacle at the other end of the room. "That's some fool rule, dad. Strikes me that for a high gazebo who doesn't have to count his pennies you deal yourself in one way or another a rotten hand; but at least"—an appraising blue eye traveled about the shabby little room—"you're a sport when you play it! Why the dickens don't you get rid of some of this junk and blow yourself to some real mahogany and a rubber plant—just to create a homelike effect?"

"You are creating enough effect for the family."

The young man crossed his legs. He certainly created an effect of good looks, any way you took him, and presumably he knew it. "I suppose I am, dad—just pure scenery."

Blakely grunted. He sat, for an instant, looking his son over, then he cleared his throat. "I made another fool rule years ago, and that was never to tell a man what I thought of him at a first sitting. Well, I've had about twenty-three years to come to a conclusion about my own son. I have an idea it will clear the atmosphere between us to tell you"—he paused to let the words sink in—"exactly what I think of you as a man."

It was young Blakely's turn to study his father with a curiously steadfast gaze. Then he said, "You have the floor, sir."

The other frowned. Dawson had backed considerably to the door, but he had laid, in passing, the little packet of bills on the desk. Blakely's clerks never left his presence without a proper dismissal.

"Don't go, Dawson." The boss' voice

had sharpened to a note of command. "I may need your memory of this conversation for future reference. Jerry, I've got something to say to you that won't hold over. I'm perfectly willing, when I make a mistake, to own up to it. Well, I've made one with you. I've let you go on thinking that a man in a silk shirt is better than one with his muslin sleeves rolled up. I've paid for your silk shirts a good many times, but I'm hanged if I'll stand for the monograms!"

Jerry flushed. "It's all right, dad, if you feel that way about it. A woman did them for a living. She was supporting a lame kid, so some of the crowd felt it was up to us to give her a chance."

The elder Blakely beat a silent tattoo on the desk lid. "Hm! Did she also work the monogram on your cigarette?"

"Oh, that? It's just a fancy brand. It doesn't mean a thing. I've had just as good a smoke from a ten-cent pack."

"Well, I'm not questioning your taste." The father's voice had gone dry. "A man has a right to any kind of smoke he can afford to pay for. That's my working principle, and it's one you've got to assimilate before you go much further." There was, in spite of its gruffness, a curious break in old Blakely's speech, but he put it aside and got back to the tone he used when a "fresh" clerk needed rebuking.

"I've paid your college bills for four years, Jerry, not limiting myself to tuition and other necessary expenses. Looking at it from a purely business standpoint, it's about time for you to arrange a first payment on the investment."

Jerry lifted his lids; his eyes were set to a stiffened blue gaze. "I don't think I get the idea. As I look at it, sir, you distinctly owe me my living, since you happen to be the one in funds. If"—he turned a moment to cast an irritated glance at Dawson—"if it ever happens that you are down and out, my argument would work the other way. Naturally I should look after you."

The veins on the older man's neck swelled slightly, but he gave no other

sign. Instead he said, still dryly: "Along what line—supposing such a calamity were to occur—would you proceed?"

Jerry smiled faintly, as if the humor of it struck him. "The line of least resistance, probably."

"Exactly." Blakely's hand still beat that silent tattoo. "The business of being a father is my present concern, and I expect to run it by the same rules I'd use in any decent deal I was anxious to put across. I've made you certain advances. Well, I'll not be hard on you and ask a cash settlement. I'll take it out in trade."

"I don't understand you, sir."

"Trade. Day's work. If it offends your special brand of pride to be termed a day laborer, we'll take you on by the month. The main idea is to put you on schedule. I'll see that you get decent pay for every hour you put into your job."

"Is this your idea of a joke, dad?"

"I never was more serious in my life. You see, I'm staking your whole future on it—whether or not you turn out an honest man?"

Jerry's eyelids flickered. A red flush was staining his well-groomed skin. "What are you trying to do to me, anyway?"

"I'm trying to pull you up short, Jerry, and I'm taking the only method I haven't tried out. We've talked on the subject of debt before, and had one or two blow-outs without laying any new tracks. I want you to map out fresh territory. I want you to cut out one or two of your friends—they're rotters—and make a friend of your father." He mopped his forehead. "I'm not asking you to beat the streets looking for a job. You don't have to, thank Heaven!" He stopped again. His voice held a certain note of hard pride. It was as if he said, "I've done the rough work for you, boy; the thing is here for you, ready-made."

Jerry had risen. He was bracing himself against the desk, with one hand gripping the woodwork. "We had better," he said stiffly, "talk this thing to a finish, sir. I can give you my an-

swer right now. I wouldn't be an out-and-out business drudge such as you are for the biggest string of mines in Colorado. I have a right to live my own life in my own way, and it's nobody's business which way I choose. You say you've brought me up to the kind of thing that goes with a silk shirt. Well, you can't expect me to change all that on order. I don't think you're playing the game.

"It will be all right to chuck me when I disgrace you," the young man went on; "until then I think I have a perfect right, considering, as I said before, that you are the one in funds, to draw on you for any decent amount that I find I need to keep me going. As it happens, I intend, later on, to take up a profession. It will need thinking about. At present I have other plans. In fact, I came down to-day with every intention of telling you one of them. I have recently engaged myself to a little girl."

The older man stared at him a moment. Then he said flatly, "Who is she?"

"Her name is Curtis." Jerry was not altogether at his ease. "Her father is connected with the Mercantile Trust and——"

"You don't mean Curtis who runs that bunch of clerks in the auditing department?"

Jerry bit his lip. "I believe that's his line, sir."

"I shouldn't have thought," said Blakely with slow emphasis, "they'd be highbrow enough for you, Jerry."

Young Blakely threw back his head. "This is not a question of class."

The other's lips moved, then closed in a tight line. Suddenly he leaned forward. "By George!" he said. It was as if he were discovering, for the first time, some quality in young Blakely that needed consideration. He gripped the arms of the chair. "Jerry," he said, "I've been sort of counting, ever since you were a little shaver, on having you down here at the old hang-out with me. I wanted you to learn the ropes and some day take over the whole concern. That's why I tried to pull you through Sheffield Scientific. I thought I'd make

you a fancy engineer and then unload you on the mine. But I've got over that dream in the last five minutes. You wouldn't fill the bill. Why, you wouldn't, the way you are now, even make a good clerk!"

Jerry stared back at the man in the chair. His eyes shot blue fire. There were little, twitching veins in his temples. Perhaps that apologetic figure in the worn office coat who was standing with his back considerably turned hurt his pride. Dawson had been for a good many years his father's "man Friday."

"Now about this—engagement business." Old Blakely looked up from under bushy brows. "What are you expecting to marry on, Jerry?"

His son's flush deepened, but he carried it off high. "For the present I am simply counting on—my allowance, sir."

"Indeed? Well, it's only fair to tell you that it stops from this hour!"

Jerry stood stock-still. Then he said: "I don't like your idea of fair play."

Blakely turned. "Dawson, the monthly checks to my son are discontinued. Do you understand? You will draw one to his name for fifty dollars and bring it to me for signature before I leave to-night. Thank you, Dawson. That is about all." He nodded curtly and sat stiffly forward in the big chair until Dawson had softly closed the door behind him; then he said: "Jerry, let's get down to rock bottom. Let's work this thing out together according to decent business methods. I'd like to get hold of your idea of life, and talk things out."

Jerry's face, dead white, was turned away. "Thanks, but you've already made it final."

"There are only two of us, boy, since your mother passed away."

But Jerry had swerved suddenly. With a deliberate gesture he turned the knob of the big glass door and stood with his foot holding it ajar, open to the view of the clerks outside. He reached for the little silver case in his pocket, and, striking a match, lighted a cigarette. Then he went out with his head held high.

His father did not move. The muscles of his cheeks had sagged. He looked suddenly old. He needed time to pull himself together. An hour later Dawson found him still sitting there, a hunched, burly figure, mopping his brow.

CHAPTER II.

THE BALANCE SHEET.

JERRY climbed into the car outside with a brief sentence to the blasé young man who sat at the wheel. "Let's get out of this place, Patsy, quick!"

"All right, old man. What's the row? Say, you look like a Sunday-school picnic caught in the rain! My word!"

"Stow it, will you?"

"Don't get rabid. Where to, Jerry?"

"Oh, blazes! Anywhere. Down to Beckwith's. He has some stuff on hand. I've got to have a drink."

"Say it in French, will you, if you've got to talk about it. Suppose Beckwith isn't home?"

"Then we'll go out to the golf club. I tell you my head is going round. For heaven's sake speed her up, Patsy; I've—just had a scene with my father."

The blasé young man whistled. Then he pulled his motor cap lower and let her go.

They found Beckwith, as it happened, just coming off the golf course, hot and fractious, and disposed to fib about the contents of his locker. It took Jerry's white face and the merciless kidding of one or two other congenial spirits to make him loosen up. The result was a small group of six who did things to a corner of the piazza, including some innocent wicker chairs and a caddy whom they scared into a blue funk because he might "blab."

It was a male club, where a man could get rid of his collar and tie and sit with his legs higher than his head to ease his system, or otherwise unload. But even in a male club there are limits. They were reached in this case when Beckwith suggested, with an air of real concern, that "some one of you fellowsh shee Jerry home."

"You go home and tie a towel around your head, Jerry, old top."

"Shay, Jerry, you'll have to pay for that railing if you break it! Thish ain't the balcony scheme——"

Young Blakely, balanced on the balustrade, hugged a painted pillar and lifted aloft an empty glass. "Here's to who?" he mumbled. "To Stella—brightest little star——" He corrected himself with an effort. "Brightest little shar—— Well, anyway, here's to Stella." He let himself down, in a limp heap, to the wooden flooring, his eyes still set to that pained blue stare.

"Say! Jerry's under, all right. Somebody better steer him home. Where's Patsy? He came with old Pat——"

"Patsy's trying what a cold shower will do. If you call him now he'll come out like Adam!"

"Well, you can't put him in a car like that. Somebody call Rosedale 107—it's a taxi stand."

In the end that was the solution. Jerry Blakely was bowled off like the sixth little Indian while the five others stayed behind and tried various methods of "sobering up." Their last impression of him, necessarily hazy, was of a dead-white face set with spots of high color on the cheek bones, and blue eyes fixed and frowning. Damp blond locks hid what was left of Jerry's "noble brow."

Young Blakely had sense enough not to go home, but he wasn't sure of the other place. At last, stretching across what seemed a great void, he gave an order to the cabman. He was conscious, in a dim sort of way, of a steady pain at his heart, and a desire to be understood. Underneath the vagueness of his suffering he unearthed the fact that he and his father had come to some painful conclusion, and that somebody had shut a door in his face. His father was a good old duffer, Jerry thought; but he was obsolete, belonging to an era that no longer held sway. And his father was *hard*—rocky—his father had been turning some screw; he could feel the hurt of it yet.

In the depths of the taxicab young

Blakely set his jaw and delivered himself of certain sentiments connected with his "governor." "Shelf-made," he said, "that's what he is—a shelf-made man! Naturally he's selfish. Thinks of nothing but grubbing. No fine feelings—never hished his wagon to a star." And with that he promptly reverted to the name he had chosen for the little Curtis girl!

He was still repeating it when he stopped at her door! As he stood, balancing himself with difficulty in the small brown living room, he stared after the frowsy maid. He felt all at once distinctly pleased that the Curtis tribe were not "highbrows"—he could always give his wife as good as this! A mighty contempt filled his soul as he fixed his eyes on the plaster ceiling.

Jerry became conscious, all at once, that a door had opened. "H'lo," he said, "shweetheart——"

"Jimmy—why it's frightfully late! Whatever is the matter?"

"Had to see you, littl' star." Somehow his arms were not answering to the summons of his brain. He enveloped her instead with a sickly but spreading smile.

She stood perfectly still on the threshold. She had some sort of white thing on, as if she had just come from her room, but it was not whiter than her face. "Jimmy, you're ill! There is something—wrong——"

"Nonshense, darling, everything right as a trivet. I jush wanted—jush wanted to comfort you, un'erstand?"

"Jimmy, you're *drunk*!"

"Drunk?" At her cry he made a step forward.

But she shrank back, shivering. "Jimmy—don't touch me! Oh, dad dad——"

A man had stepped out of the shadow of the little hallway; the next instant she was tight locked in her father's arms, her face crushed against his breast.

Blakely, beginning dimly to realize that he was giving some kind of horrible impression, stood silently holding to a table while things generally went around, and the chairs took grotesque

positions. They had left him alone. He could hear them in the next room, low-pitched, careful voices, and some one—sobbing! He was just about to go in and demand by what right they held away his bride when the head bookkeeper of the Mercantile Trust came in with something in a cup.

"Drink that," he said curtly; "no, don't say anything, please, just drink it."

Blakely, gulping down the black coffee, drew a deep breath and straightened. "Mr. Curtis, have I been—drunk?"

The bookkeeper looked at him. "You are drunk," he said.

Blakely sat down and held, for a space of minutes that went uncounted, his head in his hand. He was aware that Curtis had left him alone after taking away the coffee cup, but the voices had died out. There were only the night sounds that surround an apartment house in a dense city block—the clang of a trolley sweeping past on the avenue, a policeman on his solitary beat, the honk of an automobile. But what young Blakely listened to was a still, small voice that spoke insistently, torturingly—words that beat like little hammers on his brain!

Curtis, coming in silently, stood regarding him without comment. Blakely looked up. "Mr. Curtis," he said, "I'm not drunk now, and—I beg your pardon!" His eyes were full of a sick dismay.

"That's all right." Curtis was still abrupt, distinctly unpleasant. "Do you think you are able to get home alone? I've sent for a cab."

Blakely sat very still. "You mean," he said, with a tortured little smile, "that—I am not to come again?"

"That's about the size of it."

Blakely got to his feet. He was steady enough now, except for a certain pounding in his temples. "Don't say that, Mr. Curtis! It—would change my life!"

"Don't you think you're about due to change it?"

Blakely bit his lip. "You don't understand," he said. "Mr. Curtis, I was

coming to you to-night, only I got sidetracked at that infernal club! Stella and I——" He stopped, then added in desperation: "The fact is she loves me, Mr. Curtis."

The head bookkeeper of the Mercantile Trust listened quietly; soon he said: "I think I can answer for my little girl, that she has changed her mind."

"And do you mean?"—Jerry was quivering now—"that you'd let one drunk queer a man—for the rest of his life?"

"Not one drunk, Blakely." The head bookkeeper was facing him with steady eyes. "Do you want me," he said, "to tell you the truth? You are a rich man's son, and they are not apt to hear it."

Blakely looked at him. "Go on," he said hoarsely.

"I'd rather see my daughter dead—than married to one of your crowd."

The young man's face went gray. "Look here, Mr. Curtis——"

The bookkeeper of the Mercantile Trust put his hands in his pockets. They were worn pockets. There was, as young Blakely saw him, a certain amount of wear and tear about the whole man. His temples were slightly hollowed; he wore glasses, and the gold rims stood out, like a decoration, about his narrow face. But there was also, and this Blakely dimly comprehended, something fine. You couldn't knock down a man like that for telling you things, you just—ground your teeth and took it standing.

"I am twice your age, Blakely," Curtis went on, still speaking with that quiet undertone of scorn, "and my position is not like your father's, for instance, big as the world sees it. But I don't owe any man a dollar, Blakely, nor a meal, nor a bed. Sometimes I work down at my hang-out till every one else has left—a bookkeeper has to do that sometimes, and get so dog-tired he can't see the strap in the subway coming home—but do you think I would pass over my books to any one else and skin out of it? No, because no other man could do my work as well as myself! That's what you are doing, Blakely, you and your crowd, passing over your books to your father to keep for you, and he

can't do it, he can't square your balance sheet—it won't come out even." Curtis paused. "You see," he ended, with his slow, precise smile, "a family tree isn't worth a hill of beans if the younger branches fail to keep it green!"

Blakely lifted hollowed eyes. "I—get you," he said.

Curtis nodded. "If you do, Blakely, I shan't be sorry I've spoken."

Blakely drew himself together. "I guess I'll get on," he said hoarsely, and without another word he went softly out and closed the door behind him.

As he climbed stiffly into the waiting cab he gave a street and number. They were not his own. He was going to hunt up Dawson, in Dawson's shabby boarding house. Blakely, sitting back with the knife thrust of shame still in his heart, had clung, with a strange persistency, to the idea of Dawson, his father's steady. He hardly knew why. He only knew that in the last few hours his whole world had been chucked overboard—he hadn't a friend left on earth!

He felt, Heaven help him, like a yellow dog, and he knew that Dawson was the kind who would take in even a yellow dog and befriend it. Just one idea, along with the idea of Dawson, had taken form out of the void in young Blakely's miserable consciousness—Curtis had put it into words for him. He would never see his father's face again till he had learned to keep his own books—to stand upon his own feet with other real men.

CHAPTER III.

FIGHTING IT OUT.

SITTING on the edge of Dawson's iron bed in the stuffy hall room with its bowl and pitcher, Jerry Blakely blurted out his need: "Dawson, I've got to clear off. Somewhere. I'm going out to Gallagher at the mine."

Dawson lifted his head. There was uncertainty in his plain face. It was as if he were groping in the dark, for a clev. "Yes, Mr. Blakely?"

"Yes. I'm chucking things over, Dawson. Shipping myself off for good and all. I'm—not coming back."

6B TN

Dawson put out a thin, knuckled hand and touched Blakely's sleeve. "I—I was sorry to be a party, sir, this afternoon—to intrude. But you must make allowances. We all do, down at the office. You father has a good deal to try him, I guess," said Dawson with a slow smile. "I try him at times myself, Mr. Blakely; but he's fine. He's got a fine sense of honor, sir, and—I hope you won't make any hasty decision."

"Stow it all, Dawson! You know confounded well I'm a rotter. The only thing," said Blakely, getting up hastily and striding up and down the tiny room, "the only thing I'm not rotter enough to do, Dawson, is cringe. I'll not lick my father's boots and say I'm sorry before I've proved it to my own soul." He swallowed hard, stood still, and stared back at Dawson with those shamed, miserable blue eyes.

Dawson put up a hand to his collar. He had a prominent Adam's apple, and it moved. It was almost as if Dawson swallowed hard, too. But he didn't attempt to answer. Dawson, among other things in a bare life, had learned repression. He couldn't always analyze his feelings, and when he couldn't he kept them to himself.

"There's one thing more," said Blakely hurriedly, "that I'll not do. I'll not let my father back me with a dollar—not if I starve. I'd sooner turn hobo, and sell shoe laces from door to door! He spoke of a check this afternoon. Well, I won't touch that. But—Dawson, I've got to get as far as Colorado; I want you to lend me fifty dollars. I've got some money, but I'll need more for my ticket and other things."

"Certainly, Mr. Blakely. I have it right here, sir." Dawson was already fumbling for the key of his trunk. He didn't, faithful soul, tell young Blakely that he had been saving up for a winter overcoat.

"Thanks." Blakely's hands closed over the bills. "And, Dawson"—his voice was strained—"I don't want my father to know. Keep him in the dark as to my whereabouts. I'll wire him

from somewhere along the road. I'll shut Gallagher up when I get there."

Dawson said with visible effort: "You won't keep him without news long, Mr. Blakely? The chief ought not to be worried—at his age. We try, down at the office, to keep worry from him, in little ways."

Blakely reached over and gripped Dawson's hand. "You're a faithful dog, Dawson, and I'm a yellow cur. That's about our rating! I don't wonder my father values you. You only come one of a kind." And then, with a queer contortion of a smile, he tucked the fifty dollars into his breast pocket. "Dawson, can you give me a shake-down for the night, and—and breakfast?"

"I'll take it as an honor, sir; I'd do anything for your family, Mr. Blakely, and it's made me as happy as I can be over a miserable business to have you come to me. I'll just call the landlady for clean sheets."

"Dawson, I don't deserve all this kindness." He paused a moment in thought, then said: "It's beastly impudent, but was there ever—any kind of a little girl in your life?"

The other sent across one of his slow smiles. "It never went as far as that, Mr. Blakely. You see, I had a dependent mother. By the time she died my—lady friend had married some one else. There wasn't enough, you see, for two, and mother needed me most. But I think it's made me understand all love a little better, even though in a way it came to nothing."

Nothing! Jerry Blakely, staring across at the homely, blunted features, felt a faint stirring of the truth—that Dawson had sounded the length and breadth and depth and height of the thing sung by men and angels. Later he felt it again, when old Dawson said his prayers.

At length he kicked off his shoes and turned his face to the wall, and lay stretched, stiff and motionless, in a room adjoining that of the long, lank man who did drudgery in his father's office. He fought his first beasts that night! Dawson slept like a little child.

CHAPTER IV.

PLAYING A JOKE.

JERMYN BLAKELY went as far as the middle of Colorado. Then he got off. He had absolutely thrown overboard the old life. As he sat, hour after hour, in the swiftly moving train, he tried to visualize, instead of those receding miles that seemed a race course to a new existence, something that had happened a week before, when he had been a freebooter, flocking with birds of his own kind.

He tried to call up the image of Patsy, driving a car like the very wind, or Beckwith, with rounded arms like a girl and a passion for strong tobacco and shady company. He had always, at least in that respect, been a cut above Beckwith; not that he could put his little finger on anything that called for pride—it was just that he was not Beckwith's sort of a rotter. If he had been he could never have faced Stella Curtis with level eyes.

He passed a monotony of time in the smoker. His cigarettes had given out, but he bought a cheap pack on the train. Once he had a bad half hour. A man near him recognized his "frat" pin and tried to hobnob on the strength of it. He was a Yale man, 1914, and had seen service abroad. Jerry felt once again like a yellow dog. He hadn't done a thing for his country, and he was ashamed to mention his friends.

He had written, upon thinking the thing over, from the Grand Central just before he boarded his train—on cheap stationery bought in a drug store. The note to his father was a struggle with his pride, and also with something, a mist, that kept coming before his eyes when he remembered it was the last word that might ever pass between them. It would take him time to square himself, and his father was an old man. Jerry had written:

I am cutting away, sir. The reason for it lies partly in our conversation of yesterday. The rest of it I cannot explain. You will agree with me that I am most kinds of a rotter, but not all. I have been a parasitic growth on the family tree for too long. It is something that I recognize that. It is a part

of the thing I am cutting away. You told me yesterday, among other things, that I had no right to use your name as an alibi to get me out of a tight place. It is perfectly true. I haven't a right to it in the world. You made it yourself, and you have a right to keep it clean. I am taking another, temporarily.

Perhaps I, too, am dealing myself a rotten hand, but at least I can also try to be a sport when I play it. Dawson is returning you the check. I am managing to get along without. I have found out in the past twenty-four hours that a man can get along without everything except the shirt on his back and his own self-respect. Dear dad, forget me—cut me out of your thinking box. If I ever turn up again I promise you it won't be as a bad penny. Heaven bless you. Forgive me. Sir, good-by.

JERRY.

He did not write to Stella. He had cut away that right, also; but he wrote a stiff little note to the head bookkeeper of the Mercantile Trust:

Some day I am coming back. But you need not be afraid—it will be after I have squared my own balance sheet. You said things to me last night, Curtis, that I could knock a man down for. To my eternal shame they were true. But I'm going to make you swallow them some day. As for Stella, she stands at least for the purest and best moments of my life. She will be to me always what her name implies—my one star in a blackened sky. I won't send her my love, Mr. Curtis, but give it to her if you have a heart.

JERMYN BLAKELY.

He had dropped the letters in the box and jumped on the already moving train.

On a hot Thursday early in July, Gallagher, mine boss for Blakely & Co. at the Old Carston diggings, looked up from his checking sheet as Cooghan, the day watchman, strolled in from the yards. Cooghan had a pipe in his mouth. He spoke now, in thickened accents, over the stem:

"Young feller outside wants to see you. Job hunting. He's hiked it from Sloane Valley—walks with a sore hoof."

"I can't take on any more raw labor. You know that, Cooghan. Tell him to get out." Gallagher's tone was lazy but final. He went back to his list.

"I did. We was over by A Shaft. He got his eye glued to that left cable in the hoisting machine. I told him the inspector had passed it, and he said he

was a bum inspector. Said it nice and friendly, but I thought you'd better see him."

Gallagher looked up sharply. "What's that?" He stared a minute at the blank wall beyond Cooghan's head, then he tipped his derby back to ease the red line on his forehead. "All right," he said. "Cooghan, send the fresh cuss in to me."

Jerry Blakely came in, blinking a little from too much sunlight. Also he limped. He had left his grip at the Sloane House, and purchased, from one of the company stores, a miner's outfit. He got his first dose of what things were going to be like from the shoes. He stood waiting for the mine boss to look up.

"Well"—Gallagher's tone was short and to the point—"what's your idea?"

"I want a job, any kind of job, in the mine."

Gallagher continued to study him with narrowed gaze. He kept eying Blakely's hands. "What was your last job—clerking?"

Jerry flushed. "I might as well tell you. I've never been much good at anything. I know a little about engineering, that's all. I'm willing to begin at the bottom." Some touch of inner pride made him add stubbornly: "And work up."

The mine boss smoked his cigar reflectively a minute. He seemed puzzled. But one could not fool him. His first idea—that Blakely might be some agent let loose on the mine in order to pry out conditions for some "nuisance of a welfare league" as he put it mentally—was spoiled. He got, before many seconds had passed, nearer to the truth—the applicant was some college bloke, taking his own idea of a summer vacation. Gallagher, loving a grim joke for its own sake, made up his mind to take him on, and work him "like the cheerful devil!"

"If you want to come in as a loader," he said after a silence, "I'll take you on. I'm short on one of the shifts. If you'd happened to be a Polack or an Italian there'd be nothing doing. I've got too many foreigners on my hand now. But you're American," snapped the mine

boss, "and the Powers Above know we need a few to remember where we are on the map!" He turned back to his desk. "Your name?"

Blakely had figured that in with his outfit. "James Ryan."

The mine boss nodded to Cooghan. "Take this man down to the bunk house and fit him out. Send him down to McCoy—tell him to put him in the shift that's working the West Heading."

As Blakely, in the watchman's wake, crossed the littered yards he could see, outlined against the doorway of the little wooden office, the angular figure of the mine boss, still smoking and following them with his eyes.

CHAPTER V.

AMONG THE STARS.

IN those first weeks, "James Ryan" did a lot of underground work. He felt sometimes as if he were tunneling a way through to the real Jermyn Blakely, that he was getting, for the first time, on intimate terms with himself. There were things he hadn't taken stock of—his pride in clean finger nails, for instance, and linen of a certain texture. In the depths of the earth one did not worry about such things.

And there was a disgust that was almost physical nausea at rubbing elbows with these soiled beings of an alien race. It lasted for three days, till a low-browed Lithuanian, with bared, hairy chest, spent the best part of a morning patiently picking up the shovelfuls that Jerry kept dropping, and at the end of it told him, with a cheerful but distorted smile, "Aye, you's doin' fine!"

Blakely, in those winding passages where the thermometer kept steadily mounting, found that something else was as steadily falling—his own self-conceit. He saw, for instance, that one couldn't, in the "Old Carston," jump into a job like Gallagher's—he had to prove his fitness for every bit of "lead" the company handed out to him, and then walk chalk while the New York office watched him do it.

Even McCoy, who managed his shift,

had got to the front of his gang by certain definite qualities. McCoy, from somewhere along those coal seams, had dug out patience, a steadiness with the men. He could fill up with raw temper twenty times a day and not spill over. At first, Jerry, loading the little, sliding cars under McCoy's incessant goad, felt a huge superiority. McCoy, with his bleak face, and ears set standing like a rabbit's, was just "dirt" with a little more sand in him than the rest, that was all.

And then came the day when McCoy dragged a drunken Polack from under the cage of the lift—jacked it up and dragged him out with a frenzy of strength and speed, binding up the crushed body with rags from the engine room, muttering as he flung out short orders.

"Phone Entry B. Tell Murdock to come thundering quick and get this lift working again! Here, you men, get hold of this fellow's legs. For Hades' sake, can't you do it gentler? He ain't a load of coal!"

Jerry, with a queer tremor twitching his lips, fell into the gap. "That's all right," he gasped; "I've got him, McCoy."

He had got, along with a hold on that inert body, something else—a weight of shame. There on the oil-puddled floor, standing with McCoy shoulder to shoulder, with that crushed Polack between them, he knew McCoy for the bigger man of the two. And probably McCoy never had heard of the Sheffield Scientific School at Yale.

Jerry got out, that afternoon, into top air, and stood for a moment irresolute. Then, following an impulse that sent a flush to his forehead, he hunted up the mine boss in the yards. "I—Do you mind telling me how that Polack's getting on? The man who was hurt on my shift?"

The mine boss stared at him; then he said: "Couldn't tell you. We shipped him down to the hospital at Fayetteville."

"Fayetteville." Jerry echoed the word and then said stumbly: "Why, that's forty miles off on the map."

But Gallagher, as if there were nothing more to say on the matter, had already turned in the direction of the engine room.

Jerry stood still in the beating sunlight. He had washed off the coal dust and there was a little white line rimming his lips. He was thinking: "I'm James Ryan. I must keep my blamed mouth shut. Great Heaven, not even a first-aid station—and I've got to keep quiet in my father's mine!"

A sudden wild desire seized him—to take up an old make-believe he played with as a small boy, to "pretend" doing things to people's legs and arms with a pair of garden clippers and a manicure scissors. It was just after his mother had been through an operation. It was the only ambition he had ever had, and now it confronted him again, a grown-up man, when there was no chance. He bit his lip and stumped onward, in his thick shoes, to get his dinner.

His boarding house was just on the edge of the yards. It was kept by an Irish-American widow named O'Dee. Her husband had been buried under a "slide" the year before, and one of her two children was sickly, a boy of fourteen, who picked "slack," and coughed up coal dust most of the night. The other one, a girl called Maggie, helped with the bed making and the meals. She was the kind that mature early, and then "go off."

At seventeen her figure was all soft curves. She had a full throat and soft, dropped eyes. Jerry had wondered once or twice what they would look like if they opened full on you. She was the kind of girl that Beckwith would have had a "crush" on—or was it the girl who would emerge from the experience crushed?

Jerry, stumping up the rickety wooden steps, passed Maggie O'Dee. She was shelling peas, her rounded shoulder showing through a rent in her faded pink cotton, and she looked up with a gleam from her liquid brown eyes. Her lips parted in a soft smile of invitation. It was as if she had urged him to talk to her, to sit down and tell her intimate things, but Jerry,

flushing up to the roots of his hair, remembered Beckwith and went on hurriedly. He saw red staining her cheeks also as he lifted his hat. It was the thing he would have done to a lady!

He ate his dinner with the crowd, trying to overcome his old distaste at the half-cooked viands and thick bowl without a handle in which he got the brown liquid that Mrs. O'Dee called coffee. The trouble was that his work gave him appetite for decent things. He was hungry, and this kind of stuff was all he was man enough to earn!

Then he remembered that all those duffers had to stand it—that they could never look for anything better, unless they got away with some bigger job. "By the Eternal Powers, what they need in that mine is not just diggers, but trained brains!" he said to himself as he got up to get out into the air again.

"What they need is trained brains, and—and a trade school," he told himself. "I've been here three weeks loading coal, and I've found that out for myself. And my father's company is rich enough to build one, only they don't get the idea!"

That night he wrote to Dawson:

I'm sending you ten out of your fifty. It's a pretty big thing, Dawson, this tinner. I've earned it by a sweating process that is somehow sweating a lot of accumulated rot out of my system. I've stood in black puddles stripped to the waist. But I don't care a rap. What stands out for me so far is the fact that I wouldn't go back to the old life. I'd rather cuss myself and die! Now at least I am making my own bed and sleeping in it, so dog-tired that I don't even get the nightmare!

Dawson, I wish you'd tell me—was it difficult getting over that bit of love story with its bad ending? You see, something of the same sort has happened to me. When I first came here I thought some day I could take Fate by the throat and set things right. Now I know that even if I tunneled my way out to decency and money for two to live on, she'd still be set beyond my reach, somewhere among the stars. This all sounds like nonsense, Dawson, but I simply have to unload. I haven't even a dog to wag his tail and be glad I'm living. I've got to beat it now, and go to the corner for some weed. My pipe is empty. And, Dawson, give me a line on the governor, will you? Tell me if he's keeping fit. Yours,

JERMYN (alias, J. RYAN.)

Jerry folded the paper and placed it in the envelope. He felt better for writing the letter.

CHAPTER VI.

WITH RED FLAGS SET.

LIFE went on for Jerry in an endless round; bad air, gases that sometimes got into his lungs and made breathing a conscious effort; hours in the dark passages of the West Heading; the sliding grind of the empty cars as they slowed down to the siding. He stuck at his work as a loader until one morning in September when McCoy told him without lifting his head that he was to go on to Entry B, and take his first dose of real mining in Room 6, back of the haulage way.

Jerry, adjusting his lamp, took a pick and tamping iron from against the wall and turned his back on his old shift. He would have liked to shake hands with McCoy, to say something friendly after all these weeks together; but he knew McCoy would just look at him and think he was putting on "side." Jerry knew he stood alone down there. He was neither fish nor fowl, and sometimes he was conscious of an unspoken resentment among the men. Instinct told them he was not better, but "different."

He found himself, after tortuous windings, in Room 6. Some one, a grizzled old miner named Sully, showed him where his vein was, and how to get at it. He gave the lesson with as few words as possible, and then stood off in grim silence to see it worked out. Jerry felt as he had when his old mathematics teacher at Lawrenceville School made him do a problem in algebra on the board. He felt kiddish and a trifle scared.

After a while Sully nodded. "That's the ticket," he said flatly. "You go on doin' it that way and you're all right." It was the only sentence he spoke through a long morning.

And yet, turn whenever he would, Jerry knew the old miner was watching him. They did things carefully in Room 6. It was a balky lead. It took

sometimes heavy blasting to mine the ledge, and there was a bulging ceiling.

Jerry spoke of it later in the day to Sully. "I say," he asked casually, "oughtn't that to be put right?" He nodded upward.

Sully looked at him a moment, then he grunted. It was neither affirmation nor denial. Sully had the fatalism that roots and grows in all old hands at mining. One goes on doing things with red flags set. Sometimes the rushing danger gets him, and sometimes it gets the bunch in the next heading. It's a matter for fate to decide. And no matter what happens one never blames it on the company. If he did, and later things turned out badly, the company might not be too generous with the widow.

But it worried Jerry. Had he known its real importance it might have worried him more. As it was he came down each morning in the lift, took his tortuous trail, and without glancing at the bulge in the roof got to work with his tamping rod. But sometimes he would argue it out to himself with compressed lips. "Some day that thing is coming about our ears. And my father ought to know!" But he knew that it would take a bigger man than James Ryan to stand up to the company and have things out!

There were a dozen of them altogether in Room 6. Sully and a little Jew named Voorst, and one or two Irish-Americans. The rest, with the exception of a Swede, a giant with small, close-set eyes and fair hair, were Polacks, heavy, stolid, but inclined to fight to a crimsoned finish when one of them started any kind of a row.

Jerry hadn't been there two weeks before he got himself in bad with the worst man in the crowd, a man from Poland, named Letzky. It began with a badly rammed charge that bowled one or two of them flat, and left the rest gasping.

Sully, standing over the man who had done it, spoke with thick emphasis. "Look here, this ain't the kind of place to make mistakes in. Don't you do that thing again."

The culprit, choking with coal dust, picked himself up and stared back at Sully. Then he scowled bitterly. "Yah!" It was meaningless, a mere expletive in a place where curses were no novelty, but the venom in the man cropped out on the end of his shaking tongue.

Sully looked him over much as he would have looked at a rat just out of its hole. "That's all right," he said at last. "I guess you understand." He went back to his ledge quietly and without another word.

But Jerry, not liking the look on the man's face, kept watching him, and at last he got his chance. Another charge had just been rammed home, and the blond giant, Larson, had just set the fuse. Jerry, scurrying from the blast with the rest, caught a glimpse of Sully, with his back turned, making for the free end of the room, and Letzky taking definite aim with a short length of iron bar.

In a moment he had rushed the Pole and knocked down his arm as they stumbled out of danger together. Jerry drew up panting. "Drop it!" he said, with set teeth. "Drop that thing in your hand!" He kept his tense grip of Letzky's wrist.

Then suddenly, as the blast rang out, the man turned on him, like an animal. In the mêlée that followed it seemed to Jerry that everybody was fighting. Only the figure of Sully stood out, calm and unmoved, while they heard the sound of running down the heading, as men in the next room came to find out the row. Jerry, conscious of a stinging pain in his left shoulder, wiped the crimson from his forehead. Letzky was a lump on the floor, with his lamp broken, and spilling a little track of flaming oil through the coal dust. It was then that Sully, with every movement calculated and efficient, beat out the flame and cleared the room. The rushing danger, urged on by their own foolhardiness, had passed them by.

Jerry stood up. He looked ashamed and penitent. "He had the bar lifted," he said slowly. "I thought he'd get you. But I had no right to cause a

stampede. I ought to have called to you to duck it. Instead, I did the fool thing." His tone was bitter.

Sully looked back at him without speaking. His eyes were like cold iron. Then he said tersely: "There are lots of ways a man can make a fool out of himself in a coal mine, Ryan. When you've been at it as long as I have you'll learn to take even a knock-out blow with a crowbar rather than endanger the rest of the shift." It was a lesson that Jerry pondered deeply as he walked home that night across the yards.

He felt still the hurt of his shoulder, and a little sick at heart. Letzky was ugly. He was the kind that would brew, for the man who had spoiled his chance of putting something across, the slow poison of hate. And Sully was cold about the whole business. A sudden depression got hold of Jerry from his head down. It seemed to bend him to earth! He suddenly wanted even a dog to wag his tail and show friendliness. And he wanted his girl!

As he nodded to Cooghan at the gate, and took the narrow street that led to the boarding house he felt like chucking the whole thing and going under. He had plenty of chance; an overdose of something, and the next morning somebody knocking for a long time at his door—who would ever know? It would be just James Ryan and the world well rid of him! And then he remembered that he still owed forty dollars to Dawson. He couldn't skin out with a thing like that on his soul. He remembered, with the still unpaid debt, the warm grip of a thin, big-knuckled hand, and Dawson's hoarsely spoken sentence, "It's made me understand all love a little better, even though in a way it came to nothing." Bowing his head, Jerry tramped on through the dusk.

CHAPTER VII.

THAT BULGING ROOF.

MAGGIE O'DEE was sitting on the rickety top step. She was looking the other way, as if she were expecting somebody, but the ruse was too

old with Jerry now to count. He understood a lot of things about Maggie; soft, tender askings that hadn't, as far as he was concerned, any answer. She started now, as he said his good evening, and then slowly put out a soft little hand, rather reddened from constant dish washing, and gripped his sleeve.

"Let's sit down a while," she murmured. "You never do sit down. You are always in such a hurry."

"That's too bad," said Jerry, "to seem like that, Miss O'Dee; but then it's usually true, you know. I am in rather a hurry."

She was looking at him now, cautiously, from under those dropped lids. "Why don't you call me Maggie? You've known me long enough to—to do a lot of things."

He made a mistake. "Things?" he echoed, and then could have bitten his tongue out because it gave her a lead.

"Sure. Just 'things.' Like kissing and holding hands and that. You are terrible cold, Mr. Ryan. I don't think you want to be friendly." Her voice had dropped at the last word. And suddenly he realized with a tremor that about one thing Maggie was dead in earnest—that he take her at her word.

He looked away from her. Dusk had fallen quickly, hiding with a soft blurred beauty the agonizing ugliness of the little street—its ash cans and garbage pails and broken palings. It was hiding even the redness of Maggie's hands. They were just soft friendly things that wanted to cling to him, and he was alone, with not a soul to give a thought what happened to him, and with the sweetheart that he lost out on far away. There came a sudden rushing of blood to his temples—Maggie had reached up with her little clinging hands, was pulling him down.

At the touch of her lips he woke. He was Jermyn Blakely again, the man who had been a dismal failure, but who wasn't Beckwith's kind of a rotter.

"Listen," he said, "Maggie"—his voice was a little thick, but desperately in earnest—"I'll tell you why we

mustn't—make love to one another." He knew that in her world one does not hedge. A spade is just a spade, and not something to dig about the bush with.

"Yes?" she said. She was looking at him now, with a pallor about those full red lips.

"We mustn't," he said, "because it wouldn't be honest, Maggie. Because a long time ago, before I came here and met you I promised a little girl that I would be true, and told her that I cared, Maggie."

She grew limp. Her arms fell into her lap and her shoulders sagged. But she didn't cry. They don't cry in Maggie's world, either, except at funerals. But her lips were quivering now, and she was plucking at the ruffle of her cotton dress. "I knew right from the first there was another girl," she said, and then straightened.

"But don't you think," she went on in a sobbing voice, "don't you go thinking for one minute that I'd try to cut her out!" And as she turned from him, a little blindly, to grope her way into the dark, ugly hall, he drew a deep breath. In spite of rotters like Beckwith, there was honor in Maggie's world! Thank Divine Providence now that from the first he had not been cad enough to make her feel any difference. Thank Divine Providence he had treated her as a lady!

That night he wrote again to Dawson, and then rolled himself into his cotton sheet and slept till gray dawn. He hurried into his clothes and after a hasty cup of coffee walked down to the yards through a world just waking. He was able to fling his head up and take what life flung out to him here standing. After all, it was a new day.

He had written to Dawson:

I've been on the edge of things to-night. But I didn't topple over. That's about as far as I need to go with it. I got depressed and I guess I was tired, and there was a girl. She's the daughter of my landlady, and very pretty. So pretty you forget she's common. But why should I expect you to understand? You are white, Dawson. You'd never even have the desire to touch pitch.

But at least I've not let this thing blacken my soul. Her name is Maggie O'Dee.

You are right. No matter how it ends, when the real thing has once been in your life it makes you look at things differently. To-night I felt held back—do you see what I mean?

I am sending you ten out of the forty I owe you. If it takes me till Christmas I've got to break the back of the worst of the accounts against me. I have sent payments on some of the bills already, fixing it so they won't learn my name here.

You don't say a word about my father. Is he ill? I feel sometimes like a prisoner under a life sentence, and then I get interested in the mine and forget. In some ways the company uses rotten judgment. Why in thunder don't they put in an electric plant? They'd save in the end. And they're careless about safety devices. I go down every day with a rotten cable. The inspectors are stuffed full of hot air, and they're too good-natured to blab.

But, Dawson, it's all wrong. They haven't even a first-aid station. When I first came up there was an accident and they shipped the man forty miles in a motor lorry. He died on the way! If I could go back I'd cut Sheffield Scientific and go in for surgery. If you saw some of the crooked backs on kids! There isn't any excuse for that kind of thing. And some day my father has got to know the truth if I have to come back from the dead and tell him myself! Yours,

JAMES RYAN.

As he went into the bunk house to get his lamp Sully came up to him. He laid one of his big hands, with the finger nails broken into the quick, on Jerry's shoulder.

"You mustn't think I'm hard, boy," he said simply; "that was a fine thing you done, only not to say judgematical. And don't you let that bloke worry you. The shift boss has his number. Now you come along down with me."

For the first time since he had cut away from the old life Blakely smiled. And then suddenly he and the old grizzled miner were gripping hands. It was like the blood bond between them.

On the way up at noon the mine boss sent for him.

Gallagher was sitting with his chair tipped against the wall of the little office. His coat was off and his shirt sleeves were held up by elastic bands. "Ryan," he said drawlingly, "when this company takes on a man at any kind of job it pays him for two things—work-

ing seven hours a day, and keeping his mouth shut."

Jerry stared at him.

"You've not been doing it, Ryan."

"I—beg your pardon?"

"You've been saying things. The kind of things the company won't stand for. Why? Because if they let you go on doing it, some day it would lead to a stampede. That cable is perfectly safe, Ryan."

"No, sir; it's a bad cable. I've seen the strain it's under every day."

"And when a roof bulges"—Gallagher had his eyes narrowed to that straight, unwavering gaze—"it's not your business, Ryan. In a mine with as many workings as this, roofs are liable to bulge. Now you know what the company feels about it. You're a good worker. I'm not going to fire you, I'm just telling you a few things in a friendly way." The mine boss nodded. It was as if he felt sure of his man.

Jerry threw his hair back. It had a habit, when he got eager, of getting in his way. "Mr. Gallagher, I—I'm interested in this company. I've got so I like my work. It's infernally hard work, but I like it. But when you say that cable is safe you are simply taking chances every day, sir, with a load of human freight. I know something of engineering, and in my judgment you should install a new hoisting gear."

They stood looking at one another across the little office. The mine boss did not flicker an eyelash. He merely said, quietly: "That will do, I guess, Ryan, for one day." And then he added with gentle emphasis: "Of course, if you feel that way about it, whenever you get afraid, Ryan, just step to the office and see the cashier. It's easy to pay up and quit."

Jerry sent him a baffled glance. The mine boss had taken the one way, and he and Jerry knew it, to close the matter. There would never come an hour in Jermyn Blakely's life when he would own, to any man on earth, that he was afraid. He went out of the room silently, and, pulling his peaked cap down hard, tramped steadily across the yards.

CHAPTER VIII.

DANGER UNSEEN.

THAT afternoon things went badly in the West Heading. Everything had a kink in it. Afterward people said, women mostly, that you could have seen it coming. It began with an ominous line in the south—thunderheads that rolled into heavy masses and then broke away above the Fayetteville turnpike.

At three o'clock the yards were running with dirty water. A bolt struck outside of the big separator, and sent splinters of rock coal flying like shrapnel. Also it tore away the shutters of the wooden office where Gallagher and Cooghan were sheltered, and sent sluices of muddy liquid down the ventilating shafts that led to various parts of the mine. But to Sully and his workers underground not even a whisper came from the outer world. As far as sounds of earth go, a miner is as good as dead and buried.

In Room 6, Voorst, the little Jew, was ramming a charge. He had his tamping rod lifted when he turned suddenly to Jerry: "Say, by the devil, your glimmer's going out!"

Jerry put his hand up to his cap brim mechanically. Then, on the instant, he noticed that Voorst's lamp was going out, too. "What do you know about that!" he said curiously, but strangely, the truth never struck him. It was Sully who called sharply from the back of the room:

"Wait—don't fire that charge! There's fire damp somewhere!"

Perhaps he was not quick enough. One of the men, it happened to be Letzky, was bent double, close to the undercut. They saw him strike his match, and shield it an instant with his hand as he held it against the wall. Perhaps it was mere bravado; one could see, even in the shocking seconds of silence that followed, his hate for Sully in his eyes. At any rate the Pole stood up, with a broad grimace that turned all at once to horrible, indefinite fear as Sully called hoarsely:

"Heaven have mercy, you fool!" and

followed it by staccato sentences: "Hurry, boys! I tell you there's fire damp! We've got to get out quick."

The Poles were in the lead as they rushed the narrow entrance into the heading, all except Letzky, who stood, still with that distorted face turned toward Sully, until the old miner pushed him through the door. He himself was the last to stumble out, calling, as he ran, to the men in the rooms beyond:

"Fire damp, boys! There's a blowup coming. Get out quick!"

Jerry, stumbling along somewhere in the wake of the stampeding men, was conscious again of that faint disgust. But this time it was not a thing that hurt his senses, it was something that jarred his soul. It was that animal struggle to be in the lead, to get first out of the unseen danger.

Then all at once he saw Sully, with set, grizzled face, turn and run along one of the trailing passages to carry to the men at the far end his alarm, when he might never have time to get back. Jerry, in that flashing instant, knew Sully as he had known McCoy, binding up that crushed Polack with rags from the engine room. They were men of the same breed. His breath caught as he bowed his head and stumbled on. It seemed as if for the first time he caught the drift of the Almighty's idea for the created world.

As they crowded pell-mell through the various rooms that led to the main entry it overtook them—a roar that sounded like the calling of souls to judgment.

Jerry, sprawling over the man in front, realized that his mouth was full of coal grit. He thought for a moment he had gone blind. There was the sound of beating waters in his ears. But he was no longer afraid. He got, somehow, to his feet, prodding with his foot the man who still lay prone. "It's over," he said, and then he repeated it foolishly: "It's over, man; get up."

Some one was staggering toward him in the darkness. And then Jerry heard Sully's gruff voice.

"See if you can find it, boy," the mine

boss was saying. "It should be about here."

And as Jerry turned to him blankly he saw him feeling for the wall ahead of them with his hands, and suddenly stumble to his knees.

He picked himself up quickly. "Well, boy"—his voice was hoarse, pitched to a strange key—"we're blocked. I guess that's about the size of it, lad."

Jerry's stiffened tongue put a question: "What's the idea, Sully?"

And Sully sent again a hoarse whisper across to him: "Piece of roof fallen in Room 2."

Jerry felt brought up to a great pause. Worlds seemed to be revolving about him. It was as if, a naked soul, he stood still. And then he tried to speak to Sully and couldn't.

"Funny," Sully was saying, still in that low-pitched, monotonous voice. "You can't never tell what a roof is going to do, not even when it looks on the level. Most likely that old bulge of ours has weathered through, and this one is down. You just gotta take chances in a mine." He stood with those slightly stooped shoulders of his, staring at the heap of débris that cut them off, pulling with his big hand at his grizzled beard.

But Jerry was young. "Can't we dig?" he asked hotly, and he caught up his mining pick that had dropped with him in that crashing moment to the floor. He was staring about him, a little wildly, and conscious of vague anger at all of these dark figures about him that stood as if they had taken root.

"Sure, you can dig." Sully spoke quietly. "You can dig, lad, but it would be sure enough out of the frying pan into the fire. Great guns, can't you hear it roarin' through?"

Out of the sharpened silence they heard it passing them by, down the heading toward the main entry where they ran the full cars up to the lift—a circling, sullen whirlwind that caught up the particles of coal from the floor bed and turned them into crackling splinters of flame. Jerry felt, as he listened to the faint sounds, his heart stop

beating for a moment, and then go on again, dully; but it was not from fear.

"That's the gas," said Sully; "after that it's just a question of burning itself out. It'll just eat its way through—that's what fire does in a coal mine."

Jerry was turning his head with an effort. "Why, then, why, then," he stammered, "it's a good thing we're walled up." He forced his dry lips into a smile that nobody saw in the darkness.

"Well," Sully was speaking again, "it is if you look at it that way." He cleared his throat. It was as if that short sentence had made some demand on his courage that he must meet and pass along.

"How long," Jerry asked roundly, "does it usually take to—burn out?"

Sully met the question squarely. "It depends," he said; "in our case I should say a matter of four or five days or so." About the thing they had to face there must be no misunderstanding.

Somebody, a man in the rear of the little group, muttered thickly. Jerry caught him up.

"Look here," he called, "let's not mutter about it. What's four days? Let's work to a point, boys, and—and add up our grub!"

Every one of them knew, however, that he was thinking most of the water.

They had among them two full lunch kits—for seven men. And one of them, it was Jerry himself, had a canteen of water. He had found that one of the things he had to combat, in his life underground, was a constant thirst for a clean drink, and he had got the little canteen from the company stores out of his first week's wages.

Some one stumbled on a half-full bucket, and Jerry commandeered it with a sob that threatened to work through his dry throat, and put it, with the lunch pails, into Sully's keeping.

"Give us what's right," he said, "Sully. It—it needs a white man to see us through!"

The old miner nodded. They were playing, not for time, but against it. The heat outside was increasing. They could hear the flames now, eating

through the thick coal, feeding greedily on the full cars that must have been abandoned on the sidings. Once, breathing the stifling air, Jerry put a sudden question to Sully, so low that the others would not hear.

"Do you think," he asked, "that the rest of the crowd got out all right?" He thought for a long time over Sully's short answer:

"Likely. If that cable held."

To Jerry, with his conscience scorched by the burning hell that was his father's coal mine, it seemed that if those men had lost out the Divine Powers would put it up to the company at the last day to pay the price.

CHAPTER IX.

OF THE SAME STUFF.

THE atmosphere grew intolerable. One felt licked by flame. One's tongue was a flame itself, licking parched lips. The water in the bucket grew tepid, and still it was infinitely precious, a thing to be guarded almost above life itself.

For hour upon hour they stood the heat impassively, trying not to think of the thirst. But soon Jerry realized that they were all watching Sully, or the place in the darkness where Sully leaned his grizzled head against the wall, wondering how soon it would be time to pass the stuff around. Only one man had any more than the rest. Letzky, the Pole, the man who had lain a crumpled heap on the floor at the first shock, had his head bound with Sully's red handkerchief dipped in water. He still lay on the floor bed. He had groaned once or twice, but he hadn't spoken. Sully thought he had a fractured skull.

They talked. Great Heaven, how they talked! There were spaces of dumb silence that each man knew for the lassitude of despair, and yet nobody gave up! Sully knew they wouldn't while the water held. After that, he calculated that for all of them there would be some sort of a finish. He was afraid that it would go hardest with the Polacks!

They were not conscious of the passing of time—by hours. They knew it just by that shaking hand held out to each one in turn with a dipper one-third full. One of the men had matches and Jerry had tobacco and a pipe. It was a pipe that Stella Curtis had given him on the day that they became engaged, and he held it now under cover of his hand with a clutch at his throat as he thought of those men putting it to lips that had often and often been unclean!

And then he drew himself up sharply, and remembered going to her, his little sweetheart, with thickened speech and a brain on fire, and could only stare ahead of him, there in the depths of earth, with an agony of shame in his soul that he had thought himself any better than these Polacks. An instant later he had reached across and laid the pipe in Sully's lap.

"Pass it around," he said. Not one of them knew that with it he surrendered forever every atom of false pride that lay still in his heart. After that he could think of Stella oftener. And it was always as of a star set in those outer spaces of sky that he was never to see again.

Sully, with an old and battered watch of a cheap variety, kept track of night and day, until an hour in the second afternoon when he began with the dipper at Letzky, and after he had forced a tablespoonful of water through the set teeth, turned the bucket upside down. The men were watching him with set, staring faces. They heard the sound, but they weren't quite sure what Sully had done till one of them lighted a match and held it over the bucket. The interior was as dry as the desert sands.

The man threw away his match with a snarl. "The devil take you!" He was on Sully in an instant, twisting him back, with a knotted hand gripping close under the grizzled beard!

Jerry was up in a flash. "Look here," he said sternly, "you can't put anything like that over! If we're due to go under let us die like men, not beasts."

The man shook as one with a gale.

His grip fell away. He began to sob, heavy, choking sobs, like a child in the dark. "He gave the last drop to that water-logged cuss on the floor," he said wildly; "that's why I did it." He said it over and over, till it made the others sick to listen to him. He had sunk back, crouched in his corner.

Sully sat by passively. He had not uttered one word. But presently he reached down stiffly and shifted the coat he had rolled to a softer pad for the sick Polack's head. And once again Jerry remembered the gentleness of his old shift boss, McCoy. He was gaining, down in that dark and heat-scorched underground, a vision of what man can be when the Maker's image flashes out of him. It was just that. The fineness in Curtis, the faithfulness of Dawson, his friend, the gentleness in McCoy, and now Sully—with his battered, seamed face, giving the last drop to the least among them—it was all just the same thing happening—they were letting the world see, in spite of themselves, and trouble and sorrow and the shadows of death, those faint, dim flashes of the Maker's image. It was the anchor of the world. You couldn't drift beyond it. It was a thing to keep men steady, even at the end of things.

There were long silences now. Sully, leaning over, said to Jerry under his breath: "In the name of the Almighty, talk. Say anything! Spin them a yarn—I can't do it all!" And he added: "Once they slip their cables—" He didn't finish; but Jerry knew his fear. It was that some of them, any of them, would go mad.

He gripped his courage with a beating heart. He began to tell them things, funny things, that had happened to his bunch at Yale. And then he sang to them—"Rolling Down to Rio" and "A Long, Long Trail."

Nobody said anything. They didn't even ask him to go on, but he went on doggedly, like one who meant to see the thing out to a finish, who would never, while breath lasted, give in. He sang until his strength gave out and he felt as if his blood was turning to water, and then he heard somebody

muttering again. It was Voorst, the little Jew.

"When I think of us down here, left to die like rats, oh, Heaven!" And then in an instant Voorst was damning the company, and Gallagher, and old Blakely, most of all old Blakely, sitting safe in New York!

In a flash Jerry had stumbled to his feet. He stood dizzily over Voorst, who sat hugging his knees with fresh imprecations ripe on his breath.

"Listen," Jerry cried, "don't say that thing again! Don't you dare!" And then, as he made out their dim, staring faces, he told them the things in his heart—passionately, at high, choking tension.

"You think that old man in New York doesn't care. That the company doesn't care. You think they're just gold grabbers, that they buy your time and then forget you are living. I tell you they are digging a way to us right now! On my soul, I believe it! They are all on top there and they are thinking of us down here, breaking their hearts for us, and praying for us to live.

"It's true! Before a just Providence, every word of it is true," Jerry went on. "There isn't a man up on top who wouldn't take your place, and die to let you live. Not one! A Man died for us once, just duffers such as we are, and—and ever since then men have tried to reach up to His level, and—and at a pinch have been willing to die!" He stopped, and suddenly, swaying a little, he turned to the place where Sully sat hunched and bent against the wall.

"Sully," he said it on a sobbing breath. "Sully, you're white. You've helped to keep us alive. I want you to tell them I mean what I say—that if I could stay here and go out into the dark and send them up to light and air again, I'd do it! By the great thunders, I'd do it, boys, because this thing will break John Blakely's heart. You say he doesn't care, that the company doesn't care, when I know right now this thing is breaking my father's heart! No; I'm not James Ryan. I'm made of just the same stuff as you are, and

I'm Old Blakely's son!" He covered his face with his hands.

"Fan him, some of you—he's just faintlike." Sully's voice came to Jerry from a long distance. "It's the bad air." He felt arms under his sagging shoulders. His head went down while he gritted his teeth and drew himself up.

"I'm Jermyn Blakely." It seemed strange to him, the name, and he repeated it to himself. "I'm Blakely; I'm in the current Yale yearbook." It was as if he wanted to make sure of this identification. It mattered a lot to him. He was proud of being John Blakely's son. His father was self-made. No one had ever given him a dollar. He had earned it all by the work of his hands and brain.

"Ease him up a bit. Now then, lads. Great Jehoshaphat, if we had a little water!"

At that Jerry turned his eyes on Sully's face. "I'm right as a trivet, Sully. I guess I caved in for a minute. Don't bother about me. I tell you I'm all O. K."

Did time pass after that? It is probable, since the Creator has fixed laws for even the stars. But to the men walled in Room 10 down in the Old Carston diggings time got lost somewhere in an eternity that swallowed up sight and touch and sound!

No; there was still sound. Sitting about in the blackness, or lying prone with parched tongues between split lips they practiced the thing that Blakely taught them, his college yell; the one that Yale uses on the football field. He tried, with infinite patience, to make it clear to them why they must learn it.

"They're digging a way to us right now, boys. But we've got to make them understand we're alive. We've got to tell 'em, boys, and give 'em a working signal; we've got to let her rip for good old Yale! See, it's like this." Over and over he did it, and while he did it the crimson rushed to his cheeks because he was seeing the big game of the year. He was in the Bowl with his father, and a short distance off the little Curtis girl was sitting proudly beside

her brother and sending him straight, soft glances.

"That's the ticket!" He would sink back, done up all of a sudden, and weak as water. In those moments, when soul seemed a separate thing from body, he would bring himself back by looking fixedly at the spot where Sully sat huddled, a grim, iron figure, a fit side partner for any man with courage enough to live out that torture.

"Now then, boys—all together! Fine! That did it; that got across to them. In the name of mercy, isn't it four days yet, Sully?" Jermyn Blakely turned his eyes stiffly to the dark spot against the wall; but Sully did not answer. They thought he had gone mad. They could hear him creeping across the flooring toward that blocked-up door.

"Sully!" Blakely was calling his name, sharply, on a choked breath, and then Sully's voice came to them, hoarse and cracked:

"For God's sake, lads, give them that call again! They're tunneling to us from the West Heading."

CHAPTER X.

ANCHOR OF THE WORLD.

IN the Fayetteville hospital John Blakely sat on a camp chair and kept his eyes on his son's face. His own had aged twenty years. There was sunshine in the ward, and through it the nurse moved silently, till she came to old Blakely; then she stood still.

"Mr. Gallagher has sent a message," the nurse said. "Will you go down? We'll send for you if there's any change."

He nodded. "How's Sully?"

She could answer that. "Doing fine. You can't kill off those old miners, they're wonderful. Sully is wonderful. He's as obedient as a child."

John Blakely turned his heavy eyes on her sternly. "Do you think my son—will pull through? I know you're not allowed to answer questions."

She looked back at him. "I'm going to speak to you frankly, Mr. Blakely—I think his chances would be better if you would send for the girl."

Old Blakely's jaw set. "I'll do anything on earth," he said jerkily, "anything on earth to save my boy." He turned away from her, the muscles of his cheeks working.

One sunlit afternoon Jerry tried to speak to somebody about something. But he couldn't. The queer thing about it was that he wasn't quite sure of what he wanted to say. And then he remembered what he wanted to tell his father about that cable, and the bulge in the roof down in Room 6.

There were other things, voiceless things, that couldn't get themselves whispered even, though he tried several times. He wanted to talk about a first-aid station and a surgical course. He hadn't got anywhere at Yale, but he could do a lot out at the mine, after he'd trained for it, of course. And he wanted his father to build a moving-picture place, where the kids could go Saturday afternoons, and girls like Maggie O'Dee.

And where the dickens was Sully? Or was it Dawson he wanted. Yes; it was Dawson. He wanted the good old Dog Tray. He could talk to Dawson about Stella. Jerry Blakely, turning painfully on his pillow, suddenly stared upward. He seemed to be coming out of the end of a tunnel, upon a sky set with stars. And then he saw why. The little Curtis girl was clinging to her father's arm, desperately, there, just above his head.

"Jerry, darling," she said. "you're not to talk! Oh, Jerry!"

He tried to be savage. "Of course I'm going to talk. I know. I've been learning a lot of things down in my father's mine." He fixed his eyes on hers. "Is Sully out, too? And the rest of them?"

She had got hold of his hand. Back of her the ward nurse stood silently, with that faint, mirrored smile. "Jerry, darling, they're all out. And Sully says, oh, Jerry, Sully says it was you who kept them alive!"

"That's all rot." He didn't want any fuss made. All the same, he got her hand to his lips. "I think," he said,

"dearest, I'd like to see my father, but you needn't go away."

Old Blakely looked into young Blakely's eyes. It was like the rending of some veil. Things were stripped away.

"Dad, you were great. To go through it all and—and come out a company!"

"It was just honest work, Jerry."

"I know. But there were other things you must have dug out down there. I got a few out myself, dad, and one of them was that you don't count until you stop counting yourself. You aren't worth a hill of beans, dad, until you've learned to leave yourself out of the equation."

"I know, dear lad!"

"Sully used to call me that." Jerry Blakely's eyes drifted. "Father, I wonder if you'll understand? I grew to love Sully. He's not common—he's fine!"

"The company is going to make things up to Sully, Jerry."

"I know. The way I'm going to try if I get on my pegs again, to make things up to you."

"Jerry, I'm an old tree. I'm fit to be cut down, boy, but you'll take up my job and see it through?"

"Yes." He seemed puzzled. "How did you know that I was here, dad?"

"Gallagher knew. He wired me the day you turned up. And I told him to put you in the beginners' class, Jerry." Old Blakely's voice caught as his hand closed over the one on the coverlid.

Jerry frowned between bent, serious brows. "I think that's what life is, dad—a beginners' class; nobody needs to be left out." Soon John Blakely left the room.

The ward nurse stopped a moment to speak to Stella Curtis. "He's doing fine," the woman in white said, and turned away with a softened heart for all youth.

"Stella." Jerry had that faint smile on his lips that had come with him out of the dark.

"Yes, Jerry?"

"You're not afraid—to sign over?"

She drew a deep breath. "No, Jerry."

"You see, if you sign over before we go back, we'd not be wasting any more time. And I'd like Sully to see us married."

"I—I'm ready, Jerry, darling."

They looked away, across some troubled sea to that new life they were facing. Faith had come back to

both of them. It is the anchor of the world.

And then suddenly he was sitting up, a light in his eyes, his cheeks flushing to color. "What the dickens! Stella, it's the boys—outside on a motor truck. Sully is cheer leader. They're giving me my college yell!"



THE SEVEN HOPES

—By Arthur E. Scott

SEVEN brand-new managers
Starting out this season,
Each vowing that the flag he'll cop,
Or else he'll know the reason.

Switched from other jobs they held,
Just to win the rag;
Such a lot of fuss to make
'Bout a pennant flag!

Duffy heads the Red Sox crew;
Evers leads the Cubs;
Mitchell will transform the Braves,
Or he'll call them dubs.

Fohl may change St. Louis Browns
To a brighter hue;
Donovan the Phillies team
Will create anew.

McBride will push the Senators
Further in the race;
While Cobb—the great and glorious Ty!—
Will set the Tiger's pace.

So the season starts with hopes
In the hearts of all;
But hits, not hopes, cop pennant flags
Early in the fall.

"To one and all good luck this year!"

All fans exclaim with glee.

"Hit hard, play clean, you'll surely bring
Baseball prosperity."



By Henry Wilton Thomas —

Illustrations by Jo Lemon

Strike Against Nothing

IT is something of a novelty to find a dress-suited and evening-gowned crowd engaged in a strike as a means to register their protest against anything or their demand for a chance. Yet they had a strike of that kind not long ago in Rome, Italy.



The scene of it was the Costanzi Theater, where grand opera is given.

The fashionable ladies who occupy the boxes in that historic theater don't dress much more than the ladies of similar social status seen at the

Metropolitan Opera House or in the boxes at the Madison Square Garden horse show every autumn. The scantness of leaves on the trees at that season is honored by these ladies in the cut of their drapery.

But no one so far has ever raised any hue and cry against it in the Garden. Nor had anything of the kind ever been done in Rome until the night in question. Then the rumblings and grumblings against the ladies' shadowy attire took active form. The Roman mob voiced its famous hoarse murmur.

7B RN

Pandemonium reached such a pitch that the performance of Puccini's "Girl of the Golden West" had to be suspended till the offending ladies were cowed by the threatening demeanor of the public in the parquet and the balconies. It was an uncompromising strike against nothing, as one wit described the attire of the offenders; rather it was a strike against the low cut of bodices instead of the high cost of living, as had been the case in so many Italian towns.

The strikers would not let the performance go on until the seminude aristocrats retired or put on more clothes. Some of them, unwilling to submit to popular interference with their personal liberty, left the theater; others muffled themselves to the neck in their costly furs and remained until the last curtain. The strike was a pronounced success. Scantly clad aristocracy was seen no more in the boxes of the Costanzi that season.



Ways that Are Dark

SOME of the gentlemen who used to exercise their talents in selling wildcat stock to innocent persons have left the Wall Street region

and opened shops uptown. They have gone into the "picture-play production" line. Instead of selling queer oil or mining stock they now sell to girls bogus prospects of becoming motion-picture stars. Though different in detail from the stock-selling game, the principles of success in it are about the same.

**BE A MOVIE STAR
IN THREE WEEKS!**



Chicago and San Francisco are honored by the presence in their midst of these operators. Let us take a look at the way they do it in Chicago.

A girl from Peoria, let us say, comes to Chicago after having read certain advertisements in the "Help Wanted" columns. For example: "Wanted, blondes for gigantic cinema production. Beauty instead of experience needed." The address given is a small office hired a week before to receive applicants. "Will you accept two hundred and fifty dollars a week?" is the question put to the good-looking girl.

"Why," she says, "I was——"

"Oh, don't be afraid," comes the assurance of the "producer." He takes up a blank contract and begins to fill it out. "You are just the type we can make a star of. Come, sign on this line to play the lead in our coming production of 'The Magnificent Pandora.'"



She takes up the pen and, as she signs, remarks timidly, "I've no experience, you know."

"Oh, well, never mind. Our school will fix you up in a few weeks. The three weeks' course won't cost you more than one hundred and fifty dollars, and your salary as lead for the first week will more than make that up."

He gets her one hundred and fifty

dollars, and you can imagine the rest. It falls out that she is left with the choice of going back to Peoria a confessed failure or getting in some studio as an atmosphere girl with one or two days' work a week. The chief of police of Chicago has not put these "producers" on his board, we understand—that board which carries the names and addresses of active crooks. But the board is yawning for them, as it was when they were selling "phony" stocks.



The New French Duel

THE duel with doughnuts or pistols at ten paces received another black eye in France a while ago. This time it was the old-fashioned bare-knuckle punch that marked a new era. The trouble began in the Chamber of Deputies, which has seen the origin of so many *affaires d'honneur* with rapier pistol, or *brioche*s, which are the nearest things to the doughnut one finds in France these days.

Léon Daudet, a royalist of the Extreme Right, and a famous duelist, announced some time ago that he would give up dueling with weapons other than the tongue, as he considered it foolish. But he continued challenging to lingual combats, the most recent instance being a wordy affray with one Alexander Blanc, a socialist of the Extreme Left. It arose over a campaign against the socialists carried on by Monsieur Daudet in his newspaper *L'Action Française*.



HOT AIR AT
TWENTY PACES.

After the latter's speech in the chamber, Monsieur Blanc met Monsieur Daudet in the lobby and demanded that the deputy editor discontinue his tirades against the socialists. Daudet was for discussing the matter—to have a duel of words. But, strangely enough, the socialist declined the invitation to talk.

Instead he doubled his fists and raised his arms and, not quite in the style of Carpentier, landed one blow after another on the face of Monsieur Daudet.

The attack, for the moment, left Monsieur Daudet stunned, dumfounded. He had fought eleven duels of the type sanctioned by the *code d'honneur*, but here was no weapon that in the least resembled a rapier or a pistol or even a doughnut, and no one was at hand to serve coffee. But the practiced duelist recovered quickly and met the occasion splendidly. He, too, began to punch, though not with Carpentier science; nevertheless he made such an impression on his adversary that he sat down very suddenly on the lobby floor. The episode is regarded in Paris as a precedent for future duels.



The Shoplifting Industry

SHOPLIFTING in New York may be said to have passed well beyond the stage of an infant industry. According to estimates supplied by the heads of department stores in that city



to Justice Kernochan, of the court of special sessions, the losses to the big stores by shoplifting amount, at a conservative estimate, to a million dollars a year. This despite the fact that from a large proportion of the shoplifters arrested the stolen goods are recovered.

Courtroom spectacles of recent years were overshadowed one morning not long ago when about two hundred shoplifters and alleged shoplifters appeared in the court of special sessions. It

required two courtrooms to accommodate the multitude of defendants and about an acre of the spacious vestibule to hold their frightened and whimpering children, their character witnesses, and the relatives and friends who came to stand by in their hour of trouble.

The defendants, nearly all women, ranged in age from sixteen to eighty-two. Very few gave outward appearance of poverty. Some were well dressed, some were smartly dressed, and some were magnificently dressed. Occasionally, the eyebrows of one of the three black-robed justices lifted a little as, when a name was called, a stately dame arose swarthed in furs, her face penitent under a forest of plumes.

Uniformed court attendants elbowed through the compressed ranks of lawyers, detectives, witnesses, and defendants and frowned, hissed, shook their fingers, and whispered vibrant threats at women who would weep in spite of the fact that their honors had ascended the bench. Sharp intakes of breath were heard here and there as defendants made violent efforts to compose themselves. There were a few brief concluding sobs and a rustle and snapping of hand bags, followed by the hurried refinishing of complexions.

Ninety-eight of the accused pleaded guilty. Chief Justice Kernochan said he thought not more than three or four of all the defendants were professional criminals. Of those who pleaded guilty, however, about twenty had impaired their amateur standing by robbing two or three stores before they were caught. They were sentenced then and there or



their cases were laid over for further consideration.

It looks so easy that the ranks of the shoplifting industry are steadily recruited; but it is only the trained and the skillful who contrive to elude capture for even a while. Most of the professional shoplifters have served one or more terms in prison. The amateur who tries his hand often succeeds in getting off with the goods as far as the store door; there a heavy hand is likely to be laid on her shoulder and the voice of the store detective is heard: "I want you for shoplifting; step this way, madam." Then it dawns upon the pilfering one that the way of the shoplifter is hard.



The Monocle Must Go

THE newspapers of Germany have had a lot of fun with certain government officials there over an order issued recently to the security police. It was an order declaring *verboten* the wearing of monocles by members of that body. Not until a year or so after the armistice did those optical marks of the pronounced British appear in the streets of Berlin. During the period when *strafing* England was the vogue you couldn't have found a monocle from one end of Germany to the other.

But suddenly, to the disgust of a large part of the populace, not only private citizens but officers of the republic be-

gan wearing these reminders of prewar Anglomania. Still the monocle became more and more in evidence. At last Minister of the Interior Severing rose up and launched an order making it *verboten* so far as the security police were concerned.

"Earnest-minded officers," said he, "should discard such trimmings, in view of these hard times and in the interest of the democracy." Some of the police, or their spokesman, replied to the minister. They declared that while the monocle for long had been a sort of badge of British aristocracy there was no reason why a true democrat could not wear one with perfect consistency. Besides, it was necessary often on account of the weakness of one eye. As a result it fell out that the order was supplemented to include a rigid physical examination of all members of the security police who wore monocles because of weak eyes. By this means it would be determined whether they were fit for the force.



The whole affair has given the "column" humorists a chance to fill space. "Now the republic is saved!" cried one. "It is a solution of the exchange and all our national problems," declared another. "Think of the saving it will mean in window glass," said a third. But in spite of this journalistic *strafing*, Minister Severing is determined that the British monocle must go.





(COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE)

CHAPTER I.

THAT GENERAL MYSTERY.

DOW did not have a heart as big as a prize pumpkin. Indeed, he was rather a heartless wretch. There was generally a twinkle in his eye, and his tongue was not tied to the ways of truth. Those he liked spoke of him with respect, but the awe of people he did not favor was mixed with fear, and they called him a young villain softly among themselves.

There was a legend that Dow had been born on the links; it was quite certain that he had been bred upon them—escaping wonderfully from school, and becoming a great authority on golf long before he was taller than a club. He was a tyrant among the caddies, and his fame was as wide as the sea that licked around the sands below.

"I'll put you in charge of Dow. He'll—er—take you round the course," said the general's introducer on that lonely hero's first coming upon the green. "That is, if we can get hold of him—there's always a run on Dow."

"Who is he?"

"Oh, a caddie!"

"I see," said the general, twisting his

big mustache; "a small chap to carry the clubs—and pick out the right one, eh?"

The general's introducer was one of the many who respected Dow. He wagged his forefinger coaxingly, and a little shape rose slowly out of some tall grass and brambles—Dow was inured to prickles—approaching the two with a solemn stalk.

"Can you, will you—take my friend around this morning?" said the general's introducer humbly.

Dow considered. "I can gie him a round," he said; "but he mauna be ower slow. I hae twa leddies and the juke forby."

The general's friend lent him his second-best driver and an iron putter, and hurried away to play a match of his own. The general had never played golf before. He did some queer things, and Dow admonished him with all proper scorn.

"I guessed that ye couldna play when I saw him gie ye that auld thing," he said, glancing at the weapon that was being wrongly swung. "Where d'you come frae?"

"India," said the general shortly.

"Ye're a sodger?" Dow inquired, with a lordly condescension, as he put the

ball on the tee, and drew out of reach of the general's wild brandishing of his club.

"Ho, ye wadna kill many black men if ye couldna hit straighter nor that!" said Dow.

The general was not humble. He wound up that round by pitching his driver upon the green, and taking his small instructor suddenly by the scruff. Then he shook him like a kitten in the middle of the links.

"I'll no forget you," said Dow, staring in astonishment after this bold stranger. "I'll no forget!"

Dow had his favorites, all right. The duke was one of them; but he was not earnest enough, and had a frivolous way of bringing out an umbrella, which Dow, the contemptuous, was obliged to carry. The minister was another; he—while playing fairly—talked theology in a general way with Dow, who thirsted for information about the devil.

The first favorite of all was a Mrs. Whin. She was a little widow who lived in a big house she had taken lately, and who put all her mind for the present into the business of learning golf. She was related distantly to the duke, and so people made much of her; some liked, some hated her, but every one was polite.

Dow was her right hand and counselor; she never played without his little, pale, saucy face at her elbow, and when he had bidden her get a scarlet coat, she had done so meekly.

"It doesna look purposelike for you to be creepin' about the links in black if you were five times a weedow," he had pronounced, and she had laughed, and ordered the coat when she went in to Aberdeen.

Dow was greatly vexed when Mrs. Whin and the general got acquainted.

The general was close and shy. He put up at the Gordon Arms, and seemed to have no plausible reason for appearing in this particular spot. His one friend—a man Mrs. Whin knew slightly—had got him into the club, and introduced him to one or two old fogies; had also presented him casually to Mrs. Whin. But this friend had gone south,

and could not be applied to for information; and the general remained, pottering about the town and links like a fish out of water.

There were two or three old soldiers thereabouts, but they all had gout and long troops of daughters. The general was an exception, tall, spare, and fiery, with sad eyes that interested Mrs. Whin.

"The man is a mystery!" said one lady to another. Their husbands could not help them in this thing for once.

CHAPTER II.

IN A HAPPY FLUTTER.

A COMPANY of women were sitting in the varnished veranda of the ladies' club, and one or two more were leaning over the palings talking. It was tea time, but the good people whose turn it was to boil the kettle had made a terrible smoke inside, and the rest had all crowded out.

Within a stone's throw was the men's stern granite clubhouse; behind, the green golf links rose and dipped to the sea; and in front, a far speck, was Mrs. Whin's red jacket, near which hovered the long shape of the general. Dow, a sulky, slow-moving object, was hugging a stack of clubs.

Mrs. Whin was making coquettish motions, raising her driver, and dropping it in the swing, and asking about her stroke. The general—that bad player—was counseling earnestly. After a little they parted, and Mrs. Whin came tripping up to tea.

"What's he here for?" asked one of those sitting outside the club, as she turned her head to glance in at the others, struggling with smoke inside. They were not all conscious that Mrs. Whin, who had entered, was by an open window.

"Nobody knows—and he is continually prowling——"

"I wouldn't say that of a soldier, May!"

"Well, scouting—spy——"

"No, no!"

"At any rate marching round people's back premises. Call it what you like!"

The Blackies of Hendarroch distinctly saw him wandering sadly outside the servants' gate. You know they have a fine new avenue for themselves. When they approached he fled."

"Were you speaking about Hendarroch? Oh, the Blackies have spoiled the place!" said a stout old lady with seven daughters, who sat on a creaking seat.

"No, Mrs. Milne; we were talking of the general."

"It is odd," said the stout lady slowly. "I have been puzzling where and when I have met him, for his face is quite familiar."

There was a chorus of exclamation. Mrs. Milne's memory was notoriously bad, however, so there was no hope. The general, a distinguished, if bashful, figure, took on more mystery; heads were drawn closer, and theories expounded, until the heads started apart in confusion. Mrs. Whin was leaning out of the window, calling in an impatient voice:

"Will you come in to tea?"

This mystery may have made the general more interesting to Mrs. Whin than to the world at large. However that might be, she took him under her wing, which meant the duke's also, when that lazy person was anywhere about, and upon that the whole world was civil.

One dull afternoon, when there were few players and the wind was cold, Mrs. Whin's partner took alarm.

"We must finish," said Mrs. Whin.

"But you are cold," the general said anxiously, coming forward to help in turning up the high coat collar that nearly reached her ears. His hands touched the small chill fingers that Mrs. Whin put up; and the collar was very stiff.

The general did not button up his long military coat, neither did he take up his driver; something seemed to be on his mind. "I am going south," he said at last.

"With the swallows?" said Mrs. Whin.

"I think they are gone already," the

general answered, gazing abstractedly out to sea.

The wind had blown into the widow's cheek a scarlet to match her coat. She put her head on one side thoughtfully, making believe to look at the hole, and then seemed frightened to find that she had not spoken.

"I have sometimes wondered what brought you all the way up here," she said hastily. "It is not as if you had come up to see old friends, or—anything."

"N-no," said the general awkwardly. "No; I—drifted. I will tell you about it some day, when I have courage."

"You forget," said she, "that you are going south." There was a queer shake in her voice. It might be cold, but it was not laughter.

The general took a stride nearer to her and spoke. "I am running away," he said. "I thought I was hardened to being lonely, with not a soul to care for me but the chums who would say, 'Poor chap!' when they read of my death in the English papers. I did not know that I was a fool. Will you say good-by to me kindly, and let me go?"

"Don't go," said Mrs. Whin.

He had taken her hand, and involuntarily her fingers closed over his. There was a silence while they looked at each other, and Mrs. Whin's color rose.

"I am weatherworn," said the general.

"So am I," said Mrs. Whin.

Then Dow rose up in alarm, and traitorously signaled to two or three men who were seeking the general high and low, and who promptly came up and interrupted.

"Hi, general, what about our match?"

"Come along. Milne is neither to hold nor to bind; come and play that foursome."

Mrs. Whin and the general started, dropped each other's hands, and the general bent his brows.

"I am playing with a lady," he said.

"The last hole, sir!" Dow put in, running forward to pluck out the flag.

Unwillingly the general sent his ball into it, and the game was over. He paused for an instant, looking at Mrs.

Whin, and she gave him one glance that was not for the spectators.

"I am going home," she said.

"May I come up to see you later?" he asked.

The unhappy foursome, a great and solemn thing, posted up in the club's arrangements, must override everything, since the others had come to fetch him.

"Come!" Mrs. Whin said, smiling; and they went their ways.

She stood looking after the men, still smiling tremulously; then she tripped over the hillocks in a hurry. At the pavilion gate she turned round and beamed on Dow, who was stalking behind her glum and silent.

"Run across to the Gordon Arms and tell Andrew to bring my cart," she said, taking the clubs from him and running in to shut them up in her locker. Dow stopped at the gate and whistled.

"Here you, Sandy," he said with a lordly air, "rin round to the Gordon Arms for Mrs. Whin's dogcart. You'll get a ride back in the cart."

One of his understudies rushed off obediently, and Dow himself marched up the steps and arrived at the threshold of the pavilion. Mrs. Whin was struggling with the keys at her wrist. She was all in a happy flutter.

CHAPTER III.

TIME TO SPEAK.

THERE was to be a tea party that afternoon, and there were signs of it in the smoky stove and the baskets against the wall. Mrs. Whin was one of the committee; but she would not wait. She must go home. She was eager to get away to sit in her house and think; and afterward she would lean to the window beyond her chair, and watch for the general coming along the road. She shook her wrist with a laugh, and the keys jingled and were confused; there was no fitting the right one into the lock.

"Could I speak to you, mem?" said Dow. There was something portentous in his air and in the way he spoke, with a painstaking English voice.

When he was not upon his dignity he spoke like the other lads, and when he was piloting southern strangers about the green he was apt to exaggerate the vernacular, by way of putting them in mind of the fact that they were out of their own country, and in a despot's hands. This kept them humble. But when he had solemn things to say he put on a mincing English, and this afternoon his speech was pitched in the key appropriate to an awful revelation.

"What is it?" said Mrs. Whin.

"An impostor, mem," said Dow, looking up to her with a groan. "I have been holding my peace this while, thinking if he pleased to set himself up with the lords and ladies it was not my business to interfere. But I threshed it out with myself this morning, and I think it's my time to speak."

"Well!" said Mrs. Whin, amazed.

"Don't take it uncivil, mem," said Dow, speaking slowly, to pick out his formal English; "but I was feared this deceiving person was making up to you. And I said to myself, 'Tis an awful thing, she so pleasant, and such a lady, and the duke ready to flop on his knees to her at a wink—that such a deceiving wretch should make her the laugh of the countryside—'"

"Dow!" cried Mrs. Whin.

"And I said to myself, 'He shan't.'"

Mrs. Whin was both mystified and angry. Dow was no ordinary caddie, and he was privileged, as a henchman ought to be; but still—

"Listen yet a wee," Dow said earnestly, "and then if you're not obliged—well, I'm telling you for your good. It is this general who comes pottering round and cannot drive a ball straight, and goes for walks like a bat when the sun is down. Oh, mem, you don't know what brings him to these parts."

"I shall hear from himself," Mrs. Whin said quickly. She could only get in these words edgewise while Dow was pausing for effect.

He went on contemptuously: "From himself? Not you! Excuse me, mem; but I know the circumstances."

"Dow," said Mrs. Whin severely, "I

cannot have you speaking like this about my friends. You ought to be very much ashamed."

Dow the accuser was not abashed, however. "What would your friends say, mem—and what would the duke say—if they knew you were getting familiar with the son of a butcher body?"

Mrs. Whin gave a gasp, and then laughed outright. "You are out of your mind!" said she.

Dow shook his head in a melancholy fashion, and fixed her look with a pair of solemn eyes. "'Tis Thomson the flesher in old King Street," he said convincingly. "The old folks died, and Anderson's bought the shop, but they aye keep the name to hold customers together. I mind it well; that is"—he was speaking hastily—"I heard it so often that it was as good as seeing it a' myself. Young Archie would not bide and mind the shop. He wanted to shoot people, he said, it was better than stiking sheep; and he ran away for a soldier. And old Ann Thomson would cry, 'He'll come back yet; he'll come hame when he's weary o' the wars.'"

"But he didna come," Dow went on, "and the cornels and folks got shoy, and somebody took a fancy to him and shoved him up, and there was no more hoping for him to come home and drive the cart and tie on his apron. Sae the old folks died, and maybe he has come home at last to see if he can light on Ann Thomson's stocking—for she kept aye putting by for Archie, and they couldna find where she put it. Anderson has a look whiles in odd corners, and up the lum; but he hasna got it—and he is come creepin' about the old place pretending to be as fine as the like of you."

It was circumstantial indeed. If it should be true?

"I don't believe it," said Mrs. Whin.

"Do you think I would vex you with a lee?" said Dow, dropping from his state language with relief. "Oh, mem, it isna spite, and it isna jokin'. I made sure it was truth before I wad trouble you with the story. He keeps himself to himself, and he darena speak; but

there's some in the place knows him for Archie Thomson the flesher's son, who ran awa' to the wars."

Mrs. Whin's bright eyes grew dull with a sudden shock. All at once she remembered—yes—driving past that old shop in King Street—stopping to order something that had been forgotten, and seeing the general inside. She had wondered then what a man staying in a hotel could be doing there, and to her look of surprise, he, reddening, had answered, "Buying collops."

Mrs. Whin was not very bold. She had great ideas about family, and she would run faster from ridicule than from a cow. So she gave a gasp.

"I'm awful vexed," said Dow sympathetically, looking up at her with big round eyes; "but I thought it was a pity you an the duke should be lowerin' yoursel's, no'kennin'—"

"He is a brave man and a general," murmured Mrs. Whin, in an uncertain voice.

"Ay, he's brave and a general—maybe. They tell me he was aye fightin' with the baker's lad. An' many a time the loaves would lie in the mud, an' the legs o' mutton would need a scrubbin'. The baker's lad aye cam' by the worst," said Dow.

"Oh!" cried Mrs. Whin.

She clenched her hands with a feeling of intense humiliation that brought the tears smarting into her eyes. Her general, her interesting, distinguished general—a butcher's son! How the county would laugh at her if they knew! Oh, it all fitted in so well with the little things she had noticed and paid no attention to at the time. And to think that she had nearly—

"There was a lass at Hendarroch aince, a servant lass," said Dow, "and Archie Thompson used to court her at the back gate when he came wi' the meat. But she wadna wait sae long. He maun hae been sair putten about to find his auld sweetheart a grannie!"

"That will do," said Mrs. Whin. Her horse was backing against the pavilion fence, and the groom was clucking to keep it still.

Dow moved out of Mrs. Whin's way,

and in another minute she sat up in the driving seat, took the reins from the groom, and started. The high red wheels flashed across the links and vanished.

Dow turned to one of the lesser caddies: "You see to Sir Thomas this afternoon," he said in his lordly English, "I hae got other business." Then he stalked off the ground.

CHAPTER IV.

WHEN SHE WOKE UP.

THE general marched through Mrs. Whin's gates cheerfully that afternoon; his head was high, and his gait contented. He rang the bell, and turned to look over the garden and the late autumn flowers, humming something martial.

"Mrs. Whin at home?"

"Not at home."

He glanced at the servant; there was some mistake. "I am General Thomson," he said gruffly, expecting to be let in instantly.

"I know, sir. But my orders are to say that my mistress is not at home."

There was no mistaking this. The general stared blankly at the man, ready to swallow him in the extremity of his wrath. Mrs. Whin had made it plain—so plain that he could only wonder at the ways of a woman and beat a retreat. He had better pack up at once, and take the morning train south.

"I will leave my card," he said, with a grim flicker in his eyes, and he wrote on it "P. P. C."

There was a shadow in the corner of the gateway that the general, striding through, did not see. As he passed, however, with chagrin written on his countenance, the figure rose up and chuckled.

Creeping in the lee of some big bushes, Dow arrived at the lowermost windows of the house. There was one where he had seen a stirring of the window curtains when the general came away. A big laurel bush leaned over against this window, and Dow made himself small, stretching his neck cautiously out of the laurel leaves. Mrs.

Whin sat in the curtain shadow, with her face fallen in her hands, crying bitterly in the dusk.

"Losh!" muttered the watcher blankly, as he slid out of the laurel bush, "an' she might hae the juke himself!"

Mrs. Whin lay long awake that night wondering at herself. She had been very angry, and she had said she would never speak to the man again; but she had sat at the window to watch his discomfiture, and to see if he looked ashamed, and sitting there she had been forced to fight with some strange feeling that pushed her to call him back.

She clenched her hands and scolded herself till he reached the gate. And then the servant brought in his card, with the P. P. C. written big and unsteadily across it, and she knew that he was gone for good. The door shut softly, and she turned and looked wildly down the drive, and he was out of sight.

"I am a fool!" she said angrily, in a voice that shook.

She had a queer dream that night, when she stopped scolding herself, and trying to shut out the general's reproachful face—that he had no right to be reproachful, and still was so.

First she and the general stood alone on the links, and there did not seem to be anybody else in the world, or, at least, upon the green. They were playing a match, they two together, against some creature of india rubber that had a mocking laugh as it bounded up in the air. The face of Dow, her caddie, appeared. Their opponent had all the clubs, and she and the general had to play with sticks. The wind blew their balls aslant; the thing was mocking.

"We must win," said the general, and she pressed to his side, and held on to his coat, putting her cheek against it; but the thing was grinning.

Then suddenly all their acquaintances seemed to come crowding around, and there was scorn in their expression. They were pointing to her and the general and making faces. The duke came forward in his mackintosh, and looked amazed, and all Mrs. Whin's pet aversions pushed to the front. She looked

up. The general was standing in a cart, wearing a long apron of butcher blue, and as she looked he leaned over the wheel and cried:

"Will you ride with me?"

They were all laughing shrilly as she started back, and the sound of it was maddening; but she could not withstand the look in the general's eyes as he said again:

"Will you ride with me?"

"Where are you going?" the duke asked, catching her arm, and the mocking chorus behind grew louder. The general stretched out his hand to grip her, and help her up—and then she awakened crying.

It was in the cold gray morning that Mrs. Whin came down to the links. The two or three enthusiasts who were there already remarked that her manner was curt and restless. She kept turning half consciously to the railway cut through which in an hour or so the south express would be whisking.

Dow, for once, was not on the spot. She missed him with a feeling of relief, and brought out her driver to go around the long course in the hills and hollows by the side of the sea. The sprightliness had gone out of her walk this morning; she followed up her ball with a dragging step, and listlessly played the strokes, not caring.

It was going to rain. The sky was dull and leaden. There was a ruffle of wind across the sea, and the gulls were all ashore. Yes; it was going to rain, and the smoke would lie in the track of the south express; it would pass in a cloud and leave clouds behind it—and so good-by!

Lifting her eyes then, Mrs. Whin gave a little cry. She was face to face with the general.

CHAPTER V.

DOW TAKES A HAND.

THE general was having a last look around, walking slowly among the familiar places, and he did not see Mrs. Whin until she gave the little cry; then he moved, standing aside in the withered bracken to let her pass.

He did not speak, but his look was dark with reproach, and she could not bear to see it. The impulse she had been compelled to fight with the day before grew suddenly all too strong and broke down her pride.

"Don't go, don't go!" she cried. "Forgive me!"

The general looked doubtful. He did not venture to take the impetuous words for earnest until he saw that her eyes were dim with tears. Then he took her hands.

"You should have told and trusted me," said Mrs. Whin, glancing thus at the dangerous subject. She felt strangely happy in recklessness, like one who has thrown away a burden, and she was ready to dare the world.

"I—I did not like——" said the general, but she interrupted the apology.

"Don't speak about it," she said with a little shudder, for there was still a stirring of her trampled pride and the prejudice of high family. So the general did not speak.

"They packed up a lunch basket for me," Mrs. Whin said later. "I was ashamed to tell the servants I could not eat. Come and have lunch with me in the Hut." That was her name for the majestic pavilion. "You will get nothing good, only poor little thin sandwiches and claret!"

"My train is gone," said the general, eying a faint white puff of smoke.

"Your train? It is not your train!" Mrs. Whin cried quickly. "Your train is put off for my convenience!" She smiled down to him, tripping up the pavilion steps, and the general followed meekly.

"Will you light the fire?" she asked, glancing around for a tablecloth. "And then I can make some tea. There are matches, and there are sticks—and, I fancy, cinders."

The general retreated behind the varnished partition that shut off the kitchen corner of the Hut from the rest. He knelt down before the grate and struck match after match with the knowledge of a campaigner, but the wood was damp, and the chimney would not draw.

Mrs. Whin hung up her coat. It had come on to pour, and the rain was beating against the windows. They would have to stay in there till it cleared a little before they could venture out. She drew out the provisions gingerly. Was there enough for two?

There was a sudden dash in of rain and wind as the door opened and let in Dow.

The wet was trickling along his cheeks and pouring down his coat; he wiped it out of his eyes, shut the door and spoke: "They said you were here—you were around the links by your lane this morning. I hae been fightin' myself a' night up till this very minute, and at last I hae made my mind up, and I hae come to tell."

"To tell?" Mrs. Whin said faintly.

Dow was twisting his wet cap in his hands. The day before he had looked virtuous and calm, but now his mien was disturbed.

"I didna think you wad take on so," he said lamely. "I said to myself: 'She's no a flighty bit lass to fret an' wish herself died, as lasses do when they're crossed. She's a wiselike weedow woman, an' she'll be angry and send him about his business—and he'll be offended and gae doon south—an' she'll tak' the juke.' It's awfu' easy to tell a lee, an' pit more to it; but it's awfu' difficult to spoil it an' tell the truth."

"What do you mean?" asked Mrs. Whin hastily.

Dow wriggled slightly. Behind them the general was getting the fire lighted; he was still stooping over it earnestly, coaxing a blaze.

"He's no gane yet," said Dow. "He missed the train. I ken that, for I was at the station. I—I couldna bide to think of you, mem, greetin' sae sair."

The youth made an effort—feeling keenly the lack of dignity, to take up the mincing English he used upon great occasions.

"I informed you, mem, that the general was the son of a butcher body of this town—a ne'er-do-well who ran away to the wars—and you would na' see him because of it. I told you a falsehood, mem!"

"I should think so!" shouted the general, appearing suddenly. "You young imp!"

But Dow had fled bolting into the rain.

"Oh!" said Mrs. Whin, covering her face.

"I'll tell you why I came here," said the general, sitting down beside her. "I was ashamed to tell you sooner, for it seemed so silly, and I did not want you to laugh at me. But when I was young I came here to stay with a Sandhurst chum, and—and I used to moon around a girl who lived at Hendarroch."

"It is a poor little story," the general went on. "She married a richer man. Well, I had a queer whim to come here again and see the old place—and I heard she was left a widow. It has changed; she has changed, for she did not know me. She must have forgotten the very name of her first admirer——"

"Who is she?" asked Mrs. Whin eagerly.

"Mrs. Milne of Pollaine."

"Fat Mrs. Milne?"

"Fat Mrs. Milne. She is changed." Then he took her hands and looked seriously down in her brightened face. "What was this crazy story of that little rascal, Dow? You believed it?"

"I believed it," said Mrs. Whin, laying her cheek on his shoulder, "but I——"

"But you would have had me all the same?" said the general.

"I would," answered Mrs. Whin.

And somehow Dow was forgiven.

The Same Thing

ALFRED: "That young bride worships her husband, doesn't she?"

Ethel: "Well, she places burnt offerings before him three times a day."

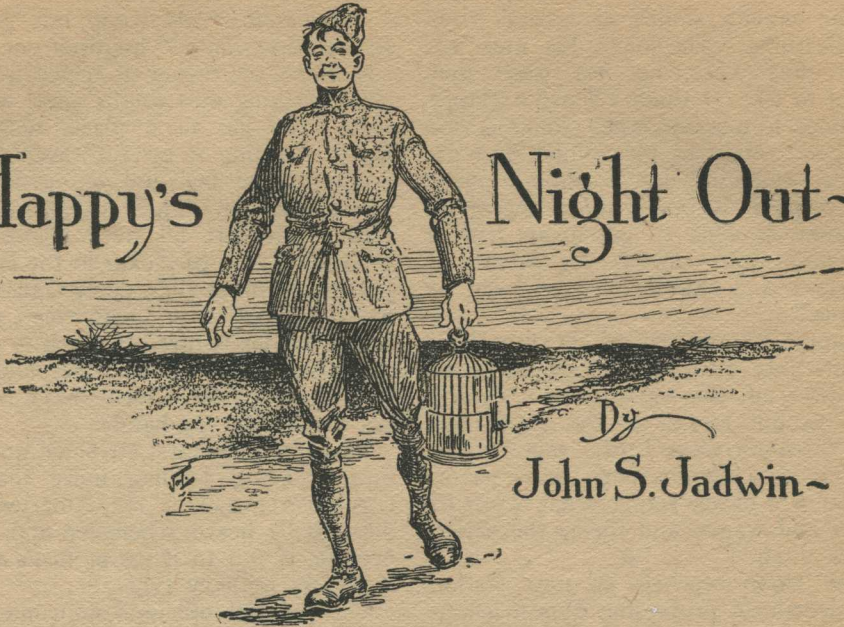
Common Practice

MISS SNIPS: "I wonder why Maud gave her age as twenty-five when she married that rich old man?"

Miss Snapps: "Oh, I suppose she made a discount for cash."

Happy's

Night Out~



By
John S. Jadwin~

(COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE)

CHAPTER I.

TO PASTURES NEW.

TROOP C was being shifted from one part of the border to another. The wheels clicked steadily over the rails eastward. In three horse cars seventy wise and faithful steeds were crowded. Two tourist coaches and a Pullman contained sixty-seven not-so-wise troopers and three officers. One baggage car held the chow, the cooks, and a discreetly tipsy mess sergeant.

For six months this outfit had been chasing phantom smugglers and raiders over many dusty, dry miles of a geographical frying pan called the Big Bend Country. Their new district was to have headquarters in a metropolis of the Rio Grande that had not yet responded to the call of better ways.

In the two forward tourist coaches the men amused themselves after the ways of soldiers.

The three officers sat together in the smoking compartment. "There is a good swimming hole just outside the camp," said the captain, who had been

detailing the merits of the new camp which he had previously visited. "Altogether I call it soldier heaven. At least it will be until pay day. Then our land pirates will fill that town full of undiluted Hades. I hate to think of it! Three months' pay coming to them and all kinds of resorts to spend it in."

"They really won't be very bad, will they, sir?" inquired the second lieutenant. The latter was new to the army. Though exposed to soldiering for two months he had not yet shown any signs of its taking. The captain already regarded him as an unnecessary part of the landscape. The men, who always read character correctly, labeled him the "Boob" and endured him as a necessary evil.

"No," the first lieutenant replied facetiously. "The troop will go downtown pay day night and have some soda water. Then they'll all go to the moving pictures and come home afterward singing hymns. That's the sort they are—not! Especially that striker of yours, 'Happy.' A nice, sweet, innocent lot of seminary girls they are! Wait till you see them all oiled up once."

The captain smiled at several vivid recollections. He loved his men for what they were, not for what they ought to be. "I think I'll make Happy wagoner to-morrow when Jones is discharged. He's an old soldier and deserves something, but I couldn't make him corporal without ruining the army. He may be able to get away with a wagoner's job. Mules are intelligent creatures and should keep him out of trouble."

Happy was no pet of the first lieutenant. He attempted to dissuade the captain from this rash move. "You'll have to put an ad in the paper day after to-morrow—'Lost, one escort wagon, two mules, and one driver. Finder will please return what is left of mules and wagon and throw the driver into a ditch.'"

The troop reached its new station and detrained, professing honest astonishment over actually seeing trees in Texas. With the trees shading the tents, a swimming pool close by, beer and movies in town, the camp would have been perfect if it were not for one drawback. A tangled growth of cactus and mesquite covered the drill ground. To clear it off a grumbling fatigue detail was turned out.

"That's it! That's the way I got my start!" yelled Happy as encouragement to the pick and shovel men filing by him. "In his new capacity of wagoner he was excused from fatigues."

"I hope them mules of yours bites your shirt off," retorted an uncharitable member of the detail.

Four times as many laborers were turned out as there were tools with which to work. Consequently three sympathetic onlookers encouraged the unlucky handler of each tool by witty remarks as he languidly went through the motions of using it. Official noncoms moved from one scene of toil to another growling at the idle men for not working. The real noncoms kept their eyes on the wiser of the old soldiers and quietly checked them from slipping away and hunting some spot remote and cool, beyond danger of being called on to exercise a shovel.

"Don't no other troop but us ever fix up their camp?" inquired one plaintive voice, the owner of which was gingerly hacking at a cactus plant with an ax. "We get to a place, work like blazes cleaning it up for three months—then move out and let some other outfit move in. Then we go to a new place and start all over again. I've cleared off half of Texas in the last two years. Wonder they don't transfer me to New Mexico so I can clean up the whole border before my hitch is up! I wish we'd fight Mexico and *make* her take Texas back! Ouch—hang it—I've got a cactus in my hand."

That little outburst attracted no attention, it being nothing more than the regulation growl of the American soldier, to be heard whenever and wherever he is put to labor at tasks not of a strictly military type.

One of the officious noncoms, Sergeant Cain, possessed a positive talent for reproaching idleness in men he did not like. In the eyes of the troop, Cain was particularly despicable. Manifold instances in the past had determined his status as the poorest sort of a man. His chevrons were due to consummate horsemanship. Consistent catering to the first sergeant enabled him to keep on terms of good fellowship with the powers that were. A bluff good fellowship which he simulated was not accepted at its face value by the troop.

CHAPTER II.

A PLAN OF CAMPAIGN.

CAIN had cronies, of course. Birds of a feather must flock together; others will not willingly associate with them. "Windy" Fasenello was his most particular intimate. A month before Bob Horne had thoroughly whipped Windy in a stand-up fight. So Horne inherited Cain's ill will. This worried him not at all. Before the encounter with Windy the troop had called him "Bobby." There may appear no great difference in being addressed as "Bob" instead of "Bob-by." But one exists. The first indicates that the man is recognized as an equal by his peers; the second is a nursery title.

Like most of his mates, Horne had the well-developed notion that he was not paid for what he did but merely for "sticking around." Since the soldier who gracefully avoids work draws as much money as the one who honestly does his part, this would seem to him correct reasoning. Anyhow, Horne had not yet detected any flaw in it. So he viewed with abhorrence any activity which he could possibly avoid.

By watching him closely Cain was soon justified in ordering him to cease loafing, take an ax and go to work. Horne did not resent this order. The small, unstified remnant of his conscience told him that he should be at work. But he did resent the motive that led Cain to supervise his every movement. No open declaration of war was advisable. Duty is duty and a non-commissioned officer in discharge of those duties is all powerful.

Nevertheless Horne made this promise to himself: "I'm going to get that guy where his hair is shortest."

The fatigue ended after a day that seemed eternity. As soon as dismissed Horne drifted to the stable tent and found Happy. The two had become close bunkies since the day when Horne whipped Windy and conquered his own fear of physical punishment at the same time. Happy was overpowered by one of his periodical enthusiasms. He was famous for originating hair-brained schemes that died at birth. This idea was different from most of the others in that it had a substantial base. The two hunted a secluded spot where Happy outlined the method by which they might become Monte Cristos.

"How much coin have you dropped in Cain's blackjack games?" he inquired.

Bob opened his ears, interested in anything that would give him means of retaliation against his new enemy. He replied bitterly: "I've pretty near supported him ever since I came to the troop. He's got all my dough that the canteen didn't take."

"All my jack's gone to him, too!" responded Happy. "But the rest of the outfit ain't got anything on us that

way; he's skinned us all. I always thought he was on the level, but lucky enough to fall into a sewer naked and come out with a brand-new suit of clothes on. But he ain't! It don't stand to reason that any human could draw to eighteen and win as often as he does."

"I always figured it was because he was in business with his old chum, the devil!" explained Horne.

"He ain't," answered Happy. "I'm wise to him now! It's an old trick he's been fleecing us woolly little lambs with. Marked cards! I got a hunch and borrowed one of his packs when he wasn't looking to give them the once over. I know a thing or two myself. A crooked firm back East does it darn cleverly. They cost two dollars a deck, but that's cheap for him. Look here!" He spread the cards out and showed Horne the slight deviations in pattern of the backs that enabled the initiated to read the value of the faces.

"The poor fish!" ejaculated Horne, disgusted. "We'll put the outfit wise to him."

"Yeh!" sneered Happy. "Grow up! You don't think anything we could prove would make him out any worse than he is now, do you? I've got a better way to take it out of his hide—one that will really hurt him. It's a big advantage for him to know what our turned-down cards are; but it'll be a bigger one for us to know whether the card on top of the deck will make us nearer to twenty-one or break us, if we play together, won't it? We'll send him home in a barrel. That's what will hurt Señor Cain, esquire; to take his easy money away from him."

Horne considered the proposal. "I don't like it," he said. "It don't make me feel proud of myself to turn into the same dirty sort of a sneak thief he is; but you've got to set a thief to catch a thief, I suppose. I'd do anything once, just to get a chance at him. I'll go that far with you if you let me finish the scheme."

Happy listened to the amendment. It hurt his thrifty soul even thinking of giving up good money he had once laid

his hands on to any one except a purveyor of liquid cheer. But he agreed reluctantly saying, "I suppose it won't hurt giving the others back the money they lose if we can only annex Cain's big betting roll."

Theoretically noncoms are not supposed to gamble with privates. This is a beautiful theory, something akin to the old article of war which provided that a soldier should forfeit one sixth of a dollar every time he swore, the money to be applied to buying luxuries for the sick in hospitals. If this A. of W. had been properly enforced the sick would have been supported by the entire pay of the army. Similarly, if all noncoms who gamble with privates were to be reduced the army would be a beautiful place from the standpoint of the private. There would be no noncoms. Still this was an order the violation of which discreet noncoms were not anxious to have brought openly before the eyes of their officers. Occasionally it was enforced.

CHAPTER III.

A DIVIDEND DECLARED.

PAY day dawned bright and clear. Six thousand good American dollars were distributed among seventy of Uncle Sammy's troopers as recompense for three months exposure to heat, cold, cloudburst, and thirst, under no better protection than a slicker, pup tent, or campaign hat.

The "old man" paid off at ten in the morning, departing immediately thereafter by rail to pay and inspect a detachment guarding a railroad bridge that spanned a cañon, forty miles west.

"If any of the children break into jail," he told the first lieutenant, "don't try to get them out. That's the best place for them."

Several pyramidal tents became gambling joints. No fear of an officer's intrusion was felt. They tacitly avoid appearing on pay day. The most popular game was Cain's, because it was backed with the most money. The sergeant habitually produced a bank of several hundred dollars, saved from the last pay day with which the winnings of the

lucky were guaranteed. The fact that there were few winners never made his game unpopular.

"Right this way! Hit 'em and take 'em! No bets barred!" Cain chanted the blackjack slogan. This game is more popular than poker as quicker action can be obtained.

The gamblers came bleating to the shearing pens. Happy and Horne, obtaining places, played moderately at first. They were beginning to win good-sized amounts when "Hog" Rooney, the horseshoer, went broke, having lost as much money as their original combined capital. As their piles accumulated they gradually increased the size of their bets.

Dinner time came and went without any one withdrawing to eat. A man could eat any old time, but good gambling occurred only on pay day. By one o'clock most of those whose stakes were small had been stripped and had dropped out. The "Hobo" departed at this time after having run his forty-five dollars' pay up to a hundred and twenty, only to see it melt when his phenomenal luck deserted him.

At two o'clock Happy's pile was as large as the one in front of Cain. Horne's winnings were almost as great. By three Cain began to look anxious. A half hour later he closed the bank in order to save his last ten-dollar bill from the two eager players. In a very bad humor he tore up the cards that had been untrue to him, scattered them on the ground, and left the tent using picturesque language. Bob picked the fragments up.

"We've got time for a few smiles before five-thirty," he said to Happy. "I've got to be back then for water call. You should be able to hitch up and get down to the station for the old man in time for the six-ten, if you come back then."

It was Happy's official duty as wagoner to meet the captain upon his return, with the light vehicle commonly called the "pie" wagon. But duty troubled that worthy very little while his pockets held three hundred and eighty dollars and saloons were doing business.

It was a matter of small consequence whether he met the captain or not.

Ordinarily it required fifteen minutes to reach the nearest thirst emporium from camp. But ten minutes later they were sitting before soul-satisfying steins of amber liquid. Horne began compiling a list. "Let's see: There is ninety dollars to the Hog. I hate parting with so much real dough all in one lump, but it'll be worth every cent of it when that gorilla gets his hands on our esteemed friend, Sergeant Cain. Then the Hobo gets forty-five. May the lord help his sinful soul when that hombre tangles up with him. And Red dropped thirty beans." The list continued until the amount totaled one half their winnings.

Happy took out his wad, peeled off his pro-rata share and pushed it over to Horne, saying, "You pay 'em. I'm going to ramble to-night and don't want any responsibilities. Wait until about eight o'clock. They'll be mad enough then to chew nails, thinking of all the steins they ain't emptying."

By keeping one eye on the clock, Horne was able to drag Happy back to camp just in time for water call. As his mind was occupied with more important thoughts, Happy dallied in harnessing. But at six-five, suddenly realizing he might be late, he drove the pie wagon out of the corral with more haste than discretion. The wagon proceeded by leaps and bounds, mostly on one wheel behind the galloping team.

CHAPTER IV.

A BUSY EVENING.

HAPPY arrived at the station as the Sunset Limited pulled out. The captain stood on the platform, talking with a civilian, a small hand valise beside him. Actuated by a desire to be useful, Happy wrapped the reins around the whip and descended to place the valise in the wagon. Unfortunately his liquid diet had played tricks with the focus of his eyes. In reaching for the grip, he miscalculated its exact location, overreached and fell upon it.

8B TN

"What in blazes is the matter with you, Wolcott?" inquired the captain.

"Nothing; I'm just getting over the grippe, sir!" responded that quick-witted genius from his prostrate position.

The captain choked visibly. He had a sense of humor that drove away his wrath. This was all that saved Happy's life. They climbed into the wagon and started. During the ride the captain decided that he would have a new wagoner the next morning, progress being made on a zig-zag from gutter to gutter, narrowly missing every telephone pole.

When he recovered his breath at the end of the trip he explained thoroughly and profanely how little he enjoyed extemporaneous chariot racing. "And you groom those mules until I tell you to stop!" was the order he gave at the conclusion of his tirade.

Happy went meekly to the picket line and dallied with curry comb and brush, while awaiting the captain's departure from camp. About seven o'clock this occurred, without, however, there being given him the order to cease grooming. The watchful Happy saw the captain holding an interview with the noncommissioned officer in charge of quarters, and correctly assumed that this concerned his being confined to camp for the evening. As he had other plans he vaulted a back fence and escaped.

"The charge of quarters'll tell the top sergeant he can't find me, and the top'll send a search party out after me," Happy reasoned. "But my name's not Happy if I can't make monkeys out of them."

With this object in view he lingered near camp until a noncom and two privates, wearing side arms, left for town. This identified the search party, whom he followed at a safe distance. As they entered the first saloon he hailed a passing troop mate.

"Do you want to make five bucks?" he inquired.

"Sure! Who do you want me to murder?"

"Well, Corporal Slane will be out of

that saloon in a minute looking for me. I'll be up the alley here. You tell him that you saw me going over to Mex Town about ten minutes ago. When he starts for there the money is yours."

"Just as easy as picking a peach from the tree," said the man.

Happy hid in the alley until he heard the corporal sent off on a false scent by his hireling. When the search party disappeared following the blind clew, he came out, paid his debt, and walked boldly into the saloon, safe in the knowledge that it would take the detail at least until nine-thirty adequately to explore Mex Town. After that time he wished to go there himself, but left the problem of how to lure his pursuers back into town proper to hunt for him until the need should arise.

Twenty-odd troopers were disporting themselves hilariously within the saloon. Not to be thought cheap, Happy jumped upon a table, danced a clog dance as a means of attracting attention, and then invited every one to liquid refreshment.

He explored the other six establishments where good cheer could be bought. At all these places he played the prodigal, inviting every one to be his guest. Why not? He had money. At nine-thirty as he stepped from the last saloon's closing door, he very nearly ran over the "Boob." He saluted respectfully, although his forefinger touched the lobe of his ear instead of the brim of his hat.

"Wolcott!" exclaimed the lieutenant, "I thought the captain had confined you to camp!"

"Yesh, shir!" responded Happy thickly, and after mumbling something, he weaved unsteadily away. The lieutenant gazed after him in open-mouthed wonder. Not knowing exactly how a situation such as this should be dealt with, he gave it up, proceeding homeward to report the matter to the captain.

Immediately after water call Horne went downtown. He came across his partner staggering down the street. After leaving the lieutenant, Happy had gone into an animal store and added a

canary bird in a gilt cage to his load. What his idea was Horne did not inquire. He had grown accustomed to the eccentricities of this remarkable individual.

They joined a musical crowd bound in the direction of Mex Town. The troubadours were singing, "Sweet Adeline if you were mine I'd paint your nose with iodine." As the roisterers approached a concrete bridge over an arroyo, Happy unobtrusively slipped away. He had caught sight of a party of three, under an arc light, approaching from the opposite direction. On the bridge the party was held up by Corporal Slane and detail, who were not in a pleasant frame of mind. They asked for information concerning Happy's whereabouts in as surly a tone as if they carried a personal grudge against him.

"I saw him over in town not ten minutes ago," volunteered Horne, truthfully enough. He did not feel honorbound to add that the culprit was then hiding under the bridge.

"Well, hang his fool hide, anyway! We've dissected all of Mex Town looking for him. Never saw Happy so hard to find before. Usually all you have to do is to head for the most noise and the most trouble. He'd be there!"

"How's business over in Mex Town?" inquired the joy hunters.

"Pretty lively! There will be the devil to pay before morning. Come on, fellows," the corporal added to his detail. "We've got to locate that bird if it takes all night."

At two-thirty a. m. Corporal Slane finally overtook Happy. He found him peacefully sleeping, propped against a door. Beside him was the bird cage containing the bewildered canary. Slane had him carried home. No resistance was offered after the corporal solemnly promised that the precious canary would be brought along. The two criminals, Happy and the canary, were eventually delivered into custody of the guard.

"I don't know what the charges against the dicky bird are," Slane told the sergeant of the guard. "But if they try it for associating with Happy, it ought to get life!"

CHAPTER V.

THE CAPTAIN'S INNING.

THE next morning Bob Horne was awakened by a broom handle being poked into his spare ribs. At the end of his evenings' perambulations he had requisitioned the front porch of an eminent citizen's house as sleeping quarters.

"Come on, soldier," his involuntary landlady said, continuing to poke the broom. "It's time for you to go home now!"

Bob arose and betook himself beyond ear range of her uncomplimentary remarks as quickly as possible. Arriving in camp, he found his first duty would be to report to the orderly room and answer for being absent from reveille. With fear and trembling he dragged himself there. No man stood before his captain on delinquency report without feeling that it was a serious matter. Around the orderly room he found a group of choice offenders, who after dancing unauthorized dances found that they must pay the piper. Upon being admitted within he heard the captain addressing sergeant Cain, in tones that made shivers play up and down the back bone.

"So you thought you would have my protection from these men whom you deliberately cheated, did you?" the captain was inquiring. "Well, you don't get it! I'll show you how much use I've got for your sort of a noncommissioned officer. You'll be doing kitchen police as soon as I can get the order through busting you! Get out."

The captain turned to those accused of committing the offense. "Under ordinary circumstances," he said. "I'd make you think the judgment of Heaven had fallen on you. But this is a special case. I won't press it further. I'm glad to find out just what sort of a man Cain is. That will be all!"

Horne was the next to catch his eye, although Happy stood in a more conspicuous place, looking as if he expected instant execution. "What excuse do you have for missing reveille?" he inquired.

"No excuses, sir!" answered Horne, fearful of being struck by lightning the next instant.

The captain looked at him more kindly. In common with the rest of the world, he liked a man who took his medicine without whining. "It was quite a nice little party you stage-managed last night," he said, referring to Horne's exposé of Cain's methods. "I didn't know you were such a hoodlum! Well, three kitchen polices for you. That's all!"

Thankful to be let off so lightly, Horne made his exit as Happy was called. The captain glowered as the chief malefactor stood before him. Happy shivered.

"Last night," the captain said in a growling, bass voice such as the giant used when he threatened to eat Jack-the-giant-killer, "you tried to pancake me against every telephone pole on the way home from the station. Before we go any further I want to tell you that you are busted as wagoner!"

"Yes, sir."

"Then I leave orders confining you to camp, but you slip away. You meet Mr. Nichols—the second lieutenant—downtown and send me the astonishing message by him that last night was your night out and that to-day is my day in. Am I correct?"

"Yes, sir." Happy was becoming firmly convinced that boiling in oil would be a light punishment for his crimes. Inwardly he berated the Boob for reporting their singular conversation.

"Well, this is my day in!" declared the captain, looking at him as a cat does at a mouse. "Then the detail finds you and a canary bird and carry you both home this morning. By the way, what was your object in buying that canary?" Curiosity had the better of the captain.

Happy looked shyly at him, gulped, figured that nothing but sheer audacity would keep him out of the guard house, decided that he might as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb in case he failed to strike the captain's funny bone, and said:

"I was going to teach it to sing bass, sir. But I think you can do better than I can if you'll take the bird!"

The corners of the captain's mouth twitched perceptibly. Growing sterner again, the captain veered away from the dangerous subject of canaries. "I understand you intend to reënlist in the coast artillery?" he questioned.

"Yes, sir," answered Happy. This is the dream of most old soldiers. It is popularly supposed to be easy soldiering near some large city.

"Suppose I were to give you a discharge as a habitual drunkard! Do you think you could get any captain in the coast to take you then?" inquired the captain.

"No, sir," answered Happy.

"Well, what would you do in that case," asked the captain, confident that he held the whip hand.

"I guess I'd have to reënlist in the troop," replied Happy calmly.

"What!" This idea was new and distasteful to the captain. "I wouldn't have you. Get out! Get out of my sight!" He wanted to be left alone before his dignity dissolved in laughter.

Once more had Happy's sang-froid saved his hide. He emerged from the orderly room with the carriage of a conquering hero and spoke jauntily to his sentry. "That will be all, James. You are dismissed."

Coming into the troop street he met Horne, who had been loitering about awaiting to see him brought out and hung.

"What did you get?" he asked, amazed at seeing him free.

"Nothing! Me and the old man are just like that!" answered Happy, holding up two tightly joined fingers.

"Well, I'll be hanged!" ejaculated Horne.

"Of course you will," replied Happy. "It's only a matter of time."

The Hated Cats

SOME famous people have been subject to the complaint, described by Doctor John Freeman in the *British*

Medical Journal, which causes its victims to bolt from the room should a cat enter it.

When staying at Schönbrunn after the Battle of Wagram, Napoleon was heard in the middle of the night shouting loudly for help. The equerries rushed in, to find their master making desperate lunges with his sword at a cat sheltered behind the bed curtains. His hand was so trembling with fear that he could not drive the animal away.

Miss Louisa Merrick, who painted Lord Roberts' portrait in India, relates that she had to banish her kitten whenever the commander in chief came to her studio. "I was told," she adds, "that on one of Lord Roberts' voyages home he asked to have the cat removed as soon as he came on board. An American passenger, unaware of Lord Roberts' identity, said to Lady Roberts, 'Don't you think that gentleman must have been a mouse in a former state?' Lady Roberts' reply is not recorded."

Doctor Weir Mitchell called this complaint ælurophobia—a term of which the etymology goes back to Herodotus. When the father of history first encountered the cat in Egypt, he called it "ailuros," or tail-waver. Doctor Mitchell said that he personally knew thirty-one people who could detect the presence of a cat though it was neither seen nor heard by them, and he maintains that cats cause not only asthma, but also violent sickness, temporary blindness, hysterical convulsions, and lockjaw.

Doctor Mitchell thought that ælurophobia is due to the existence of "olfactory emanations, distinguished by some as odors and by others felt not as odors but only in their results on nervous systems unusually and abnormally susceptible."

By some perverse instinct, cats are very fond of ælurophobes. Even strange cats, according to Doctor Mitchell, seem to have an unusual desire to be near them, jump on their laps, and follow them.



(COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE)

CHAPTER I.

EFFICIENCY OR HEART?

F," asked Captain Ferguson with a snort, as he apparently read from the paper he held in his hand, "two and two are four, how much wood would a woodchuck chuck if a woodchuck would chuck wood? And, why is a dog's tail like the heart of a tree? I can answer that—because it's farthest from the bark. What caused Adam's downfall? Answer, the apple business. Why does a chicken cross——"

"Say," the first officer asked sharply, "is all that junk down there?"

"No," returned the captain, "it isn't; but there are questions just as foolish. I don't know what this world's coming to. When Old Man Lawrence was at the helm of this steamship line we didn't have any such nonsense."

"Well, what can you expect with a cub trying to run things?" asked the first officer. "The old man had hardly been laid to rest when young Lawrence announced there would be a shake up in things. Not satisfied with a steamship line that was paying mighty big profits on the investment, he wants to double them. He's money mad."

"He's a prize fool," exploded the captain, "with his infernal efficiency engineer, and crazy notion about modern business methods! He thinks the only way to find out whether or not a man is any good is to ask him a lot of fool questions. Now if he'd ask how far a vessel is offshore when you get an echo twenty seconds after a blast from the whistle, or how long it takes to load twenty thousand cases of salmon, why we'd get somewhere, but asking seafaring men 'How old is Ann?—huh!'"

"Younger blood!" suggested the first officer with a grin. "That's his slogan, you know."

"Why," the indignant captain went on, "that fresh young dude who calls himself an efficiency engineer, came aboard a half hour ago, bustled into my cabin without even knocking, slammed the paper down in front of me, then pulled out his watch and said: 'Captain Ferguson, answer these questions, please. Your time limit is five minutes.' 'And,' said I, 'your time limit from here to the dock is five seconds.' And with that I pulled out my watch and wiggled my foot to get it limbered up for action."

"So that's why he made such speed to the dock," the officer said, grinning.

"Well, captain, I'll make a guess that he'll be back, and young Lawrence will be with him."

"I hope so," remarked the captain a bit grimly. "It's high time somebody gave that youngster a talking to; otherwise he'll be wrecking the company his old dad spent a lifetime in building up."

Young Lawrence did come aboard, but he was not accompanied by the efficiency expert, the latter having decided at the last moment that some things about Captain Ferguson were mighty efficient—the way his foot worked at the ankle, for instance. Young Mr. Lawrence's brow was black with anger, as he stepped lightly up the gangplank. He nodded shortly at the first officer, then hurried up the nearest ladder to the captain's cabin.

There was little doubt that Mr. Lawrence studied the latest styles with the utmost efficiency, as his attire was faultless. The little mustache he affected had been trimmed down all around until it barely remained—one slip of the razor and it would have vanished. What a loss to art that would have been! Nothing is more ridiculous than a youngster in a rage over something touching his pride; thus Mr. Lawrence was ridiculous. Seamen aboard the *Taku* grinned with averted faces. The first officer found it necessary to bite his cheeks when he had nodded at the "boss."

In his cabin the old Scot who had started with the Lawrence Steamship Company when the concern boasted but an ancient two-masted schooner, and to whom a great measure of the company's success was due, now pondered on the difference between young Lawrence and old Lawrence.

"What I ought to do," he growled, "is to take the lad across my knee, but —" And he stopped. There was not a doubt that Lawrence could discharge the skipper if he so desired. He was boss; a poor misguided boss it is true, but boss nevertheless. The captain had something to think about and consider besides his own personal desires.

Upon Queen Anne Hill, overlooking

Seattle and the harbor, was a neat cottage. It was of the bungalow type, surrounded by an unusually large lot upon which grew shrubbery and flowers in profusion. Snug Harbor, Captain Ferguson called it, and it was there he intended berthing when he at last retired.

He was not ready to retire for many years yet, however. A few sound investments brought in a fair income, but not sufficient to maintain Snug Harbor as it should be maintained, nor to keep the pretty and fascinating Miss Ferguson in the University of Washington. She was a member of a sorority, and when a man is the father of a sorority girl it is no time for him to retire from his business or profession.

"Maybe I'd best not say all I want to say," mused the skipper, "but"—his voice became sharp with decision—"I'll take no lip from him." Then he waited for the owner.

CHAPTER II.

THROUGH THICK AND THIN.

"CAPTAIN FERGUSON," said the angry voice of Mr. Lawrence after the skipper had waited some time, "I'm here to demand an apology for your treatment of my efficiency engineer. I consider it a personal affront."

"How old are you?" replied the captain.

Mr. Lawrence looked surprised, but replied: "Twenty-two, sir!"

"Well, when I was twenty-two I had a thundering lot to learn. I'm now sixty and I've still a lot to learn, but not quite so much as I had when I was twenty-two."

"We'll not discuss that, sir!" replied Lawrence with dignity, "since my father died——"

"Just what I want to talk to you about," said the captain quickly. "Your father never heard of an efficiency engineer, but he lived to see many a business rise and fall while his own has grown steadily until now the Lawrence line has quite a respectable fleet, and with the addition of the *West-*

erner you'll have the finest passenger craft on the West Coast.

"We old fellows all hated to see your father go," the captain went on. "He was a man who loved his employees and was in turn loved by them. He got a maximum of results, too. A man was given his chance, and if he made good, and he was always given the benefit of the doubt, he was retained. If he failed he was discharged, of course. To us who rendered satisfactory service to your father, it seems an insult to question our efficiency now. Judge us by results, sir. That's all we ask."

Lawrence listened in a bored tone. He wanted to interrupt, but that was not efficiency. "Are you through, Captain Ferguson?" he said patronizingly.

"I am!" snapped the captain who was controlling his temper with difficulty. It was not the other's words, but his manner that got under the captain's weather-beaten old skin.

"Very well, then, now for a few words on modern business methods and practices. You must remember, captain, you are a product of another school, quite good enough in its time possibly, but wholly unsuited to present-day needs. What we must now do is to speed up production! Speed it up!" Lawrence was driving home his words by tapping the gloved palm of his left hand with the fingers of his right. "What we need is the infusion of younger blood into our older and established institutions. To-day we need younger——"

"You're right there, Lawrence," the captain interrupted; "what we need is younger vessels. This old tub I'm skippering is only held together by her paint, and if she hangs together until I get the *Westerner* I'll consider myself lucky."

"Now that you brought up the subject of the command of the *Westerner*," said Lawrence, averting the captain's eyes, "I'm not so sure that it would be best to give it to you. She'd be safe enough, no doubt, with you on the bridge, but whether you could sail her with the efficiency so great an invest-

ment naturally demands is something I haven't decided."

The captain's disappointment was apparent. In lean years and in fat, Lawrence, senior, had dreamed of the day when his line would boast the finest passenger vessel on the Pacific. In summer she was to run from Puget Sound to Alaska, catering to the tourist trade; in winter she was to run from the Sound to San Diego.

"And she'll be your ship, Ferguson," the old man used to say. "You've stuck to me through thick and thin, and that's my poor way of showing just how much I appreciate it."

Many of the features on the *Westerner*, now nearing completion, had been suggested by Ferguson; the captain's cabin had been built to his order. She was to be the reward for his years of loyalty, when rival lines had offered him better ships to command than the Lawrence line could offer.

Young Lawrence shifted uneasily. "You understand, captain, that, in so far as possible, I shall carry out the promises made by my father previous to his death; but now that the responsibility of the company's success is resting upon my shoulders I really can't permit such promises to interfere with the best interests of the business. I shall not arrive at a hasty decision, however, and shall be guided largely by the dictates of modern business methods."

"All of which is very kind of you," said Ferguson, who at that instant was a strong believer in curing some ills by the laying on of hands.

Lawrence chose to ignore the sarcasm, modern business efficiency permitting some slight leeway in the matter of an employee's temper on such occasions.

"Captain Dowson of the *Mystic* is making a fine record—very fine. An efficiency chart shows a steadily climbing upward curve; in your case there is no curve whatever. Rather, it is a straight line."

"You can't expect a curve to go higher," retorted the captain, "when it has reached the top. As to Dowson, you don't need to tell me that he's

knocked me every chance he has had, and that he's after the command of the *Westerner*, because I know Dowson. That fellow's been playing in fool's luck so long, he thinks it is a matter of course. Mark my words, sooner or later he'll pile up the *Mystic*, or"—and the captain paused—"the *Westerner*."

"Captain Dowson," Lawrence said, "is typical of the modern young man as well as modern methods of business—dashing, aggressive, and efficient."

"Yes," replied the captain; "he dashed through Wrangell Narrows in a heavy fog when the three best skippers on the Alaska route had anchored their vessels beam to beam waiting for the fog to lift."

"Thereby saving twelve hours, if my memory serves me rightly, that was lost by three other vessels."

"Four," corrected the captain; "I anchored five minutes before he left."

"I'd be ashamed to admit it," retorted Lawrence; "but this is getting us nowhere. Frankly, captain, you have just about exhausted my patience." He fumbled in his pocket a moment, then produced one of the hateful question blanks.

So far the captain had done nobly, despite an intense desire to lay hands on the impudent kid before him—a desire that the elder Lawrence would have heartily approved had he been living—but the sight of the questions the other placed before him caused him to see red.

"Now what I want," began Lawrence, glancing at his watch, "is——"

"Is a good old-fashioned spanking, such as your father would have given you had he lived to see what an infernal ass his son is making of himself, and he's going to give it to you by proxy."

The enraged skipper leaped to his feet, smartly cuffed Lawrence on both cheeks, then, grasping the younger man by the arm, he jerked him to the nearest chair. The captain dropped into the chair; then in spite of the desperate resistance Lawrence was making, the captain pulled him across his knees and his great palm was poised a moment.

"Your mother was a wonderful woman and your father the finest man that ever walked in leather." Down came the palm with a crack. "If it wasn't for the fact that you've their blood in your veins I wouldn't waste time on you." Smack! "But maybe there's a man's form beneath that fool's hide you're wearing of late." Smack! "So I'll try to pound some sense into you in the usual way." Smack!

The hand continued to rise and fall for a minute or so after the captain stopped speaking; then he released his victim, who faced him choking with rage.

"I suppose you know what this means?" Lawrence spluttered.

"If it means you want my resignation, why you won't get it!" snapped the captain; "but if it means you're going to fire me, all right, go to it, but the water-front newspapers will be after a story the instant they hear of it. They usually get what they go after, though I'd never tell. Anyway, think it over! Maybe your efficiency engineer can give you some good advice."

Lawrence paused long enough to adjust his disordered clothing; then with a glare at the skipper, he stalked out.

"I don't get the *Westerner*," the captain said with a heavy sigh; "but I don't mind, if what happened will only do the son of Old Man Lawrence some good. I wonder if I hadn't better pack my chest. No; I guess not. The kid's got some pride and when he cools off a bit, he'll probably picture what a good newspaper man, aided by a cartoonist, would do with such a story."

CHAPTER III.

OUT AT THE START.

YOUNG Mr. Lawrence was so upset over the incident that he almost passed the ship-news reporter of the *Times* without his customary greeting.

"Hello, Lawrence! Any excitement?" queried the reporter. Being a veteran at the newspaper game he did not produce a pad and pencil when he asked questions.

"No; everything's quiet," fibbed Lawrence. "I suppose you know we landed several healthy freight contracts."

"No!"

"Yes; we're to handle a big portion of the salmon pack this year. It'll keep both the *Mystic* and the *Taku* busy until September, anyway. Any extra cargo space will be taken up by ore. They've opened up a copper mine on Prince William Sound and are shipping the ore to the smelter at Tacoma."

"Thanks!" returned the reporter, who now had enough for his daily "story." "I was about to visit my old stand-by, Captain Ferguson. When I get up against it, he spins a yarn of the early days that is always good for a column. Great old fellow, the captain!"

"Yes!" agreed Lawrence without enthusiasm. "Good day!" Lawrence felt slightly better. Luck seemed to be with him, for he had headed off a reporter about to visit the captain in quest of a story and the captain had a corking story. Upon arriving at the offices, the owner retired to his private quarters. The efficiency engineer entered ten seconds later.

"Doubtless, sir," he said, gleefully rubbing his hands together, "you showed that old pirate where to head in at. Some of these old fogies find it hard to understand this is the day of younger blood, of efficiency, and modern business methods. Wherever I have readjusted worn-out office machinery, I have invariably encountered the type. I suppose the captain had his say?" It was a question.

"He did."

"And you yours?"

"I did."

"And he filled out the blank?"

Lawrence hedged. "I shall rate the captain in a day or two," he said, and there was something in his tone that caused the efficiency engineer to retire.

After mature consideration Lawrence decided not to discharge Captain Ferguson, though he told himself it was not fear of the captain telling the cause, and the resulting ridicule. Knowing something of human nature, though not

as much as he should have known, Lawrence understood the longing in the old skipper's heart to command the *Westerner*. In fact, he had taken it for granted that the command was his, because of the senior Lawrence's promise.

"He scoffs at younger blood, the old fool!" exploded Lawrence. "Very well, then, younger blood will teach him a lesson—youth must be served and age is the waiter." He smiled. The added phrase was original, and he was quite proud of it. "And," Lawrence went on, "the man to turn the trick is young Dowson. A dare-devil if there ever was one. Quick at decisions, aggressive, and with the willingness to take a chance—that's Dowson and that's youth. Slow of judgment, cautious, and a plodder—that's Ferguson and old age!"

In due time Captain Ferguson was notified that the command of the *Westerner* would be awarded on the basis of efficiency, and efficiency in this instance was dollars and cents. The *Mystic* and *Taku* were sister ships, purchased by the elder Lawrence years before. Their operating costs were about the same, as was the earning capacity of each. The news was received calmly by the captain.

"Might have expected something of the sort," he growled. "Oh, well, it won't make any difference with me. I've always made my voyages in the quickest possible time, consistent with sound judgment in the matter of navigation. I shall continue to do so. I've trod the deck of this old craft all these years and I can do so a while longer."

Thus Captain Ferguson conceded that his young rival Dowson would make the better showing, barring one condition, and that was the chance he would pile his ship on to a reef or the shore, on some wild night. Only fools would indulge in competition of the sort—a contest, which if it came to the attention of the proper authorities, would without a doubt result in suspension, if not actual revocation, of the licenses of those engaged. Ferguson was out at the start.

"That's business," Dowson said with a smile, when he heard the news, which was imparted by Lawrence when the *Mystic* was about to sail northward. "May the best man win; the best man, and he alone, is entitled to trod the bridge of so proud a vessel as the *Westerner*."

"Worthy sentiments, sir!" returned Lawrence in admiration.

Dowson, of course, knew who the best man would be in this instance. "Fine chance that old foggy has of making a showing. He'll quit before he even starts; but just the same I'll keep an eye on him. The *Westerner* means passengers by the hundred and pretty girls, dancing, and I've worked mighty hard for what I've got and the *Westerner's* coming to me."

In his climb up the nautical ladder, Dowson had not hesitated to pull down those above him, nor step on the hands of those coming from behind. It had worked out to his benefit, and he proposed to continue such practices. He had done a better man out of the command of the *Mystic*, and so clever was his method that he even deceived Old Man Lawrence, which was no mean achievement in itself.

CHAPTER IV.

ON THE BRIDGE.

AT the beginning of the summer the *Taku*, by reason of the schedule, was a half voyage ahead of the *Mystic*. That is, when the *Mystic* left Seattle northward bound, the *Taku* had just left Seward on the southbound leg of her first round trip. The two crafts docked at Juneau at the same time by chance, and it gave Dowson an opportunity to drop several sneering comments at the elder man when they met on the dock.

"You're late, captain," he shouted. "What's the matter? Did you see a berg in Icy Straits and heave to until it drifted by?"

Captain Lawrence refused to dignify the slur by retorting; he continued his way uptown, to the familiar roar of the stamp mills clinging to the mountain

above. He frequently returned the bows and salutes of acquaintances, for the skipper was a popular man along the Alaskan coast. Many a sour dough made it a point to book passage on the *Taku* despite her limited accommodations—they could turn in at night and not worry when the fog enshrouded the ship and her whistle shrieked overhead.

Dowson steamed down Gastineau channel three hours later, and when the *Taku* tried to depart shortly thereafter it was discovered that her steam steering gear was out of commission. Captain Ferguson superintended repairs, then asked a single question:

"Was Captain Dowson aboard?"

"Yes," replied the quartermaster who had been on watch at the gangplank; "he left some letters to be mailed at Seattle, I believe. The purser can tell you, sir."

The purser confirmed the statement and exhibited the letter, but stated that, as he was busy at the time, he failed to recollect whether the captain had remained aboard or gone ashore immediately.

Captain Ferguson indulged in mental imprecations and resolved to watch his step; a precaution that proved unnecessary because the meeting was the only one that occurred in port, though twice each voyage the vessels passed, and exchanged the customary salutes. But it became apparent that Dowson was making good his boast to overhaul the *Taku* and beat her in to Seattle on the last run of the season. Each round trip saw him closer to the *Taku's* broad stern. The ships now passed either close to Seattle or Seward; no longer did they meet midway in the Inside Passage.

And at the home office Lawrence smiled with approval. Younger blood was winning out, and the man he secretly desired to command the *Westerner* was as good as ordering his chest aboard, and this in spite of his boasted neutrality.

The efficiency engineer and his stock of unusual questions had gone to improve other fields. With the exception

of the officers and crew of the *Taku*, all employees of the line had been properly tested and classified. There had been some changes, resulting in the spilling of some old blood and the infusion of younger, and as things were running nicely, Lawrence, wishing to combine business with pleasure, announced his intention of a trip to Alaska.

He sailed as far as Juneau on the *Mystic*, from which point he proceeded to Skagway, where he stopped for several days. Eventually he found himself going down the Yukon River. Arriving at the junction between the Yukon and Tanana rivers, he proceeded up the latter to Fairbanks.

The government railway between Fairbanks and Seward would be completed within a year or two, and Lawrence proposed to convince a number of mining men that his line could best transport their ore from Seward or Anchorage to Tacoma. In this he was partly successful. Later he journeyed by automobile for nearly four hundred miles to Chitina, from which point the Copper River Railway carried him to Cordova.

The familiar stack and masts of the *Taku* towered above the dock, and, stopping only long enough for his mail, Lawrence hurried to the dock just as the vessel was casting off her lines. He dropped his bags and shouted lustily. As much as he disliked voyaging on the *Taku* with Captain Ferguson, he was desperately anxious to reach Seattle again. "And besides," he told himself, "it's my ship, anyway!"

Captain Ferguson knew Lawrence was somewhere in Alaska, and his unexpected appearance was not exactly a surprise. He barked out a number of orders, the engine-room telegraph became active, and the vessel bumped the dock, permitting Lawrence to scramble over the rail.

The purser assigned him to the best room aboard ship, seated him at the captain's table, then proceeded with his own duties, leaving Lawrence to his own resources.

"I ought to show the old devil he can't bluff me," he mused, and then

made his way to the bridge. The captain greeted him pleasantly, though with dignity. So far as Lawrence was concerned he was a passenger. The fact that he was also the owner was merely an incident.

"By the way, captain, where is the *Mystic*? I've been in the interior for several weeks and am a little out of touch with affairs."

"Loading at Drier Bay, sir, I believe. Dowson has taken the trouble to inform me that he will leave Juneau about two hours after I do." Ferguson knew the specific information his employer sought, and he gave it a bit grimly.

"Is there any chance of the *Mystic's* beating the *Taku* into Seattle? I'm mighty anxious to get home. Two hours, however, will not make a great difference," he added.

"It all depends on weather conditions," replied the captain, and Lawrence understood.

CHAPTER V.

DASHING ABILITY.

THE Gulf of Alaska was in a friendly mood, and as a result the voyage across the open water was quiet enough. Two thousand cases of salmon were taken on at a cannery near Icy Straits; then the *Taku* legged it for Juneau. From the moment they docked, Lawrence kept watch on the Gastineau channel for the first glimpse of the *Mystic*. He was nervously eager for the favored skipper to appear; but it was not until the *Taku* had backed into the stream and put about that the *Mystic* hove in sight. There was something bordering a jeer in Lawrence's face as he glanced at Ferguson.

"Well, there he is, captain!"

"So I see!"

As the two craft passed, Lawrence waved frantically from the bridge. Five minutes later there came a radio from the *Mystic*.

"Is the owner aboard?"

"He is!" replied the *Taku's* operator.

There was an interval of several min-

utes; then came a message directed to Lawrence and signed by Dowson:

If in a hurry, will pick you up somewhere down the line.

"Grand-stand stuff!" growled the *Taku's* radio man as he took down the message. He was only a young man himself, but he was a lad of experience.

Wait for me at Ketchikan.

This reply signed by Lawrence was ample indication that he believed the *Mystic* would arrive at Ketchikan ahead of the *Taku*. Several hours later he was again on the bridge. "I am leaving you at Ketchikan, captain," he said contemptuously. "Captain Dowson has very kindly offered to wait for me."

"It would be an act of kindness," returned Ferguson calmly, "if somebody treated Captain Dowson to a dose of the same punishment given you not so many months ago. He's a young idiot and that's the verdict of more than one skipper on the northern run."

"The older men, possibly," replied Lawrence; "but I'll wager the younger men envy his dashing ability."

"I've several youngsters aboard the *Taku*," retorted the captain, "and I have yet to hear them cheer Captain Dowson's seamanship—it's quite the contrary."

And there the subject was dropped for the time being.

Lawrence left the bridge muttering something about "A hopelessly out-of-date old fool, and I'm going to seek congenial company."

Not until the following day did Lawrence again honor the bridge with his presence. For several hours the *Taku* had crawled along sounding her whistle, and with each blast had come an echo from the towering mountain that lay somewhere to starboard in the fog. The water was like glass; but it was impossible to see a scant dozen yards beyond the bow, and only by peering over the side at some bit of driftwood was it possible to tell that the vessel was under way.

At length all movement ceased and an anchor splashed over the side. From somewhere astern came the faint sound

of a whistle. Lawrence listened intently. From the bridge Ferguson shouted down:

"Yes, that's the *Mystic*."

Lawrence did not reply. Dead ahead a launch with an air whistle was answering the warning signals from the *Taku*. At first she seemed to be off the port bow and then the starboard. At length she appeared from the mists, running at half speed, and veering off suddenly to avoid crashing her bow against the sides of the *Taku*.

"Go it, you young devil!" bellowed the skipper, grinning down.

An impudent young face was thrust from the open window of the small pilot house and returned the grin.

"You seem to admire some forms of recklessness!" commented Lawrence.

"He's risking no one's neck and no one's property but his own," replied the skipper. "If he crashes into a steamer he may dent a plate, possibly lose his own life, but he's not risking the lives of others—that's the difference."

Again came the *Mystic's* whistle—a bit nearer this time. Ferguson judged that Dowson must be running almost at full speed ahead, but he was not quite sure.

After an uncertain interval during which the blasts grew louder, the fog unexpectedly lifted. Dead ahead several small islands seemed to block the way, though the width of channel seemed ample. Even Lawrence had to admire the skill of the old skipper who had brought his craft through the mists to stop at exactly the right point. Astern the *Mystic* loomed up, and then the disturbing breeze died away and the curtain of mist once more dropped. The *Mystic* came lazily through the haze to pause abeam of the *Taku*.

"Anchored, eh?" shouted Dowson through a megaphone. "Well, I'm going ahead. If the owner's aboard and has no time to waste, I'll send a boat for him."

"Thanks, captain," shouted Lawrence. "Stand by for orders." Then he turned to Captain Ferguson. "Come in here a moment; I want a word with

you in private." Lawrence led the way into the captain's cabin, and Ferguson followed, though not before he had winked at his first officer.

"I don't believe in calling down an employee before a crowd," he began, "and so, captain, that's why I came in here. When Dowson announced his willingness to proceed, at the same moment I decided the *Westerner* would be under his command."

"Sure that wasn't decided several weeks ago?"

"So that's settled," continued Lawrence, ignoring the skipper's comment; "but there's another thing. Dowson can proceed, and there's no reason why you cannot do likewise. Your experience is far greater."

"And that's why I'm anchored and why he's going ahead—my experience is greater. If it was a case of life and death I presume I could put the *Taku* through without difficulty; but with the human lives aboard this craft weighed against the saving of a few hours it is not sound judgment to proceed."

"Not even if the command of the *Westerner* was at stake?"

"Not even if the command of the greatest ship that floats was at stake," said the captain firmly.

"Very well, then, as owner of this craft, I order you to proceed!" shouted Lawrence with a youthful glitter in his eyes. "It is high time I asserted myself."

"As master of a vessel at sea, whose authority is higher than that of owner or any one else in matters of navigation, I order you out of this cabin, off the bridge, and down below with the other passengers," replied the captain, and his hands began working nervously—a sign Lawrence recognized instantly.

Before the owner had realized it, he was once again on deck. In the clash of authority younger blood had lost—lost, Lawrence thought, until he should reach Seattle where, he determined, he would dismiss the veteran the instant the *Taku* docked. If Ferguson refused to take orders from the owner, he at least knew of a skipper who would.

"Send a boat, Dowson!" Lawrence shouted.

Fifteen minutes later the *Mystic* with the owner aboard vanished into the mists, but long afterward her whistle came through the gray shroud.

CHAPTER VI.

BLAST AND ECHO.

I HOPE Dowson gets through," muttered the skipper fervently, "and I've no doubt he'll make it, but I'd certainly like to show the young fools a thing or two. I could start right now and beat him to Ketchikan, but it would be a fool trick, and I've been called an old fool enough times in recent years, but no one has yet called me a confounded fool!" And having thus delivered himself, the skipper, hearing a waiter beating on the dinner gong, promptly went below for his midday meal.

And while so engaged a dark mass loomed out of the mists and through the open port he saw one of the crack Alaska Steamship Company's liners coming to anchor. While the two skippers in strong terms discussed the weather with their mates, the impatient passengers whiled away the time as best they might. In the radio shack, the operator on watch with his set in place pounded away on the typewriter in an effort to get the ship's daily paper out on time. His nimble brain was vainly endeavoring to produce a merry quip or two to liven up the edition, when he suddenly became aware of an insistent call.

A moment later the operator burst from the radio room and raced to the bridge and from the bridge he dashed to the social hall, then to the smoking room, where he found Captain Ferguson. He motioned to the skipper, and something in the operator's face told him the urgency of his message.

"The *Mystic's* piled up!" the man from the radio room exclaimed in a hoarse whisper. Then in a few brief words he gave the stricken vessel's position. The radio operator sped away to stand by for additional information.

Presently he returned. This time the skipper was on the bridge; the anchor had just cleared water and the *Taku* was forging ahead. He handed the skipper a radiogram. It was short and to the point.

For Heaven's sake hurry! LAWRENCE.

The captain of the anchored liner watched the *Taku* disappear at full speed. "What the devil's got into old Ferguson!" he exclaimed. "He's gone crazy, too."

Perhaps Ferguson had the *Sophia* disaster in mind when he ordered full speed ahead through that dense fog. Early in winter the steamship bound south from Skagway had crashed onto a reef during a snowstorm. So securely was she lodged, apparently, that no effort was made to transfer passengers to vessels standing by. Some time that night she slipped off the ledge, carrying every living soul, some three hundred, with her. Many an old-time friend of the captain was among the lost.

In any event, the victor of many a hard-fought battle with wind, wave, and fog, trod his bridge, keenly alert, knowing well the chances he, too, was taking, but confident. No blast of foghorn, nor tolling bell, marked the course that twisted and turned between islands here, skirting a reef there. Sometimes it led close to places where abrupt walls towered thousands of feet above. Again it seemed to shrink away as if fearful of some hidden danger. Tides and currents tugged and pulled at her steel hull in an effort to lure her from her path of safety.

Above the whistle shrieked for guidance, and the answer came in the echo thrown back from the mountains. The counted seconds between blast and echo told the distance from shore. The experience of many an encounter did the rest. As one finds his way about his house in darkness, so the grim salt on the *Taku's* bridge treaded his way through the gray mists that relentlessly obscured the way.

From time to time he would bark a comment at his first officer, as if to

check up on his own reckoning. The reply came with the snap and sureness of the efficient seaman. But once did he hesitate. Then the echo had not come back at them with a crash, but had seemingly fled from them, following the contour of the range until it died away.

The skipper grinned. "Where do you think we are?"

The other shook his head half in doubt, then replied.

"Correct!" Ferguson said with a smile. "But if I were in command of a ship, I'd lay at anchor for days before I'd accept the responsibility of putting her through here with this sort of a tide and fog." He paused, then added: "Except in a case of this kind."

CHAPTER VII.

IN A THOUSAND EDDIES.

THE *Mystic*, with crumpled bow and flooded compartments and a bit of a list to port, gripped at the jagged rocks of the reef. From below came the groans of anguish of the hull as some part collapsed from the strain.

In the waters about lifeboats floated placidly, while life-belted passengers nervously strained their ears for the ship they were told was coming. Captain Dowson, just beginning to realize what the tragedy meant to his future, remained aboard because tradition demanded it. Perhaps they could salvage her, perhaps not. He had fortunately lost no lives—that lessened the disaster considerably. All his life he had shifted responsibility—passed the buck—and now his brain was desperately seeking a victim.

"Sound that bell!" he snarled at the seaman standing by the ship's bell. It was their sole remaining warning signal now that the fireroom had been flooded. There should have been something in the way of an emergency foghorn, but in the excitement no one seemed able to find it.

By the captain's side Lawrence stood, very white, but controlling himself in a creditable manner, all things considered.

"Great heavens," he exclaimed at length, "will he never get here!"

"Probably afraid to chance it!" sneered Dowson, but he was praying for the *Taku's* arrival nevertheless. From the fund of his great experience Ferguson might have a suggestion to offer that would mitigate the last results of the crash.

And then as darkness was adding its terror to the scene, they heard the *Taku's* whistle.

"Thank the Powers Above!" Lawrence said breathlessly, and from the boats that had gathered about the *Mystic* with the coming of darkness came the sobbing voice of a woman in grateful prayer.

To those waiting, the *Taku's* cautious approach seemed age-long. And then they saw her, barely making headway. Her search light, a finger of white sweeping through the mists, wavered uncertainly, then swept the *Mystic*. From the bridge, the bellowing voice of Ferguson ordered the boats alongside. Willing hands helped them aboard, dry and thankful.

With the *Mystic's* human freight cared for, the skipper studied the wreck with a critical eye.

"What do you think of it, sir?" The voice of Lawrence was at his elbow.

"Total loss!" replied the skipper. "And my advice to you is to get Dowson and his men off."

The owner could speak now and be obeyed. He picked up a megaphone and ordered Dowson aboard the *Taku*, announcing that he had abandoned the wreck to the underwriters. For an instant Dowson hesitated, then a menacing grinding as the hull shifted on the rocks decided him. The grinding continued as a nervous boat's crew stood by while those remaining aboard slid down the boat falls to safety. A shuddering groan ran through the wreck as the boat shoved off and again she shifted slightly as the stern settled.

The last man was boarding the *Taku* when Ferguson backed away. Almost at the same instant a series of rending crashes thundered about the reef; then slowly, with increasing speed not unlike

a ship sliding down the ways to her first dip, the *Mystic* began gliding from the reef. The water in a thousand eddies grasped at the hull, mounting higher and higher.

Suddenly she half turned, like a tired living thing seeking rest, her bow cleared the reef until it was nearly perpendicular, then to the accompaniment of the crashing deck gear she vanished from sight. For several minutes the *Taku's* searchlight hovered over the spot. From the watery grave escaping air lashed the sea into a seething mass, spuming forth bits of wreckage and débris.

And then from their own craft came the throb of engines. Above them the whistle shrieked its plea. From the distance came the echo. Once more they were under way.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ONE WHO COUNTS.

THE *Taku* tugged at her lines in Seattle harbor once more. The rumble of engines and rattle of cargo booms filled the air. A knock came at Captain Ferguson's cabin door. "Come in!" shouted the skipper pleasantly. A trim man of middle age, but with all the marks of the sea entered. In either hand he carried a heavy bag.

"Hello, Anderson!" exclaimed Ferguson, extending his hand. "What brings you here?"

"I hate like the devil to tell you, Ferguson, but I've been ordered to take command of the *Taku*," said Anderson.

"That's all right!" returned Ferguson, while inwardly he felt hurt. It was not so much at losing his berth as it was the fact that in a way he had proved Lawrence was wrong; that is, Dowson had proved it for him. Lawrence's methods were a bit unfair. "Orders are orders!" he added. "It won't take me long to get my stuff out of your cabin. Good luck to you and don't pile up on any reefs."

"They're going to hand it to Dowson good and plenty from what I hear," said Anderson. "Well, he's had it coming to him for a long time. He did

me out of command of the *Mystic*, you know."

"Yes. So I understand."

After making the necessary transfer, Ferguson set a course for the general offices of the Lawrence line. He tossed a bundle of papers down upon the counter and at the same instant Lawrence himself appeared from his sanctum. In his hand he carried a sheath of efficiency reports.

"Good morning, captain," he said pleasantly. "Did Captain Anderson show up?"

"He did, sir, and is now in command."

"That's fine; now as soon as you get your stuff aboard the *Westerner*, I wish you would——"

"The *Westerner*?" faltered the old skipper. "Why——"

"Sure, didn't you send your stuff aboard? Why, I supposed you knew you were to command her. Dowson, of course, is not to be considered. He's inefficient—very inefficient."

Too grateful for words, Ferguson continued to stare at the "boss."

The latter grinned and continued: "Yes, captain; I think I've been something of an ass—the fact is I know it—but I do still insist that there's nothing like young blood to pep up an organization. However, to get a maximum of results, as the efficiency engineer says, we need the mature judgment of the old boys to keep the young fellows from running wild. I'm learning, slowly, but I'm learning. I rate myself as well as my employees. Just a minute—I'll show you my chart. I've just brought it down to date. Note that upward curve?"

"The one that looks like a mountain peak?"

"Yes! Well, that indicates wonderful improvement in myself—a turn for the better, you might say. The date, as you'll notice, is of the day you spanked me. Too bad you didn't use a club. Now as to Dowson, the fellow's getting a bit nasty. Says unless I see him through, he'll tell the inspectors I ordered him to proceed.. That is not the truth."

"Don't let that worry you," replied the skipper; "we have plenty of witnesses to prove that he announced his intention of proceeding and invited you aboard. But let him tell 'em you ordered him ahead, they'll give him the laugh quick enough. A skipper doesn't take orders on matters of navigation—he's sole judge of what's proper and on him rests the responsibility. Forget it. Now I guess that's all."

Still They Come

IN 1902, the St. Louis Browns entered the American League, and since then have never won a pennant, the Senators and the Yankees keeping them company in this respect.

For the present season the Browns will try their eighth manager, Lee Fohl, who had considerable experience as manager of the Cleveland Indians, but baseball fans are not enthusiastic over the prospect of his landing the Browns in first place this year.

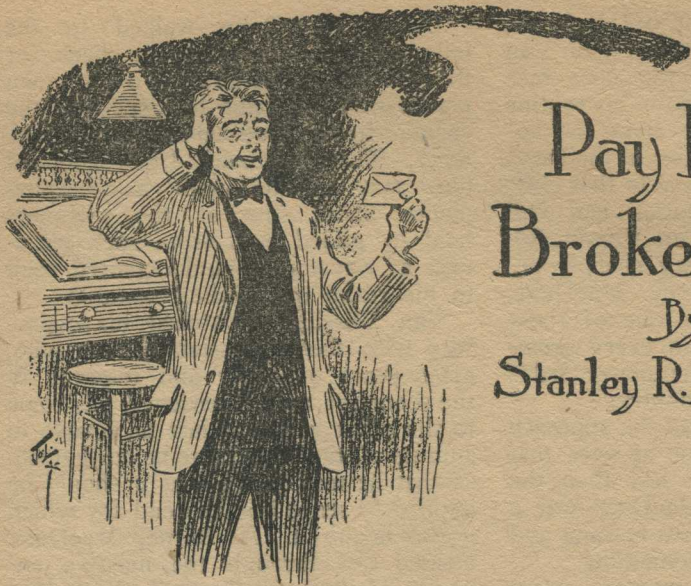
James McAleer was their first manager, from 1902 to 1909, and he was able to finish second in his opening campaign, but never did better than fourth place later, filling each of the lower positions. Jack O'Connor landed the team in the cellar the following year, 1910, and Bobby Wallace in 1911 failed to make any improvement. George Stovall, Branch Rickey, and Fielder Jones followed in succession, but without any success, and in 1918 Jimmy Burke took charge, landing the team in fifth place that year and again in 1919, and moving up to fourth place last season. Now it's up to Fohl to boost them some more.

The National League team in St. Louis, however, have nothing on the Browns, as the Cardinals are the only team in the older league that have never won a pennant.

Slight Error, Madam

MRS. MURPHY: "Didn't I tell you never to come here again?"

Tramp: "I hope you will pardon me, madam, but it's the fault of my secretary. He has neglected to strike your name from my visiting list."



Pay Day; Broke Again ~

By
Stanley R. Hofflund ~

SLOWLY Van Vlissingen scanned his salary check, scowled, and uttered a piece of sarcasm his fellow employees in the bank had grown so accustomed to that they would have regarded pay day as incomplete without it:

"Broke again! To-day is pay day, so I'm broke again."

At thirty-seven Van Vlissingen was a bookkeeper in the bank, earning, or rather being paid, thirty-five dollars a week. Thirty-seven years is not old, but neither is thirty-five dollars much. And for fifteen years Van Vlissingen had served that bank faithfully and efficiently.

"We're a slave gang," Van Vlissingen thought bitterly as he surveyed the neatly combed or bald heads of the bank's employees surrounding him. "Worse than that, we're slaves of our own volition. Not one out of a dozen of us will ever amount to anything really worth while in the banking business."

The clicking of tireless adding machines irritated him. He had often envied those machines their purely mechanical ability to add long rows of figures without interference from distress-

ing thoughts about success in life and achievement of desires and ambitions, to which human adding machines are prone.

Van Vlissingen was a scrupulously well-groomed man. He had been reared to hold strong convictions regarding personal appearance, and strong prejudices against anything that did not conform with certain standards and conventions of that class he regarded as the "best people." At twenty-two, upon finishing a university course that had cost every penny of the small inheritance his father, after squandering his estate with conventional profligacy, had left him, Van Vlissingen had entered upon his career as a banker.

Banking, he had decided at twenty-two, was a proper career for a gentleman. At twenty-two, had any one had the temerity to suggest for him a career of farming or carpentering or other labor involving muscular strength and skill he would have been met with lofty scorn.

But fifteen years of slow advancement in a vitality-draining vocation had shown Van Vlissingen much. Just how much he had learned during those fifteen years forms the meat of this story. The rest is gravy and side dishes.

A deeply rooted trait of character, or of breeding, was expressed upon Van Vlissingen's strong but too-sober face when he raised his eyes from his routine of endless figuring to observe the approach of a person familiar in the bank, a customer whose presence in that elaborately furnished institution had frequently raised within Van Vlissingen's patrician mind some very sharply defined prejudices. Barney MacDuke, building contractor, was one of those characters encountered in every growing, hustling city in the newer fields of development of our country.

Van Vlissingen watched the approach of Barney MacDuke out of eyes that were nothing more nor less than the portholes of a caste. MacDuke was a man who had sprung from nothing and had made himself into something.

Barney MacDuke's trousers were baggy at the knees, and there were dots and splotches of white plaster upon his clothing, face, hands, and disreputable hat. And he was chewing something that made his lips brown and untidy.

Van Vlissingen could not repress a slight shudder of repulsion. "If unshaven stubble were worth ten cents a pound," he commented mentally, "that fellow MacDuke could sell his for enough to get his trousers pressed." He smiled at his own flippant sarcasm. Later he would repeat it to brother employees to sustain his reputation further as wit of the bank.

Yet Van Vlissingen, as MacDuke trudged sturdily toward a teller's cage close to him, found himself regarding the contractor with an interest which had been recently growing stronger and stronger. There was something honest and fearless and wholesome about the fellow that would have attracted more than a criticism of his personal appearance from a man of any caste.

And one of the things that Van Vlissingen had learned during fifteen years in the bank had been that personal appearance and the fortunate circumstance of good breeding are not essential factors in hewing success and happiness out of life. He had learned all that after a long and painful process of unlearning.

Barney MacDuke walked to the teller's cage and deposited a check for fifty thousand dollars. To his own plaster-stained credit he deposited the check, after a good-natured nod at the teller. Then he remarked that it looked like rain outside—with a sweeping glance about him at the prisoners held by gilded bars from such pleasures as rainstorms—and departed back to his realm of building material.

Van Vlissingen watched his departure with the expression of one who, after years of study and research in the school of hard experience, has come to the point where at last he is able to sum up all the knowledge he has gained, so that he may apply it as it should be applied to serve best the end for which it was acquired. As Barney MacDuke bustled out through the massive entrance of the bank the smile upon Van Vlissingen's face was a kind that had never been there before.

II.

AT noon Van Vlissingen went out to lunch with Wallie Hazelhurst, his best friend in the bank. Hazelhurst at thirty-five, two years Van Vlissingen's junior, was a teller, on a salary of fifty dollars a week. But Wallie had an uncle who was one of the bank's heaviest stockholders.

"I'll have to eat in a cheap joint today," Van Vlissingen said. "I was just paid off, you know. So I'm broke again."

"Suits me, Van," Hazelhurst agreed, smiling at his friend's familiar pay-day sarcasm. "Lucy is keen about having me go slow on expenses when she is not along to order the meal. I'll eat anywhere."

Hazelhurst was married, Van Vlissingen single. Up to his thirtieth birthday he had started numerous heart conquests; but all had ended the same. He wasn't earning enough money to marry that sort of a girl. And after his thirtieth birthday he had lost heavily from his fund of optimism.

In a cheap café Van Vlissingen and Wallie Hazelhurst swallowed food in

silence; neither seemed to be in talkative mood. Presently Van Vlissingen noted that Barney MacDuke, the successful building contractor, was lunching at a neighboring table. And Barney MacDuke was eating with his knife.

The contractor had tied a napkin around his neck, under his unshaven chin, so that it protected his plaster-stained suit from the meat, potatoes, and gravy that occasionally fell from the blade he was so cheerfully misapplying. He was obviously enjoying his hearty meal; frequently a satisfied grunt would emphasize his approval of the mouthful he snatched from his knife with the zest of perfect digestion.

At first the spectacle, particularly uncouth from Van Vlissingen's sensitive, high-bred point of view, was a distinct shock to the young bookkeeper. Then a feeling of intense fascination gripped him. Spellbound, his eyes followed knifeful after knifeful upon journeys from Barney's plate to his mouth. At first when a morsel would slip off the knife and fall back into the untidy plate with a splash, Van Vlissingen would wince. But later the mishap caused him to grin. And in that grin was first sympathy and then admiration.

The hungry contractor worked away like a busy stoker, blissfully unconscious of the impression his bad manners were creating in more than one section of the café. It occurred to Van Vlissingen that if he himself had just deposited a check for fifty thousand dollars, he, too, might enjoy a meal as wholeheartedly as the contractor. He might even— Yes; it was remotely possible that with fifty thousand dollars in the bank he might even enjoy eating a meal with his knife.

Hazelhurst noted his companion's hypnotized stare. "Remarkable how long it takes to civilize some people, isn't it, Van?" he asked with a laugh. "That fellow MacDuke must have practically the unspoiled brains of a cave man."

Van Vlissingen finished his lunch before replying. He was too deeply engrossed with whatever weighty matter

he was considering to realize that Hazelhurst was watching his face with an amused smile. "Barney MacDuke is an extreme," the bookkeeper said at last, with the deep conviction of one who has at length solved a complicated mystery. "He's one extreme, and"—a peculiar smile relieved the seriousness of his expression—"I'm the other." He declined to elaborate upon this remark, though Hazelhurst did his best to draw his friend out.

"You're a deep nut, you know, Van," the teller declared as they returned to the bank. "You're too deep for me, I'll confess. And you seem to be growing nuttier and nuttier. You're not sick or anything lately, are you?"

"No," Van Vlissingen replied with a shrug and smile. "I'm not sick, Wallie. That is, not in the ordinary sense of the word. But I'll admit I'm a nut. You guessed me that time, old boy. And the thing I've grown nutty on is extremes. Has it occurred to you, Wallie, that the most successful weapon for fighting any kind of a big fight, over any issue, is adopting the extreme most radically opposed to the one your enemy has adopted?"

"Look at the greatest of all the world's wars, capital against labor," Van Vlissingen went on. "Capital adopts one extreme, labor the other. Neither can hope for a final successful settlement without the use of extreme measures of combat. And what applies to class fighting must apply in a smaller degree to the struggle of the individual for success."

It was all beyond Hazelhurst's ken. Easy-going chap that he was, he had no struggle for success to be generalizing. He would inherit the things he most dearly desired in life.

Van Vlissingen went on speaking aloud, but he was addressing himself, not his friend: "I've got an extreme of breeding to fight against if I'm ever going to win out," he declared soberly. "And half measures won't combat it, I'm sure of that. I've tried half measures, and they have failed. As long as I live I'll be broke on pay day unless I adopt an extreme."

He adopted one that very afternoon. Van Vlissingen, who had served the bank faithfully as a faithful dog for fifteen years, resigned his position.

III.

I CAN'T imagine what's come over Van," Hazelhurst said to his wife one evening a month after his friend had left the bank. "I haven't had a line from him since he left—not a scratch of the pen to let me know how he's getting along or where he is."

A month later Hazelhurst repeated, in substance, the same remark. And later, at intervals of time which steadily increased in duration, he confessed surprise that Van Vlissingen should have so completely disappeared from his friends and associates.

"You'd think he'd at least drop an occasional line to let us know how he's getting on," Hazelhurst would complain. But he did not grieve to any serious extent; his world was too full of diversion which required all the thought he could spare from business.

As a matter of fact, Van Vlissingen's sudden and lengthening disappearance had created more of curiosity than regret or worry among those he had left. It was not that he had failed to make many friends, but there had been born in him a certain reserve which had prevented really close intimacies.

More than for any other reason, Van Vlissingen was missed socially because he had always been such an entirely satisfactory man for hostesses to include in their invitations. He had never been a clubman, chiefly because he could not afford the only kind of a club that would have interested him in the slightest degree.

The bank, it is true, had missed him, as a teamster would miss a faithful horse, well broken to its work. But a faithful horse or a faithful bookkeeper can always be replaced. The world is well stocked with the merely honest and faithful.

It was three years before Van Vlissingen came back into Wallie Hazelhurst's life. The manner of his com-

ing was a distinct surprise to his former friend and bank associate.

Hazelhurst had gone out to lunch alone, and being in the economical noon-day mood his wife had so thoroughly instilled, had selected the same cheap café he and Van Vlissingen had patronized the day that his friend so completely disappeared. While Hazelhurst ate his solitary meal he smiled reminiscently, rather sadly, as he recalled his last experience in the place with his friend.

"Poor, snobbish old Van!" he thought. "I wonder what's become of the old boy. If he only had a living relative a fellow could communicate with to find out something about him, it wouldn't be so mysterious. It wasn't like him at all, not at all."

Hazelhurst's smile broadened as he recalled traits of character of his friend. Van Vlissingen had been such a well-bred chap, so sensitive about the things he had been reared to regard as absolutely essential marks of good breeding; rather a snob, no doubt, but a splendid fellow. For the time being Hazelhurst missed him so keenly he decided he would hereafter refrain from eating in that café. It was too insistent a reminder of their last meeting, and of cheapness and discomfort and the class of people and things in life Van Vlissingen had most disliked.

The entry of a man into the café attracted Hazelhurst's attention, more than casually. At first glance the man appeared to be a laborer of some sort; the stamp of an outdoor vocation was upon him. His clothing, while not ill fitting, was wrinkled and untidy from muscular activity.

The man, as he gave his order to a waiter, smiled in a way that gripped Hazelhurst's attention. The young teller's eyes became riveted; he stared with wonder and incredulity.

IV.

WERE Hazelhurst's eyes deceiving him? Could such a perfect double of the old Van Vlissingen really exist? This man was wearing clothes

the bookkeeper would have hesitated to offer in charity without a pressing, and his tanned face was cropped with an unshaven stubble Van Vlissingen would not have worn on a fishing trip. But the way the fellow smiled—there was something amazingly familiar about that smile!

His enviable appetite apparently unspoiled by the fascinated stare Hazelhurst fixed upon him, the living image of Van Vlissingen proceeded to eat. And he accomplished the matter of transferring hearty food from his various plates and dishes to his mouth—with his knife!

To say that Hazelhurst experienced a shock would be putting the case mildly. For this man, every authoritative cell of his brain told him, was Van Vlissingen; Van Vlissingen himself, not an astonishing double. That smile was Van Vlissingen's; to argue or reason against that was futile. So was the hair, the eyes, the straight nose. Tan and lack of a shave could not disguise those well-bred features of his old friend.

Hazelhurst's shock, however, was not from the effect upon his sensibilities of Van Vlissingen's reappearance. It came from his recollection of the well-known, oversensitiveness of the bookkeeper. There sat Van Vlissingen, unmistakably Van Vlissingen, shoveling knife blades laden with meat and potatoes and cauliflower and boiled onions—the old Van Vlissingen had loathed boiled onions—into his mouth.

And as Van Vlissingen ate he talked loudly, with his mouth full, and gesticulated violently with cutlery-encumbered fists! Those fists seemed to have grown in three years from well-manicured lily whiteness into huge, vulgar, red hams. And the fellow diner the man was addressing was obviously a stranger to him, under Van Vlissingen's old strict custom of acquaintanceship. He had been occupying a chair at that table when the former bookkeeper took possession of another chair. It was too unutterably preposterous to think of Van Vlissingen deliberately addressing a total stranger without proper credentials

and introduction, as though all men belonged inherently to the same fellowship!

Hazelhurst did not realize how rudely he had been starving until the man, Van Vlissingen, looked across an intervening table and bestowed upon him a good-humored, entirely unoffended, brazen wink. Hazelhurst sat up stiffly, blushed a guilty crimson for all his certainty that Van was Van, and wilted over his half-finished meal. A blow could not have dazed him into a condition of more complete helplessness.

For a time the bewildered bank teller sat with closed eyes. Then he slowly recovered possession of his wits, and he tried to conjure up in his memory a picture of Van Vlissingen as he had last appeared in that café, a Van Vlissingen with immaculate face and hands and clothing, one whom a king's ransom would not have bribed to employ a knife in the way that the man who had just shattered his nerves with a brazen wink was doing.

Hazelhurst opened his eyes with a start when a muscular hand suddenly gripped his shoulder. Another muscular hand smacked him resoundingly upon his back.

"You old snob, you!" It was Van Vlissingen who spoke laughingly. "I'm sure glad to see you again," he added as he grabbed Hazelhurst's nerveless hand and shook it heartily, with the grip of a man accustomed to gripping things. Then Van Vlissingen literally dragged the teller back to his own table, ordering a waiter to fetch along Hazelhurst's half-finished, light repast. The other man at the former bookkeeper's table had left.

"I would have written to you, Wallie," Van Vlissingen said smilingly, affectionately, when a slight smile appeared upon the other's lips to signal that his mentality was at least partially normal again, "I would have written you, but I've been so busy learning how to be everything from a carpenter, mason, steamfitter, and plumber, to a building contractor, that my time has all been taken up. At that"—his brow wrinkling and a smile of self-disparage-

ment twisting his mouth—"I haven't learned any trade thoroughly excepting one."

His smile changed to one of radiant satisfaction as he went on: "I've learned how to make money, Wallie. I've acquired acquisitiveness, the important trait I used to keep smothered under a lot of useless rubbish. I'm a partner of Barney MacDuke's now, Wallie. A full-fledged partner! I handle all the contracts over in Chicago, where I've been ever since I skipped out of this bloomin' burg."

V.

VAN VLISINGEN, his eyes twinkling, paused to hoist with his knife a large portion of potatoes into his mouth. "And I've learned to be a first-class sword swallower," he declared with his mouth full of potatoes and pride. Van Vlissingen held up his knife and contemplated it affectionately. Suddenly he pointed the blade straight between Hazelhurst's eyes. The teller almost dodged.

"Extremes, Wallie," Van Vlissingen said impressively. "The only way to overcome one extreme is to adopt another. The only way I could combat my inherited extreme of super-refined Van Vlissingen blood was to adopt the other extreme and stay with it. So I adopted Barney MacDuke, his sword-swallowing method of eating and all. And I've stayed with Barney faithfully. Ask him if I haven't. I've imitated him so successfully that"—Van grinned delightedly—"now Barney eats with a fork."

Wallie Hazelhurst could only gasp.

Van Vlissingen waved his knife as though it were the emblem of a great cause. Slowly a light of admiration dawned in Wallie Hazelhurst's eyes. When it shone with fullest splendor Van Vlissingen unexpectedly tossed the knife over his shoulder. It clattered upon the floor behind him.

"I don't require extremes any more, Wallie," he said as he rose from his chair. "You'll realize why when we reach the bank."

And Wallie Hazelhurst gladly admitted that realization when Van Vlissingen, after waiting for him to get behind his teller's window, deposited a check for seventy-five thousand dollars to his own personal credit, remarking that it was nice, cheerful weather.

Most Exciting Moment

A NEW YORK sporting writer asks the question: Which is the most exciting—a knock-out in boxing, a nose finish at the track, or a home run in baseball? What game, in fact, offers the greatest thrill?

Many, he says, would prefer to see "Babe" Ruth hammer a homer with the bases full; others would watch Harley of Ohio State get away in the last moment of play and race the length of the gridiron for the winning touchdown. Jack Dempsey's terrible left landing on Carpentier's chin, or Man o' War and Sir Barton in a driving finish, would be the choice of others.

As other possibilities of extreme excitement, this writer mentions a tussle between Lewis and Stecher, or when a favorite pair steal a lap in the six-day bicycle race.

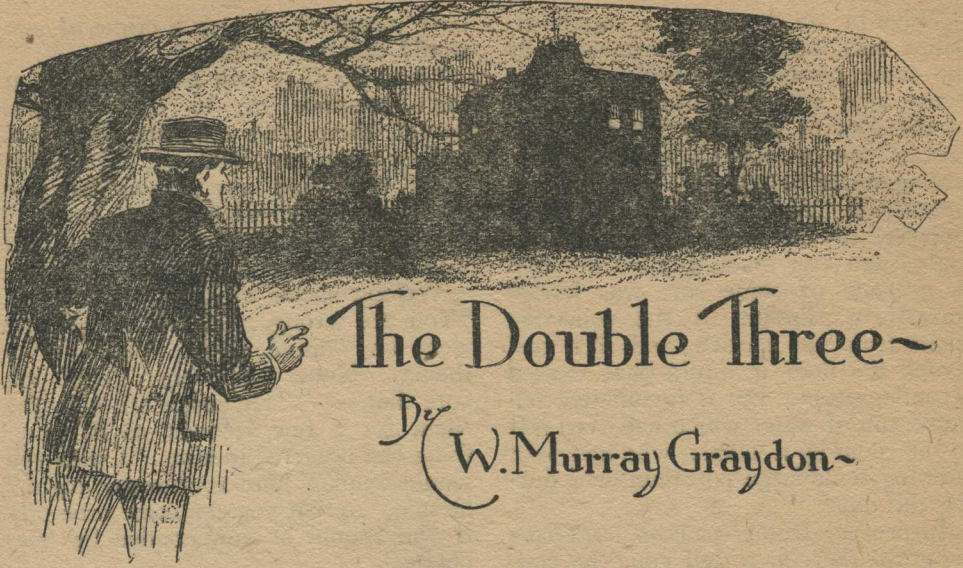
"How," he asks, "would you like to watch Rudd, Eby, and Hill run another eight-hundred-meter race like the one they ran at Antwerp last year, when the three fought it out for two hundred yards, only to finish inches apart and fall exhausted? Six men ran in that race and the finish found five of them lying half conscious on the ground. It was the toughest race ever run.

"But tell me," he ends naively, switching to golf, "have you ever made a hole in one?"

The Test Gastronomical

NOW that we are settled in our new home," said the bride, "don't you think it would be a good idea to give a little dinner to some of our friends? I'll cook the dinner myself."

"Yes," replied her husband, looking up from his plate. "I think that would be a good way to test their friendship."



The Double Three~

By
W. Murray Graydon~

(COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE)

CHAPTER I.

A PUZZLING QUESTION.

FOR a little time there was no sound in the room except the scratching of the pen which Inspector Dunn, crouched at his desk in the detective bureau at police headquarters, was driving over a sheet of yellow paper, pausing now and again to look at what he had written. James Weldon, one of his men, seated in an armchair close by, was absorbed in a newspaper, his keen eyes ranging down a column through the haze of smoke from the pipe that was in his mouth.

"It is curious," he murmured aloud, speaking to himself. "Very curious indeed."

"Wait a moment, and I'll talk to you," the inspector said absently. "I've nearly finished."

His pen scratched on for a minute or so, and then, putting it aside, he swung round in his swivel chair. "Well, what is it?" he asked.

"The Tudor affair," Weldon replied. "I have been reading about it."

"You read of it before, didn't you?"

"I noticed a brief mention of it, Dunn. I didn't pay much attention to

the newspapers while I was away on my vacation; but there isn't much about the case in this one. What there is, however, has whetted my curiosity. Perhaps you can give me further information."

The inspector nodded. "I meant to tell you of it," he said. "I thought it would interest you. It has been a puzzler to me. Very likely you are acquainted with Mr. Pomeroy Tudor."

"I have known him for some years, but not intimately," Weldon returned. "He is a man of wealth, living a secluded life in a big house on Riverside Drive, and his hobby is the collecting of all sorts of antiques—paintings, tapestries, bronzes, ivories, miniatures, enamels, and so forth."

"Yes; that's right. He has a large collection of stuff, which is stored in an annex which he had built at the rear of his dwelling, over the conservatory. And now for the facts of the case: One night, a couple of weeks ago, some miscreant forced open a small window at the back of the house, pushed through it a lot of rags saturated with oil, and dropped a lighted match onto them. An officer discovered the fire, and it was extinguished before any particular damage was done.

"Five or six days later a second attempt was made, and presumably by the same person, who broke into the house, and started a fire just outside of the door of the collection room. A servant was awakened by the smoke, and again the flames were promptly extinguished. Not discouraged by two failures, the miscreant returned four nights ago and made a third attempt. A grenade of some sort was hurled through a window of the collecting room from the garden, and if it had struck the floor it would have caused a conflagration. But it fortunately fell into a tub of water which had been left in the room by a woman who had been cleaning some large porcelain urns during the day."

Inspector Dunn paused. "That's about all there is to tell you," he continued, "and I dare say the matter will remain as it is. There has been no arrest. Mr. Pomeroy Tudor can't throw any light on the affair. It is shrouded in mystery."

"It is certainly mysterious," said Weldon. "What could have been the motive for the three attempts at arson?"

"If you want my opinion I'll give it: I suspect Mr. Tudor himself."

"Indeed? How is that?"

"For two very good reasons, Weldon. My suspicions have been roused by inquiries which I have made. In the first place, Mr. Tudor has been hard hit in the market. He has lost the greater part of his wealth, and the papers stated several weeks ago that he intended to have his collection sold at auction. In the second place, his collection is insured against fire and burglary for a large amount."

"I see your point, Dunn. You suggest that Mr. Tudor's antiques are insured beyond their value—for a larger sum than they would bring if they were disposed of at auction."

"Yes; that's what I think. He tried to destroy them by fire."

"Then why did he announce his intention of selling the collection?"

"As a blind, Weldon, of course."

"Well, I don't believe it. I am satisfied that Mr. Pomeroy Tudor is ut-

terly incapable of such a crime as you would attribute to him."

"And I believe that I am right. You can't convince me to the contrary, though there isn't an atom of proof against the man. Who but Mr. Tudor could have had any motive for the three attempts to set fire to the house?"

"Ah, Dunn, that's the question. And it is a puzzling one, I will admit."

Weldon shook his head and smiled. "You are wrong, my dear fellow," he went on; "quite wrong. I have no theory. None whatever. Yet I am sure that——" He broke off, and was silent for a few seconds, as if something had occurred to him. "I wish you would remain here to-morrow night," he said, "so that you can come promptly if you should be summoned by telephone."

The inspector shrugged his shoulders. "What have you got in your head?" he asked.

"An idea; that's all. I rather think I can clear up this mystery."

"I doubt it, Weldon. Mr. Tudor has been put on his guard by my conversation with him. He won't make a fourth attempt to fire the house."

"No; but somebody else may. It is very likely that somebody will. At all events, stay here to-morrow night. I shall be greatly disappointed if I don't have occasion to——" Weldon paused again. He rose from the chair, and picked up his hat. "I must be going," he said. "I have one or two things to attend to. To-morrow night, Dunn," he said, as he turned to the door. "Don't forget."

CHAPTER II.

BEWILDERED FOR AN INSTANT.

IT was on a Tuesday that Detective Weldon had the talk with the inspector, and in several of the New York papers on the morning of the following day was a paragraph to the effect that Mr. Pomeroy Tudor, who had been arranging for the sale of his collection, had left town and would be absent for a couple of days.

There was no truth, however, in the

paragraph. At ten o'clock that night Mr. Tudor was at his residence, in a small smoking room that was on the first floor, and which was in darkness. And in a bedchamber near by, which was also darkened, Weldon was comfortably settled in a big chair with a revolver in his pocket, and the door open to the width of an inch or so. The two servants had been sent to bed, and not a light was burning anywhere in the house, which was a large, detached one with grounds at the front and back of it.

Weldon had no theory, as he had told Dunn, yet he was convinced that there was no foundation for the inspector's suspicions of Mr. Tudor. It was a clever trap that he had set, and he felt pretty sure that the person for whom it was meant would fall into it. As the night wore on, however, his confidence was weakened. A clock below struck the hours of eleven and twelve, and still all was quiet. Another half hour elapsed, and at length Weldon gave a quick start and sat erect, listening to a faint, scraping noise that floated to his ears from somewhere overhead and beyond him.

"Ah, the fellow has arrived!" he said to himself. "But where can he be?"

Rising to his feet, he slipped quietly from the bedchamber, and glided along a passage to the door of the collection room. Having listened again for a moment, he threw the door open and switched on the electric light as he stepped over the threshold into the room. He had hardly done so when there was a crash above him, and the body of a man fell through the shattered skylight in the ceiling and dropped heavily to the floor. And a few seconds later, as Weldon was staring at the huddled form, Pomeroy Tudor appeared on the scene.

"You've got him, have you?" he exclaimed. "Who is it, Weldon? His face is familiar! Surely it can't be——" He was dumb with bewilderment for an instant. "Good heavens, it is my friend, Samuel Craig!" he cried. "My old friend!"

CHAPTER III.

A HEATED ARGUMENT.

AS arranged with Weldon, Inspector Dunn had remained that night at police headquarters, and a telephone message brought him to the Riverside Drive residence in a taxicab by one o'clock. An agitated servant admitted him, and ushered him upstairs and into the collection room, where the light shone on paintings and tapestries, and on numerous other things that were on shelves and in glass cases and cabinets.

Weldon and Pomeroy Tudor were standing by a couch on which was seated, pale and trembling, an elderly, well-dressed man with a tawny beard and mustache that were streaked with silver. Dunn glanced at the broken skylight and at the splintered glass on the floor, and turned to Weldon.

"It is Samuel Craig you have caught!" he said in amazement.

"Yes; that's right," assented the detective. "He lives in the neighborhood. He has been a friend of Mr. Tudor's for years, and he is himself a collector of antiques and curios."

"And—and he is the man who has been trying to set this place on fire?" the inspector gasped incredulously.

"It would appear so," Weldon replied. "He fell into my trap. But I don't assert that it was he who——"

"I can't believe it!" interrupted Pomeroy Tudor. "I won't believe it, Weldon! My old friend! No, no; it is impossible! You can clear yourself, Samuel!" he went on. "I am certain that you can! What is the explanation? How did it happen? Tell us!"

"I'll—have to—to confess," faltered Samuel Craig, who had been only stunned by the fall and was just recovering his wits.

"You are guilty, then?" exclaimed Mr. Tudor. "You have been trying to destroy my collection? You, of all persons?"

"Oh, no, Pomeroy; I don't mean that. I never tried to set fire to the house, on my word of honor. But—but I was tempted to——"

Craig stopped, and looked in shame and confusion at his horrified friend.

"It was that Etruscan vase there that tempted me," he resumed. "The unique one in that case on the left. I have envied you the possession of it, craved for it, since you showed it to me when you bought it five or six years ago. I haven't anything of the kind to compare with it in my collection. I wished to purchase it from you, you will remember, and you refused. I kept thinking of it from time to time, and after you told me that you were going to have your collection sold, I—I made up my mind to steal the vase if I could. I knew that if I were to go and bid for it at the sale, I would be outbid by some person with more money than I could spare.

"So I yielded to the evil temptation, Pomeroy," Craig went on. "Believing that you had gone away, as the papers stated this morning, I slipped into your garden to-night, and round to the back of the house. There was a ladder planted against the wall of the conservatory, reaching above the collection room, and I supposed it had been left there by workmen who had been doing some repairs. I changed my mind when I saw it. Instead of trying to get into the conservatory, as I had meant to do, I climbed to the top of the annex, and crawled over the roof, intending to drop into the room below, steal the Etruscan vase, and leave by the staircase. But there was a man lying flat on the roof, close to the skylight. I had only a dim glimpse of him. As I sprang to my feet he jumped up also, and dealt me a blow that sent me staggering onto the glass. I fell crashing through, and remembered nothing more until I found myself lying here.

"That's the truth," Samuel Craig continued; "every word of it. I haven't been near your house on any other night. Surely you don't doubt me, Pomeroy? You know I couldn't have had any motive for trying to destroy your collection. The man who struck must have been the man who has made three attempts to set fire to your place, though I can't imagine why. But what

I have done is bad enough. I have no excuse to offer, except that the mania for collecting curios is apt to weaken one's moral principles, and lead to dishonorable and dishonest acts. The craving for that vase of yours was an obsession with me. I fought against it until I couldn't resist it any longer."

Pomeroy Tudor gazed at his friend sadly, and sighed. Stepping to one of the glass cases, he took from it a small vase of bronze-colored metal that was mottled with greenish patches.

"I am shocked, Samuel!" he said. "Deeply shocked! Yet in a way I can understand the impulse that urged you to commit a crime. If I had known that you wanted this so badly I would willingly, gladly, have given it to you. And I give it to you now."

With tremulous hands, his eyes sparkling, Samuel Craig eagerly clutched the vase. He held it for a moment, and then shook his head.

"I can't accept it," he said reluctantly. "No; I am not worthy of it. Take back your gift. It is most generous of you, my dear friend, but I really could not think of——" He broke off abruptly. "This—this is not genuine!" he gasped.

"Not genuine?" exclaimed Pomeroy Tudor. "Nonsense."

"I tell you it isn't!" declared Samuel Craig. "It is a clever imitation. A spurious, worthless thing that was probably made in Birmingham!"

"My precious Etruscan vase an imitation! Ridiculous! Absurd! You are a fool, Samuel!"

"You're another, Pomeroy. I tell you again that this thing isn't a real antique. You have been deceived."

"I know better," spluttered Mr. Tudor.

"I know better than you do," vowed Mr. Craig.

"What knowledge you have of Etruscan antiquities isn't worth a snap of my fingers. You are an ignoramus."

"I am right, Pomeroy. I can swear that I am."

"You are wrong. I'll bet you anything you like that——"

"As if I would put any faith in your

opinion! You can go to Jericho! Pouf!"

They glared at each other, both flushed with indignation. Snatching the vase from his friend, Pomeroy Tudor replaced it in the case, and slammed the glass lid shut.

"You shouldn't have it now if you were to beg for it on bended knees," he cried angrily.

"If I were to stumble over it on the pavement I wouldn't take the trouble to pick it up," sneered Samuel Craig. "I would kick it into the gutter."

"Conceited ignoramus."

"You are one yourself."

The altercation had amused Weldon, and it had done more than that. He did not know what kind of a judge of antiques Mr. Pomeroy Tudor was, but he did know that Samuel Craig was a connoisseur of the highest reputation, and that his judgment was regarded as infallible. There was a curious glitter in Tudor's eyes, and a tinge of color, denoting excitement, had crept into his cheeks. Dunn spoke to him twice before he answered.

"What is it?" he asked absently.

"What's wrong with you?" snapped the inspector. "I've been telling you that I mean to arrest Mr. Craig. Any objections?"

"What do you propose to charge him with? Not arson?"

"Well, no, hardly that. He has told a straightforward story, and I don't doubt it. He is not the incendiary. He could not have had any motive for——" Dunn paused and stroked his chin; then he shrugged his shoulders and shot a furtive glance at Mr. Tudor, whom he still suspected. "I shall charge Mr. Craig with attempting to steal the vase," he declared.

"That rests with me, I think," Tudor blandly replied.

"Do you suggest that you want to help to compound a felony?"

Samuel Craig had dropped onto the couch again, nervous and agitated, pale with fear.

"Forgive me, Pomeroy!" he implored. "Don't charge me, I beg of you. It would kill me!"

"I have no intention of doing so," said Pomeroy Tudor, whose anger had evaporated. "Don't worry, Samuel. I should not dream of sending such an old friend as you to prison." He turned to Dunn. "I shall overlook Mr. Craig's fault," he went on. "He yielded to a temptation that I might have succumbed to myself, and I refuse to prosecute him."

"Very well, sir," Dunn sullenly assented. "It is for you to decide. If it had been an ordinary burglar who had been caught here, though, you wouldn't show him any mercy."

"Perhaps not," admitted Mr. Tudor. "But the circumstances are different. I am sorry for my friend, and I want the matter to be hushed up. As for the attempts to set fire to my house, inspector, I think it is to the discredit of the police that they haven't found and arrested the scoundrel. He must be a lunatic with a mania for incendiarism. And yet he has made no attempts elsewhere. It is as much of a mystery to me as it is to anybody. My collection is insured, but not beyond its value. I wish you would put Weldon on the case. I am extremely anxious that——"

There was a gasp from Samuel Craig, who had risen from the couch and was pressing his hands to his heart.

"I—I feel ill, Pomeroy," he said huskily. "I have been overcome by your kindness. I can never forget it. Never."

Weldon led the inspector to one side. "I wish you would take this chap home," he said. "He lives just round the corner. I want to stay here for a bit. By the way, I may tell you that I investigated before you arrived. There are the vague footprints of two persons on the dusty roof above us, and the ladder that was used was brought from the garden of an adjacent dwelling that is being repaired."

Samuel Craig withdrew with the inspector, leaning heavily on his arm, and Weldon threw a glance around the room.

"Sit down, Mr. Tudor," he said. "I want to have a quiet chat with you. I

am inclined to believe that your friend Mr. Craig has put me on the scent of the mystery."

CHAPTER IV.

THE FIRST ONE.

A COUPLE of days after the sensational affair at Mr. Tudor's home, of which no mention had appeared in the papers, a tall, well-dressed gentleman with a fair beard and mustache entered a dingy, low-browed shop that was crammed with antiques of every description. Finding nobody there, he passed through to the rear, and stepped into a small office where a middle-aged man with a gray mustache was writing at a desk. The man was the curio dealer, Morris Davidson by name. He rose from his chair, and glanced at a card that the visitor thrust into his hand.

"Mr. Halkett, of Mistley & Manson," he murmured. "What business have you with me, sir? Do—do you wish to buy any—" His voice stuck in his throat, and he drew a deep breath.

Mr. Halkett shut the door, and sat down. "Anybody else on the premises?" he asked.

"No, there—there is no one," Morris Davidson faltered.

"Well, you can guess what my business is."

"You have seen Mr. Pomeroy Tudor's collection, I suppose."

"I have seen it, and I have examined it. Need I say more?"

There was an interval of tense silence. The curio dealer was white to the lips, and his features were twitching painfully. He was in a state of terror.

"What are you going to do about it?" he inquired, speaking with an effort.

"What action I may take will depend on yourself," Mr. Halkett coldly replied. "You have amassed a considerable fortune, I dare say."

"I am not a poor man, sir. If—if you are willing to accept a bribe, and it is a question of a very reasonable sum—"

"If I name one it will be reasonable, in the circumstances. How long have you had dealings with Mr. Pomeroy Tudor?"

"For eight or nine years."

"And how much money have you received from him during that period? Can you tell me without consulting your books?"

"I can tell you roughly, sir, as I recently looked up the account. I have had in all about sixty thousand dollars from the gentleman."

"Very well," said Mr. Halkett. "You will draw me a check for sixty-five thousand dollars."

"So much as that?" exclaimed Morris Davidson. "Good heavens, it will ruin me."

"Oh, no; it won't. I know better."

"It is extortionate, sir! I will give you five thousand."

"Sixty-five thousand or nothing. You must decide quickly."

The curio dealer hesitated, staring in consternation. "If I consent," he said, "I must have a written promise that you will hold your tongue in consideration of the payment."

"I will make no promise, Mr. Davidson, either verbally or in writing."

"But—but you would have me at your mercy, sir. You could denounce me whenever you pleased, and I should have no evidence against you; nothing to prove that you had accepted a bribe from me."

"The check will be a piece of evidence. I have no objection to your drawing it in my own name, and you can produce it at any time if I should show up your rascality. Isn't that fair?"

"I don't like it. You will have the best of the transaction. But I'll have to submit."

With shaking hands, and a gleam of resentment in his eyes, Morris Davidson took a check book from his desk. He filled one in for the sum of sixty-five thousand dollars, payable to the order of James Halkett, and tore it from the counterfoil. And Mr. Halkett, having slipped the check into his pocket, politely bade the curio dealer

good morning, and departed with a smile on his face.

"It is the first bribe I have ever accepted," he said to himself.

CHAPTER V.

A WORD OF ADVICE.

THE detective quietly closed the door behind the visitor, who moved forward with hesitating steps, nervously twisting the hat he held in his hands, his gaze shifting from the furnishings of the room to the figure of the man he dreaded. Taking his pipe from his mouth, and putting aside the book he had been reading, Weldon resumed his seat in the lounge chair by the window.

"Sit down, Davidson," he said, in a voice that was as cold as ice.

The curio dealer was prepared for the worst—for what he had known an hour ago to be inevitable. There was despair in his eyes, and on his face the look of a trapped and helpless animal.

"You sent for me, sir," he said huskily.

"Yes; to show you this," Weldon replied, taking something from his pocket.

It was a pink slip of paper, the check for sixty-five thousand dollars that Morris Davidson was staring at. His jaw dropped. He bit his lip, and an angry color crept into his cheeks.

"The dirty, sneaking hound!" he exclaimed. "So James Halkett has been to see you!"

"There is no such person," said Weldon, with the glimmer of a smile.

"James Halkett doesn't exist."

"Then—then it was you who——"

"Yes, Davidson; it was to me you gave the check this morning."

"And do you mean to keep to the bargain, sir? Will you use the check and——"

"Do you imagine that I would, you scoundrel?" Weldon's voice rang loud and sharp. His eyes flashed with passion, and then he laughed scornfully.

"The check will go where it belongs, to Mr. Tudor," he declared. "That is why I extorted it from you. And now, Davidson, I will have your confession,

which I could have had when I called at your place. But I preferred to talk to you here. Denials will be useless, for I have had Mr. Pomeroy Tudor's collection examined by an expert. For years you have been imposing on him, swindling him, selling him worthless rubbish. You were aware, of course, that he had no judgment of his own, and that he would believe anything you told him."

"Yes, sir; that's right," assented the curio dealer, with a sigh. "It was easy to deceive him. He didn't know a real antique from an imitation. It was partly for that reason, and partly because my business wasn't doing well in these days, that I yielded to the temptation when I had dealings with Mr. Tudor."

"And you kept on deceiving him, year after year."

"I must admit that I did, sir."

"Until your sense of security was shattered by the knowledge that Mr. Tudor was in financial straits, and that he intended to dispose of his collection."

"Yes; until several weeks ago, when I read in the papers that he was going to have the collection sold at auction. I was terribly frightened. I knew that discovery was certain, and that it would mean imprisonment for me. I was afraid to offer to buy the stuff back from Mr. Tudor lest I should rouse his suspicions. And so—so I determined to——"

"Go on. Make a clean breast of it, Davidson. You tried three times to destroy the collection by fire."

"Yes, sir; three times. All of the attempts failed, and so did the fourth one when I went again last week and tried to break in from the roof. But I was interrupted by a burglar who climbed up by the ladder I had used. I struck him a blow and knocked him through the skylight and cleared out in a hurry. That's the whole story, Mr. Weldon. I have made a full confession, and—and I hope you will——"

The man paused abruptly. A door to his left had been opened, and Inspector Dunn stepped from the detective's bedchamber into the sitting room,

followed by Mr. Pomeroy Tudor. There was a moment of hushed silence.

"That's enough, Davidson; you are my prisoner," said the detective, standing up and dropping a hand on his shoulder. "You have refunded the money you dishonestly acquired, but you have to answer to the law for what you've done."

Morris Davidson knew that it would be useless to plead for leniency. He held out his wrists for the fetters that were locked upon them, his features pallid, his limbs trembling.

"And now, Mr. Tudor, I have a word of advice for you," Weldon said, in a tone of veiled sarcasm, when he had given him the check. "I suggest that you hereafter turn your taste and attention to modern antiques, in the collection of which you will not require any discriminating judgment, and will not have to dip deeply into your purse. You have had a bitter lesson, and I trust you will profit by it in the future."

Man's Highest Records

THE highest mountaintop ever reached by man is Mount Kabru of the Himalaya range in India, which is 24,015 feet in height. This world's record was accomplished by two Norwegians, C. W. Rubenson and Monad Aas. The Duke of Abruzzi, however, on his famous expedition in 1909, reached a higher level of 24,600 feet in his effort to scale Mount Godwin-Austen, the second highest mountain in the world—28,278 feet. Although the duke failed to reach the summit, he ascended to the greatest height yet attained.

Some renowned mountain climbers had said that it was impossible for man to endure the cold and rarefied atmosphere at a greater altitude than 24,000 feet, but the duke proved that they were wrong. And at Dayton, Ohio, last year, Major R. W. Schroeder, of the United States army, drove his biplane to a height of 36,020 feet—almost seven miles. At this height the temperature was estimated at sixty-seven degrees below zero. The aviator's eyes

froze, he lost consciousness, and the plane fell five miles in about two minutes. Then he managed to regain control of the machine and made a perfect landing.

Mount Everest, 29,002 feet high, is considerably lower than the height attained by Major Schroeder, but no man has reached its top.

Lazy, But Lovable

WRITING in *Asia*, Charles Mayer expresses the opinion that the Malays are the laziest people in the world; that their disregard of money makes all dealings with them extremely difficult.

"When work is an exciting or amusing game," he says, "such as the hunt, they will go on for days without signs of fatigue. They seem to keep alive by some fanatic energy. But when work is just plain labor they will say, 'Wait,' or 'I must think.' Or a Malay may say candidly: 'Sir, I have just had plenty to eat. I am content.' Many times I have had a Malay tell me, when I asked him to do some work, that he had enough rice and fish for the day and that he might die during the night. It is an unanswerable argument. Tomorrow's food can be found when tomorrow comes. Why should a Malay gentleman, who believes in Allah and whose stomach is full, do the labor that can be done by the heathen, pig-eating Chinese?"

"Will you row me across the river?" I asked a Malay one day.

"Tuan, I have eaten and have plenty," he replied. "You may take my boat and row yourself across the river. To-morrow, if Allah grants me life and if I need the boat, I will swim over for it."

And yet, Mayer says that with all their laziness they are a lovable people, in most cases brave and willing to do anything for a person they like.

Unkind Rose

MABEL: "The first time George proposed I didn't accept him."

Rose: "I know that, dear. You weren't there."



Adventures of a Big-League Pitcher ~

Oh, You Baseball Romeo!

By
C. S. Montanye~

CHAPTER I.

TALL DUCK TO THE FRONT.

HERE are the words and music. After the Brown Sox, the team for which I have been pitchin' for the past three seasons, plays the last game of the series, which already you know about if you spend two cents now and then to read the papers, Larry Keegan, the bird what owns and runs the team, comes into the clubhouse, where the boys are toyin' with the showers, and so forth, and without no warnin' of any kind begins bustin' into speech.

"Boys," he hollers, "now the season has officially come to end, I'm gonna spring a surprise!"

Well, we thinks maybe we are all canned on accounta not coppin' the well-known pennant, but such ain't the case.

"Boys," Larry goes on to say, "listen to this: I have just now made arrangements with a Pasquale Gomez, who is a man and not a vegetable, and who owns a first-class ball park down in Havana, Cuba, to say nothin' of a team he calls the Cuban Giants, to take you down there for four months and

play ball. But first off, before I speak of the arrangements made, and so forth, I wanna tell you all about Cuba."

Larry then goes on and talks geography. He tells us all about Cuba like we don't know nothin'. He calls it the garden spot of the world; says that prohibition has never reached there and never will on accounta it bein' separated from the United State by so much water. He tells us they is more doin' down there in the way of amusements and the like, in one minute, than they is on Broadway in six months. He says you can get real ale or wine without creepin' down into cellars and gettin' cobwebs onto you, and he also says everythin' is jake in the line of gamblin'.

Accordin' to Larry everythin' from stud poker, with a sky limit, to Mississippi marbles is wide open and goin' full blast. He begins ravin' about the climate and tells us whilst blizzards will be ragin' here, down there flowers is growin', summer underwear is bein' featured, and people are goin' in swimmin'. Then he winds up the song and dance by speakin' of the gals what are to be found there, and what lookers they are, and so forth.

Well, when he gets all through he

asks them what is ready and willin' to go to Cuba to raise up their hands, and they was a lotta excitement from shoutin', yellin', and every one askin' questions at the top of their voices. Everybody raises up a hand exceptin' I and a bird called "Chick" Allen, who has been playin' left garden all summer for the Sox, and for all the good he done he might have been playin' football or golf, because nobody knew he was on the team, anyway.

Well, Larry looks the bunch over, and then he sees me and gets surprised. "What's the matter, MacGonigle?" he wants to know. "Is your hand too dirty to hold up?"

The boys look me over, and I smiles. "Well," I says, "before I stick up my fin I wanna know about the money end of it. How much jack is there in it for me?"

Larry pulls some sheets of paper from his pocket and gives them the all-over. "I got you down here, Mac," he says, "for two hundred and fifty a month and all expenses paid. How does that sound?"

Well, not wantin' to make no wise cracks until I can dope out how much that is a week, I tell him I will think it over. Larry says sure I can think it over, but I should tell him my answer before ten o'clock that night, as if I don't string along with the Sox he will have to pick up some other pitcher.

I waits until I gets back to the hotel from the park, and the minute we hits it I gets some paper and a pencil and starts figurin' out how much is two hundred and fifty per the each week. This comes out about sixty-two dollars and some cents, and I guess I would be a fine goof leavin' the good old United States, gettin' seasick on a ocean trip, and pitchin' my head and arm off for a bunch of Cuba's for sixty-two bills per each week! Bricklayers and milkmen, get ten bucks a day without goin' to Cuba or any other place what they can't get home from at night, so where do I come in, tossin' big-league ball for that much money?

I don't have to wait until ten o'clock. I breaks it to Larry in the billiard room

of the hotel the second supper is ate, and he beats down to knock the ivories about. Naturally, it took Larry off of his feet, as no doubt he thought I would sure fall and go to Cuba, and I could see he was terrible disappointed; but every man for himself in these hard times with the high cost of livin', say I.

"All right, Mac," Larry says, and they was tears in his eyes, "of course, if you wanna pass up a vacation and stay here in a climate where a fur coat will feel like a piece of cheesecloth, go ahead."

"That part of it is O. K.," I answers, "but where do I come off to get sixty-two bucks a week when I can drag down a hundred and a half as easy as lift a finger?"

"Sure," Larry says, "but if you pitch for the Sox in Cuba they will be no danger of goin' to jail."

Well, I don't get this, but I sees it must be some kinda a joke because he winks at some birds lurkin' near by, and they laugh.

"I guess I don't have to go to jail to make that money," I answers.

Larry chalks up his cue and turns away from me. "Take it or leave it," he says; "that's all!"

"I already left it!" I answers again.

He looks over his shoulder. "But don't forget to report at White Springs next March 15th," he says. "In fact you oughta report a coupla weeks ahead of that time. The rest of the team will come back from Cuba in great shape, and what will you have to show for the winter, Mac?"

"A good arm and a bank account!" I hollers.

For some reason I don't get much sleep after I goes up to my room and crawls into the feathers. I'm thinkin' maybe after all it will be dumb not to go down to Cuba, because it would be a shame to have the Sox beat up on accounta not havin' a good pitcher in the box. Then I remembers hearin' how these Spanish babies are some queenos, and they are lots of medicos what will give you dope to keep from gettin' seasick. Then, I thinks, a fel-

ler is a fool who will pass up a chance to go where there is no prohibition, because many's the man what is buyin' bad booze for thirty bucks a bottle that would eat the linin' outta a brass overcoat.

Well, after thinkin' this all over I waits for Larry the next mornin' near the dinin' room, and when he shows up I gets him into a corner. I says that on accounta havin' been with the Sox for so long it will be a dirty trick to ditch them when they is goin' into a strange country, and that I will do him a favor and string along, because I am a white man and always do the right thing.

I gets this off my chest, and Larry shakes his head.

"I'm sorry, Mac," he says, "but I thought you was in earnest last night. I wired 'Smiley' Hogan of the Newarks, and no longer than three minutes ago I got his telegram which says O. K., and that he is on."

Well, seein' I'm double crossed, and not wantin' Larry to think I'm gonna bust into tears, I laughs. "That's O. K.!" I barks. "Don't feel cut up on accounta *me*! I got a offer of a hundred and a half for November, December, January, and February. I only offered to go because I wanted to do the right thing."

"What are you gonna work at?" Larry wants to know.

"Well," I says, "it's a secret yet, and I can't say nothin' to nobody."

He says somethin' about openin' a safe, what's a joke he musta copped outta small-time vaudeville, and blows in to feed his face.

For some reason I don't seem to have no appetite, and so I goes into the lobby. The minute the clerk sees me he lets outta chirp:

"Gentleman waitin' for you, Mr. MacGonigle!" he hollers.

As he says the words, a tall duck, built like a ox, gets up from out a chair near the desk and comes around to me. He wears a coat what fits him like a plaster, has a coupla thousand dollars' worth of ice scattered around on his

fingers, and a pair of shoes you could see your face to shave in.

"Is this Mr. MacGonigle?" he asks, shovin' a cigar into my hand.

I pleads guilty, and he leads me into a corner and waves me into a chair.

"Now, Mr. MacGonigle," he says, "allow me to introduce myself. I'm Al Jones, owner and manager of the Lady Pirates."

"Oh, one of them lady baseball teams!" I says.

He laughs. "No. This is a All-Star Burlesque Show what is playin' down at the Main Street Theayter."

He sets down across from me and lights up a cigar himself. "Did you ever think of goin' on the stage, Mr. MacGonigle?" he asks.

Well, this is a surprise, and I can only stare at this bird, wonderin' what is his game.

"No; I ain't never thought of it," I answers. "But that's no reason why I can't. Why?"

He nods. "Well, we're gonna present a novelty in the olio, or the vaudeville section, of our entertainment, Mr. MacGonigle, in the form of a dramatic baseball sketch, and I'm lookin' for a pitcher what has got some kinda a name to play the leadin' part."

He goes on to say they is fifty bucks a week in it, but no railroad expenses to be paid nor nothin' like that. He also says the play only lasts twenty minutes each afternoon and night, or forty minutes altogether for the whole day's work. He asks me will I be interested in playin' the leadin' part, and I says I will, because fifty dollars for forty minutes' work a day is good jack. It is the same as one hundred and a half for eight or nine hours work a day, and not only this, but they is a chance to learn the business, and how do I know Belasco or the Shuberts, or George and Cohen won't hear of me and offer me a part in a big show. Anyway, I figures I'd be a fine idiot gettin' seasick to go to Cuba and pitch my head and arm off for a bunch of Cuba's, so that when the next season comes the only thing I'd be in shape for would be a ash can.

And I guess when it comes to the question of gals, them what are right here in the old United States are O. K. and better'n these here ones with yellow skins what go around with castanets in their hands and knives tucked away in their stockin's.

Well, I am now a actor, and I guess it is somethin' to be proud of, because they is not every one who can be a top-notch twirler and then go up on the stage and knock 'em cold, too.

CHAPTER II.

THE BIRD WITH THE GROUCH.

WELL, I'm still treadin' the boards as the sayin' is, and I've got a collection of newspaper clippin's to show my friends what a riot I am, and what a swell actor I have turned out to be. After all, none of us can know what talents we has got hid until they comes the time when somethin' turns up.

Well, I told Al Jones I was his, and he brung me over to the hotel where he is livin' at and showed me a printed contract. He says this contract is got out by a concern called the Equity, and he says that when you sign it the Equity protects you. I tells him I don't need no protection, being able to take care of myself, but I borrow his fountain pen and sign it, anyway. Jones signs it, too, and then the both of us go in front of a notary republic and get some red seals and the like put onto the contract.

Jones gives me a copy of the contract and says I should come around to the theayter where the Lady Pirates is playin' at half past two and get a hold of the manuscript of the play so I can begin to learn the speeches I'm to make and not waste no time.

So I goes back to the hotel, and you should have saw the faces on the boys when, durin' lunch, I drops the contract accidentally, and the secret is gave away.

"That looks like a theatrical contract!" Eddie Shaw, our first-sack tender, says as I picks it up from the floor.

"What did you think it was—the map of China?" I growls, brushin' off the contract.

"No; what would you be doin' with the map of China?" Shaw replies. "You know enough chink laundrymen as it is."

Well, I pay no attention to him, and the rest of the boys begins askin' am I really a actor, and so forth, and is the contract on the level or is it a phony? I shows it to them, keepin' my thumb on top of where it says the salary I'm to get, for it is none of their business, and it was certainly a treat to watch their faces. Larry, too, was knocked cold, because I guess he thought if I didn't trail down to Cuba the only thing I could do would be to take up a course in burglary from the Irrational Correspondence School.

"So you're gonna be a actor, hey?" Larry barks. "Well, Mac, I always thought you had higher ambitions than to knock around with a burlesque show. Still, every one to their own tastes."

How is that for a jealous crack? I guess he wouldn't give a piece of change to be in my shoes, hey?

Well, after lunch is ate I gets my stuff packed up and gets the grips down into the lobby. Larry has served warnin' that now the season is officially ended until next March 15th. I am no longer connected with the Brown Sox. The rest of the team is out shop-pin' for the clothes they're to wear down in Cuba, and I guess the store-keepers musta thought a bunch of ravin' maniacs was loose, for whose gonna go into a store and call for B. V. D.'s and lightweight suits when the winter is approachin'?

Well, after I gets my grips took care of, I blows down to the theayter where the burlesque show is at. At first I'm disappointed, thinkin' maybe Jones is gonna pass me in to see the show for nothin'. But he don't do this. He takes me into a office, which is in back of the place where the theayter tickets is sold, and after handin' me a cigar, he opens his pocket and pulls outta play which is typewrote.

This play is called "True to Base-

ball," and it is certainly a play for the life of you! They's three people in the play, includin' me. I take the part of a big-league pitcher, and they is a gal and a old man in it. Jones tells me the story of the play, and it is hot stuff, believe me! This is it:

The pitcher in the play is supposed to be twirlin' for a world's series, and it is the last game with a tie score. The old man, Dalton by name, is the manager of the rival team, and he is as crooked as a bent hairpin. He wants to cop the last game of the series, and he comes to the pitcher and offers him ten thousand dollars in cash money if the pitcher will throw the game by allowin' his team to grab all the runs they can before the pitcher gets took outta the box. Well, the pitcher is true to baseball and as straight as a yard of pipe. He tells Dalton that he can't be tempted by rotten money, and says he should be ashamed for makin' such a offer, and that if he don't beat it quick he will bust him one in the eye.

The old bird breezes at this, and in comes the gal. Her name is Mae, and she is supposed to vamp the pitcher, who knows her. They is a lotta love stuff here, and the pitcher asks her to marry him. She says she will only marry him if first he proves he really loves her. The pitcher asks what does she mean, and she says she will only marry him if he tosses away the game. Well, the pitcher is crazy mad about the gal, and he says all is fair in love, war, and baseball, and that he will do this for the first time. The gal hands him a kiss, and the curtain comes down.

Whilst the curtain is hangin' down, the baseball game is supposed to be played in the back of the stage, and all the people in the burlesque show yell their heads off, makin' out they is in the stands. Well, then the curtain is dragged up again, and the pitcher comes on with the gal, who is callin' him to beat the band. He is all in from the nine innin's, and he can't say nothin' to the gall although she pans him to a T., because what did he do but play on the level and pitch his head and arm off and win by six runs!

He tells the gal he can't never look her in the face, and tells her that at the last minute he couldn't throw the game on accounta thinkin' of his old mother, and so forth. Next he says he is goin' out West and will never see her no more, and just as he is gonna take the air they is a big surprise. What does the gal do but throw herself into his arms and says she was bein' paid by Dalton to vamp him so he would throw away the game! She tells the pitcher she is proud of him, and she says she loves him and that she is glad he is on the level and not no cheap crook nor nothin'.

Just then in comes the old bird, Dalton, who is as sore as a sunburned neck and as friendly as a wasp. He begins to call down the gal for double crossin' him, and tells her she is a crook, and so forth, for takin' his jack and then foolin' him. Well, the pitcher is gonna slam Dalton one on the chin, but the gal stops him, and takin' out the money he give her, she chucks it in his face and says he should take his dirty money and be gone! Then her and the pitcher go into a clinch and the curtain comes down.

Some show, hey!

Jones tells me to study up and learn the speeches by heart, and that I'm to travel around with the company until the play is ready to be put on. It is not no cinch, believe me, to be a actor, for only a person what has got lots of brains can learn a lotta speeches. It is not like at school when one was a kid and could stand up and say "The Blacksmith" with other kids whisperin' him the word what comes next. No; in this here play of mine you gotta know the words what come next, or the show will be ruined, and the audience will laugh and hiss you off of the stage. So I gets busy and sets up half of each night learnin' the speeches, and so forth, and in no less than two days I have got the whole first page down pat.

Whilst I'm learnin' it, Jones has gave me a knockdown to the Lady Pirates, and they are some band, take it from me! He also introduces me to the old

geezer what plays in my play, and to the dame what is to have the part of Mae, the vamp.

Well, you should have seen this Mae baby! It is sure lucky I didn't go to Cuba, for she is some queeno, and they is nobody, nowheres in the world, what can hold a match to her. She has got beauty, good looks, and class. Her name is Ethel Delling, and you don't have to be in the poultry business to see she is some chicken. She ain't one of them bleached-up peroxides, but has got hair the color of coal, and eyes that match it. She has got some mouth, and a figure that's a shape! If she's a day over twenty-one I'm a liar by the clock, and when she speaks, her voice makes you think you has got into a bird store by mistake! Some queeno—class to the heels, and sweet as fifty pounds of graduated sugar.

About two days after I've learned the first page of my play, Al Jones calls a rehearsal. Well, I'm a little nervous, bein' new to the stage, and so forth, and not wantin' Ethel to think I'm dumb. The rehearsal is in the mornin', and the musicians is there, the stage hands, and a lotta the Lady Pirates, who is curious or somethin' I guess, to see what is goin' on—like women always are. Jones is settin' in a box, and he says we should go ahead and shoot.

Then we begins my play, and right away from the first minute I begin talkin', Jones starts to laugh! Well, laughin' gets contagious, because not only him, but every one present begins laughin', and Ethel herself begins laughin' so hard she has to knock off and go and get a glass of water. The only one who don't pull a smile is Ferguson, the old geezer who acts Dalton, and the bird what wrote my play for me. This Ferguson, for some reason, has got a grouch, and after a while he leaves off actin' and goin' over to the box where Jones is at, says somethin' to him in a low voice.

"Oh, let him play it as farce comedy, Fergie," Jones says. "It's immense this way! Funniest thing I ever saw!"

Then Ferguson says: "But it's deep

drama, and this *ad lib* stuff will ruin it!"

"If it's deep," Jones answers, "he'll get drowned. Leave it go as farce comedy. It's a scream the way it is."

Ferguson says somethin' under his breath, and we start in actin' again. He hands me some hard looks, but don't open his trap, because he knows I will clout him one for luck if he says anythin'.

Well, after that we have a rehearsal every mornin', and it sure is great. I'm gettin' terrible fond of Ethel for some reason, and anybody would be a dummy who didn't fall for her. But she is a funny kid, if I do say so myself, and whilst I don't tell her I'm strong for her, I don't make her belief I exactly hate her.

They is another gal in the company also, by the name of Mabel Blade, and whilst I think at first she may be a relation of Tony the Razor, she is a good kid, bein' quite friendly with me, and so forth, on accounta havin' a brother who plays semipro ball with a bush team. This Mabel is a blondie, and whilst I can see she is crazy about me, I don't bother much with her, because I don't want Ethel to get jealous nor nothin' like that. One of the best rules a feller can have is not to go around, nor flirt, nor carry on with other dames whilst he is in love. I don't mean to say I'm exactly in love, still they is no way of tellin' when it might happen.

Well, whilst I'm gettin' strong for the little gal, the Lady Pirates is tourin' from town to town, and I'm workin' like a slave studyin' my speeches.

When we gets to Washakon, Minnesota, my play is allowed to go on, and there sure was a riot if they was ever one. I got a bigger hand off the audience than the fans ever gave me. They was more clappin' for me than "Babe" Ruth, Daubert, Speaker, or Cobb ever got in their life, and after the curtain was down they calls me out, and I had to make a speech and thank 'em, which I did.

Exit laughingly!

CHAPTER III.

THAT BLONDIE PIRATE.

AFTER all, they is nothin' like the life of a actor, and honest, every time I think of next March 15th, I shiver. I have bought myself a actor's coat, and it's some overcoat, believe me! It has got fur inside of it and on the collar, but I won't waste time sayin' how much I paid, because no one wouldn't belief me, anyway, and what I wanna say is that I don't see how I'm ever gonna be able to give up this here life and blow down to White Springs, Texas, next March, to get into shape to hurl the Sox to victory and a pennant—a sure one this time and no kiddin'.

Meanwhile, I am makin' the hit of my life in this here little play "True to Baseball," and I'm also goin' strong for that little gal called Ethel. In fact, everythin' is swell outsid'a Ferguson, the author of my play, who is still wearin' a grouch, and who I will paste in the beak if he ever opens up his mouth to me.

Well, bein' we is so much together, I have found out quite some things about Ethel. As I knew, she is twenty-one years of age; she has been on the stage for two years; she comes from Albany, New York; and she is a baseball fan. She has got two sisters, one of which works in a collar factory in Troy, and the other, bein' married to a duck named Watson, lives in Albany with the mother. Her old man owns some cabs there, and I guess he must have plenty of jack, for who hasn't if they own cabs!

Last night, when the play was goin' on, somethin' funny happened. They is a little part in my play where I takes Ethel into my arms and tears off some kisses. Well, generally she has been turnin' away her face, thinkin' I'll muss up her hair or somethin', and whilst the kisses has looked real to the audience, they has been nothin' more or less than camouflage. Well, last night, Ethel didn't turn away her face in time, and so she got the kisses, and you oughta have seen her blush even un-

der the greasy paint we all have on! Then I got kinda excited and forgot my speeches, and so I had to make some up, and honest, I don't remember what they were, but it was a sure three-bagger for me, for the audience out in front did everythin' save tear up the chairs and seats. Well, I and Ethel gets six curtain calls and stops the show for the time bein', and this a. m. Al Jones says I should make up somethin' to say every night, and that my salary is raised up twenty-five bucks more each week, so that I'm gettin' seventy-five now. He also says I can work for him for two years if I want, and I guess this don't show I'm a great actor, hey?

I'm gonna think this over, because why should I be burnin' the plate with fast ones, and workin' out in the sun where a man is liable to get a sunstroke, playin' with birds who might be cripples for all the support they give you, when I can work forty minutes each day and make thousands of people happy and laugh, and so forth? Not only this, but if I get a raise of twenty-five bills every coupla months, look at all the dough I'll be makin' by next October! In fact, this here proposition looks pretty O. K. to me. I will have to quit baseball cold, of course, but what is the matter with baseball is this:

When a man gets married who is playin' baseball, and he wants his wife to travel with him around the circuit, he has got to pay her railroad expenses, and so forth. But with a actor it is different. If they marry a dame in the same show, he don't have to put his hand into his pocket to pay the railroads, because Al Jones does that.

Then they is still another thing. When a pitcher is in the box shuttin' them out, how does he know what his wife is up to, or where she is at, or what she is doin'? She might be on the level, or she might be blowin' his coin at pinochle, or in the department stores, but he can't leave the park whilst the game is goin' on just to look her up. On the stage it is different. A actor has got his wife right with him, in front of his eyes the whole

time, and if she starts flirtin' or lookin' after other birds, he is right there to see her and get busy with her. Not that I belief Ethel is that kind of a gal, but I'm just tellin' you this to show you the stage has got it on baseball in the long runs.

Well, that blondie Lady Pirate by the name of Mabel Blade is tryin' her best to get me, but I'm not one of these here Bluebirds with a thousand wives or more. I don't give her no encouragement to speak of. I feel kinda sorry for Mabel, especially as she is crazy about a feller as popular as me, it is tough. I treat her civil, but don't allow her to start no vampin' nor nothin', and I guess maybe in time she will get wise to herself and lay off.

Now I have got to hustle down to the theayter and put on my costume, and so forth, for my play.

CHAPTER IV.

ROMEO NO PIKER.

WELL, I have decided to stick to baseball, after all, as it is a white man's game. Foolin' around with the stage is only a job for a sissie with manicured eyebrows, and not no place for a big husky who was born and brung up with a glove on his hand. I have got the good of baseball at heart, and a feller is a idiot if he should leave it flat and look at a gal who is on the stage. All gals what work behind the footlights are jokers, who don't mean what they say. It is only them gals what come outta shops and stores what are on the level with a feller and don't vamp nor kid him along. Them dames have got somethin' on their minds out-sida gaddin' around the stage and flirtin' with every one they lie an eye on, and so forth.

I have just wrote Larry tellin' him on accounta my love for the game, I am ready and willin' to join the Sox in Cuba, and pay my own expenses there and back—which shows you I'm a straight bird, and that my love for baseball is stronger than for the stage. I don't know how long it is gonna take for Larry to answer me, but I said he

should telegraph me, and no doubt I'll hear from him soon. I've decided I would rather be a water carrier for a bush team than to be John Mantell in a dress suit, or Ethel Barrymore, or any of them what play Shakespeare, or other society plays.

This is the way it begun:

When I and the Lady Pirates gets into Fargo, which is a nice little town even if it is run by a expressman, we stops at a hotel called the Waldorf, and Ferguson, the duck what wrote my play, is settin' in the lobby readin' some letters with his feet stretched halfway across the hotel. I'm passin' him on my way to the cigar counter, when I accidentally trips over his feet, and he jumps up like I shot him or somethin'.

"You big ham!" he snarls. "Why don't you look where you're goin'!"

Well, they has never been any love lost between the both of us on accounta him bein' as green as a dollar bill with jealousy, and I knows this, so I makes allowance, as they say.

"Who's a big ham?" I snaps back at him.

"You are!" he says. "Trippin' over a shine what just cost me fifteen cents! Why don't you keep your eyes open and look where you're goin'?" If you did you wouldn't be stumblin' around like a two-year-old infant."

"I'll keep my eyes open when I'm near you," I says. "If I didn't I'd find my watch gone or somethin'!"

Well, I expects him to call it a day after gettin' such a fast answer as this, but he don't. He laughs and hurls away an inch of cigar.

"You big cheese!" he says. "You're the original fall guy of the Western Hemisphere! The way you go struttin' around with your chest flung out, like you was Otis Skinner, is to laugh! If you play ball the way you act, you must be a great asset to the team—the other team!"

Well, he keeps on ravin' like this, and I feel sorry for him, because he is so jealous he don't know what he is sayin'. He is, an old geezer, and, of course, I can't knock him one, although if I had ever soaked him his

family would have had to hire detectives to find him.

"Yeah?" I snarls. "Well, you don't know what you're talkin' about, and when you say that, you're makin' a spectacle of yourself!"

"You're a rotten actor!" he yells. "You're terrible——"

"I'm just rotten enough to grab six or eight curtain calls each night!" I butted in. "And I guess Al Jones wishes all the company was as rotten as me!"

"That crack alone," Ferguson barks, "shows how much furniture you've got upstairs! Ain't you never gonna get wise to the fact the audiences are laughin' at you!"

"Sure!" I retorts. "Who else would they laugh at—some bird out on the street?"

He grins like a raven. "They laugh at you," he says, in a voice as soft as six dollars' worth of feathers, "because you're makin' a holy show of yourself. Instead of playin' 'True to Baseball' as a dramatic sketch, the way it should be played, you've turned it into burlesque, and by clownin', forgettin' your lines, and makin' a big fool of yourself, you get applause and laughter the same as any nut who shows off how absolutely dumb he is! And you're so stupid you can't realize it."

Well, that's a fine argument for a grown-up man to pull, hey?

"If you wasn't so old and weak," I sneers, "you'd get beat up unmerciful, Ferguson. As it is I can't do nothin' to a duck what ought to be in a old man's home."

"Don't let my age stop you," he answers. "I might look antique, but I got a young punch!"

Well, rather than chew the rag with a bird that is in his second or third childhood, I turns my back upon him and walks away. I goes outside the hotel and begins walkin' down the main street of Fargo, lookin' into the shop windows and the like. I'm strollin' along, keepin' a eye out for Ethel, when I comes in sight of a jewelry store window, and who is standin' in front of it but Mabel Blade.

Well, naturally I'm surprised to see Mabel, who, you remember, is the gal what is crazy about me, and I takes off my hat, for a feller has got to be polite, and so forth, even if he ain't up in the air about a dame, and she tosses me the sunshine of her smile.

"Oh, Mr. MacGonigle," she yelps, "can you tell me anythin' about watches?"

"I don't know much about watches," I says, makin' a play for comedy, "but I understand that raw onions eaten quickly will take away the odor of ice cream from the breath!"

Well, this gets a laugh, and then she opens up her hand bag and drags outta watch which is about the size of a dime.

"The reason I ask," she goes on to say, "is because I have broke my watch droppin' it on the floor of the dressin' room, and these watchmakers are all crooked, chargin' you anythin' they like if you don't know what is the matter with it."

Well, after gettin' appealed to like this, what can I do but offer to help her out, if only for the sake of politeness, and so forth.

"Come ahead into the store," I says to Mabel, "and if this bird overcharges you, I will overcharge him one on the chin."

She tosses me another smile at this, and the both of us goes into the store. It's not a bad place at that, havin' two counters what is stocked up with pearls, diamonds, rubies, garnets, and the like. They is a department for the mendin' of eyeglasses, and another for the fixin' up of watches, but they is no one around, and me and Mabel leans up against a counter, and I says what a cinch it would be for a band of yeggs to back up a movin' van to the door and clean the place out. Well, she sees some dust around on the floor and says the place needs cleanin' out, and then she says I ought to know a lotta 'bout diamonds, and when I asks why, she says because I'm a ball player, and if this is a joke, what's the answer?

Well, the two of us is kiddin' around, and so forth, when a door opens in

the rear of the store, and the chap what runs it comes in. He is a little bird, about five feet minus in height, with blond hair and a mustache, and so forth.

Mabel hands him the watch, and he slips off the back cover, sticks a microscope in his eye, shakes it up a coupla times, and then says he will charge six dollars to fix it up like new.

"Oh, goodness!" Mabel hollers when she hears this. "The watch cost only *five* when it was bought!"

"It is worth ten now," the jewelry bird says, "but if you want a new watch I will sell you one for eight dollars. I have them as low as that."

Well, it don't take me no more'n a minute to get wise to this baby's game, which is nothin' more or less than to stick up the prices of fixin' up watches so his customers will get disgusted and buy new ones.

"Just a second," I snarls. "Where do you come off to charge *six* bucks to repair over a watch that cost only *five* when new?"

Well, hearin' me speak, he looks over me like I'm a stranger to him, which, of course, I am, and pulls a smile. "I presume," he says in a oily voice, "you are familiar with watch repairin'?"

"No," I answers; "but I'm familiar with tryin' to be gyped. This little gal is with me, under my protection so to speak, and I don't intend to let no jewelry robber skin her, nor no one else!"

He don't pay no attention to me and dips down into one of the counters. He pulls out a tray filled with watches and begins showin' them to Mabel. Then, after a while, he turns around his head and looks at me.

"Perhaps the gentleman with you," he says to Mabel, "might care to buy you a watch. I am sure he must be a good judge of timepieces."

Well, it was the way he said it, and the funny look he give me that got me goin'. I didn't intend to have no jewelry robber nor any one else make me out to Mabel as a cheap piker, and while at first I thought of slammin' him one on general principles, I seen that

wouldn't get me nothin' but thirty days, so I digs for the roll.

"How much?" I wants to know.

"Twenty dollars," he answers, noddin' to the watch Mabel is holdin' and admirin'.

Well, how is that for a skin game, hey? When we goes in the watch is eight, and when we buys it it is twenty! Well, rather than have Mabel think I'm a cheap skate, and so forth, I pay it, but I make up my mind the district attorney of Fargo is gonna be put wise as to the profiteer what is doin' business in the town.

Mabel, naturally, is all excited about the present I have gave her, and is as happy as a baby with a hammer and a dish pan. When we gets out into the street again she can't do nothin' except thank me, and so forth. But all the way back to the hotel I'm worried she will think maybe I am crazy about her, for if I wasn't why should I give her such a valuable watch? I asks her to keep it under her hat, and she looks surprised, but says she will.

CHAPTER V.

ABOUT THE LIMIT!

DURIN' the matinée at the theayter, which is another name for the afternoon show, I'm waitin' in the wings for my play to start, and chewin' the rag with Ethel whilst the rest of the Lady Pirates is singin' and dancin'. Then, all of a sudden I leave off thinkin' about the watch, and I gets the idea I will ask Ethel to get married to me.

I was surprised at myself for thinkin' of such a thing with the high cost of livin' so high, and so forth, but I can't help but think some one will give Ethel a buzz about the expensive present I give Mabel and thus put me in wrong with her. They is sure to be a lotta gossip amongst the gals when they finds out what I handed Mabel, and I decides to beat it by askin' Ethel to marry me and cinch it before she gets a rumble of what I done.

Well, I'm about to spring it there and then, when what happens but "True to Baseball" is ready to start,

and I have to go on the stage and act. So I can see there is nothin' to do but to wait for the night show and crack it then.

I don't know how other people felt when they asked their wives to marry them; for all I know they do it by mail or over the telephone; but I could see it wasn't gonna be no different askin' Ethel than it would be to pitch a no-hit game. Durin' dinner I dopes out what I'm gonna say, and after a while I figures the best thing will be to get her alone and say, "Ethel, you look as good to me as the beginnin' of the ninth, with the Sox at bat, the bases full, and no strikes on the bird at the platter. How about I and you gettin' hooked up and livin' as cheap as one?" This sounds pretty good, but I decides to leave the "cheap" part off of it, as she might get the idea I wouldn't spend no money on her.

Well, it ain't no cinch springin' it. When I gets to the theayter Ethel is already in her dressin' room, and when we're in the wings a lotta dummy stage hands is hangin' around us, closer than hobos panhandlin' for car fare. Then my play begins, and I see I will have to wait until later. The minute "True to Baseball" is over and I have grabbed my usual six curtain calls, I breaks the indoor-stairs-climbin' record gettin' up and into my dressin' room, where I cleans up and puts on my regular clothes.

This done, I starts downstairs to wait for Ethel at the stage door, and this is what happened: When I reaches the second floor of dressin' rooms, who do I see but that crab Ferguson in the hall, chinnin' with Ethel, who is pullin' on her gloves. Neither of them can see me because I'm standin' on the stairs where it is dark, and Ferguson, thinkin' he is alone with no one around, suddenly grabs a hold of Ethel and steals a kiss off her!

Well, before I know what I'm doin', I lets out a Indian war hoot, dash down the stairs, and make a bee line for Ferguson. This time, I figures, his age won't save him, for no matter if he was a hundred and sixty he couldn't

get away with rough stuff like that when I was around and in my right mind!

Well, some one musta have dropped some greasy paint on the floor of the hall, for it was slippery like a banana peel, and the swing I made at Ferguson kinda upset me, and I lost my balance. Whilst I was doin' the same, Ferguson puts up his dukes, not that it would do him no good, but he has to make a showin' of some kind before Ethel. As I said, I lost my balance, and it is just my luck to stumble and fall right on top of Ferguson's fists, and I guess he will always claim he knocked me out, but such ain't the case, as how can any one scrap on a floor what is like a skatin' rink?

Well, I fell back against the wall and hit my eye on it, and whilst I'm pullin' myself to knock Ferguson again, what does Ethel do but stamp her foot at me and bawl me out to a T?

"Oh, you big brute!" she screams. "How dare you attack Mr. Ferguson? I'm goin' to report you to Al Jones, and I will never act with you again!"

I'm sure I'm hearin' things, or outta my mind, or crazy, or somethin', when Ferguson horns in:

"Never mind, sweetheart," he says to Ethel; "just let me attend to this. As soon as we hit Seattle and are married, I'll speak to Al and see to it this big brute is flung out of the show!"

Without another word the two of them take each other by the arms and blow, and the last thing I hears is them laughin' as they go down the stairs.

Was there ever anythin' as raw as that? I'm glad I didn't ask Ethel to marry me, because any gal who would marry a man of thirty-eight or nine—which I have been told Ferguson is—wouldn't make me the kinda a wife I want, and it is also a cinch she has been flirtin' and carryin' on with him on the sly.

Well, I goes back to the hotel and bathes off my eye and then gets into the hay. But for some reason I can't sleep very good. I do a lotta thinkin', and after a while I get wise that Mabel Blade is some queeno, and that I have

been makin' a mistake by wastin' my time on Ethel, and not lookin' at Mabel more. It is a lucky thing for me, I thinks, that I gave Mabel the watch, for I would have been a fine idiot givin' anythin' to Ethel when all she gave me was a dirty deal!

It is almost ten-thirty a. m. the next mornin' when I wake up and get dressed. The dinin' room is deserted when I gets down to it, or at least I think it is deserted, but when I goes in I see it ain't, and that it holds one person. And who is this one person but Mabel, settin' alone, at a table under the window!

She sees me, and lies down a spoon as I goes over to her. "Oh, goodness, Mr. MacGonigle!" she gasps. "What on earth has happened to your eye?"

Well, not wantin' to give cause for scandal or gossip, I says I hit it on the bureau in the dark, and so forth, and she says I must go and get it painted. Then a waitress comes in, and after fixin' up a place for me across the table from Mabel, I sets down and picks out a order of somethin' to eat.

When the waitress takes the air, I looks over at Mabel. She is right where the sun comes in, and for the first time I notices what a swell head of hair she has got. She is a real blonde, and not no bleached-up peroxide, or yellow-headed dame dyed black. She has also got skin like a dish of peaches and cream, and two blue eyes and a nose.

She is wearin' my watch on her left wrist, and when I gets a sight of it, all of a sudden I gets the idea Mabel is gonna make some bird a swell wife and why shouldn't that some one be I? Well, this comes like a flash of lightnin', and the first thin' I'm doin', I have grabbed up her hand and am holdin' it.

"Listen," I says, "Mabel, you look as good to me as the beginnin' of the ninth innin', with the Sox at bat, three on base, and no strikes on the bird at the platter!"

She smiles at this and drops down her eyes. But she don't pull her hand

away, so I drinks a glass of water and goes on:

"Mabel," I says, kinda choked up, "you're some queeno, if I do say so myself, and what's the matter with the two of us gettin' hooked up?"

She don't say nothin' for a minute, and she lifts up her eyes. "I'm terrible flattered that you should ask me this," she says in a voice so low I can hardly hear it, "and I like you, Mr. MacGonigle, because you are good company and awfully funny, but I can't marry you."

This is a surprise, but what follows is worse.

"I can't marry you," she goes on to say, "because it is against the law to have more'n one husband at the same time, and I have one now. His name is Joe Blade, and he is a travelin' salesman, sellin' women's clothes on the road."

This is about the limit!

"How is it," I wants to know, "you never told me this before?"

She pulls away her hand and sighs. "You never asked me," she says. "And how was I to know you wanted to marry me when you were never even sentimental or noticed me much?"

"Well," I says, "you can't marry me, but you can make out you're a single woman and graft expensive presents off me, hey?"

"I didn't ask you to buy the watch," she answers, takin' it off her wrist. "It was your own suggestion. Please take it back. There is nothin' on earth now that could make me wear it a minute longer!"

She gets up, drops the watch in front of me, and blows.

Well, these here are the reasons why I have made up my mind to go back to baseball, and I have already told Al Jones I am through. All I can say is that the feller who named the Lady Pirates knew what he was doin', and that I will lay around until I get an answer off Larry. Then I will step back into the old box and pitch off my head and arm, and I'd like to see the duck what will even get to first on me.

In the meantime I'm lookin' for some

one to which I can sell a lady's watch I have for eighteen bucks, which is a bargain, and very little used.

CHAPTER VI.

A PRETTY WISE BABY.

AFTER I quit bein' a actor and left burlesque flat, Larry Keegan got a letter off me down in Cuba, in which I told him I was ready to go there, join the team, and pitch **A** ball for them. Well, after makin' such a offer, naturally I gets ready to leave on a minute's notice. But what does Larry do, but to send me a telegram what costs three dollars and eighty cents cash before I can even open it. I pays the money, but what do I find in the telegram but that Keegan says, "Nothin' doin'. Sorry!" How is that for a dirty deal? I guess the next time I coughs up three-eighty good jack to find out that kinda stuff, celluloid collars will be popular in Hades.

Well, after this I'm hangin' around Fargo, runnin' up a bill at the hotel where I'm stayin' what resembles the national debts of Sweden, and doin' nothin' at all except nothin'—which means a little pool and billiards and a chair on the porch of the hotel. A week goes by, and then a travelin' salesman by the name of Ruebens, who sells lace curtains, invites me to the bar for a coupla rounds of mineral water. We gets kinda chummy, and after he hears my name, Ruebens looks surprised and recognizes me right away.

"MacGonigle, hey?" he says, lookin' me over like I was applyin' for a job. "Are you the MacGonigle that used to twirl for Keegan's Brown Sox?"

I says yes; I am the same party, and then we go into the lobby and set down. Then Ruebens begins askin' me a lotta questions about my work with the Sox, and so forth. Well, I'm not used to gettin' third degrees off of birds what I hardly knows more'n I know Adam, and I would just as soon tell them where to go as I would take a drink of water, but I kinda think maybe this Ruebens has got somethin' up in his sleeve, and sure enough I am right.

"Did you ever hear of the Gem City Giants, Mr. MacGonigle?" he says, when I gets all finished answerin' his questions. "Gem City players out in California?"

"No," I says; "what are they—diamond cutters?"

Ruebens laughs at this. "Gem City," he explains, "is a town about six miles south of Los Angeles, out on the coast. Well, my brother-in-law, Phil Crawford, is a baseball bug, and he has got a team called the Gem City Giants. This club is made up of semipro's and old-timers, and they are a scrappy organization, believe me! They play in the Coast City League twice a week, on Saturday and Sunday. Now, Mr. MacGonigle, my brother-in-law, Crawford, is looking for a good twirler. How about me sendin' him a wire tellin' him about you?"

Well, this is kinda suddenlike, as you might say, and insultin', too, for why should a pitcher as good as I turn into a busher just because his manager done him dirt?

Ruebens musta been a mind reader, for no sooner do I begin to think it over, when he laughs. "You're worried because the Gem City Giants is only a stick team," he says. "But what do you care so long as they can pay you twenty-five dollars a game—or fifty dollars for Saturday and Sunday together? Then again they is chances of pickin' up soft dough, because a lotta the boys on the team run over to Hollywood durin' the week and clean up five dollars a day in the movin'-picture studios. If you're ashamed of playin' ball with the Giants, all you gotta do is change your name and who is gonna know you?"

Well, this puts a different face on it. It is the same as bein' offered a chance to get into the movies, and I can see I am considerable dumb if I don't grab the chance like it was money bein' offered. I and Ruebens chews the rag some more, and at last, callin' me Jones, he wires to Crawford.

"A rose," says Ruebens, after I digs for the price of the telegram, "smells just as sweet by any other name."

He means Jones, and I laughs.

"Yeah," I answers; "but I am not no rose. I am a sunflower what blooms in baseball parks!"

Well, Reubens tells me they is a few travelin' salesmen friends of his in town, and would I like to come up to his room about half past eight p. m. that night for a little polka?

So, when half past eight comes around that night, I breezes up to Ruebens' room, and they is four other birds there besides hisself. I get introduced to each one of them, but I don't remember their names, and what's more, I'm glad I don't, for the crew of 'em was as fine a bunch of pickpockets as you could find outsida a jail. One sold women's clothes; one sold hardware; one features leather goods; and the other sold groceries. But believe me, they was wastin' their time bein' salesmen, for all four of them was cut out to give the police force a chance to earn their wages.

The duck what sold women's clothes had three bottles of beer what was made before Congress went crazy. They was wrapped up in an old shirt in his suit case, and from the way he was talkin', you might think he owned a brewery, or was some relation to the Pilsners. While Ruebens was ringin' for a card table to be brung up, the hardware shark says, "Why not put the bottles on the window sill to get cold?" But the fourth crook—the feller that features leather goods—and who has been lurkin' in one corner of the room as quiet as dust—lets outta chirp. He hollers no; don't put the bottles outside, because if they was seen the hotel would be pulled down by a thirsty mob, who now believes beer is something to grow hair, for all they see of it.

Well, if I do say it, I'm a bit of a whiz at polka, so I was some surprised when I got cleaned for thirteen iron men. But this wasn't my fault, as I was playin' with a bunch of burglars usin' marked cards. The only time I won anything was when I was the dealer, and as I only deal once out of every five times around, four times I

was in the hole, and it's no wonder I come out such a big loser. I suppose if they had not been a one-o'clock time limit, I would now be wearin' a barrel. By rights I should have stood them con men against a wall and took what they cheated away from them, and I'm sorry I didn't, but on accounta Ruebens I lay off the rough stuff. I guess them babies will never know how lucky they were!

Bright and early the next mornin', about eleven o'clock, I bumps into Ruebens in the lobby just as he is startin' out with his lace curtains. He has got an answer off his brother-in-law what says he is interested in me, and I should come out to Gem City as soon as possible.

"So you see," purs Ruebens, "you can thank me for gettin' you a good job. I know you're gonna get along swell with Crawford. Don't forget to let me hear from you."

"Sure," I laughs, "and don't forget to let me hear from you as to who is gonna pay my fare out to this Gem City place."

Ruebens sets down his suit cases and starts laughin'. "Who but you?" he hollers. "You can't expect my brother-in-law to send you money for car fare when he don't know you!"

"Well," I answers, "he ain't got anything on me, because I don't know him, neither. Anyway, I guess I'm doin' him a favor by changin' my name like I was a chorus gal, and playin' on his bush team."

Ruebens says he will have to look at my box scores before he can answer that, and we argues back and forth. Finally, like he was the sore one instead of me, he picks up his lace curtain bags and walks away without a word.

Well, just outta curiosity I goes down to the railroad office and finds out the tickets to get out to Gem City will put a hole in a fifty-dollar bill. For just a minute I kinda make up my mind I won't have nothin' to do with the stick team, but will go back to New York. Then I figures out that if I let the chance go I will never bust

into the pictures, and I beats it back to the ticket office. So, after all, I've arrived in Gem City havin' just got in a coupla hours earlier. After all, I guess I'm a pretty wise baby, for it cost me less than fifty to get here, whereas if I had been in New York I would have had to have sprung two hundred fish at least to get out here.

CHAPTER VII.

NO CAUSE FOR EYESTRAIN.

THIS here California is some place. to begin with, the weather out here is what you call a climate. You never see no calendars because they ain't necessary, and it's always May or June no matter if it's December or not. Out here the sun works twelve hours a day steady, never goin' on a strike, and a person what lives in California all of the year around is lucky, because in November he don't have to get his overcoat out of hock, and spend good jack buyin' wool underwear, sweaters, earmuffs, gloves, and the like.

Naturally they is people what plays an anvil chorus and knocks the coast, sayin' it is N. G. on accounta earthquakes, and so forth, but I bet if them birds was investigated they would be found out to be the manufacturers of ice skates, snow shovels, and derby hats.

The next mornin' after I arrives, I jumps into the best suit of clothes I got and start out to find Crawford and let him know I have came. Locatin' the ball park ain't what you might call a job for a dinny. The first bird I meet with says to take the Shell Boulevard and follow it straight along. All I have to do is to find the Shell Boulevard.

Findin' it, I begins walkin' along it. It is about as wide as Broadway in its dull places, and on each side of it they is little white stuck-up houses. Each house features two yards of lawn, a flivver, a grass sprinkler, and a coupla children.

Well, after a while the sidewalk ends, and I have got to walk in the roadway. I'm doin' this when I hears the sounds of honkin' behind me, and turnin'

around, I gets a slant at a red auto big enough to be a patrol wagon, drove by a duck who might be Barney Oldfield for all I know. He is tall, has got black hair, and wears a diamond stick pin in his necktie that's as big as the headlight of a locomotive.

"Hey, foolish!" he bawls at me. "Are you deaf as well as dumb? Didn't you hear me honkin'? Get on to your side of the road before I run you over!"

Of course, I don't take stuff like that from no one. I go over to one side of the road to get a stone, and also because the ground is better to fight on there, and whilst I'm doin' the same, the coward in the red machine steps on the gas and dashes away.

Well in about the half of a hour I comes in sight of the Gem City ball park, and it is some ball park, take it from me! Everythin' is built outta concrete and steel, and it is surrounded with a wall made of stuck-up, twelve feet or more high—which is tough on them what see their games from the outside. They is also a clubhouse what is a ringer for a Carnegie library, and a stand and bleachers what looks like they could hold a million people without no one gettin' their toes stepped on.

A geezer lurkin' around the gates tells me I will find Crawford over to the clubhouse. I starts pickin' a way toward it, walkin' across a diamond what would make Larry Keegan take carbolic acid through jealousy could he lie an eye on it.

The door of the clubhouse is wide open, and I busts through it and steps into a office. Who is sittin' there in front a desk but the big duck with the black hair and the diamond stick pin what was in the red auto!

He sees me at the same moment I see him. "Hello," he says, kinda smilin'. "Lookin' for some one?"

I tells him I'm lookin' for Phil Crawford, and he laughs.

"You don't need to strain your eyes none," he answers. "Phil Crawford is my name!"

The succeeding chapters of this story will appear in the next issue of TOP-NOTCH, dated and out May 1st.

TOP-NOTCH TALK

News and Views by the
Editor and Readers.

APRIL 15, 1921.

Touch and Go

PEOPLE look at a good picture, a piece of fine statuary, hear a finished musical composition, behold an example of noble architecture, and do not feel that the production of such works of art is an easy matter—something that any one of fair intelligence and education can achieve without special training long and assiduously pursued.

But when people read a well-conceived, well-constructed, well-written story they are quite likely to think that almost anybody could do as well, or even better. It looks rather easy. The better the author has done his work the easier it looks to the person who reads it.

Of course, there are readers who are not beset with any such delusion; they have a glimmering of the art that must have been employed to produce the pleasurable result; of the special knowledge and skill that must have been brought to bear upon the undertaking, and above all, the creative instinct, the imaginative force, necessary to give the story life and an effect of reality.

Such a glimmering, however, is not given to the average reader; to him or her the thing looks easy. That is one reason why so many people try to write stories. That is a reason why the mails bring thousands of scripts to the magazine editors.



An Illumination

IT is fair to say that the less a person knows about writing stories the more confident he or she is of ability to write them; and when the confident ones get

their scripts back they are more than likely to add their voices to the pretty general cry that editors don't read the scripts, or that they are returned after receiving a mere glance. If there is any more general delusion than this it is that writing good stories is so easy that any one can do it.

Now and then we get a letter from a contributor of some experience who has never been able to get it out of his head that editors do not read the scripts offered unless they come from some member of an imaginary "ring." Here is a letter, recently received from Los Angeles, which reflects a widespread misapprehension:

DEAR MR. EDITOR: I am inclosing a South American humorous story, which seems to me to have the sort of flavor your readers like. Look it over carefully, please. It must be read through to be appreciated. A slant at the beginning and end, as is customary in judging whether or not most stories are readable, won't give you a hint of its value. Go through it and feel a real sense of satisfaction.



Never Grows Stale

THE knowledge of outsiders regarding the customs of the insiders of an editorial room is truly wonderful. This knowledge does not take in the staff of men and women who devote every working day to reading the scripts which the mail brings in such large volume.

But human vanity is able to dispense with actual fact in this as well as many another regard. Human vanity is quite certain that a manuscript which goes back to the sender could not have been read—at least could not have received more than a "slant at the beginning or end." If it had been read through, of course, it would have been accepted.

An editor known somewhat for his witty comment upon affairs in and out of the office, once remarked that he for

one did not find it necessary to read the whole of every script in order to make a decision.

"It is the same with a story as it is with butter," he said. "I don't have to eat all that is on the plate to know it is bad."

But the contributor of the typewritten chickens that go home to roost will not tolerate such philosophy. The customs of the editorial rooms are to blame; never is there anything wrong with what the writer has put on paper. It is a phase of human vanity that is of evergreen interest.



In the Next Issue

WE are glad to announce as the leading feature of the next number a complete novel by Albert M. Treynor. The last novel of his writing, "Room for One More," proved to be one of the most popular stories ever printed in TOP-NOTCH. But—well, a comparison between that splendid story and the one from the same author to come to you in the May 1st issue had better be put aside. We will let the best evidence be presented by the best witness available—the story itself. It is another big drama of a mysterious tragedy, but the stage of it is not New York, as was the case with "Room for One More." To tell you anything definite about "Lights Articulate" might rob you of some of the pleasure to be had in the reading, but this much may be said: It is well up to the standard set by the previous work of Treynor. The length is satisfactory; it will run to about sixty pages.

You will have the opening chapters of a serial novel by Berton Braley, who is best known for his authorship of verse. This adventure of his into the field of sustained prose is titled "Silver Bow," and it is a colorful picture of Northwest life as seen in Butte, Montana, and other parts of that region.

And there is a story that will hold your interest.

There will be one novelette, the contribution of Walter A. Dyer. It is a story of that delightful series in which Ginger, the dog detective, has scored such a success. "The Gordon Emerald" it is called.

Do you mind if a sport story is far out of season? We should like to have your idea about this. There is ground for the belief that the seasonableness of the sport is of slight importance; that what really counts is the story; that you want to know whether that is good or bad. Well, there will be in the next issue a story woven upon a background of winter sport, skiing. It is titled "Over the Furrowed Trail," and the author, a newcomer in TOP-NOTCH, is Phillip Duffield Stong. Other sport stories are "When the Boox Gets Gay," a baseball affair, and funny, by R. F. Hamill; a tale of the boxers by Sydney Horler—"The Loser's Prize."

Among the shorter ones will be found: "In the Jaws of Suzanne," the wonderful story of a man-eating tree, by J. Joseph-Renaud; "Robin's Return," told in verse, by J. L.; "Above the Roofs," by Thomas Murray, and "Passing the Busher," by Jo Lemon, both in verse. G. G. Bostwick will tell of the "True Winner," in rhyme.

"The Unknown Alibi," that absorbing story that gets its start on the stage of a London theater, will come to an end in the next issue. "Oh, You Baseball Romeo!" by C. S. Montanye, will be in its second bright installment. Dean Mathey, an A. E. F. entry in the international tennis tourney in England, will give us a chat on the subject, "Are You Man Enough for Tennis?"



Told in Rhyme

Editor of TOP-NOTCH MAGAZINE.

DEAR SIR: I always watch for friend TOP-NOTCH, and my! how fast I grab it; I've read T.-N. since 1910; now it's become

a habit. Some nights would be quite drear to me, save for one reason only: this magazine keeps me serene and nights from being lonely. The tales of sport, the long and short, I like to read those stories, and how I love those novels of the West and all its glories. We're asking for, so give us more, long yarns of bygone ages; those days of old, when knights were bold, should have some of your pages. Give us a lot, all that you've got; I ate that one by Dyer, and many more are asking for the same, or I'm a liar.

I guess I'm through, so here's to you, you're sure a pleasant eyeful; and one thing more—now don't get sore—increase your size a trifle.

Yours truly,

MITCHELL PARISH.

Monroe Street, New York City.



Good Old Days

Editor of TOP-NOTCH MAGAZINE.

DEAR SIR: I have been reading your magazine ever since it first came out, but don't think the stories come up to the old-time ones.

The authors I like most are Burt L. Standish, Roland Ashford Phillips, Albert M. Treyner, Gerald Beaumont, William Wallace Cook, and George Goodchild. I don't think much of the Dorrances, as they do too much explaining to make the story interesting.

Would like to see some actual-place stories, so we could read something about some other city except New York.

You couldn't improve on the way TOP-NOTCH is got up as to serials, complete novels, and short stories, and I think it is one of the best magazines published to-day.

Wishing you every success, I remain,
Yours very truly,

RALPH A. PARKER.

West Sixth Street, Plainfield, N. J.



Names His Favorites

Editor of TOP-NOTCH MAGAZINE.

DEAR SIR: I have been a constant reader of your magazine for about ten years, and I have read quite a few others; but, believe me, TOP-NOTCH has them all beat by a mile, and then some.

I have just finished reading "The Time of Their Lives," and it surely is great. "Colorado Jim" is one fine story. I could hardly wait for the next issue. Burt L. Standish is an ace, also William Wallace Cook. Very truly yours,

JOHN A. STEWART.

Broad Street, Pittsburgh, Pa.

Knows the Deep Blue

Editor of TOP-NOTCH MAGAZINE.

DEAR SIR: I have been a reader of your clever magazine for some time, and feel that I must write and tell you how I have enjoyed it during my spare time.

The story, "A Man's Word," by Howell, was very good, and having had lots of experience at sea myself, I can safely say this man Howell knows the deep blue and its kind well and is gifted by being able to put their ways and the ways of the sea in good words.

The baseball story was good also, and I enjoyed it a lot.

Let's have more of Howell's work.

Yours,

BAZIN.

New York City.



Delayed in Transmission

Editor of TOP-NOTCH MAGAZINE.

DEAR SIR: I have just finished reading the January 15th issue, and would like to give my opinion of your magazine.

"Eagle's Spread" was great; in fact, all the out-door stories that you publish are. I do not care so much for the "Big Town" type of stories, but I suppose there are many others who prefer these. "Colorado Jim" was good, although there have been much better stories in the TOP-NOTCH. "The Winner Who Lost," by Thornton Fisher, and the opening chapters of "When a Shoe Fits" were fine. "Call of the Clan," which appeared some time ago, sure did justice to the magazine. I can safely say that it was the best story I have ever read, which is saying quite a bit.

As to my favorite author, I am like most readers: Burt L. Standish leads them all in my estimation. After Mr. Standish it's hard to say just who I like best, but I believe that John Milton Edwards and Roland Ashford Phillips have the edge over the others, although William Wallace Cook and the Dorrances also write some corking stories. The Canned Soup King lends a lot of pep to the magazine.

"The Mystic Three," by Phillips, which appeared a long time ago, was fine. A forest-ranger tale by Edwards, with the extreme northern part of Idaho as a setting would sure be appreciated here.

I like Burt L.'s adventure stories better than the baseball novelettes, but all are good.

Hoping more outdoor stories will soon appear, I remain, yours for success,

CARL D. WALTERS.

Ferrall Street, Spokane, Washington.



"The Job is Yours— on One Condition!"

"For a long time I watched the new men who came into this business. Some stood still—stayed right where they started. Others climbed—made each job a stepping stone to something better.

"Now, what was the difference? Well, I investigated and found out. The men who were getting ahead had been devoting part of their spare time to study along the line of their work. Our treasurer used to be a bookkeeper. The factory superintendent was working at a bench in the shop a few years ago. The sales manager started in a branch office up state. The chief designer rose from the bottom in the drafting room.

"All of these men won their advancements through spare time study with the International Correspondence Schools. Today they are earning four or five times—yes, some of them *ten* times as much money as when they came with us.

"So out of this experience we have formed a policy. We are looking for men who care enough about their future not only to do their present work well, but to devote part of their spare time to preparation for advancement.

"And I'll give you this job on one condition—that you take up a course of special training along the line of your work. Let the I. C. S. help you for one hour after supper each night and your future in this business will take care of itself."

Employers are begging for men with ambition, men who really want to get ahead in the world and are willing to prove it by training themselves in spare time to do some one thing well.

Prove that you are that kind of a man! The International Correspondence Schools are ready and anxious to help you prepare for advancement in the work of your choice, whatever it may be. More than two million men and women in the last 29 years have taken the I. C. S. route to more money. Over 130,000 others are getting ready in the same way right now. Surely the least you can do is to find out what there is in this proposition for *you*. Here is all we ask: Without cost, without obligating yourself in any way, simply mark and mail this coupon.

TEAR OUT HERE

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS BOX 3933 SCRANTON, PA.

Explain, without obligating me, how I can qualify for the position, or in the subject, *before* which I mark X.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> ELECTRICAL ENGINEER | <input type="checkbox"/> SALESMANSHIP |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Electric Lighting and Railways | <input type="checkbox"/> ADVERTISING |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Electric Wiring | <input type="checkbox"/> Window Trimmer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Telegraph Engineer | <input type="checkbox"/> Show Card and Sign Ptg. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Telephone Work | <input type="checkbox"/> Railroad Positions |
| <input type="checkbox"/> MECHANICAL ENGINEER | <input type="checkbox"/> ILLUSTRATING |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mechanical Draftsman | <input type="checkbox"/> Cartooning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Machine Shop Practice | <input type="checkbox"/> BUSINESS MANAGEMENT |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Toolmaker | <input type="checkbox"/> Private Secretary |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gas Engine Operating | <input type="checkbox"/> Business Correspondent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CIVIL ENGINEER | <input type="checkbox"/> BOOKKEEPER |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Surveying and Mapping | <input type="checkbox"/> Stenographer and Typist |
| <input type="checkbox"/> MINE FOREMAN OR ENGINEER | <input type="checkbox"/> Cert. Public Accountant |
| <input type="checkbox"/> STATIONARY ENGINEER | <input type="checkbox"/> TRAFFIC MANAGER |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Marine Engineer | <input type="checkbox"/> Railway Accountant |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ship Draftsman | <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial Law |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECT | <input type="checkbox"/> GOOD ENGLISH |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Contractor and Builder | <input type="checkbox"/> Common School Subjects |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architectural Draftsman | <input type="checkbox"/> CIVIL SERVICE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Concrete Builder | <input type="checkbox"/> Railway Mail Clerk |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Structural Engineer | <input type="checkbox"/> AUTOMOBILES |
| <input type="checkbox"/> PLUMBING AND HEATING | <input type="checkbox"/> Mathematics |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sheet Metal Worker | <input type="checkbox"/> Navigation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Textile Overseer or Supt. | <input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> Spanish Teacher |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CHEMIST | <input type="checkbox"/> Poultry Raising <input type="checkbox"/> Banking |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pharmacy | |

Name _____
 Present _____ Business _____
 Occupation _____ Address _____
 Street _____
 and No. _____
 City _____ State _____

Canadians may send this coupon to the International Correspondence Schools Canadian, Ltd., Montreal, Canada 1-1-21

Guaranteed 20 Years



ONLY
\$1.00
DOWN

except the pie plates and bread pans are buffed and polished to mirror-like brilliancy. Shipped direct to you for 30 days' trial on our special offer. The only way to appreciate this wonderful bargain is to see and use this set. Let us ship it to you right away. Only \$1.00 down—then \$2.50 per month—total price \$21.85. Send coupon now.

This Wonder Set consists of:—1½ quart extra heavy paneled rice boiler (3 pieces); 6 quart extra heavy paneled tea Kettle (2 pieces) with flat metal "stay-placed" handle and cocobolo finished metal tipped grip; 9 cup percolator (4 pieces). Has welded spout and cocobolo grip handle; 3 quart extra heavy, lipped sauce pan; 4 quart covered convex sauce pot (2 pieces), extra heavy, buffed and polished. Has "stay-placed" handle and cocobolo finished grip; 1 quart lipped sauce pan, extra heavy gauge, rimmed edge. 2, 9-inch seamless pie plates; 2, 9½-inch seamless bread pans with rounded corners; 10½-inch extra heavy lipped fry pan with rimmed edge; and our special 9 piece com-

bination Roaster Set. This wonderful combination set gives you practically every utensil needed to do your cooking, roasting, baking and frying. While it consists of 9 actual pieces, these pieces are so formed and fitted that they may be converted into the following utensils: A self-basting roaster, a double boiler; cereal cooker or triple steamer; an egg poacher that poaches 5 eggs at one time; a muffin pan biscuit baker with 5 custard or jelly moulds; a bread or bake pan; a pudding pan; a mixing bowl; and a stew pan. The entire set consists of 27 actual pieces. Shipping weight about 15 pounds. Order by No. A-121. Send for this set today.

L. FISH FURNITURE CO., Dept. 1334, Chicago

Enclosed is \$1.00. Send me your Wonder Aluminum Set No. A-121 on 30 days' free trial. If satisfied I will pay the balance at \$2.50 per month. If not, I will return the set to you and you will immediately refund my \$1.00 and freight charges both ways.

No. A-121—\$1.00 down, \$2.50 per month. Complete price \$21.85

Name.....

Address.....

Post Office.....State.....

If you only want Furniture, Rug, Stove, Phonograph, ☐

Send Coupon

Don't miss out on this big bargain. Don't put off sending for this Wonder set at this very low price. Make your kitchen work a pleasure. Send this coupon now—**TODAY.**

Money Back If Not Satisfied

30 days' free trial in your own kitchen. If satisfied pay balance at only \$2.50 per month. If not, return to us and we will refund your \$1.00 and freight charges both ways.



L. FISH FURNITURE CO.
Dept. 1334 CHICAGO