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Wide-Awake

Magazine

Edited by
Burt L. Standish



Paul Gervais

TWICE-A-MONTH
WIDE-AWAKE
MAGAZINE

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Vol. IV.

January 10, 1916.

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The Speedway of Fate

By
Franklin Pitt

CHAPTER I. Quarter-Mile Bend.

REALLY there could be no question that the car had got away from her. Stanley Downs, driving his high-powered Archimedes down the winding mountain road, had noticed the girl eight or ten miles back, and had admired the ease with which she managed the rakish six-cylinder in the many difficult spots, where strength, as well as skill, was demanded to keep the road.

She was a slim, bright-faced young woman. He knew that, because he had had one good look at her pretty face as she swung around a "hairpin turn" and passed him on the lower road, while he traveled to the bend on the upper.

He had taken a chance in looking

sideways while preparing to negotiate the cruel bend with his own car. He should have kept his attention straight ahead, without regard to any girl, pretty or otherwise, who might be passing two hundred feet away, and who certainly was paying no attention to him.

"That's a Fanchon she's driving, Karl," remarked Stanley to his chauffeur, who sat idly by his side. "It's a new car, and I don't know whether it is dependable or not. It has speed, and the lines are graceful and strong. But until a car has been well tried out, you never know where a weakness will develop.

"The Fanchon's a good car," pronounced Karl briefly.

"Glad you know that, Karl, because it— Hello! What does that mean?"

Karl suddenly came to life, as, when they got around the bend, he, as well

as Stanley, saw that the Fanchon was moving faster and faster, and, moreover, was swaying from side to side in a wild manner, which, to their experienced eyes, told its own story.

"Something's slipped, Karl. She's lost control."

"She sure has! And there's the lake and bridge at the end of the short quarter-mile turn! She can't make the bridge at that speed."

"Of course she can't!" returned Stanley excitedly, as he opened up his own gas a few notches. "There's an ugly twist there. Merciful Heaven! If she strikes the bend like that, only one thing can happen. She'll shoot into fifty feet of water."

"Unless she hits the stonework of the bridge approach. Then——"

"Shut up!" snapped Stanley. "We can't let her do it! We have five miles. In that distance, we ought to be able to help."

Karl did not reply. He knew how quickly five miles can be covered in an automobile.

Stanley drove faster and faster. The girl had nearly got to the next bend, which was one of the awful "S" turns. He saw that she was bending low over her wheel, prepared to serpentine her way around at full speed, if it could be done.

"The Lord send that she doesn't meet anything!" murmured Stanley, as he put on more power. "What are we doing, Karl?"

"Fifty," replied Karl, glancing at the speedometer.

"Fifty miles an hour! Well, we'll have to go up to sixty—perhaps more."

Stanley Downs gritted his teeth, forced his car up to sixty miles an hour, and then reduced the speed to thirty. They were approaching the "S."

The girl was just running out of it, her car rocking awfully as she reached the straight.

"Well, she's out of that," remarked Stanley. "I was afraid she'd never do it. By Jove, she's some driver!"

The Archimedes, being under control, went through the "S" safely at forty miles an hour. Then Stanley Downs set himself to catch the other car.

He was not clear as to what he would do if he did catch it. But he was resolved to do *something*. There was another sharp bend ahead, close to the broad lake, with its stone wall and many boat landings. After that came another twist, taking the road straight upon the long bridge that crossed the water.

As the Fanchon whizzed around on two wheels, Stanley saw that the fair driver was leaning far to one side, to throw the weight of her body against the inclination of the car to tip over. She was game to the core. Stanley Downs would have sworn to that.

"Doesn't seem scared!" shouted Karl, above the roaring of the car, as it gathered more speed.

"Nerve of pure steel!" replied Stanley, through his clenched teeth. "Karl!"

"Well?"

"Get ready to take this wheel—without stopping the car."

"Great Scott! That's going to be some stunt," declared Karl, but loosening himself up at the same time, ready to obey. "What's the idea?"

"You see that we are getting to that last twist in the road, the quarter mile?"

"Sure! All right! Ready to do it now?"

"Just a moment. Wait till I get my feet clear, so that I can swing out as you go in behind the wheel. Get me?"

"Yes."

The two cars were not far apart now. The girl was holding to the steering wheel with a desperate grip, her feet on the pedals, trying to make the foot brake hold. The emergency hand brake had given out long ago, and the other

seemed to have hardly any power. But she was fighting every inch to regain control.

By this time, a score of people, who had been strolling along the high-teraced walk above the roadway, which overlooked the lake, were watching the two great cars swirling down toward the quarter-mile turn.

They were accustomed to seeing cars moving at a good speed, after safely negotiating this difficult bend, but it was unusual for machines to approach it in this headlong fashion.

At each of the bends was a gigantic signboard, painted a terrifying red, bearing the word "Danger!" in white letters two feet long, and with the additional caution, in rather smaller characters: "Sharp curve ahead! Drive slow!"

There was hardly time for the spectators to express their horror at the catastrophe that seemed imminent, when the two cars swept along side by side.

"Now!" shouted Stanley.

He knew that he could depend on Karl. That rather taciturn young man had proved his courage and intelligence on other occasions. It was his habit to do what came his way without making much fuss about it, and if the task menaced his safety, or even his life, why, it was all in the day's work.

"Ready, sir!" replied Karl.

"All right! Come!"

Stanley slid along the seat from behind the wheel, and immediately Karl was in his place, recovering the slight divergence of the car that had been caused by the change of guiding hands.

It was now that Stanley Downs had a good view of the girl's face.

It could not be said that she was not frightened. But certainly her apprehension had not interfered with the masterly manner in which she managed the steering wheel. She was staring straight ahead of her, and, as she

whirled around the quarter-mile bend, she endeavored to get the car headed up the road.

But there was another hairpin curve—called so because the two roads ran almost parallel, like the legs of a hairpin—and the car would have to swing completely around, running in the opposite direction, if it were to avoid the lake.

"She can't make it!" exclaimed Karl.

Stanley Downs said nothing. Karl had been obliged to let the Fanchon push a little ahead in rounding the bend, to avoid a collision, and Stanley was standing on the seat by the side of the chauffeur, balancing himself perilously on the leather cushion, with his eyes fixed on the girl.

He motioned with his arm to Karl to draw closer to the other car.

They were within a hundred yards of the edge of the lake, and charging straight toward it.

As Karl brought the two cars within a yard of each other, Stanley leaped across the gap and into the front seat of the Fanchon.

What followed happened too quickly to be described in detail.

With a savage tug, he dragged the girl away from the wheel, at the same time kicking open the door. Then he seized the wheel with both hands as he stood by the side of it, and wrenched it so hard that the car swerved until it seemed as if it might run along the road at the very edge of the water.

The wrench was not quite enough, however. Its only effect was to prevent its going straight into the lake. Instead, it shot off diagonally, and with the car went Stanley Downs and the girl.

The tremendous splash caused by the diving in of the Fanchon was followed instantly by another, as the Archimedes, with Karl at the wheel, plunged off the stone wall, and, turning a com-

plete somersault, disappeared beneath the surface.

Only a number of bubbles in the center of two rapidly spreading series of rings, told the frantic people, who had rushed to the edge of the lake, that two cars, with three human beings, had sunk there.

Then the cap of the chauffeur, still on his head, where it was fastened by a chin strap, showed above the surface, as Karl swam toward a wooden boat landing.

Where were the other two—Stanley Downs and the girl?

The question was soon answered. Stanley and the girl came up together.

There was a streak of red across the forehead and cheek of the young man. But the beautiful face that lay against his shoulder was a dead white, and the eyes were closed.

Stanley Downs was pale himself, and there was a dazed expression in his eyes as he shook the water out of them and looked about for the shore.

In another moment he obtained a grip on himself, and struck out for the boat landing, where Karl was by this time being helped out.

It was with difficulty that Stanley swam the short distance. He had received a nasty knock as he broke away from the car under water, and it had weakened him. Moreover, he had the weight of the girl he was bringing to shore. She was unable to help herself. All she could do was to lie prone on his arm, her brown hair rippling over the water, and one small gauntleted hand resting on his shoulder and against his cheek.

CHAPTER II.

Stanley's Mission.

I THINK I can walk," were the first words she spoke, as they were dragged out of the water.

"I don't think you can," returned

Stanley Downs positively. "I will carry you."

He did so. There were half a dozen stone steps from the wooden boat landing to the top of the wall. From there, it was a trip of some five hundred feet to the veranda of the hotel, which faced the broad lake and the magnificent vista of mountain, where the verdure-clad slopes were bursting into the fresh green beauty of spring.

Stanley had recovered most of his strength by the time he was pulled from the water. Besides, he rather liked the task of carrying this dainty young woman, whose independence of spirit had manifested itself with the first glimmer of returning consciousness.

"Won't you put me down, please?" she asked, with a touch of imperiousness.

"Couldn't do it," answered Stanley, as he hurried toward the veranda. "You would fall."

"Nonsense! I'm not so weak as all that. Where is my car?"

"At the bottom of the lake, I guess."

"And yours?"

"By its side—or perhaps underneath or on top of yours. We all went in together."

Her eyes—deep-violet eyes they were, as Stanley Downs saw—were wide open by this time, and it was clear that her mind was working in orderly fashion, no matter how distressed she might be physically.

"I am too heavy for you to carry," she persisted. "You are badly hurt. There is a great cut in your forehead. Put me down!"

"You don't weigh much," he laughed. "It steadies me to carry you. A hundred pounds or so in my arms is what I need to keep me balanced."

"I weigh a hundred and thirty!" she burst out indignantly. "I may not be very big, but I play tennis and I swim as well as——"

"And drive a six-cylinder Fanchon,"

threw in Stanley. "That keeps you in good condition. Yes, I understand that. But when a young lady is hurled out of a car into a lake, and especially when she has some little difficulty in getting clear of the wreckage, she must expect to feel a little shaken."

"You threw that door of the car open just before we went over the wall" she remarked with a smile. "That showed you had not lost your head. But for that I might not have got clear. I wonder you thought of it—so quickly."

"Quickness of thought was needed at that stage of the proceedings if the thought was to do any good. Well, here we are at the veranda. I'll carry you up the steps, and then you will be all right. Here is a lady who seems to know you."

Stanley Downs put his burden down gently on the broad veranda and drew a large wicker chair to her. As he did so, a middle-aged, motherly sort of woman, in a light-blue morning gown, came running up and took the girl's two hands in hers.

"Why, Miss Ranvelt! What is this? Was it you that went crashing into the lake? I heard that there had been an accident, but I never supposed——"

"Never supposed it was I, Mrs. Somers?" laughed the girl. "Why not? It was just as likely as to be anybody else. I'm always racing around in a motor car. You know that. Dad says I'll get into a bad mess some time. It seems as if I came near it this morning."

"Came near it?" grunted Karl, who had followed close behind Stanley. "How much closer does she want to come?"

Karl's voice brought Stanley sharply to a recollection of something of great importance to himself that he had forgotten all about in the excitement—even after he had found himself safe, with the girl in his arms.

He waved a farewell to the young

lady, who was being hurried away to the housekeeper's own rooms, for dry clothes and general attention, and turned to Karl:

"The money?"

"It went down with the car," replied Karl. "I had no time to get at it, and you were in the other car. It was in the door pocket in front, with the latch fastened. It ought to be there now."

"Yes, yes!" agreed Stanley nervously. "It ought. The door pocket is not waterproof. But it will keep some of the water away, perhaps. Anyhow, it will keep it all in one place. Then there is a thick wrapping of brown paper over it. That ought to help."

"Twenty thousand dollars, isn't it?" asked Karl.

"Hush! No need to tell everybody," warned Stanley. "But that's what there is. A little more than twenty thousand."

"Hello, Stan!" broke in a cheery voice, as a brawny brown hand seized Stanley's. "What have you been doing to yourself? You're soaking wet. By George! So is Karl! What in thunder is it all about?"

"Fell into the lake," replied Stanley briefly. "Where did you come from, Clay?"

"Adirondacks. Cold as the deuce up there! Too early in the year; so I just turned my gas wagon in this direction, and I'm bound for New York. It is the only place for civilized beings in May."

Clay Varron was a member of the Thracian Club—the athletic organization in New York to which Stanley Downs also belonged—and the two young men were good friends. Their mutual liking was based on respect, for both were clean-living, bright young fellows, who enjoyed athletic sports as earned recreation, without making them the principal business in life.

Among other reasons for Clay Varron and Stanley Downs being good

comrades was that both were ardent motorists. Clay had done seventy miles an hour on the road, and Stanley Downs would have beaten that record, in the opinion of the Thracian Club, if he had not been dissuaded on the ground that more than seventy miles an hour away from a regular track would be idiocy, rather than good sportsmanship.

"Got any clothes with you?" asked Stanley.

"Plenty! I've engaged a room here at the hotel. Come up to it until you get one for yourself. Where's my man? Where the deuce— Oh, here you are!" he added, as a trim-looking fellow, with "body servant" written all over him, stood at his employer's elbow. "What's the number of my room here at the Ridgeview, Moran?"

"Forty-three, sir. Suite—bedroom, sitting room, and bath. Baggage is there already. Clothes laid out, too."

Clay Varron winked at Stanley Downs, and grinned pleasantly.

"I believe if I were in a shipwreck at night in the middle of the Atlantic, Moran would have my clothes laid out in regular order, so that I could be drowned properly dressed," he said, with a chuckle. "Well, there's nothing like doing your work right, whether you are President of the United States or a valet. Come on! We'll get you out of those wet rags in two minutes, once you are in my room. Your chauffeur can look out for himself, I suppose?"

While Karl sought warmth and dry clothes in another part of the great, rambling hotel—finally bringing up with a chauffeur he knew—Stanley Downs went up to Clay Varron's apartments.

Half an hour later, Stanley and Clay sat at the window of the private sitting room, which overlooked the lake from the second story, while Stanley told his story to Varron.

"There's not much to it, Clay. You

know Colonel Prentiss and some other men are managing this big automobile race for the Lawrence gold cup and a purse of twenty thousand dollars?"

"Of course I know it. Isn't that one of the reasons I'm hustling back to New York? I want to hear what they think of the race at the Thracian—first-hand. It's one week from to-day, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"And tickets are being taken up very fast, I'm told. I want to get parking space for two machines. Where's the best place to look for the tickets? I'm told the new speedway will be a wonder. One man told me that there will be accommodation for nearly a hundred thousand people to see the races."

"Pretty nearly that," admitted Stanley. "You can get tickets in New York. I'll manage that for you."

"Why? Are you interested?" asked Clay Varron, rather surprised.

"Only as an official of the bank of Burwin & Son, in New York City. My uncle, Richard Burwin, is the sole owner of the bank, as I think you know."

Varron nodded, and waved a hand for Stanley Downs to continue.

"Because he is the sole owner, he insists on doing things in his own way. Colonel Prentiss has been selling many tickets in Buffalo, and he found himself with more cash than he wanted to take care of. He is like my uncle in the way of having notions, and he will not do business with any bank except Burwin & Son. That is why he would not deposit any of his cash in banks at Buffalo or elsewhere, as he might have done."

"I see. Drive ahead, Stan! Get down to cases!"

"My uncle sent me to Buffalo to get twenty thousand dollars that Colonel Prentiss wanted to deposit with us. I was not allowed to use the railroads—I didn't want to, for that matter—but

was to go in my own car, with Karl, who is my uncle's own chauffeur, to drive when I got tired, and to help me guard the money."

"Swell idea!" observed Clay Varron. "But I never knew the day when Stanley Downs couldn't take care of himself—and of anything he was told to keep safely."

Stanley got up from his chair and strode up and down the room. In a suit of light clothes belonging to Clay Varron, which fitted him almost as well as if they had been made for him, Stanley was a fine-looking specimen of the American man in his twenties.

His erect carriage, firm jaw, quick eye, and alert bearing were all those of the young man who "does things." Even the troubled expression that drew his brows together and made him bite his lip impatiently, only seemed to accentuate the firmness of his character.

"Now I am in trouble, Varron," he said, after a short silence. "When my car took a header into the lake, out there——"

"Great Scott! Was that what it did?" interrupted Clay excitedly.

"Yes. But that's nothing in itself," declared Stanley hurriedly, waving aside further ejaculations. "What troubles me is that twenty thousand dollars in bills, which were tied up in a package and placed in one of the door pockets of the car, went down with it."

"Good heavens!"

"I dare say the money is still in the door pocket," continued Stanley. "But what use is that, when the car is at the bottom of the lake? It is between fifty and sixty feet deep, right off the edge of the promenade in front of this hotel."

"So I've heard. But that isn't deep enough to lose your car for you. I see they are working at it now. Look!"

Clay Varron pointed out of the window, and they saw that twenty or thirty

men were manipulating ropes that dropped into the water. They were pulling at them with a big motor truck as well as several teams of horses. Evidently the crowd had something attached to the ropes under water, which was giving the motor truck and horses all they could do to drag it out.

"That's good!" exclaimed Stanley. "I didn't think they would get at it so soon. Ah! I see! Karl is out there directing things. That young fellow is a wonder, Clay. Let's go out!"

It was just as Clay Varron and Stanley Downs reached the veranda that the big Archimedes motor car was drawn to the surface of the lake and thence to the boat landing, which was almost level with the top of the water.

Stanley rushed down the steps and laid his hand on the door pocket. It was in full view as the car lay on its side.

The next moment he gave vent to a groan of dismay.

The door pocket was empty!

CHAPTER III.

An Enemy by Chance.

FRANTICALLY, Stanley Downs searched all over the interior of the big car. It did not seem to be much damaged, although it was soaked with water and showed mud where it had struck the bottom of the lake.

There were no signs of the packet of money. The door pocket seemed to have been wrenched open, and it was easy to imagine that the money might have slipped out as the machine tumbled over.

For a few moments Stanley could hardly realize the full extent of his misfortune. He soon made sure that the package was not lying anywhere in the car. Karl, too, searched carefully, without result.

"Get the car to the road as soon as

you can, Karl," directed Stanley, forcing himself to speak calmly. "Then run it into the garage and overhaul it. We shall probably go on to New York to-day."

"Very well, sir."

"How about the other car, the Fanchon? Are they going to get it up without much trouble?"

"I think so," replied Karl. "But it was underneath our car, and it may take all day. I'm afraid there isn't much left of the Fanchon. Bits of it are floating on the water. You can see some of the wooden spokes of the wheels, and one of the mud guards came up on the grappling irons a while ago."

"My poor car!" exclaimed a sweet voice behind them. "You really think it is done for, then?"

"Why, Helen!" cried Clay Varron, swinging around. "Were you driving that Fanchon? What the deuce made you do it? I have often heard your father tell you that you must never drive a new car until he has tested it thoroughly himself."

"Well, I tested this one for him," laughed Helen Ranfelt. "I don't think he will have any more trouble with it. If it had not been for this gentleman," smiling at Stanley, "he might not have had any more trouble with his daughter, either."

"It was a perilous proceeding all around," said Stanley. "But I am relieved to see that it had no serious outcome—except for the car. By the way, Clay," he went on, turning to Varron, "perhaps you won't mind vouching for me as a respectable member of society to Miss——"

"What? Never been introduced?" cried Clay, astonished. "Well, well! This is Mr. Stanley Downs, of New York—Miss Helen Ranfelt. You know her father, L. K. Ranfelt—Stanley, by name, at least. There is their home up there on the mountain. You can

just see it through the foliage—that white house, with the golden cupola."

"Of course I have heard of Mr. Ranfelt," returned Stanley, when he had acknowledged the introduction with a bow, and had absorbed a most fascinating smile from the young lady. "Who has not? His mines in Nevada——"

"Oh, yes!" broke in Helen Ranfelt. "That is always the way. Everybody has heard that dad has made many millions out of his mines, and that they are still producing. But hardly any one knows that he would be a great man, even if he had never got to be a millionaire. You ought to see *him* drive a Fanchon, Mr. Downs—or any other car! No fear of his driving into a lake. He makes a car do just what he likes. And it is the same with everything else he does."

Clay Varron smiled approvingly.

"That's so, Helen. He's a mighty smart man, and I'll say it, even though he is my uncle. By the way, now that I've met you, I guess I'll drive you home—if you want to go. I haven't seen Uncle Larry for more than a year."

"I heard that you've lost something from your car, Mr. Downs," said Helen. "Some money. Don't you think you can recover it?"

"I'm afraid not," was the doleful reply. "The lake is fifty feet deep right here, and much more as it approaches the center. It was a bundle of bank notes, wrapped up in paper. The water would destroy them in a very short time, and there is little chance of dredging up the fragments. No, I'm afraid it is a dead loss."

"I am very sorry."

Her feminine tact told her it would be better to say nothing more about it. The square jaw of Stanley Downs, as well as the fighting glint in his gray eyes, suggested that he would deal with the misfortune in his own way, and that he would not ask for sympathy from any one.

"I shall have to communicate with my uncle, Mr. Burwin, in New York," he remarked, after a short pause, during which it struck him that he should make some acknowledgment of her expression of sorrow. "The money was his, and I was taking it to our bank."

"Burwin & Son, you know, Helen," interjected Varron.

"I did think I would go directly to New York," continued Stanley. "But I think I will call him up on 'long distance,' and stay here till I find out whether I can save any of the bills."

"Nothing much can be done to-day, I should say," observed Varron. "You will have to get dredging machinery from somewhere—Poughkeepsie, probably. That will take at least twenty-four hours, by the time it is all set up."

"Won't you be my father's guest for to-night, Mr. Downs?" asked Helen. "He will be pleased to see you, especially when he hears that you have saved his daughter's life. I am a great deal of a nuisance to him, but he thinks something of me, nevertheless."

"Well, I should say he does!" laughed Clay Varron. "Helen makes him do just what she wants. I don't think anybody else on earth could do that."

The end of it all was that Stanley Downs accepted Helen Ranfelt's invitation, and about six o'clock that evening Clay Varron drove his big car under the porte-cochère of Lawrence K. Ranfelt's castlelike mansion on a mountaintop, to let Stanley jump down to help out the young girl who had been by his side during the ride up from the lake, the glimmer of which could be made out miles below.

Karl had been instructed to watch the attempts to get the package of bills from the water, and to let Stanley know by telephone if there should be any result. The stolid chauffeur could be depended on. His faithfulness had been

proved in years of service, and his honesty was beyond question.

Under the influence of a good dinner and cheerful conversation, Stanley was able to look upon his heavy loss with a more hopeful eye afterward.

Lawrence K. Ranfelt was a man of fifty or thereabouts, with a jolly manner, a clean-cut, shaven face, and grip when he shook hands that conveyed sincerity that won Stanley's confidence at once.

What particularly pleased Stanley Downs was that his host did not say much about the part Stanley had taken in saving his daughter from death. All he did was to shake the young man's hand and whisper, after a ten minutes' talk alone with his daughter:

"Helen has told me, Mr. Downs. I thank you from the bottom of my heart. That sounds stupidly inadequate, but I mean it. She says that if you had not dragged her from the car, down there at the bottom of the lake, she must have been drowned. You had opened the door before the accident, so that she could get out. That was something everybody might not have thought of. But even then she would have died if it had not been for what you did afterward."

This was just before dinner, after Stanley had put on evening clothes from Clay Varron's rather extensive wardrobe, and when the men were in the library, waiting for the call.

"By the way, Mr. Downs, you have not met Mr. Burnham—Victor Burnham," added Ranfelt, as a tall, lean man, who might have been any age between thirty and fifty, but who really was thirty-five, slipped into the library. "Burnham has been associated with me in the West for years. He was my superintendent when I made my first good strike, and he is still looking out for the Ranfelt interests in the West. But he is not a mere superintendent now. His holdings in Nevada mines have made

him a millionaire several times over. At least, that's what people say. Eh, Burnham?"

Victor Burnham shrugged his shoulders deprecatingly, as he shook hands with Stanley in a rather grudging fashion.

"People say many things that would be better unsaid!" he growled. "My private affairs are my own."

Lawrence K. Ranfelt turned away, with a careless laugh. He knew the saturnine disposition of his old-time assistant, and never took notice of his surly manner. But Stanley Downs decided, in his own mind, that he didn't like Victor Burnham.

They went in to dinner now, and Stanley was seated by the side of Helen. Not only that, but the young lady gave him as much of her attention and conversation as she could, without being actually discourteous to the other guests. Two handsome girls, her classmates at Vassar, were in the dinner party.

It was evident that Stanley had made a good impression on Miss Ranfelt. He, on his part, thoroughly enjoyed himself. He could flirt with a pretty girl as well as the next one, and Helen Ranfelt was undeniably extremely pretty.

"What's the matter with that fellow?" thought Stanley once, when he happened to look across the table and found Burnham glowering at him. "Wonder if I've given offense to Mr. Burnham?"

The truth was that he had given offense. Victor Burnham had gone so far as to tell L. K. Ranfelt that he would like to marry his daughter. The mine owner's reply was that he could not interfere with her desires in the way of matrimony. If Helen wanted to marry Burnham, why, he would consider it, then. For the present, he had nothing to say.

"You give me permission to try for her, then?" Burnham had said.

"Sure! Go in and win—if you can. I can trust Helen to act according to her conscience."

This conversation had taken place on this very afternoon, and Burnham had been trying to make up his mind when he would speak to Helen. Now in came this young man from New York, who had the advantage of having rescued her from death, and it was evident that the girl had eyes for nobody else. Burnham felt that he had good reason for glowering at Stanley Downs.

It was after dinner, when the four men were in the billiard room, enjoying cigars and cigarettes before joining the ladies in the drawing-room, that the subject of the big motor race came up.

"I am interested in it," remarked Ranfelt casually. "I have a few thousand dollars invested, and I certainly mean to see it pulled off. Colonel Frank Prentiss is an old friend of mine, and I have no doubt he will make it a success. I wish I could drive in the race. It would be an easy way of picking up twenty thousand dollars, to say nothing of the cup, which is said to be worth a thousand or so."

"The Lawrence Cup," murmured Stanley Downs thoughtfully. "By the way, Mr. Ranfelt, who is offering the cup? Do you know?"

Lawrence K. Ranfelt brushed the question aside, with a careless wave of the hand, as he let a column of cigar smoke issue from his lips.

"What does it matter who offers it?" he demanded, with a flush rather deeper than his usual color on his cheeks, while his keen eyes danced with amusement. "It will not belong to anybody until it has been won for three years in succession, on the Prentiss Speedway. Burnham, here, thinks he can carry it off for the first time."

"I'll try," growled Burnham. "As for the person who offers it, I don't see any use in making a mystery of

that. It will all come out later. It is Mr. Ranfelt who is giving it. He uses his first name, Lawrence, instead of his surname—that's all."

Lawrence K. Ranfelt burst out into his jolly laugh, as he slapped Burnham on the shoulder.

"Yes, that's true," he admitted. "But there is something else, much more interesting than the fact that I have hung up the cup for competition. That is that Helen has publicly announced—at home, of course—that she will think the man who wins this cup the greatest hero she knows."

"Indeed?" asked Stanley, laughing. "That is enough to make anybody want to be entered in the race. The twenty thousand dollars would be nothing in comparison."

"Well, I don't know," declared Ranfelt, more soberly. "That's a good sum of money. I have nothing to do with the purse, however. The Speedway Association, through Colonel Frank Prentiss, is offering that. And the best of the purse is that it belongs, out and out, to the man who wins it. He won't have to go on driving in other races, year after year, as he will to become the permanent holder of the cup."

Stanley Downs did not reply. But he was thoughtful, and when he reached the drawing-room with the others, he had so little to say that Helen Ranfelt, obviously piqued, was especially gracious to Victor Burnham, and hardly noticed Stanley at all.

"I believe I'll do it!" was what Stanley kept on repeating to himself.

He was saying it mentally when he reached his bedroom a few hours later, and gazed out of the window at the long winding road down the mountain.

"Seventy miles was Clay Varron's record in a Kronite car, on that very road below, there," he mused. "Seventy miles an hour on an ordinary road, with all the possibilities of loose stones, holes, and other cars meeting him.

What could a man do in a good car on the Prentiss Speedway? The record at Sheepshead Bay is more than a hundred and two for three hundred and fifty miles." He sighed dubiously. "That's some traveling, keeping it up for more than three hours."

Stanley Downs went to bed.

CHAPTER IV.

A Way Out.

I'M sorry nothing has been found of your money, Mr. Downs. But, to be frank, I don't see how they could get it for you. Paper money was never meant to be soaked in water and used afterward. The twenty thousand dollars belonged to the bank, I understand?"

It was Lawrence K. Ranfelt talking, after breakfast, the next morning. He and Stanley, both early risers, sat on the veranda and gazed across at the fresh verdure of the hills and the slowly rising mist from the great hollows. They were alone. Mr. Ranfelt's manner was very serious.

"The money had been Colonel Prentiss'," answered Stanley. "But, of course, when it came into my hands, as a representative of Burwin & Son's banks, we were responsible for its safety. The loss will fall on the bank."

"I suppose Burwin & Son can stand it?"

"Naturally. But that is not the point. My uncle, Richard Burwin, does not believe in mistakes—or accidents. He holds that the first always imply negligence, and that accidents never happen when proper *caré* is taken."

"I don't agree with your uncle," snapped Ranfelt. "It was not your fault that you fell into the lake yesterday. If you hadn't been trying to keep that harum-scarum girl of mine out of mischief, you would never have got into trouble. However, we won't talk about that. What about your uncle?"

"Only that I feel as if I cannot tell him I have lost twenty thousand dollars of the bank's money."

"H'm! What are you going to do about it?"

"I won't do anything for a few days, except to wire my uncle I will not be in New York just yet. He will know I have some reason for delay."

"Won't think you've lost the money?"

Stanley Downs winced at this blunt suggestion.

"It will never occur to him. Besides, I may find it before I have to tell him anything about it. I have not given up hope yet. The men are still dredging the lake."

"I am afraid there is little chance of your getting the twenty thousand dollars if you depend on its being fished out of the lake," declared Lawrence Ranfelt, shaking his head.

"I think that, too," was Stanley's unexpected outburst. "I am not depending on that. In this big motor race at the Prentiss Speedway, the money prizes go to the drivers, while the cup will be awarded to the car. I have been asked to drive a Thunderbolt car in this race, and have been considering it for several days. This decides me. I will drive in the race."

He got up, as he said this, stretching his arms and expanding his chest, as if glad to have come to a conclusion on a perplexing matter.

"What's that?" almost shouted Ranfelt. "Do you really mean it?"

"Indeed I do! Why not? I can drive, and I want the money."

"But entering the race does not insure the money for you," the millionaire reminded him.

"Nothing is sure in sport, any more than in other things," answered Stanley. "But if I don't enter, I shall not have even a fighting chance. That is what I want—a fighting chance at winning twenty thousand dollars."

"Fine!" exclaimed L. K. Ranfelt, as

he took Stanley's hand. "I am glad to hear you say this. It is the way to deal with a difficult situation. I wish you luck. Although," he added slowly, "perhaps I ought not to wish you that, if I am to be consistent."

"Why not?" asked Stanley in some surprise.

"Because Victor Burnham is going to drive in the race, with a Columbiad," replied Ranfelt. "It is not generally known, but I knew it. Burnham drove his trial two-mile dash two or three days ago, qualifying as an entrant. He did the two miles in a minute and a third—rather less. That gave him something to spare. If you are going to drive, you haven't much time. I'd advise you to get to the track and try out your car right away. You were there yesterday, I understand."

"Yes. I meant to take the money to the bank in New York, and then go right back. I promised to give the Thunderbolt owners my decision by telegraph to-day. Can I telephone to the telegraph office from here?"

"Come into my private office. I have a phone there."

It took nearly ten minutes to get the telegraph office, fifteen miles away, and then Stanley Downs had to repeat his message twice before the operator could catch it and repeat it back for verification.

"Yes. That's right," called out Stanley Downs at last. "Moussard Automobile Co., Buffalo. Will drive your Thunderbolt car in Lawrence Cup Race next Thursday. Coming to Buffalo tomorrow for trial. Stanley Downs. Get that?"

There was a pause, and Stanley Downs turned from the table, with a smile, as he hung up the transmitter. When he swung around, he found himself facing Helen Ranfelt, who was panting with excitement, and Victor Burnham, who scowled.

"Oh, Mr. Downs, isn't that splendid?" cried Helen.

"I don't know that it is," said Stanley, laughing. "Except to me. I like driving fast, and, from all I can judge, there will be some rapid moving at the Prentiss Speedway next Thursday."

"You have to go not less than eighty-five miles an hour to qualify," grunted Burnham. "I suppose you know that?"

"I have studied the conditions of the race so often that I think I am familiar with them all," replied Stanley, as he turned away.

Helen Ranfelt followed him out to the veranda and took his arm.

"Mr. Downs," she whispered, and he noted a tremble in her soft tones.

"Yes?"

"Victor Burnham is a dangerous man. He has been annoying me for some time, although I never let dad know. If I had, there would have been a dreadful scene, I'm sure, because dad never can control his temper. Now he is getting worse. He came to me this morning, as soon as I was downstairs, telling me he had something important to say."

"Yes?"

"I could only tell him to say it, for I have never told him he must not speak to me—although I should like to do so."

"But if he annoys you——" began Stanley.

"I am afraid you don't understand. Dad thinks he is a good business man—and I suppose he is. Besides, dad says he is not a bad fellow at heart. That's the way he expresses it. Only he is a little gruff. Dad says some of the finest men alive are like that."

Stanley nodded, without speaking. He had seen enough of the good-natured, easy-going Lawrence Ranfelt to understand that the mine owner would make excuses for anybody, so long as a fair outside was presented.

"Victor Burnham has asked my father if he may ask me to marry him.

He says dad told him to go ahead. If I don't believe what he says, I can ask my father. That's what Mr. Burnham told me to-day."

"The cad!"

"He also said this morning that he had been told that I would make a hero of the man who won this motor race."

"That was true, wasn't it?" queried Stanley, with a smile. "Your father told us that last night. But I understood you had said it only in a playful way, so that no decent man would take it otherwise."

"I believe I did say so—and, indeed, I think it wonderfully brave for any man to dash around a track at such an awful speed. You see, I know something about fast driving. I often go along the road, myself, at a mile a minute. But the worst of it all is that Victor Burnham pretends to believe that what I said about regarding a man as a 'hero' means that I will say 'yes,' if he asks me to marry him."

"You mean if he wins the race?"

"Yes. But I'm afraid he will. You know that he is to drive a Columbiad car, and that that car is regarded as the most powerful and speediest machine that ever has been produced. Everybody is afraid of it."

"I have heard that it is a good machine," admitted Stanley. "But until it has been tried out in a real competition with the best cars that can be brought against it, that is only talk. No one knows for certain what the Columbiad can do, because it is a French machine, and has never been seen in action in America, except at the trial, a few days ago."

"That was when Mr. Burnham qualified as a driver, wasn't it?"

"Yes. He did his two miles in one minute and twenty seconds. Pretty good going. But I believe I can beat that in the Thunderbolt."

"I am so glad you are going to drive, Mr. Downs. I happened to hear what

you were saying over the telephone just now, and I hope you will win."

"Thanks!"

"Oh, it isn't only because I want you to be successful," she confessed, with the candor that she inherited from her plainspoken father. "I want you to beat Mr. Burnham."

"And all the others in the race, too, eh?" he rejoined, with a humorous curling of the lip. "He won't be the only other driver, you know, Miss Ranfelt."

"He will be your chief competitor, I am afraid. If you beat him, you will win. I feel sure of that."

"Possibly," assented Stanley Downs thoughtfully. "It is said this Columbiad is a terror. I suppose Burnham is a good driver?"

"One of the best in the country, dad says. He's cool, strong, and he has no nerves. Dad has told me of the way he held his own against some of the rough men at the mines in days gone by. It is because he is so brave and powerful that dad likes him, I think."

"Well, I'll try to beat him," smiled Stanley.

"You must do it!" she whispered tensely. "If he should win this race I would be afraid of him. He would come to me, and—and——"

"Marry you by force? Hardly that, I think. We don't do that kind of thing nowadays. Besides, your father can take care of you. Why should you fear this fellow?"

"I don't know why I should, but I do," she confessed. "He has a way of carrying things before him in a savage way that gets him what he wants. If you beat him, he will not have an excuse to annoy me."

Stanley was rather astonished that this plucky young girl should show so much terror. He had seen her driving her big car down the winding road, showing no actual fear, even when it was inevitable that she should plunge

into the lake. Yet now, as she talked of this Victor Burnham, she trembled so that she could hardly stand, and her voice quivered pitifully.

"I'll take care of Mr. Burnham, both on the track and elsewhere, if it should be necessary," Stanley assured her.

Hardly were the words out of his mouth, when a footstep close by made him turn. He looked straight into the malevolent eyes of the man he had been talking about.

For a moment the two gazed at each other defiantly. Then, without speaking, Victor Burnham turned on his heel and went into the house.

"He heard you, I am afraid!" murmured the girl.

"Just as well, if he did," replied Stanley, with a smile. "He will know what to expect if he doesn't behave himself."

"Hello, Stan!" broke in the cheery tones of Clay Varron. "I've just heard the news."

"What?" cried Stanley, half hoping that the news might be good for him. "They haven't found the money in the lake, have they?"

"No, old man! I wish it was that. What I meant was that I'm pleased you are going to be in that race. Mr. Ranfelt and I are going to Buffalo with you. We want to see you do your trial. You don't mind, do you?"

"Mind?" ejaculated Stanley. "It is the very thing I should have suggested, if I had thought you and Mr. Ranfelt would consent."

"And I'm going, too," put in Helen decidedly.

"So will I, if I may be permitted," added the surly voice of Victor Burnham, as he stepped forward. "I'm told the Thunderbolt racer the company has ready is quite a traveler. I should like to see how you will handle it."

"I will drive you over in my car, Stan, if you like," said Clay, ignoring Burnham. "Mr. Ranfelt says he will

go in his own car, and I suppose he will take Helen with him."

Nobody asked Victor Burnham how he intended to go. But Helen knew he had come from Buffalo in his own car, and, of course, he could go the same way.

"Will you take me with you, Ranfelt?" he asked, as the mine owner stepped out to the veranda.

Helen managed to catch her father's eye, and he gave Burnham a prompt negative.

"All right, Ranfelt. I can drive my own car," he said, with an evil grin. "It will be a little lonely for me, but we can all go together, even if we are in separate cars."

"The blackguard!" thought Stanley Downs. "I feel as if he and I would come to grips some time—and not on the speedway only."

CHAPTER V.

For a Sure Thing.

IT was two days later when Victor Burnham, with a raincoat covering his ordinary raiment, and a peaked cap pulled well down over his brows, stood behind a big racing car in a garage in a back street in Buffalo. With him was a man whose oily overalls and blackened hands proclaimed him a garage employee.

"Now, Dan," whispered Burnham, as he glanced about to make sure they could not be overheard. "You understand that if I win this race you get a clear thousand dollars."

"When do I get it?" inquired Dan coldly. "I want it as soon as you run your car off the track."

"Dan Saltus, you're just as suspicious now as you ever were," said Burnham, grinning in a mirthless way. "When you were engineer for me, out in Nevada, I knew that you did not trust anybody—not even your best friend."

"Best friend, eh?" snorted Mr. Saltus, passing a grimy hand across his almost as grimy face. "Meaning yourself, I suppose?"

"Meaning myself," assented Burnham. "I was your best friend, and I am now. You would not have this nice little job as foreman of this garage if I hadn't got it for you."

"That's right. Although I don't know that it is such a nice little job, at that. The men I have around me are all dubs, and if I want anything done right I have to get at it myself. But, never mind that. Drive ahead with what you were going to say."

Victor Burnham stepped to the door of the garage and looked up and down the short street. It was between six and seven o'clock in the evening, after general business hours, and no one was about. The garage itself was empty but for Burnham and Dan Saltus, the foreman.

"What I was going to say," resumed Burnham, as he stepped again to the back of the racing car, "is that I have to win this Lawrence Cup."

"That's what they'll all say," grunted Dan. "I mean, all the drivers."

"Possibly. But it's real business with me. I've *got* to win!"

"You'll take a sporting chance, I suppose?"

"No!" snarled Burnham. "I won't—if I can help it. This has to be a sure thing for me. Chance won't do."

Dan Saltus took up some cotton waste and wiped away a streak of black oil he had just observed on one of the brake rods of the gray racer. It enabled him to avoid a response.

"This car is better than anything to be driven in that race—except one."

"The Thunderbolt?"

"Yes."

"I see. But what are you going to do about it?"

Victor Burnham glanced furtively about him. Then he moved close to

the grimy mechanic, still busy with his waste, and whispered in his ear:

"What can *you* do about it?"

"I don't get you."

"Oh, yes, you do," insisted Burnham. "But you don't want to admit it. You're not a bonehead exactly."

"Thanks! But you'll have to come across more plainly than this if you want a straight answer from me," declared Dan doggedly.

"Very well. I will."

There was utter silence for perhaps a quarter of a minute. Victor Burnham hardly knew how to frame in words what he wanted to say. Like most men of his type, he was always fearful of placing himself in the power of anybody.

"Of course, Dan, I know you are straight with me. I'm not afraid of your giving any of this conversation away. Even if you did, it would not make any difference. No one would believe you."

"No one would have to," retorted Dan. "I don't talk about my private business. And this is plumb private. Go on, Mr. Burnham. You are so leery of what you say, that anybody would think you're planning a murder. What's it all about?"

"If that Thunderbolt had some little thing the matter with it, so that it did not yield all the power it has generally been able to deliver, or so that it would gradually give out—without danger to the driver, of course——"

"Nothing like that could happen without danger to the driver," threw in Dan. "When a car is going ninety or a hundred miles an hour, or even fifty, there is a chance of the driver's neck being broken if anything slips. You know that, Mr. Burnham."

"It does not always follow," insisted Burnham, "especially when it is only some *little* thing. In every big race a lot of cars draw out before the finish with some small thing the matter."

"What, for instance?" growled Dan.

"A flaw in a connecting rod, engine trouble of some kind, carburetor not working just right—any one of a dozen things. I leave it to you what to do. But I want the Thunderbolt to come in behind the Columbiad I drive."

"Why can't you drive on the level?" demanded Dan sulkily. "You have a car here that can walk away from any of them. I know. I've driven it myself, and I saw you in the trial. Why, you did your ninety miles and over—that is, an average of that—in your trial, and you had any amount of power that you didn't call on. Why don't you go into the race and trust to your machine? That's what I'd do."

Victor Burnham ripped out an oath in a low tone that made up in foulness what it lacked in volume.

"I'm not asking what you'd do," he rasped. "I want you to do this thing for me, and I'll pay you for doing it."

"You will give me the thousand you promised if you win the race? I agreed to take that, but it was only for seeing that the machine was in perfect condition. I didn't bargain for any real crooked work for that money," growled Dan.

"It was understood."

"No, it wasn't. If you want anything more than straight goods from me, you've got to hand over something more than a thousand—a great deal more."

"I'll give you another thousand."

"Making two thousand altogether?"

"Yes."

"I'll do what you want me to. But—wait a moment. One thousand will have to be paid, whether you win or not. I'm not taking *all* the chances. Suppose I get at the Thunderbolt, and I'm seen. Where would I come in? It might take a thousand dollars for a lawyer to clear me. I've got to have a thousand before I'll take the contract. You know I'm square. I won't take your money and not do the job."

Victor Burnham reflected with deeply contracted brows, and as he did so, any casual observer would have said that he was the very incarnation of evil. Indeed, he might have been plotting murder, as Dan Saltus had intimated, so far as could be told from the expression of his dark face.

"Here's the thousand, Dan," he said at last, drawing a wallet from an inside pocket. "Do you promise to get at the Thunderbolt?"

"For a thousand dollars—yes," replied Dan, holding out his hand for the money.

Without speaking, Victor Burnham opened the wallet and counted ten hundred-dollar bills into the garage foreman's hand.

"I'd rather have had it in smaller bills," grumbled Dan. "It isn't so easy to get a century changed without people wondering where you got it. But I dare say I can get away with it."

He rolled the money into a small package and put it in a pocket under his overalls, looking at the racing car before him as he did so.

"This Columbiad is in good shape, I suppose, Dan. Nothing hurt it in the trial?"

"Not a thing. I have been over it carefully, and taken a long time to do it. She's ready for the race this minute, if you wanted to take her out. I'll be your mechanic, of course—as I was in the trial—and I'll know that she's tuned up to concert pitch when we line up. I've got plenty of gas in her. But I'll draw it all out and put in fresh gas before the race, of course. I've got the very best grade of gasoline on the market, and I've strained it three times already, to make sure she's clean."

Victor Burnham nodded perfunctorily at all this. He knew Dan Saltus would look after all details. Gasoline, water, oil, and every part of the ugly gray machine, with its great white figure 7 painted on it in several places,

would be exactly right. That was not what he had to think about.

What troubled him was that the Thunderbolt—a wonderful racer that never had been beaten by an American car so far—would also be in perfect condition. With everything else equal, he feared that Stanley Downs could push ahead of the Columbiad.

"I don't know that he could do it," muttered Burnham, half aloud. "But he might. That's what has to be prevented."

"I'll prevent it all right," declared Dan, who had overheard. "Do you want to look her over any more? If you don't, I'll take her to the storeroom and lock her in."

"I've seen enough of her," replied Burnham. "Take her up."

Dan Saltus dropped into the low driver's seat—with its comfortable cushions, which gave just room for the mechanic to sit by the side of the driver—and skillfully guided the car upon a flat platform elevator a few yards away.

"The smoothness with which the powerful machine rolled along the concrete floor, so slowly that it appeared hardly to be moving, proved that it was a perfect bit of mechanism. One could hardly realize that its gaunt, rakish frame held the potency of a hundred miles an hour and more. It just crawled now—no more.

Victor Burnham waited patiently until Dan Saltus had taken the car to an upper floor, where it would be locked up in an iron fireproof room by itself. When the foreman came down again, Burnham remarked that the trial of the Thunderbolt was to take place at the speedway at ten the next morning.

"I know it," replied Dan.

"You'll be there?"

"I guess so. The boss here doesn't like me to be away too much, for we are pretty busy. But I can trust my assistant for that length of time. We

have some good men working for us, too. That's one comfort. But you don't want me to do any work on the Thunderbolt to-morrow, do you?" he added, with the ghost of a grin.

"No," growled Burnham. "So long as you are on the job when the race comes off, I don't ask anything more. But I want you to see this Thunderbolt in real action at the trial. It may give you some ideas as to how you are to fix it afterward. Good night, Dan."

He walked out of the garage without looking back. Outside, he lighted a cigar, which he puffed contentedly as he went along.

"The coldest proposition I ever went up against," reflected Dan Saltus, aloud, looking after the departing Burnham. "By gravy, I believe he'd rather have that young fellow Downs killed than not. If Burnham knew I was on to his game to the very bottom, he'd be surprised, I reckon. *He* thinks *I* think all he cares about is to win this race just for the sake of the glory and my thousand dollars. Strange how things come about. If it hadn't been that Hank Swartz is a friend of mine, I'd never have got on to it all. As it is, I reckon that— Hello, Hank! Where did you blow in from?"

A wide-shouldered, lean-faced man, with the deep tan on his face that told of outdoor life in the open country—for he could not have got so brown anywhere else—strolled into the garage and coolly appropriated the one wooden chair in sight, which was usually occupied by the foreman when he had nothing else to do.

CHAPTER VI.

The Heart of the Plot.

I HAVE been attending to affairs for Burnham," replied Hank Swartz, when he was comfortably settled in his chair. "I wish I could smoke in here."

"Well, you can't," snapped Dan. "You know that as well as I do. This is a garage."

"All right. I just dropped in to see how the Columbiad looked? Where is she?"

"She's put away upstairs, in her own little flat," answered Dan, with his usual surly grin. "We are not showing her to everybody until the day of the race. Then some of them may see her a little too much. She's going to win that cup and the purse, Hank."

"Of course she is. She must. There'll be a neat little sum in side bets, too. Gee! I reckon Vic Burnham will clean up about fifty thousand. Well, he needs it."

This time Dan Saltus allowed himself to chuckle outright.

"He sure does. He's so near broke that if he was to get a hard shove he would tumble clear over into bankruptcy. But he's a great bluffer. If he can get that girl of Ranfelt's he'll be all right. But the other string he has out, on old man Burwin, of Burwin & Son's bank, is a good one, too."

"And yet that deal depends rather on this race for the Lawrence cup, just as his winning Helen Ranfelt does," remarked Hank Swartz wisely.

"How? I don't quite get that," responded Dan Saltus.

"Well, you know that Burnham wants to get old Dick Burwin to open a branch bank out in Carson City, and appoint Burnham the president?"

"Sure! I'm wise to that."

"Well, Burnham has been bluffing the old man that he can put a hundred thousand plunks into the capital of the new bank. That would give an excuse for making him president. Old Burwin likes the scheme, according to Burnham. But Burnham has always been afraid that when it was sprung on Burwin's nephew, this Stanley Downs, the beans would all be spilled."

"I reckon that's so," agreed Dan

thoughtfully. "This Downs is one smart guy. They say his uncle relies on his judgment in 'most everything he does."

"That's what," was Swartz's response. "So it's up to Burnham to keep it away from Stanley Downs—which he has done up to date—or to queer Downs so badly with his uncle that anything he says won't count. Pretty slick plan, eh, Dan?"

The two men chuckled in concert. Obviously they were both in a plot that appealed to their peculiar temperament, and which it gave them pleasure to discuss at their leisure.

"I hear Stanley Downs has lost twenty thousand dollars belonging to the bank," remarked Dan, after a short pause.

"Oh, you heard that, eh? Where did you get it?"

"Oh, come off, Hank! What am I on earth for? To walk around with plugs in my ears and blinders on? I can tell you something more about that. Downs is keeping it from his uncle that he's shy the twenty thousand, and he hopes to get it from this cup race. Isn't that right?"

"You are not far off, Dan," admitted Swartz.

"You bet I'm not. Well, he isn't going to get that twenty thousand, because Burnham, with his Columbiad upstairs, will rush over the finish line while Stanley Downs and his Thunderbolt will be a hundred miles behind, wondering why he ever entered."

"You'll get some of the purse, eh, Dan?"

"I'll be the mechanic. Of course I'll get some. You don't think I'm going to take chances of being all broken up for nothing."

"But won't you get more than your mechanic's percentage?" persisted Swartz.

Dan Saltus had been leaning against the doorpost, where he could look up

and down the street while conversing with Swartz. He swung around abruptly at the last remark, and there was an expression of anger as well as fear in his eyes.

"What do you mean by that, Hank? Who said I'd get more than my regular bit as a mechanic? Why should I?"

"I don't know. I only asked," replied Hank Swartz coolly. "I'm getting paid by Burnham for certain work I'm doing for him. I wouldn't tell everybody, but I'm not trying to hide it from you. I thought you might loosen up a little to me—that's all. We're old pals. We've rode, worked, and bunked together out in the West, both in the cattle country and the mines. But if you want to forget all that, why, it goes with me, too."

There was so much sadness in the way this was said that Dan Saltus felt obliged to respond. He held out his hand to the other.

"I didn't mean nothing, Hank," he protested. "Only it ain't well to talk too much. I'll only tell you this much, and you can guess the rest if you have a mind to: Victor Burnham is going to win this race with the Columbiad."

"I see," replied Swartz. "I'm glad to hear it. That will make things all O. K. for me at my end of it."

"How?"

"If Burnham wins the race, it will put Stanley Downs in the wrong with his uncle. He'll be twenty thousand dollars shy, for one thing, and he'll fall down in a game that he's supposed to know all the way through from soup to nuts."

"Then there's Ranfelt's girl!" suggested Dan.

"Yes. Not that Stanley Downs wants her. He never met her till yesterday, when he played into our hands by diving into the lake with her and her Fanchon," laughed Hank. "But Vic Burnham is crazy for her."

"What are you handing me, Hank?" demanded Saltus, with an incredulous chuckle. "I never knew Vic Burnham to be crazy over any girl. He wants her dad's money. That's all."

"Well, isn't it all the same?" rejoined Swartz. "He wants her, and he'll stand a fair show of getting her if he pulls off this race. I'm mighty glad you and he have it framed up to get it for him."

"There you go again, Hank!" complained Dan Saltus. "Who has anything 'framed up'? It's going to be a straight contest, with the best car and driver winning. You know that, don't you?"

"Of course I do. You needn't fly off the handle just because we are having a little friendly talk. I'm going around to look at the Thunderbolt, if I can. It's in the Moussard garage. They are not letting strangers look her over, of course. But I know the boys there, and I reckon I can get in to see what she looks like at close range."

Hank Swartz strolled out, after a friendly "So long!" to Dan, and walked across that part of the city for about a quarter of a mile before he stopped in front of another garage, which was enough like the one where he had left Dan Saltus to be mistaken for it, if it had been next door.

It was in an upstairs warehouse that Swartz found several persons standing around the racer that Stanley Downs was to drive in the trial for two miles on the morrow.

One of the garage men took Swartz up and directed him to stand out of sight behind a big limousine until the party looking at the Thunderbolt went away.

"Then you can give her the once over without one knowing anything about it," said the man to Swartz. "The boss gave orders that nobody was to see it except Mr. Downs and his friends—and Mr. Ranfelt, of course. They are over there now, but they won't stay long."

"All right, Bill," returned Swartz, as the two sat on the running board of the limousine.

"You will easily qualify at the trial to-morrow, Mr. Downs," remarked Helen Ranfelt, as Stanley Downs pointed out to her the various items that made up the big Thunderbolt. "I know something about automobiles, and I can see that you have about everything in this car that you could want in a racer. How I should like to drive her over the track myself, just once," she added wistfully.

"It wouldn't be as comfortable as your Fanchon, Helen," put in her father. "Besides, it isn't customary for young ladies to drive in races."

"I didn't say I wanted to drive in the race," pouted Helen. "Although I wouldn't mind doing that if it were considered the proper thing. What I suggested was that it would be nice to send the Thunderbolt over that beautiful, smooth wooden floor of the speedway, just to feel her going at ninety miles an hour."

"Ninety miles an hour, Helen?" said Clay Varron, with a laugh. "You have your nerve with you. Do you realize that that means a mile and a half a minute?"

"I know the multiplication table, Clay," she rejoined. "If it is the multiplication table you compute it by. Anyhow, I have driven sixty miles on a road, and I don't think speed would ever scare me very badly."

"That's so," agreed Lawrence K. Ranfelt boisterously. "By George, Clay, I'd rather trust Helen in a race than a lot of men I know. I'd like to see her in a car against Victor Burnham. I bet she'd make Vic hustle."

Helen Ranfelt frowned and pinched her father's arm.

"Was it necessary to bring Mr. Burnham's name into this?" she asked, in a whisper. "I want to forget him."

"If you do, you'd better root for Mr.

Downs to pull off the race. You know what Burnham expects if he brings the Columbiad in first."

"What he expects and what he will get may be widely apart, dad," returned the girl, in her usual tone, and with a careless laugh and toss of her head. "Anyhow, I'm expecting to see the Thunderbolt do it easily."

"We shall get a line on it at the trial to-morrow," observed Varron. "I suppose you haven't any doubt about it yourself—have you, Stan?"

Stanley Downs smiled, as he patted the gray monster, with its immense white "5" on the front of the radiator, and repeated in three other places, on each side of the hood and at the back.

"I'm ready to guarantee that the Thunderbolt is in perfect condition to-night," he said. "That means it will be the same in the morning, for it will be shut up here by the garage men after we've gone, and no one else will see it till I come down here to drive it to the speedway."

"You'll drive it through the city yourself, then?" asked Varron.

"Certainly. It is the safest thing to do."

"How do you feel yourself?" asked Mr. Ranfelt, slapping him on the shoulder. "Think you are fit?"

"Seem to be," replied Stanley, as the party filed out of the room and went down the stairs on their way to the street.

"Now, Hank," said the man he had called Bill. "If you want to take a flash at the Thunderbolt, now is your time."

Hank Swartz walked over to the racer, over which a bunch of electric lights still glowed, and bent down to look at her closely.

This man had owned several cars in his life, and he knew the "points" of an automobile. So his examination of the Thunderbolt was an intelligent one, even though he was not long making it.

"Well?" queried Bill, as Swartz at last moved away from the Thunderbolt. "What do you think of her?"

Hank Swartz drew a long breath. Then he shook his head slowly.

"She is unbeatable—as she stands to-night," he answered.

He went out of the garage, boarded a street car at a near corner, and sent his name up to a certain room in a prominent hotel.

"Mr. Burnham is out," announced the clerk, when the telephone had failed to draw a response from the room.

Swartz frowned impatiently. Then he hastily wrote his name on a card and handed it to the clerk. On the card he had also written: "Call me up right away. Important. Trouble."

"See that Mr. Burnham gets this card as soon as he returns, please," he requested, as he turned away from the desk.

He strode up and down the spacious lobby several times, thinking, and muttering to himself. What he said was: "The Thunderbolt is unbeatable. I said it and I sincerely meant it. Unbeatable—unless— Well, that will be up to Burnham."

He walked out of the hotel, still thinking and muttering.

CHAPTER VII.

A Reply by Wire.

THE trial of the Thunderbolt was an entire success. As Stanley Downs had said, the car was tuned to perfection, while he, the driver, was as good as his machine. The two worked together like one organism.

There were several hundred people at the speedway to see the trial, although it was not a public exhibition. The spectators included drivers of other cars, mechanics, officers of the speedway—including the manager,

Colonel Frank Prentiss—and other persons who were connected in various ways with the track and the race that was to take place on Thursday.

Stanley did not push his car too hard, but he went over the two miles in a minute and twenty seconds, which was at the rate of ninety miles an hour. This admitted the car to the cup race, the requirement being a speed of not less than eighty-five miles an hour.

When the trial was over, and as soon as he could get away from the swarm of interested people who crowded about the car after it had passed the judges' stand and been declared qualified, Stanley left the track and made his way to the garage, where he turned the Thunderbolt over to his mechanic.

He had had a telegram from his uncle that morning which he should have answered before—only that he did not know what to say. It disturbed him so that it was only by desperately concentrating his mind on the business immediately in hand that he had been enabled to drive in the trial.

The telegram was brief and to the point. It read as follows:

Have heard that you met with accident in mountains not far from Poughkeepsie. Is money safe? Answer at once.

RICHARD BURWIN.

"What shall I do about this, Clay?" asked Stanley of his friend, as the two pored over the telegram in Stanley's room at the hotel. "The money is at the bottom of the lake. I suppose it is safe enough, but I haven't got it," he added grimly.

"I suppose you must answer the wire?" observed Varron, with a questioning look.

"If you knew my uncle as well as I do," returned Stanley, "you would not ask that. Of course I must answer it."

"Well, then, I'd give him the answer you just now gave me."

Stanley looked at him, puzzled, for

a moment. Then he uttered a short laugh and shook his head.

"You mean that I shall telegraph him the money is safe?"

"Just that," replied Clay Varron. "You said yourself it was safe. That is what he asks."

"That would be a prevarication. I don't see how I can say that. He wouldn't consider it safe if I told him where it was. No, Clay, I can't do it. My uncle is always square with me. I should feel like a crook if I sent him such a message as that."

"Well, what will you do? If you tell him the truth, what will be the consequence?"

"The consequence will be that he will think I am a fool," answered Stanley Downs, without hesitation.

"He couldn't think that, unless he's a fool himself," was Clay's warm rejoinder. "Come again."

"Well, he would know that I had failed in a matter where I should have used extreme care, and I doubt whether he ever would trust me again. I have fallen down, and there is no getting away from it."

Stanley Downs strode up and down the room in such a dejected frame of mind that his friend became indignant.

"What's the matter with you, Stan? Buck up! You took a risk of your life to save a girl, and you did what any man ought to do. The fact that some of them would have held back is nothing to do with the case. When you knew that that crazy kid cousin of mine was driving straight to a horrible death, you followed her up and brought her through. If you call that 'falling down,' or behaving like a fool, then I can only say I wish there were more fools like you in the world."

Stanley Downs placed his two hands affectionately on the shoulders of his loyal friend and looked him in the eyes, as he asked earnestly:

"Clay, now, on the level, would you

ask me to tell a deliberate lie to my uncle, who has always been straight with me—who has been indeed more than a father—and who would fight any man who dared even to hint that I would juggle with the truth? Would you?"

Clay Varron coughed in embarrassment. Then he answered, in as earnest a voice as Stanley's own:

"Of course you can't do it, Stan. But I don't know what to advise you to telegraph him. I don't, by gosh!"

"There is only one way out of it that I can see," declared Stanley, after a few minutes' cogitation. "That is, to evade his question for the present. I am in hopes that after Thursday I shall be able to go to New York with the money."

"You will, old man," was Clay's eager response. "You'll win that race and have twenty thousand dollars, to replace what you have lost. I am sure of that. I believed it before I saw the trial to-day. Now I *know* there is nothing can beat the Thunderbolt, with you at the wheel. This Columbiad may be a good car. I believe it is. But, the cars being equal—and I have no idea that the Columbiad is *better* than the Thunderbolt, you are a better driver than Burnham. That will give you just the 'edge' you require to come in first. Your judgment in driving will beat Burnham, as sure as that the sun will rise to-morrow morning."

There was no resisting the enthusiasm of Clay Varron. A smile broke over Stanley's troubled countenance, and it was with a feeling of confidence that he took up a pad of telegraph blanks from a table to write a message to Richard Burwin.

He was some little time composing the telegram. At last, however, he had written what he thought would be the best thing, and he read it to Clay, in the following words:

Am detained in Buffalo until after the automobile race on Thursday. Have business with Colonel Prentiss. Will come to New York on Friday. All well.

STANLEY DOWNS.

"That 'All well' is a good touch," approved Clay Varron. "It is the truth, too. When you have driven this race, everything will be well, and you will go down to New York with your twenty thousand dollars. Then you can tell your uncle about it, if you like."

"I certainly shall tell him. I am in hopes that, if there is no loss, he will forgive me——"

"For taking a chance on being drowned to save a girl, eh?" interrupted Clay. "Well, if he doesn't forgive you he will have a hard time explaining to his conscience. Going to take that telegram downstairs and have it sent, or will you telephone for a boy to be sent here?" asked Clay.

"I think I'll walk around with it to the office. Then I shall know it gets off right away," decided Stanley. "Will you dine with me to-night?"

"Can't, dear boy," answered Clay. "I've promised to take dinner with the Ranfelts, at their hotel. Then we are going to a theater. By the way, you were invited, too—weren't you?"

"Yes. But I begged off. I knew this telegram was here, and, to tell the truth, I didn't feel like talking and seeing a show. There are only two more clear days before the race, and I think I shall use them in resting, except when I am exercising the Thunderbolt on the speedway. I want to get used to that track."

"There is not much to be learned about it, I should think," said Vernon. "It is almost a counterpart of the speedway at Sheepshead. Two-mile oval, with two half-mile straightaways and two half-mile turns."

"Yes, I know all that," interrupted Stanley. "And at the curves the outside edges rise to twenty-five feet. The

track is seventy feet wide. You see, I have all its dimensions. I even know that it is built of two-by-four pine, laid on edge. But all that means little to a man in a big race, unless he has practiced again and again. No matter how smooth a track may seem to be, there are sure to be little kinks that a driver should know."

"In what way are there kinks?"

"Little waves where the going rises slightly—almost imperceptibly—and yet which will make a fast-running car swerve. You know that, Clay. You are an automobilist."

Clay Varron nodded. He did, indeed, understand how slight an obstruction will change the course of a motor car when going at high speed. There could be no argument as to the wisdom of a driver trying out the track as often as possible.

"Of course, Stan, it would be foolish in you to neglect all possible precautions. So I suppose it was wise for you to pass up this dinner-and-show game to-night. There'll be supper after the theater, of course, and I dare say it will be two o'clock in the morning, if not later, before the fair-haired boy who is talking to you will sink upon his downy pillow."

"Drivers in three-hundred-and-fifty-mile cup races should not stay up till two in the morning," said Stanley, with a laugh. "So I have plenty of excuse for not being with you to-night."

"Another thing, Stan, that might have decided you to remain away is that Victor Burnham will be in the party. I don't believe you like him any more than I do. Besides, he will be your principal opponent in the race, I think, and you wouldn't want to talk about it, I know."

"But he would, I guess?"

"Sure! He's just the kind of bounder who would try to get your goat by talking about the difficulties of the

thing, and wondering whether your car will stand the racket."

"That would be very unsportsmanlike," remarked Stanley, with a shrug.

"Of course. That's why Burnham would do it. He's a scalawag through and through, Stan. I know that. I've met him before. And, I tell you, old man, when you are in the race, you want to look out for him. If there is anything he can do to foul you, that's what he'll do."

Stanley Downs laughed disdainfully.

"There isn't much chance of a driver fouling another in an automobile race without his risking his own neck, as well as the other fellow's, Clay. I can take care of myself when once we are going."

"I reckon so," agreed Clay Varron. "Well, I'll walk with you as far as the telegraph office. We'll take those back streets. They are a short cut. You know the way, don't you?"

"Of course I do. Come on!"

The two young men walked briskly from the hotel, and in ten minutes Stanley was handing in his telegram, telling the clerk to send an answer, if there should be one, to the hotel.

Clay Varron had left his friend at the door of the telegraph office, and was on his way to his room, to dress for the dinner to which he had been invited.

When the message had been filed and paid for, Stanley came out alone and strolled along busy Main Street for several blocks, thinking of the strange curve of the ball of fate that had brought him to Buffalo again, to become a driver in this great race.

"If I weren't so worried about that money, I should enjoy the experience, just for itself," he murmured. "As it is, I am so anxious to win that it may be the cause of my defeat. Defeat? No, sir! I *must* win!"

He was so taken up with his thoughts that he never noticed two rather under-

sized youths, with the furtive air and in the flashily cut cheap clothing peculiar to the underworld class, known as "gangsters" in most large American cities, who kept always at the same short distance behind him, and who never let him out of their sight.

CHAPTER VIII.

Desperate Treachery.

IT was when Stanley had turned off the main thoroughfare, with its electric lights and thronging promenaders, into a labyrinth of dark and small streets, that he realized he had lost his way.

He could have turned around and come back to the broad, well-lighted avenue he had just left, but that was not Stanley Downs' way, for he rather enjoyed wandering about cities without any clear notion of where he was going, only to find himself at last on some familiar thoroughfare.

"I have nothing particular to do this evening," he told himself. "I don't think I want any regular dinner, and I shall go to bed after a while. So I will just keep going till I come out somewhere I know."

He strolled through the dark streets for another ten minutes, without coming to any landmark he recognized. Always behind him crept the shadows of the two gangsters, and both held in their hands short clubs of some kind.

"Ah! I see bright lights at the end of this street at last!" muttered Stanley. "I knew I'd work out of this muddle, sooner or later. Glad of it, for this darkness and the rough side-walks are getting monotonous."

He had stood at the mouth of a dark and forbidding alleyway as he gazed at the reflection of the lights some three blocks ahead.

He laughed at himself for being lost in a city that he knew fairly well, and had started to walk on, when a soft

shuffling sound behind made him swing around, with an instinctive feeling that he must protect himself from some sudden danger.

It was this instinct that caused him to raise both arms in an attitude of defense. Also it prevented his being struck on the head.

A blackjack came down rather hard on his left arm, while another weapon of the same kind which menaced him on the right called for immediate action.

Stanley Downs was used to fighting in all sorts of ways. Not only was he a finished scientific boxer, but he had had experience in the brutal pastime of "rough and tumble" many times.

Down went the gangster who was about to bring the loaded club on him on his right. Stanley hit clean and true. His fist caught the fellow under the chin and sent him flying backward until he tumbled against a wall, where he stood, gasping.

The other rascal, having seen that his "handy billy" had not injured the arm it had struck, gathered himself together and disappeared in the darkness with the celerity that told of his familiarity with the locality, as well as proving that he was a lively sprinter.

Stanley turned to look at the half-disabled ruffian who was leaning against the wall. But hardly had he got his eyes focused on the limp figure, when the gangster, by a powerful effort of will, slunk out of view also.

Where he went was not apparent. There were many holes and corners in that shady neighborhood, including doorways to houses which were like rat burrows to those who knew them.

"Let him go!" muttered Stanley, smiling. "He hasn't done me any harm, and I could not bother to have him arrested, even if there were a policeman in sight. I suppose they were just common holdups. If one of them had landed on my head with a blackjack or sandbag, they might have got me, too."

As it was, they don't win. I'll get to the lighted streets, however. I couldn't afford to be knocked out a day or so before that big race. After that, it wouldn't so much matter."

He laughed aloud at the incident which had ended in what he regarded as rather a ludicrous manner, and went calmly back to his hotel, and soon afterward to bed.

About the time that Stanley Downs was undressing and thinking over the big contest in which he was to take part on the day after the morrow, Victor Burnham sat in the back room of a low saloon in a tough part of the city, talking to the two gangsters who had vainly endeavored to knock Stanley senseless.

"He spoiled it, did he?" grunted Burnham. "That shows that you fellows are not much good. I ought not to pay you. What you've done for me is just nothing."

"We couldn't help it," snarled one of the ruffians. "We shadowed him for nearly an hour before we got a chance. Then somebody must have given him a tip, for he turned just as I landed on him with the billy. I got him on the arm, instead of the head. He didn't pay no attention to me, but he cut loose a left hook that took Patsy in the jaw and laid him out stiff. I beat it, of course. There wasn't nothing else to do. Later I met Patsy here, and here he is. He'll tell you whether I'm lying or not."

"I don't suppose you're lying," interrupted Burnham disgustedly. "I only say you are no good. But here is your fifty dollars. If you can get him again before the race, I'll make it a hundred more—a hundred apiece. If he doesn't show up in the race, I'll know that you've done it, and you'll get your money right away."

He hurried out of the saloon. Patsy and the other worthy ordered more

beer and divided the money Burnham had paid.

"What do you say, Patsy?" asked his pal. "Want to go after that duck again for a hundred?"

"Not on your life!" returned Patsy fervently. "I wouldn't tackle him for five hundred."

And Patsy meant it.

It was in the forenoon of the next day that Stanley Downs again tried out the car he was to use in the race. By his side was the taciturn, efficient young man who had been offered to him by the Moussard Company as his mechanic.

The mechanic often is as important a personage in a racing car as the driver. At any moment during the race the machine may develop some weakness, and it is the mechanic who immediately jumps in to get things going again. At a time when every second counts, the ability of the mechanic to work swiftly very often wins the struggle.

Stanley was entirely satisfied with the performance of the Thunderbolt, and was smiling as he got out of his seat in the garage, after the trial on the track.

"Paul," he said to the mechanic. "You might as well look things over again. And perhaps it would be well if you got around very early in the morning to make sure that everything is right. The other men here are all safe, of course, or the Moussard people wouldn't have them. But I believe in seeing for myself that my machine is right before it starts."

"I'll do it, sir," replied Paul briefly. "I'll have the car in good shape. But I would advise that you look her over yourself afterward."

"I shall do that, of course, Paul," returned Stanley. "I'm going to the hotel to rest most of the day. If you want me, you can call me up there."

It was not more than two hours later,

when there came a banging at Stanley's door, accompanied by the voice of Clay Varron calling to him to open.

"What's the matter, Clay? Anything happened? My uncle? Anything from him?"

"No. I haven't heard from him. How should I? He wouldn't write or telegraph me, would he? No. It's something else. Paul Wallman, your mechanic, is in the hospital."

"What?" cried Stanley, realizing with a rush what this might mean to him in the race. "Hurt? Sick?"

"Badly smashed by a car. It happened in the garage. He was bending down by the side of your Thunderbolt. Another man, handling cars up there, didn't see him, and shoved a big car against him, crushing him against an iron post. He dropped in a heap, and they hurried him off to the hospital. His right arm is broken, and they were afraid of internal injuries, but I hear there is nothing of that kind. His broken arm puts him out of the race with you, however."

"What am I to do?" exclaimed Stanley Downs, knitting his brows. "This is a serious matter. It may mean that I shall be hopelessly beaten. Poor Paul! I'm sorry for him, too. What shall I do? I'll have to get another mechanic. But good ones are scarce. I can't afford to risk the race with one I don't know. At the same time——"

"Look here, Stan!" broke in Varron. "I didn't come here to bring bad news without having something to suggest."

"What is it, Clay?" questioned Stanley, as he clapped a hand on his friend's shoulder. "I suppose you have found a good man for me—as good a one as Paul Wallman?"

"I don't know about that," was the modest response. "The man I have for you is myself!"

"Yourself?"

"Yes. I know the Thunderbolt car pretty well. I've driven one for a con-

siderable time at intervals, and I don't think there are any Thunderbolt tricks that can fool me. Aside from that, you know that if there is anything the mechanic can do to take you over the finish line first, your humble servant will do it. Is it a go?"

The hearty handshake and the expression of gratitude in Stanley Downs' face was answer enough.

"All right, then," went on Varron hurriedly. "Let's get down to the garage and look the machine over. Then we might as well take a spin around the track together. What do you say?"

They hurried to the garage, and soon had the big racer on the street, ready to start for the speedway, out in the country. Among those who watched Stanley Downs drive away, with his new mechanic, was Hank Swartz. He was frowning heavily.

"I don't know how it is," muttered Hank to himself, "but that Downs always seems to fall on his feet. What was the use of paying to have Paul knocked out, when he can get as good a man as Clay Varron to fill his place. I know Varron. I'd rather have him in that Thunderbolt than Paul Wallman, any time. Burnham will get the worst of this yet, if he doesn't watch out."

CHAPTER IX.

A Broken Record.

IT was a splendid day for the big race. There was not too much sun, for a soft mist hung in the air, tempering the light. But it was bright and comfortably warm, nevertheless. In a word, it was perfect spring weather.

The grand stand, bleachers, and every other part of the immense grounds where admission was charged were crowded with sight-seers. In the vast acreage around the track set apart for automobiles, the machines were parked several deep, and in all of them were groups of well-dressed men and

beautifully dressed women, who had come from all parts of the country to see what could be done by motor cars that were the last word in scientific achievement.

There was a record already of more than a hundred and two miles an hour by an American car. Would this be beaten to-day? That was the question. Or would it ever be equaled?

"That Columbiad may do it," observed Colonel Frank Prentiss to a few of his intimates, as he stood in the judges' stand and looked over the vast crowd that had gathered in the hope of seeing a smashed record. "There is a possibility that the Thunderbolt may touch it, too."

"I'd like to see the Thunderbolt win," remarked an elderly man, with the indescribable air of wealth about him that can seldom be mistaken. "It is an American car. The Columbiad is of foreign make, I believe?"

"Yes," replied Lawrence K. Ranfelt, who had brought this gentleman into the stand as a special favor. "It is driven by an American, however. Victor Burnham. Ever heard of him?"

"Yes, I've heard of him," replied the other dryly. "I guess I'll get down to my car. I can see the race from there comfortably. Come with me, Ranfelt?"

"Yes. I believe I will," replied Lawrence K., as he went down the spiral staircase with the elderly gentleman. "My girl Helen is with a party of friends in another car."

The preliminaries of the big race were carried out rapidly and in businesslike fashion.

The drivers and mechanics had looked their machines over for the last time, had given them little dashes over the track to make sure that everything worked easily, and now were lining up across the wide speedway to have their photographs taken *en masse*.

It was difficult to tell one from the other at a little distance. They all

looked like machinists in very soiled clothing, while the tight caps, goggles in front, and the coat collars pulled up high, helped to hide the fact that many of the contestants were extremely personable young men, who, in their street clothing, were rather finicky about their appearance.

Stanley Downs and Clay Varron stood side by side, and close by were Victor Burnham, with his mechanic, Dan Saltus. Stanley and Burnham did not look at each other, but Dan Saltus glanced rather curiously at Clay Varron. Saltus had heard of Paul Wallman's injury, and he rather wondered what kind of mechanic Stanley would have with him in the Thunderbolt.

"Get into your cars, gentlemen!" ordered the starter, as he waved to the loud brass band to stop playing. "Ready!"

He gave a few directions to the drivers, as the eighteen cars in the race were brought to a stop inside the line. He told them they were to go once around the track, with a big car which stood a few yards in front of them as a pacer. They were not to pass the pacer. When they came around they could take a flying start for the real race as he dropped his flag.

Away went the cars! Even the preliminary rush around the bowl was at nearly a hundred miles an hour. As they came around again, the starter shouted "Go!"—which could not be heard—and dropped his red flag.

The race was on!

A great roar arose from the fifty or sixty thousand people about the track as the cars tore around the oval. Every car was at its best just then, and the first lap of two miles was made at the rate of ninety-five miles an hour, even by the last one.

The next two miles were covered at more than a hundred, and the drivers warmed up, going higher and higher as

each circuit of the great wooden bowl was completed.

The cars were scattered by this time. The whole track was dotted with them.

The Thunderbolt and Columbiad were in the ruck, neither conspicuously in the forefront, nor far behind. Both Stanley Downs and Victor Burnham were holding their cars in, contented to be safe for the present, without trying for a lead.

Time would come when some of the contestants would drop out. There were three hundred and fifty miles to go, altogether. Plenty of time for the vicious struggle that must come when victory lay just among a few of the survivors.

Stanley Downs, his goggles firmly adjusted and his eyes gazing straight ahead, knew he had his car well under control. He could feel it leaping forward in response to every light touch on the throttle, while it obeyed the least turn of the wheel over which he could just see the yellow-brown pine flooring ahead.

"She's going all right, Stan?" shouted Varron in his ear.

"Perfectly!"

"I haven't heard a sound from her that shouldn't be there."

"Nor I."

"All right, Stan! Keep steady! You'll make it!" reassured Clay Varron. "Hello! That was Burnham!" he added, as a car swept close to them, so that it seemed as if there had been a deliberate attempt at collision. "The man must be crazy!"

Burnham had driven his long, snaky Columbiad so close that Stanley had been obliged to swerve, giving his rival a hundred yards advantage, at least, before the Thunderbolt could recover.

It was a reckless thing to do. If Stanley Downs had not been a splendid driver, he might not have got out of the way in time. But Burnham had figured on that. He knew Stanley was on

the alert, and it was worth a little risk to get that much ahead, he thought.

"You've got to make up that gap, Stan!" shouted Varron.

Stanley Downs did not trouble to answer. But he let in a little more gas, and his machine jumped forward in response.

"Ah!" chuckled Varron. "That'll do it. I don't believe—— What's that?"

A soft crack had reached his ears. It was underneath the car!

Without a moment's hesitation, Varron leaned far over the side of the car, and seizing an iron handhold, he peered underneath.

As he pulled himself to his seat again, he shouted to Stanley Downs:

"Get down off the track. We'll have to lose a minute or two! Not more! Hurry!"

Stanley did not ask what was the matter until he had steered his car to the inside of the track, in front of the judges' stand. He had not quite stopped when Varron was on the ground, a pair of pliers in his hand.

Under the car he dived as it came to a standstill, and there was a minute's work with the pliers. Then he came out, leaped into his seat, and shouted to Stanley: "Go—like the deuce!"

Up shot the Thunderbolt to the track again, and it was going as fast as any of them, almost at once. It was not till the speedometer told that once more they were doing a hundred miles an hour that Varron volunteered any information as to what had been wrong.

"Connecting rod loosened," he explained. "It had been done purposely, for there was a nut wedged where it would prevent the thing being found out at first. I never saw anything more infernally cunning. Somebody got at the car while we were having our pictures taken. That's the only time it could have been done, for I'd looked her over just before that. The connecting rod was all right then."

"We'll talk about that after the race," said Stanley shortly.

The delay had given Burnham a start on the Thunderbolt of a whole lap—two miles.

Stanley could not lessen the distance, try as he would. He decided, after a dozen circuits of the oval, that he would not try any more just then. He would content himself with not getting any farther behind.

So far it appeared as if the Thunderbolt and Columbiad were just about equal in power and speed. It would be nip and tuck, even if they were level.

The race kept on, and car after car dropped out, unable to stand the grueling pace. When there were a hundred and fifty miles to go only nine cars remained—just half the number that had started.

"We've gained one lap on Burnham," shouted Varron to Stanley. "The other cars are not in it for first place. Keep it up. We did a hundred and three miles an hour for the last lap. That beat Burnham. Go ahead! Go on!"

Varron was wild now. He saw that the Thunderbolt was slowly creeping up on its rival. A little more and they would lap him again.

"It *must* be done! The Thunderbolt *must* win!"

He bellowed this through the roar of the car, and though the rushing wind drove the words back into his throat, he still kept up his frantic cries of encouragement to the cool, steady driver at his side.

Stanley Downs had been in many a contest before, on the football field, at polo, and other sports. But never had he taken part in a battle as exciting as this, and never had he been cooler.

He felt that the machine was working smoothly, that every part seemed to be in perfect accord, and that he was slowly gaining on the rival who had resolved to beat him at any cost.

Clay Varron had used his oil can at

frequent intervals. Being a racing car, the Thunderbolt could be replenished with oil from the seat in all of its more important parts, and Clay had taken care there should be no lack of lubricant.

Twenty, forty, a hundred miles had been covered, and Stanley Downs lifted his machine almost even with the Columbiad. Another effort and he would pass.

It was at this instant that Stanley caught a glimpse out of the corner of his eye of the driver of the Columbiad, as the latter turned his head slightly in the direction of his rival. Also, he saw that the mechanic, Dan Saltus, was shouting something to Burnham, as he raised his hand, apparently in remonstrance.

It was all so quick that afterward Stanley Downs did not know exactly what he had seen in the Columbiad.

Just as Saltus shouted, there was a quick swerve of the Columbiad, and it crowded toward the Thunderbolt.

It was the same trick that Burnham had played early in the race, and which then might have resulted in the horrible death of the four men in the two cars.

Stanley gripped his wheel tighter and tried to steer out of the way, even although he knew it would lose for him two or three hundred precious yards.

But he did not go quite far enough! The Columbiad bore down on him, and the two raced along for a second or two, with only a few inches separating them.

Then came the crash. By one of those curious combinations of circumstances not uncommon in automobiling, it chanced that a rear corner of the Thunderbolt clipped the other car just where it would upset its gravity.

Bang! Smash!

The Columbiad was on its side, while Stanley, quickly recovering from the jar, whirled on alone.

There was no time for Stanley to look at the wreck. He kept on with the race. He must win, no matter who might be hurt. It is the cruel rule in races of all kinds. Only those not in the actual contest can give time to look after those who may have fallen in the struggle.

As they tore around on the next lap, keeping well clear of the wrecked car, Varron saw men lifting Burnham and his mechanic away, and the next time around the Columbiad had been turned over on its wheels by a score of men and pushed out of the way.

It did not take long to cover the remaining distance. As Stanley Downs rushed the Thunderbolt over the finish line, his number went up on the board: "Number 5 wins!" Directly afterward the time was recorded also: "103.10."

This meant that the Thunderbolt had covered the three hundred and fifty miles at an average speed of more than one hundred and three miles an hour.

Stanley Downs had beaten the record!

It was some time before Stanley could get to a certain car parked in the infield, in whom he had seen an elderly gentleman, to whom he wanted very much to speak.

There were a number of formalities to be gone through. The man who had won the Lawrence Cup could not be allowed to go away till he had been addressed by the judges and had his photograph taken.

Then he had to go and change his clothes after a shower bath, and do various other things to bring him back to his usual appearance.

It was all done at last, however, and he dashed for the car that had been his aim all along since he had finished the race and had time to look about him.

"Uncle!" he cried, as the elderly gentleman took his hand in a warm, strong grip. "Somehow, I had a feeling that you'd come—especially when I got no

reply to my telegram. I'm very glad to see you."

Richard Burwin was an unemotional man, as a rule. But there were tears behind his glasses as he said brokenly:

"Stan, my boy, I knew all about it. I know more than you do. That fellow Burnham was pretty slick, but not quite slick enough for the old man. I had his measure from the first. However, he's dead, so——"

"Dead?"

"Yes. He was smashed all to pieces. Crushed almost to a jelly. Dreadful thing, of course. But he got it when he tried to crowd you off the track—or kill you. I don't believe he cared what he did. His mechanic will get well they say."

"I'm glad to hear that," said Stanley earnestly.

"So am I," came from Richard Burwin. "I am told he confessed, when they carried him off the track, and when he thought he was dying, that he had stolen a package of twenty thousand dollars from you when you were at the track before you started for New York in your car."

"Stole it?" cried Stanley, dazed.

"Yes. He changed it on you. Common trick among crooks, you know. The old green-goods game! So you had only a bundle of worthless paper, with a real bank note on the outside, in your car pocket. That's what went to the bottom of the lake. The money is safe, the fellow says. We'll get it back when we've seen him at the hospital, and got his formal confession. Now, let's get away from here. We're going to take luncheon with Ranfelt—an old friend of mine—Prentiss, and Miss Ranfelt——"

"Why, Mr. Downs, won't you let me congratulate you?" broke in the sweet voice of Helen Ranfelt. "I have been trying to do it all the time you have been talking to Mr. Burwin." Then, in a lower tone, that only Stanley could

hear: "You know how much this means to me. I am horrified at Mr. Burnham's death. But—wouldn't it have been dreadful if he had won the race?"

"Hello, Helen! How do you think you'd like to be a mechanician?" asked

Clay Varron, laughing, as he took his fair cousin's hand. "It's great sport, I assure you."

"Clay, you're splendid," she answered. "If you hadn't helped Mr. Downs to win the cup, I never would have forgiven you."

SOME NEW INVENTIONS

To convert an ordinary wash boiler into a washing machine, an inventor has patented a metal cone, perforated at the top, so that jets of boiling water are forced through clothing.

An electrical annunciator device, operated by push buttons on chairs throughout a hall, is working successfully in Holland to auction eggs without the usual noise and confusion of such sales.

Both the moistening and sealing of letters is done in a single operation by a new office implement, in which a dampened roller passes under the flaps, ahead of a larger one, that closes them.

To enable automobiles to pull themselves up hills or out of soft spots in roads, a South Dakota inventor has patented a windlass which may be attached to the rear hub of the car and operated by a motor.

A Seattle man has invented a device which keeps automobiles from skidding on wet pavements. There is a receptacle under the rear seat of the car in which sand is placed, and, by pressing a pedal on the floor of the car, the sand is released and spread in front of the rear wheels, giving instant traction.

A tin hood which fits over a rooster's head and neck in such a way as to prevent the fowl from heralding the dawn has been invented. A rooster did too much early-morning crowing near a police station, and one of the policemen devised the invention, which is said to work perfectly, and without injuring the rooster.

A pump that not only pumps up an automobile tire within a few minutes, but that keeps the tire at that pressure, regardless of large punctures, is a new invention. The pump can be attached to the hub of the wheel in less than a minute. It works on the rotary-pump principle, each revolution of the wheel, while running the car, driving air into the tire.

In putting up tall buildings, contractors have had a problem in boring holes in steel beams wherein to place the rivets, those little bands of steel that are vital to the erection of skyscrapers. By putting a trained army of drillers at work, the contractor has been able to drill correctly probably five hundred holes a day. A new machine, invented by a Los Angeles man, has demonstrated that it can bore thirty perfect holes in two and one-half minutes, requiring in the operation the services of one man and a dynamo generating sixteen and one-half horse power. This boring is done in a steel beam three inches thick. The gang drill, as it is called, can also be used on iron pipes. It is said that one man using the machine can do the work of ten, not only cheaper, but more accurately.

Frank Merriwell, Jr. at Fardale From the Leaves of Frank Merriwell's Notebook.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS

CHIP MERRIWELL and his friends fall out with Kadir Dhin, a Hindu student at Fardale, whom Colonel Gunn brought from abroad. Chip trails him as he sneaks out of the barracks at night, and thwarts an attempt to abduct Rose Maitland, whose father, an English officer from India, was murdered in France, from the home of Colonel Gunn. The colonel tells Chip, in a veiled way, that the man who murdered Rose's father did it because he and his daughter violated a religious sanctuary, and that her father's fate is planned for Rose. Chip and his friends shadow Kadir Dhin, and look for mysterious strangers, at Gunn's request. On Christmas Eve Rose is missing, and Clancy and Kess, unable to find Chip, go to the railroad station, and see Bully Carson tip the baggageman as a curious-looking trunk is put on the train. Clan and Kess board the train, and the trunk is put off at Carsonville, where they discover that it has been occupied by the unconscious form of Chip.

CHAPTER VIII.

Bully Carson Explains.



HE shrewd eyes of Colonel Carson sparkled with a sly twinkle. He sat before his deep-throated fireplace, in his home in Carsonville. Into the room he had called his son Bully, to receive from him a full account of the recent startling happenings, and the result of the investigation which had followed.

Bully had come in prepared to put his part in the affair in the best light possible. Yet he would speak to his father with more openness than he would to any one else, for it was known that the elder Carson had sown, in his youth, a pretty big crop of wild oats himself.

With that sly, humorous twinkle, Carson turned on his hopeful son. In a way he was proud of Bully, though he raged at him daily.

"I hear ye got out of it, Bully, but it took some hard work and tall lyin'. I've jest got home, but I've been hearin' about it; I'd been down to that investigation myself if I'd been here. Prob'ly some o' the things I've heard ain't so. So ye can jest straighten me out about it."

This was so much better than Bully had anticipated that the sour expression passed from his coarse red face. Feeling more comfortable, he stood up, with his broad back to the fire, and, taking out a cigar, bit off the end of it and scratched a match.

"Well, 'twas the funniest and sing'larest thing that ever came down the pike, dad, and for a while it looked 's if

they had me in bad. It was Clancy and Kess that went gunnin' for me, and come nigh bringin' me down. But I'll git even with 'em for that, see!"

He lighted his cigar, and stood smoking.

"And me and Chip Merriwell are due to have some interestin' times, too. They're all in together, and he has hit at me more than once."

"Young Merriwell was in a box or trunk in the baggage car, unconscious and about dead, when they put it off here, and you was charged with havin' that trunk or box put on the car. Of course you didn't, and know nothin' about it. You're a mighty big fool at times, Bully, but you're not so big a one as that; and there'd have been no sense in it."

Bully's face glowed to a dull and angry crimson, as he recalled the grilling he had been put through by the police officers because of that accusation.

"Me and that young Hindu, Kadir Dhin, was charged with doin' it; and they'd have fastened it on *him* sure if Colonel Gunn hadn't come to his help; for, you see, it was Kadir Dhin's Hindu trunk that they found Merriwell in. It looked mighty bad for him a while, and looked bad for me, too, jest because I had been with him not long before, and had given the baggage man a quarter at the station for bringin' down for me a box of stuff from Dickey's that it would have cost me a dollar to send in the reg'lar way.

"There's a whole big story back of it, dad," Bully explained, "and there were some things I didn't know myself until Gunn made that statement to the officers. Kadir Dhin had been treating me fine as silk, and I was going around with him a lot. He had spendin' money, and he wasn't afraid to blow it. It wasn't my bizness to ask him how he got it. Yet he came to Fardale, as you recklect, as a sort of charity stu-

dent. I thought he had meebby been gamblin', and had been lucky.

"He was talkin' ag'inst Merriwell, and plannin' ways to do him, and I liked that. And we did 'do' him, in the end, as I'll tell you.

"It started when that girl was missin' out of Gunn's house, where she has been stayin'. Old Gunn sent out an alarm about it, and telephoned the constable. In a little while it seemed as if half the town was searchin' for her. Kadir Dhin and me had been trying to annoy Merriwell that forenoon, when he was out sleighin' with her, by follerin' him round in another sleigh."

"You did that?" growled the elder Carson, with a sniff of displeasure, as he pulled at his yellow-gray goatee. "'Twasn't the act of a gentleman, son."

But Bully answered, with a careless laugh:

"Anyhow, 'twas fun. We was hopin' to make him so mad that afterward he would want to climb us, and so give us a chance to double on him together and trim him good. Kadir Dhin had it in for him for a knock-out blow Merry had given him, and I've got some things to remember.

"Well, when she was missin' that afternoon, and we saw Merriwell goin' toward the lake lookin' for her, we folloed him again. When we got down there, I turned back, because it was so cold; so I didn't see what happened, and there's two stories about it.

"Kadir Dhin says he found the girl bewildered and wanderin' about in that timbered cove beyond the Pavilion, and was tryin' to lead her home, when Merriwell came on him and attacked him; the attack comin' so sudden, Kadir Dhin says, that he had no time to defend himself before he was knocked stiff in the snow.

"I think that's right, too," said Bully. "For that's the way he told it to me, when he met me again, close by the corner, at Gunn's. Merriwell had

brought the girl home, and was then in the house. Kadir Dhin had follered. And, say, he was lookin' wicked; a man lookin' as he did then would sure put a knife in a feller in the dark!

"As he begun to tell me about it, we walked on, over toward the barracks. He was ravin'. There's nobody much at the barracks now, because nearly all the fellers have gone home for the holidays. And we stood there, talkin' it over, Kadir Dhin sayin' he wished Merriwell would come along, on his way to his room in the barracks; that he wanted to meet him there, and settle with him.

"And just then we saw him comin' from Gunn's. Kadir Dhin put his hand in his coat pocket, and I thought he was divin' for a knife.

"None o' that," I says to him; 'there's two of us'; and, if he had a knife, he didn't draw it. But he turned a funny yellow kind o' white, and I knew that something was coming. 'Go at him fair,' I says, 'and I'll back you.'"

"Right out in public, too!" commented Colonel Carson; "shows how many different kinds of idiot y' aire, Bully!"

"It seemed quiet enough; nobody on the parade ground, and didn't seem to be anybody in the barracks. Anyhow, then was the time, if it was to be done; and you're to recklect that it wasn't me, but the Hindu, that planned it.

"I want to speak with you," said Kadir Dhin, when Merriwell came up; 'I'm goin' to settle with you right now!' He didn't strike out at him, but slid his hand along, as if he was tryin' to get Merriwell by the throat. At that, Merriwell hit him and knocked him back against the barracks wall. And then I came in."

He stopped and drew in his breath heavily.

"When you fight your own battles, Bully, I don't object; but when you

fight those of other people, and no coin coming in for it——"

"That's all right, dad; but I'd owed Merriwell a licking a long time."

"And you took that chance to pay it?"

"I guess he thinks I paid him; but for a while he prob'ly wasn't in a condition to appreciate it. We left him layin' there in the snow. When we had started off, we saw him crawl to his feet and stagger int' the buildin'." Bully laughed gleefully. "He sure was lookin' sick!"

"And this young Hindu went away with ye?"

"He went as far as the street corner beyond the parade ground. And I didn't see him again until we was both of us hauled up before the officers, here, charged with puttin' Merriwell in that trunk and tryin' to kill him."

"How did he git into that trunk?" the elder Carson demanded. "You said it was Kadir Dhin's!"

"Blessed if I know how he did git into it!" Bully declared. "Jest between you and me, dad, it looks like Kadir Dhin went back there to the barracks and mebby found him in a faint from that lickin', and put him in. But Kadir Dhin says he didn't. Merriwell told the officers that after he got to his room he fainted, and that when he came to he was here in Carsonville, and he didn't know, himself, how 'twas done. Kadir Dhin told the officers that *he* didn't go back to the barracks at all, after leaving me at the corner; but that after a while he went down to the station, and when he saw the trunk there he looked at it, wonderin' whose it was, as it looked so much like his, and had no marks on it.

"And it was right there," said Bully, "when he wasn't being believed, and the thing would have been cinched on him, that Colonel Gunn came popping in to his rescue, with the most amazing yarn ye ever listened to."

"I think I heard some o' that; but you go over it, for mebbly I didn't git it straight. Seems to me, Bully, you was mighty reckless all along, and it's a wonder to me y' ain't in the jail."

He was looking at Bully closely; his brows were furrowed, and the half-humorous light had faded out of his eyes. He was again pulling at his yellow-gray goatee, this time nervously.

"Colonel Gunn said," Bully explained, "that a Hindu soldier who had killed the girl's father in France was known to be somewhere around here, and once before had tried to carry her off; and 'twas his belief that this Hindu had got into the barracks."

"And then," added Bully, "to bolster this, they brought on again the hackman who had taken the trunk to the station. He had said that a dark-faced feller, who was dressed in the Fardale cadet uniform, had hired him to take the trunk to the station; and he had identified Kadir Dhin as bein' that feller. But now, when he heard what Gunn said about it, he backed water, and admitted that though the dark-faced feller looked like Kadir Dhin, it might not have been him; he couldn't identify Kadir Dhin as being the one, he said. Now, what d'ye think of that?"

"Lied!" snorted Carson.

"But Kadir Dhin has told me himself that he knows nothin' about it."

"He lied, too!"

"Anyway, they let Kadir Dhin off, on account of what Colonel Gunn told 'em; and now officers are out lookin' for the other Hindu."

"They won't find him," said Carson. He glared at his son.

"Bully, I've tried to give ye some instructions, ye know. I've said to you that a man is ginrally justified in takin' a sportin' chance on 'most anything that promises good money, but that to be safe he's allus got to keep on the right side o' the law."

"Wasn't I?" Bully roared. "I might 'a' been fined for fightin', but what else? I didn't have anything to do with that trunk bizness."

"Who checked that trunk?"

"Nobody. That's the funny part of it. The men at the station shoved it into the car without noticin', seein' it there with other trunks, and the baggageman didn't notice; or, he says he didn't, until Clancy called it to his attention."

"Clancy and Kess thought they had heard some one groaning in the trunk, and when it went into the car they went in, too; and then when they heard the sound again, in the car, they raised a row, and the trunk was put off here and opened."

"Now, there's the case," said Bully, breathing heavily. "Only, the baggageman will get fired; for he was held here and questioned by the officers, and when they drove him into a corner he had to admit that he had received a quarter from me for carryin' the box I brought down from Dickey's. I had told that, to save my own bacon, when it seemed they was goin' to prove that I had given him the money for transportin' the trunk; and he had to say that it was so, that it was only the box I had paid for."

"I reckon that baggageman lied about knowin' no more than he said about the trunk," Carson observed. "Don't you think he did, Bully?"

"I don't know, dad."

"Well, it's mixin'. Where's Merriwell?"

"He's been sent home; he was all in, hardly able to tell his story. I may git fined yet," he added uneasily, "for toyin' with him too rough there at the barracks. But Clancy and Kess are still here and——"

"Keep away from 'em."

"Dad, I won't," Bully declared; "not until I've finished with 'em. And there'll be some good money, as well as

satisfaction, in linin' up ag'inst 'em. It will be Kadir Dhin and the Duke and me and a lot more, inside the barracks and out, that will be havin' some interesting sessions with Clancy, Merriwell, and company. Dad, you can count on that. And the Duke—well, you know he has got money to burn, and I'll never refuse to help him burn it. He's been talkin' to me since this examination, and he says that this whole thing can be used to put Chip Merriwell on the run, and we can now down him."

The twinkle came again into the eyes of the elder Carson. He admired pluck, and had been a rough-and-tumble fighter in his youth.

"I can't jest approve of the way two of you jumped onto Merriwell," he observed; "things like that tend to accumulate a reppytation for cowardice, Bully. Reppytation is a thing to be considered. Basil, or the Duke, as you call him, is a fool with money, and I can't blame ye much for wantin' to git next. But be careful, Bully. A sportin' proposition is one thing, but takin' criminal chances is another. Allus keep on the right side o' the law, Bully; in the long run it pays better."

He tugged at his goatee again.

"But that cur'us trunk case is shore mixin'. Bully, I think more'n one feller done some tall lyin'!"

CHAPTER IX.

Some Investigations.

WHEN Chip Merriwell returned to Fardale, he found himself against the line-up of which Bully Carson had spoken to his father.

But he had received word of it before. Clancy had written to him about it. And it was the first subject that Clan took up, when he met Chip at the station on the latter's return.

"I suppose Kess and I are to blame," said Clan remorsefully, "just because we weren't satisfied with getting you

out of that trunk, but tried to unload on Kadir Dhin the crime of putting you there. But they oughtn't to hold that against *you*. Colonel Gunn oughtn't, anyway."

"Sure nodt," agreed Kess, who was with him. "Vodt dhey ar-re saying apoudt me ton'dt hurdt nopoty, but dhey ar-re making you oudt a willain yoost like us."

Chip laughed; Kess amused him. And he was feeling physically fit again, which, of itself, makes for light-heartedness. He had been sent home "all in"; now he was back, at the end of the Christmas holidays, ready again to enter the old Fardale school and reassume the leadership of the loyal fellows who were always his friends.

"We are all villains together, eh?" he commented.

"The sympathy stunt is being worked hard for Kadir Dhin," Clan reported. "You accused him of trying to kidnap Rose Maitland, and flattened him out on the ice, and you repeated the accusation to Colonel Gunn when you got her to Gunn's house. On top of that, Kess and I tried to make the officers down at Carsonville believe that Kadir Dhin had found you in a faint in your room in the barracks, and had put you in that trunk. I guess we went too fast in that, and there's where the trouble begins; we couldn't make the officers believe Kadir Dhin would put you in a trunk that could be so easily identified as his. So when Gunn came down and strung his talk about the soldier Hindu, our idea was canned, and Kadir Dhin was released, with an apology.

"And now Gunn is looking black at us, Rose Maitland is looking blacker, and every enemy you ever had seems to have come to life, and is working against you. Their leader seems to be Duke Basil, and I guess you know what that means."

Chip knew well enough.

The previous year, Anselm Basil, fa-

miliarly known as the Duke, had come over with a number of fellows from Brightwood and entered Fardale, having discovered that it was the better school. The Duke had been the athletic leader at Brightwood, and had no notion of playing second fiddle to any one even at Fardale.

Duke Basil was an original genius. Not because he was rich, and a spendthrift, for many boys and young men are that; but because, with all his assumptions and airs and extravagances, he had athletic ability and brains of a high order, and had so many good qualities with the bad ones.

That Chip and Basil should clash, was a thing not to be avoided. Basil had declared to his friends that he intended to be the leader at Fardale, and that there could be but one. He had not made his boasts good. So the clash was renewed at the beginning of the present school year, yet so far with no very creditable results or decided victories to his account.

Now he believed he had found new leverage. In the first place, it seemed that Colonel Gunn's good opinion of Chip and his friends had been alienated; which meant that the iron rules of the academy would be made to bear hard on them; and could be worked to their disadvantage. Kadir Dhin, the colonel's protégé, had been made the implacable enemy of Chip and his crowd. And Bully Carson, a foe not to be despised, even though he was not in the academy, had all his old animosities re-aroused.

Clancy and Kess tried to set these things forth, as they made their way with Chip over the snowy roads from the station to the academy grounds, having preferred walking to riding in the usual "hack," that they might talk matters over.

Chip Merriwell was thinking of how these things would influence his relations with Rose Maitland, rather than

viewing them from the standpoint of his friends. He was hoping that Colonel Gunn's adverse opinions were not affecting her, even though she were a member of his household, and Kadir Dhin had been her father's friend and secretary.

There was always an unpleasant memory tucked in the back of Chip's mind, which he seldom cared to take out of its pigeonhole there and consider. His first meeting with Rose Maitland could not have been more inauspicious than it was. He had knocked Kadir Dhin down in the snowy path on account of his treatment of Kess; and Rose Maitland, rushing frantically to the side of the young Hindu, had called Chip a coward, with such a sting in the word that Chip could still feel the burn of it whenever he permitted himself to let it enter his mind.

As Chip and his friends turned into the path, beyond Mrs. Winfield's boarding house, that led to and through the parade ground, Kadir Dhin was seen standing there, much as he had been on that previous occasion, only that this time he was in conversation with Duke Basil.

"They are regular Siamese twins lately," said Clancy, with a grin. "They knew you were to arrive to-day, and have been wondering why you didn't ride up in the hack."

"Uff he standts in my roadt, like vot he dit pefore——"

But Kadir Dhin was moving on toward the barracks before Kess finished his sentence. The Duke had turned toward the village, moving to meet them.

"Ah, there!" he cried, putting out his hand as Chip came up. "You're looking fine as silk again, old top. I didn't expect it. That little rest at home has done you a lot of good."

For an instant Chip hesitated, then held out his hand; he would be as gentlemanly as the Duke. Indeed, it was hard not to be friendly with Duke Basil

on all ordinary occasions. He had a smile and a bright way with him. It was this that made him so formidable when he pitted his strength against Chip; for this, quite as much as his money, enabled him to gather and hold friends.

"I'm all right again," said Chip, taking the measure of the fellow with his eye. "You went home yourself, I think?"

"Sure. Had a fine time, too."

He did not offer to shake hands with Kess and Clancy, whom he had seen before that day; but he swung on along the path, after greeting Chip.

"He iss smile like a raddlesnake before idt pites der handt vot feedts idt," Kess observed. "Idt iss too badt apoudt dot veller. Aber a man iss my enemy I vandt him to look like idt."

They found that Kadir Dhin had gone on to his room.

Chip went to his, which he occupied with Clancy. But they were soon drawn out of it by hearing Kess in a clatter of noisy words with the young Hindu.

Villum's capacity for blundering was notorious. He had seen that Kadir Dhin's door stood open, and had entered without apology, apparently to notify the young Hindu that Chip Merriwell had returned, and to ask:

"Undt vot vill you do apoudt idt?"

Chip was not at all averse to invading the Hindu's room, for he wanted to get a look at the trunk in which he, unconscious, had been immured on that journey which might readily have ended in his death. The noisy words ceased when Chip and Clan came to the door.

"He iss say dot I am anodher," Kess protested.

Chip and Clan stepped into the room, Chip with a smile which he hoped would temporarily disarm Kadir Dhin's enmity. He glanced over at the queer, Hindu trunk or traveling chest, of itself an interesting specimen of Oriental workmanship.

"So that was the thing I was in?" he commented, ignoring Kess' complaint. "It seems that I ought to remember it, but I don't."

"You remember as much about it as I do, in spite of the charges of your friends," Kadir Dhin asserted.

There was a malevolent glare in his shiny black eyes.

Chip sat down in the nearest chair; he did not intend to be ruffled. He had long since discovered that no one gains anything by turning his quills out like a porcupine.

"I was in no position to make any claims about it; but I've wondered about it hundreds of times. As I was found in that thing, somebody put me there."

"Perhaps you did it yourself," said the young Hindu, with a sneer, though his manner was guarded; "it's as credible as that I did it."

Chip looked at him, when his attention was not directed toward the queer trunk. He was hoping that if Kadir Dhin really knew anything about that odd happening, by some slip, or by the expression of his face, he might reveal it.

"What is it about that Hindu soldier?" he asked. "That is, what do you know? I heard what Colonel Gunn said at that investigation, but I wasn't in a mental condition to take it all in. Did you know the man?"

Kadir Dhin stared at him, hesitated, and then answered:

"He was my uncle."

"Do you think he is here?"

"I know nothing about that," said Kadir Dhin. "Ask Colonel Gunn."

"He says the man is here, and did that."

"Then you know as much about it as I do," asserted Kadir Dhin, with an impatient wave of his hand.

"But do you believe it?"

"That is my business. If I say I don't, you will then declare that I must

have put you in the trunk. You'd better talk to Colonel Gunn about it. I don't know anything."

"You're a Hindu?" said Clancy, butting in.

A flush of anger put color into the dark cheeks of Kadir Dhin.

"I have that honor," he declared.

"Yet you speak English better than most Americans!"

"I was educated at the English school in Madras. If I was ignorant of the language, could I have taken a place in this school? You talk like a fool. Remember that I was Lieutenant Maitland's secretary, translating all his written orders to his Hindu soldiers into their native dialects. I am doubtless a fool—for talking with you, but I am not an ignoramus."

He turned to Chip:

"If you have looked at that trunk long enough, and have asked all your questions——"

"Fired!" cried Clancy. "Come on, Chip!"

"This German beer keg came in to insult me, and you followed to back him up," said the young Hindu.

"Not at all," Chip insisted. "But we're going. We'll have no words. I had a natural curiosity to see that trunk, that's all. Thank you for the permission. Good day!"

"Oh, we'll meet again," said Kadir Dhin. "There's a settlement coming, for the accusations you made against me, when you brought Miss Maitland to Gunn's. I've a good memory."

"Mine is quite as good," Chip retorted, with a sudden scowl. "I couldn't have been tossed into that trunk like a bag of meal if you and Bully Carson hadn't doubled on me and pounded me senseless. Recollect that there will be other debts to pay, when you begin to pay off yours."

Clan and Kess followed him, grumbling.

"Why didn't you punch his head for that?" Clan demanded.

"You forget, Clan. I didn't go there to quarrel, in the first place. Then, we're in the barracks. And, you've said yourself, that Colonel Gunn would be pleased to get me in chancery. I've got to be careful."

However, though he knew that Colonel Gunn was explosive and crotchety, Chip was not ready to accept the notion that the colonel would not treat him fairly in any situation.

So it was not because he wanted to test the colonel's feelings that Chip went over to Gunn's house that afternoon; he wanted to see Rose Maitland. The last time he had seen her she was bewildered and hysterical.

That had passed off entirely; she came in to meet him bright-eyed and smiling. Yet Chip thought she looked pale, and that her smile hid a feeling of anxiety. She soon admitted that she stood in deathly fear of the Hindu, who was still the man of mystery to Chip.

"I was feeling so safe, you know," she said in her frank way; "the constable had given Colonel Gunn such assurances. I had been going about with confidence. So I thought I needed no one to guard me while I went out on the ice a little while. And down there everything was so quiet and peaceful that I really went farther than I meant to go; I skated on and on until I was down by the boathouse. I supposed the place was unoccupied."

"We've stored our ice yacht and snowshoes and skis and things like that in it," said Chip.

"But no one has been staying there regularly?"

"No."

"That's what I thought. Yet the Fardale students go in and out of there, as I knew. So when I heard some one call to me from the boathouse I thought at first it was you, and then thought it must be Kadir Dhin; and, as I didn't

understand just what was said, but got the impression that you—I mean Kadir Dhin—was hurt and needed help, I ran up to the door on my skates.

"I knew that it wasn't you—I mean Kadir Dhin—when it was too late; I was blinded by a cloth that struck me in the face as I opened the door; it fell over my head as if it would smother me; and it was filled with the odor of a powerful drug. While I fought to get my head out of the cloth, the drug overcame me."

She was trembling; the color had left her cheeks.

"Before I became so dizzy and bewildered," she added, "I heard the man speak, and I recognized his voice as that of Gunga Singh, the Hindu soldier who murdered my father. The odor of the drug I had encountered before, in India. A man was once murdered there, and that drug was used; I was with father when he made an investigation of the murder."

"You didn't see the man at all, then?" said Chip.

"No."

"You couldn't have been mistaken about him?"

"I know what you mean," she said; "but I recognized his voice."

"I found you wandering around in that cove beyond the pavilion."

"I don't know how I got there; by which I mean I have no remembrance of it. Of course, Gunga Singh took me there. Kadir Dhin frightened him, and he fled through the trees. Kadir Dhin was trying to guide me home. They say you accused him, and attacked him. I'm sorry. Kadir Dhin was my father's friend, and is mine. Colonel Gunn knows that."

Chip did not know what to say; he did not like to declare he was unconvinced.

"Kadir Dhin had come down to the lake and had gone in that direction; I

thought he was not trying to lead you home. I didn't see the other man."

"You do think that of Kadir Dhin now?" she urged.

"I have no right to, if you are sure I am wrong."

"I'm sure you are."

"I was excited when I brought you home. When I rushed on him, Kadir Dhin tried to shoot me; or I thought he meant to. So when Colonel Gunn came, asking questions, I said that, and accused Kadir Dhin. I saw that what I said offended Colonel Gunn."

"Then, you had trouble with Kadir Dhin at the barracks. I'm sorry you were so quick, and did him a serious wrong. It's too bad. I wish you could be friends. Don't you think you were too quick?"

Chip saw that Kadir Dhin had been telling lies here.

"At the barracks I did no more than defend myself; that is, I tried. I didn't succeed very well."

"You again attacked Kadir Dhin there?"

"No, he attacked me. And he had Bully Carson with him. You don't know Carson, but he's a big fellow, and a bruiser."

"Kadir Dhin says you attacked him there, and then that Carson rushed in and knocked you down. Oh, dear, I dislike to talk about it; it's horrible! You were too quick."

"In one thing I was too quick," said Chip. "I was too quick in going on to the barracks. I ought to have gone back to the lake. I didn't see this Hindu, Gunga Singh. But then was my chance to follow his tracks into and through the woods there, and see what became of him. I'd like to get on the track of him now, and will watch out for him. How was he dressed?"

"Kadir Dhin says he wore a Fardale uniform."

"So? That's odd. A Fardale uniform. But I recall that it was reported

that some one, thought to have been a burglar, had stolen clothing out of the barracks."

"Kadir Dhin fears Gunga Singh as much as I do; he is watching for him, and will have him apprehended if he can. He and Colonel Gunn have been laying some plans about it. I wish you would apologize to Kadir Dhin. He is sensitive, and is very much hurt."

Having pieced into the story of the affair the scraps with which he had not been familiar, Chip soon took his leave.

His meeting with Rose Maitland had not made him as happy as he had anticipated.

CHAPTER X.

Reckless Villum.

WHILE you were away," Clan was saying to Chip, later, "I was tempted to put over a dictograph scheme that would have been great. I met a fellow down at the station who was agent for the things. If I could have put one in the Duke's room, with concealed wires running from it to this, we could have got at the bottom of the rascal's planning. But I'd have had to bribe more than one person, and then the problem of getting the wires across bothered me. So I passed it up."

Chip laughed.

"So it was the bother of the wires, and not any feeling that the thing wouldn't be quite a square play; but I thought the great mechanical head you developed while running that garage down in Phoenix was equal to anything."

Kess was twisting in his chair, and his blue eyes were glistening.

"Dot tickto graft hears vot you say dhere, unt rebadts idt here?"

"Something like that, Villum; it's a sort of secret telephone."

"Uh-huh! I standt under idt; unt idt wouldt haf been greadt."

No conscientious scruples, nor even

the fear of discovery, would have kept Villum from putting the scheme over, if he could have done it. He would have had wires running not only to the Duke's room, but to Kadir Dhin's, and to the room of every other fellow he suspected at present of being engaged in scheming against them.

"Vale, idt iss inderesdting," he said, as he got lazily out of his chair; "but I can't t'ink apowet idt now. I haf got to gedt me some more ackvainted mit Chulius Cæsar."

Yet he was still thinking about it as he went to his room to tackle his Latin and follow the wanderings and battles of Cæsar.

That night, having been out in the village, as he was passing Dickey's place, on his way to the barracks, the hour for closing the barracks being at hand, Kess ran into a dog fight. A pair of Airedales, one of them being Dickey's, opened a furious combat right in front of him.

Villum jumped back out of the way. "Yiminy!" he said. "Almosdt I hadt a toe bit off."

Out of Dickey's poured a miscellaneous crowd, Dickey in the midst with a pail of water, which he threw over the fighting dogs in the hope that it would separate them.

When maddened Airedales come together, such gentle measures are pretty sure to fail. Dickey was soon convinced that his dog was being murdered. So he got the other dog by the hind legs and the tail and began to yell to the squirming and clamoring mob of spectators to help him separate the animals by pulling them apart.

In the background to which Kess had retreated he was unobserved, but not unobservant. He saw in the crowd Bully Carson, Duke Basil, Kadir Dhin, and—to his great surprise—Robert Realf. Some other young fellows, wearing the Fardale uniform, were cadets whose homes were in the village, and who, by

living at home, gained greater freedom for their evenings.

Bully Carson could be expected to be at Dickey's, if in the village. Birds of his plumage congregated there naturally. But that Kadir Dhin should be there was most unexpected.

Dickey's was a place that Colonel Gunn cordially hated, and Zenas Gale watched with zealous and suspicious eyes. Ostensibly it was a cigar and periodical store, dealing also in a small way in students' supplies, such as writing material, and even secondhand books. This was a cover to sales of liquor and unlimited poker playing. Students liked to gather there, even those who had no relish for liquor or gaming, on account of the freedom of the atmosphere. Yet visits to the place put one under suspicion and threatened the displeasure of Gunn and the Fardale faculty.

Gunn had often spoken to the Fardale boys on the subject, and he had been heard to say that whenever the opportunity came he would "put Dickey through." Gale, the constable, was of the same mind. But the opportunity never came. For Dickey was the slickest cake of soap in Fardale.

So Villum Kess was amazed to see Gunn's protégé, Kadir Dhin, in the crowd that swarmed out of Dickey's when the dog fight began.

"Budt idt iss der ticktograf obbor-dunity vot I am nodt oxbecting," thought Villum.

Not a soul remained in Dickey's; it had emptied into the street, and every person there was too busy trying to separate the dogs, or in telling others how it could be done, to observe or to think of anything else. Dickey was himself yelling orders like a village fire chief.

So Villum edged along the wall, and, reaching the steps, he passed within, then looked back to see if he had been observed. Sure that he had not, he

made his way hurriedly to a door at the rear, which he found unlocked, and entered the back room famous in Fardale annals as the scene of strenuous poker games, smokefests, and drinking bouts.

There was a back door, but it was locked, and some rooms above, to be reached by a stairway. Also, there were heavily blinded windows. In the middle of the room stood a table with a green cloth top, with chairs about it, and above it a swinging electric light that had a turndown attachment. Along the walls were more chairs, with plush lounges, and at the farther end a couple of low cots, whereon, it was said, Dickey stowed students and others who had swallowed too much of his strong liquor and were not able to go on to the barracks or to their homes. The strong drink Dickey was reported to furnish was not kept here—there was always danger of a raid; Kess had heard it was kept buried in the cellar, but this may not have been so.

As his blue eyes roved round on the interior of the room, Villum moved toward the cots at the farther end.

"I vouldt yoost as lief been hung for sdealing a big sheeb as a liddle lamb; so I go me der whole hog," he was muttering. "Uff I am foundt, der ticktograf vill be proke, unt no more can be saidt."

With a last look around, Villum dropped to the floor, and, with squirming jerks, stowed his rotund body under one of the cots.

Something else under there squirmed. Villum's hands were thrust into the face of a man.

"Awk!" Villum exploded, unable, in his surprise, to suppress the sound; and he clawed backward like a turtle, trying to get out.

But the dog fight had been ended, and Dickey and his friends were streaming into the front room. Villum did not realize that he might have joined

them there in that time of confusion without attracting undue attention, until it was too late to try it. He was temporarily paralyzed by his discovery of the man under the cot. Before he recovered, some of the fellows were entering the back room, and were sitting down in the chairs by the table.

"I am sure in a fixings," thought Villum, perspiring with the terror of the thought.

The man under the cot had moved over as close to the wall as he could get, but Villum still felt the touch of him; his imagination supplying details, he pictured a knife in the man's hands; and, coming on top of that, like a flash, was the thought:

"Idt iss der Hindu murterer, I pet you!"

That made Villum's flesh creep, and nearly popped him from under the cot. He moved over, shivering. But he did not leave his shelter. He would have fared badly if he had; so in the end he preferred to stick to the frying pan rather than to flop out into the fire.

Besides, Villum had slipped into the room and shoved under that cot for the purpose of playing dictograph, and he was stubborn enough to want to stick to his purpose.

A number of guesses as to who the man was, and why he was there, followed Villum's surmise that he was the Hindu murderer; any one of them was bad enough, if true.

The man might be a common burglar, who had found a chance to hide there, and later meant to connect with Dickey's safe; if so, he was no doubt armed with an automatic, which he would use, if cornered. This seemed a very reasonable solution.

But Villum never hunted for reasonable solutions, when others could be had; so the one which appealed to his mind most was that the man under the cot with him was not only the Hindu murderer, but that this cot and room

were his usual and customary hiding places; which indicated that Dickey knew he was there, and received pay for sheltering him.

Kess and his friends had wondered where the Hindu could keep himself so that he would be safe and out of sight while he matured his plans. Kess' one wild guess, and until now he could make no other, was that the Hindu hid in Kadir Dhin's Oriental trunk. He thought he saw now that this guess was wrong.

"Aber I hear all vot iss saidt, unt am kilt as I am getting oudt uff here mit idt—ach, dot vill be awvul!" Villum said to himself, as if groaning mentally. "Yedt anodder fighdt mightdt come between dhis Hindu unt der velers in der room, unt vunce again I couldt gedt me by. So I vill vaidt, pecause I musdt, unt vill seen vot I hear."

It was a long and trying wait that followed, and it seemed much longer than it was. Soon all chance of gaining the barracks before they were closed for the night had passed; but, then, Villum had counted on not being able to return to the barracks.

Under the cot, pressed close against the wall, the man waited as silently as Villum. And, however much or little he understood of the meaning of Villum's action, he must have considered that he found himself in a most singular position.

CHAPTER XI.

Kess as a "Dictograph."

THE pasty-faced youth who took a seat on the table and sat swinging his legs while he fished out of his pocket a gold-mounted cigarette case, angrily resented the imputation of Bully Carson.

"Aw, cut it out!" he snarled nastily. "My sister is too nice a girl to have comments made about her by a low bruiser like you!"

Bully Carson's face flamed as red as his necktie; the veins on his forehead started, his hands closed into maullike fists, and he stepped forward; yet instantly he checked himself, and rattled out a wheezing laugh. He could not afford to offend this young fellow.

"Forget it!" he said in a tone of hoarse apology. "I didn't mean nothin', and, of course, I knew it wasn't so even when I said it; I was only in a manner suggestin' what others may think."

Robert Realf stared at him repelently.

"Since you forgot yourself, and said that, I'll simply explain that my sister is visiting with Nellie Stanley, at Mrs. Winfield's, just as she did last winter. You know that Bob Stanley is a student in the academy here, and is her brother, and both Nellie and my sister are friends of Mrs. Winfield. Besides, I'm down here with her. We've got money to travel 'round with, and go where we like, when we want to; more money than *you* will ever see, Carson, though you cheat and steal for a hundred years."

"Forget it!" said Carson, though the blood was in his face. "I didn't mean anything at all, as I told you. Of course, I was too fresh."

Then he mumbled something about having had a drink too much, which was the cause of it.

Kess was so interested that he almost forgot the sinister touch of the man behind him; for Carson's intimation had been that Rhoda Realf was at Fardale in the hope that she was here to get to see Chip Merriwell.

Kess knew all about the rather furious love affair between Chip and Rhoda, which had begun down in Santa Fe, when her wealthy father was down there looking at mining claims, and Chip was assisting his Uncle Dick, who was the mine investigator. It had been transferred to Fardale, when Chip was

there for a Christmas vacation and Rhoda was at Mrs. Winfield's with Nellie Stanley over the Christmas holidays.

The Realfs lived in Cambridge, and Kess recalled that once, at least, Chip had gone there, presumably to see Rhoda. And now apparently just because another girl had come on the scene, that pleasant affair was ended. Or was it ended? Kess did not know.

"Nodt for me idt vouldt nodt," he thought; "I haf more *stay*-bility. Budt uff gourse, when I fall in lofe mit dot girl which she iss really a poy—"

Though the flare of a quarrel was over, the talk was still going on, and he laid his ear to the floor to give close heed to it.

"Carson iss back down so kvick dhere vill be no fighdt; he knows he musdt be nice to gedt money oudt uff dot veller. So now vot iss nexdt?"

Robert Realf was with that coterie, Kess believed, for the reason that on his previous visit to Fardale he had been an out-and-out and violent enemy to Chip Merriwell.

The conversation at first was rambling. There was so much smoking that soon the air was heavy and dense; now and then there was a clinking of glasses. Dickey entered occasionally, but did not tarry; though it was late, he had to be out in front, presiding over his cigar counter.

It was so apparent that these fellows had gathered solely for the sake of conviviality and the tang of adventure which was a part of these forbidden visits to Dickey's that Kess was disappointed. He seemed to be wasting his time and taking a risk for nothing; and the touch of that man against the wall behind him, with the belief that he was the Hindu murderer, armed and deadly, was not soothing. Villum wanted to scramble forth and announce loudly that the Hindu was there, and was afraid to do it.

He became interested again when the talk dealt with affairs at the Fardale school. These things could not be touched without bringing in Chip and his friends. Kess glowed with indignation as he listened.

"Oh, Chip is merely showing a sample of the Merriwell jealousy," said the Duke. "Until Kadir Dhin came, he was Gunn's pet, and it hurts him to lose that place."

"That's the whole history of the Merriwells at Fardale," said another. "They've got to run things. When they can't use a man, they try to break him. Their friends are idiots like Clancy and Kess, who are always willing to praise everything they do. I'm sick of it."

Kess began to breathe so heavily that he was in danger of being heard, when, by pressing his face hard against the floor, he tried to see the face of the speaker.

"Idt's yoost Avery. He ton'dt countd."

Bronson Avery was notorious as the Duke's echo. He, too, had come from Brightwood the year before, with the Duke; hence, with the older students they were hardly considered true Fardale men.

The miscellaneous gabble, filled with envious little stabs at fellows they did not like, brought in Chip Merriwell inevitably, and led slowly up to a discussion of means to get even with Chip, or block and thwart him. The real bitterness of the speakers came forth. They were wild to take Chip down and desperate as to the means to be adopted.

"It seems to me, donchuknow," drawled the Duke, "that we can easily go farther; by which I mean, things have turned out so that we can drive him from Fardale."

"Uh-huh! So dot *you* can be der headt uff der adledtic pitzness," Villum grumbled so recklessly in his anger that if there had not been a good deal of moving about and noise in the room

he would have been heard. "You skink, dot iss always vot you t'ink uff since you haf come here!"

"Colonel Gunn," said the Duke, "is beginning to get Merriwell's right measure. He sees that Merriwell is trying to ruin Kadir Dhin, simply because Kadir Dhin refused to be walked on by that crowd. The whole thing started, you remember, when Kess insultingly shouldered into Kadir Dhin, and our friend here resented it and tried to teach the Dutchman that he couldn't carry off a thing like that. And Chip, you know, backing his chum, proceeded to knock Kadir Dhin down right there. It's the Merriwell way, don't you know. Now he's trying to ruin Kadir Dhin."

"That's right," Carson said. "I've had experience, even though I ain't in Fardale. I went to jail once through Chip's blabbin', and if he could 'a' done it he'd 'a' sent me to the penitentiary. Of course, I've got to keep on the right side o' the law, but I'd like to hit him hard."

"You came back at him rather handsomely, donchuknow," said the Duke, with an air of pleasing condescension; "but the way it ended it only gave him a chance to make the claim that our friend Kadir Dhin is standing in with this mysterious Hindu, who is said to be round here, and who is cutting up such queer pranks, donchuknow, that it's hard work to believe in them."

"He's been saying something *new* about me?" Kadir Dhin said, flaming.

"He says, I'm told, that this Hindu—if the rascal really exists, and is your uncle, I beg your pardon!—he says the Hindu couldn't have got hold of a Fardale uniform if *you* hadn't assisted him; and that he couldn't have pulled off that trunk trick, either, without your aid."

The tense look that had come to the face of Kadir Dhin softened, and he relaxed his strained attitude and

dropped back into his chair. For an instant it seemed an explosion would come; but all he said, in a weak voice, was:

"Oh, well, let him talk! The more he talks against me the more he will hurt himself with Colonel Gunn. It's known everywhere that the barracks have been burglarized and uniforms stolen."

"By careful work we can create a prejudice against him among the students who do not like his high-and-mighty ways, donchuknow," the Duke urged, "and among those who will be inclined to sympathize with Kadir Dhin. We can also put through some scheme to blacken him so in the eyes of Colonel Gunn that he will be thrown out of Fardale."

"That's right," said Avery. "Gunn is sore on him on account of what has happened to Kadir Dhin, remember, and that feeling can be increased."

"What is this plan?" growled Carson. "Put it on exhibition!"

The Duke laughed softly. He could be very pleasant, when he dropped his stilted manners and his air of superiority.

"A thought has just come to me"—it had been in his mind all day—"that if you want to make sure that Chip Merriwell goes out of Fardale, it can be worked by Kadir Dhin. He is quite a hypnotist——"

"I do very little at it—know very little about it," Kadir Dhin hastily corrected.

The Duke laughed again and lifted his eyebrows in disbelief.

"Gunn told me that this uncle of yours who slew Miss Maitland's father in France was a wonderful hypnotist. And more than once you have given little exhibitions to amuse the fellows, showing that you have that power to a certain degree."

"I'm a mere amateur," said Kadir Dhin.

"But you could put this over, donchuknow, I'm sure. And it would be a deathblow to Merriwell. Get him into conversation in some quiet place and so get hypnotic control of him. This should be in the evening. Then stain his face to the hue of yours, and send him sneaking into Colonel Gunn's under instructions to try to kidnap Rose Maitland. Hypnotized, he would obey you, and he would not remember that you had ever even spoken to him about it. Colonel Gunn could be posted, tipped off to the fact, that Merriwell was to make this effort, and that it was for the purpose of damaging you, Kadir Dhin; he could be made to think that Merriwell, so disguised, was putting a fake attempt over against the girl, and intended to be seen, so that *you* would be accused of it.

"Suppose that Colonel Gunn caught Chip Merriwell trying to do a thing like that? What?"

"Wow!" rumbled Carson.

"He would last at Fardale just as long as a snowball in August. It could be made to appear that these other efforts against the young lady had been made by Merriwell to ruin the reputation of Kadir Dhin. Some scheme, eh?"

But Kadir Dhin did not rise to it.

"I'm only an amateur," he said; "I couldn't do it."

"Well, I didn't know," said the Duke smoothly. "But you can see how it would finish Merriwell. His excuses that he didn't know what he was doing wouldn't go, if Gunn were primed in advance to expect him."

"Why don't you get up a plan to beat him to pieces?" said Carson, expressing the bruiser in him. "Fix it so's the blame'll be on him; and then when he makes the crack you've planned for, sail in and jest put him to sleep. Then you've got your excuse ready, and what can be done about it? He was the aggressor."

"Same old Carson," commented the Duke, "always seeing blood. But that wouldn't get him out of Fardale."

"You see," said Avery, trying to back the Duke. "Just putting him down for a few days or so wouldn't do; he'd get over it and come back, and still be cock of the walk here; that's what the Duke means."

"I'll say what I mean, Avery," the Duke snapped. "I didn't mean that. We simply want to get rid of the Merriwell influence at Fardale."

Avery collapsed.

"I understand," he said; "I beg your pardon!"

Kess hardly heard Carson's words, he was thinking so intensely of the queer plan which the Duke had unfolded for Kadir Dhin.

"Uh-huh! Dot vos saidt for two ears more; der two ears uff der Hindu who iss pehindt me! Der Duke iss schmaradt. He iss know der Hindu is in here. Idt vill gif dot Hindu—ouch, his knees iss now digging in my back!—idt vill gif him der itea uff idt. So he vill hypnotize my friendt Chip, unt all der resdt uff idt vill hebben. I see I got to fighdt somepoty sooner; I got to fighdt dot Hindu who iss behind me to-night, and cabture him, unt stob der whole pitzness before idt sdarts. I am glad I haf came, unt I am vishing dot I tidn't."

"Another plan that has just come to me," said the Duke, though he had thought it out earlier, "is to queer Merriwell with Gunn by getting him intoxicated. Two or three times the fellow has either been jagged or drugged—he claimed he was drugged; and if this is worked right, Gunn can be made to believe that he was drinking at those other times.

"You could work that trick, Bully, if you'd undertake it, donchuknow; and you could pay off some of those grudges. Hire a couple of fellows, you know the kind, to take Merriwell down

to the Pavilion; hand them a bottle of liquor, and tell them they'll be well paid for forcing him to drink it. When he's good and soused let Gunn know about it and see him in that fix. Eh, Carson?"

Carson's eyes began to shine.

"I'd as soon do it myself as not," he boasted. "S'pose he claimed afterward that I made him drink it, would anybody believe him?"

The Duke smiled indulgently.

"You're rather in the heavyweight class, I admit; but could you do it alone? Merriwell is some scrapper. If you try it, you'd better have some competent help handy. The best plan is to send others to do it, and keep out of sight yourself."

But nothing seemed to materialize. The Duke had as many plans as he had fingers; but always there was something, usually a question of the risk, which kept them from full acceptance.

"I guess there isn't any one here with nerve enough to go up against Merriwell," he said. "I'll have to undertake something myself."

"Oh, you foxy gran'pa! Kess was thinking. "You know dot you ar-re delling der veller under here mit me all der t'ings vot he could do. Unt I haf now got to cabture him, pefore he can. Vhen idt comes, idt vill be anodder tog fighdt, I pet you!"

CHAPTER XII.

A Lively Adventure.

KESS' "tog fighdt" wasn't up to his expectations, either in its manner or in its finish.

An interminable time passed before anything occurred, and then Villum had to start it. The room was vacated, the lights were out, and it was deathly cold. Dickey had put up his shutters, locked his doors, and had gone home. The time was wearing on toward morning, and still the man behind Kess under

the cot lay there, with no more movement than if he had died or had been turned to stone.

Villum crawled out at last, in desperation. He had long been expecting a knife in his back or a revolver shot.

"Yoost der same I know you, uff you ton'dt sbeak idt," he announced. "I haf got a rewolver vot iss full uff bullets to idts neck, unt uff you shoodt me I vill shoodt you likewise undil you ar-re deadt. So, you come oudt uff idt kvick!"

When the man did not come out, nor move, nor speak, Villum solemnly scratched a match on his trousers and flung it, flaming, under the cot, at the imminent risk of setting the cot and the house on fire.

The instant dying out of the match was followed by an earthquake; the light cot rose violently in air, and, whirling over, it fell on Villum, bringing him to the floor in a smother of bed clothing.

While he struggled to throw off the bed coverings and mattress, Villum heard the man unbar and fling aside a shutter and smash a window; they were resounding crashes, and the breaking of the window was accompanied by a tinkling fall of glass.

Villum had rammed one foot through the wire mesh of the bed springs, and felt like a wolf in a trap; but he scrambled toward the window, where he now saw the starlight and the man climbing up to escape; Villum was dragging the bed springs with him, and the greater part of the coverings of the cot.

"No you ton'dt escabe me!" he cried, and made a sweeping reach with his hands.

Though he was thrown down by the dragging weight of the bed springs, he clutched the man by the coat tails, and when, in his desperation, the man flung himself through to the ground, one of the tails of his coat remained in Villum's hands.

Compelled to free his foot before he could do more, Villum began a furious fight with the bed springs; and by this he was so delayed that, when he, too, was ready to scramble out through the broken window the man was a hundred yards off, running through the darkness of the night.

But Kess picked himself up pluckily after his tumble and started in hot pursuit; and, forgetting that explanations would be demanded and would be awkward to give, he began at the same time to bellow for help.

As he thus plunged along in wild chase, Villum saw another figure appear beyond the street corner; there was a loud demand on the fleeing man to halt.

"Stop right where ye be; I'm the constable! Stop, I tell yeou!"

The man whirled about and lifted his hand; there was a pistol report and a flash of fire.

It was the constable who stopped, though the bullet had not touched him; and the man went on, running faster than ever.

The sight of the constable and that revolver play put the thought of discretion into Villum's wild head; he swung about as the man made off and sprinted for the cover of the darkness by Dickey's.

Gale, the constable, stood hesitating. Here were two escaping burglars, as he supposed, both armed and in a shooting mood. While the constable hesitated, Kess got the house between himself and Gale and flung wildly ahead for the protecting darkness beyond.

Villum ran down the length of the parade ground, then veered toward the lake. Reflecting that he was making telltale tracks, he turned off to the beaten road, along which he continued his flight. He ran until he could run no longer.

"Yiminy!" he panted, when he stopped. "I am deadt! Vunce in der

house I am so coldt I am freezing, undt now I am so mooch uff a varminness dot I vandt to lay down unt valler in der snow. Budt dot vouldt be to gommidt susancide mit rheumonia. I got to keeb going until I feel petter."

Villum kept going until he reached the boathouse. Crawling under its lee, and making sure no one was around, he struck another match and took a look at the coat tail he had appropriated.

"Der goat dail uff a Fardale feller," he said. "Idt iss prove dot he vos der Hindu murterer. Idt iss easy to seen vhy he ditn't vant der gonstable to watch him. Sure! Kadir Dhin is subblying him mit his clodings."

About daylight Kess made his way into the village, where he sought shelter with a German friend, to whom he made suitable, though false, explanations. There he had breakfast, after he had had a few winks of sleep. As the German did not mention the break at Dickey's, Kess concluded it had not yet been noised around.

Villum found not much difficulty in smuggling himself, without attracting attention, into the Fardale buildings when the proper time came. He made his way up to Chip's room.

He burst in on Chip and Clancy, waving the tail of the coat as if it were a banner of victory.

"Yoost seen dot!" he said. "I haf peen having adventures. Fairst idt iss a tog fighdt, unt afdher idt der tickto-graft, unt anodder fighdt vhen der bed sbrings holdt me by der foodt undt I am sdopping der Hindu murterer from gedding oudt uff der vinder, unt—"

"Help! Help!" Chip shouted. "Take a long breath and start over again. What has happened?"

"I haf!" Kess exploded, waving the coat tail.

Breathless, he dropped into a chair.

"Idt iss der mix-ooop mit der Hindu unt der pedt springs unt eferyt'ing,

while I am blaying der tickto-graft at Dickey's. Yoost you liden vwhile I exblanadtion idt; but der Hindu he got away."

It was a funny story, as Kess told it; a serious one, too, though the theory that the man who had been under the cot was the Hindu murderer seemed incredible.

"Who sdole der clodings oudt uff der parracks?" Villum demanded, in an argumentative tone.

"We don't know," said Clan, who was looking at the piece of cloth Villum had brought in.

"You ton'dt t'ink dot vos a Fardale veller vot I pulled dot tail feadther oudt uff?" said Villum.

"N-o. Yet, we can't say it wasn't."

"You undt Chip haf been susbicioning Kadir Dhin. Budt he vas in der room dalking mit der odder vellers vwhile der man iss behint me by der vall under der cot. You exblanadtion me vot iss der meanness."

"We shan't know much until we know more," said Clan.

"Vell, vot do you t'ink uff dhem odder t'ings?" Villum demanded, addressing Chip. "Uff you ar-re to be hypnotized by Kadir Dhin, unt made a indoxicadtion by Carson, unt all der resdt uff idt, you petter be geddtig ready to meedt it, heh? Vot? Odderwise, vot goot do I do by running dot riskiness uff blaying der tickto-graft?"

CHAPTER XIII.

Rose and Rhoda.

THAT burglars had broken into Dickey's, but had been frightened away by the constable, was the story that got over town. Gale was heard bragging of how courageously he had acted in scaring them off, and how one of the burglars, hard pressed, had shot at him.

Chip Merriwell and his friends kept their own counsel. As the days passed,

they watched for the Hindu and watched Kadir Dhin. If the fussy and important constable were to be believed, other burglarious attempts had been forestalled by him, and he was as busy as a man with five hands.

The normal routine of the academy was for a time outwardly unbroken. Study and lectures, winter sports, work and play in the gymnasium, went on as usual, under the rather rigid semimilitary discipline which Gunn and the faculty enforced.

But it could be seen that the Duke and his friends were hard at work lining up against Chip Merriwell every man they could. The apparent result was small. Chip had a host of friends who were disposed to stand by him loyally. And of that closer and more intimate band consisting of such fellows as Clan and Kess, Jelliby and others, that they would stand by Chip through thick and thin on any and every occasion, was, of course, known to every one.

Some hockey matches on the cleared ice of the lake were exciting enough to thrill the whole school and bring a mob of spectators out from the village. Twice Chip led scrub teams against the regular Fardale team, once going to victory and another time to defeat.

That Rhoda Realf and her brother were at Fardale Chip knew from Kess' report; and it was not long before he met them. Chilled a bit by Rose Maitland's championship of Kadir Dhin, Chip was in a mood to be moved again by the beauty and charm of the younger and slighter girl.

Yet, having a good memory, Chip could not forget even while he was out on the lake in the full swing of enjoyment, skating with Rhoda Realf, that whatever break there had ever been between them had been produced solely because he could not endure the insufferable qualities of Rhoda's brother.

But when Chip went over to Gunn's

for a talk with Rose Maitland on the subject which was constantly in her mind—her fears of the Hindu who had slain her father and who was believed by herself and Gunn to be in concealment at Fardale—the feeling again mastered him which had swayed him when he first saw her.

"I could wish you were an American," he said, as he talked and jested with her; "and I don't say that because I hold any feeling whatever against the English. Now I have offended? I'm sure I didn't intend it, and beg your pardon."

She had flushed; but a slight heightening of the color in her cheeks made her only the more charming.

"It's no offense," she said. "You see, how can it be, when I am half American. I didn't know but Colonel Gunn had told you. My mother was an American, from Baltimore. That is why I was so willing to come to America. And I mean to visit Baltimore as soon as I can."

From this agreeable topic, the talk switched to the Hindu and Kadir Dhin, a change inevitable, as that had been Chip's reason, or excuse, for making this call.

"Colonel Gunn is sure that Gunga Singh, the man who slew my father, is still here, and that he is committing these burglaries," she reported. "Colonel Gunn believes he has found refuge with some of the low foreigners in the mill sections, and is burglarizing that he may have money to pay for concealment. He says, too, that Dickey would keep him, would keep any scoundrel, for money. I feel as if I were sitting on a volcano. I don't go out any more."

Then she spoke again of Kadir Dhin, declaring that it was too bad the young Hindu's career at Fardale had been shadowed as it was.

She added:

"It has come to Colonel Gunn, and he resents it, that you have been hint-

ing that perhaps Kadir Dhin isn't so innocent as he seems—that he has been helping Gunga Singh."

Chip had more than hinted that to his friends—but only to his friends; and he had believed it. He thought he had reasons for believing it.

"Somebody must be a mind reader," he said.

"You didn't say it?"

"I said it to Clancy and Kess and perhaps one or two more."

"So it wouldn't need mind reading to get out. You have wronged Kadir Dhin. I wish you would apologize to him. You haven't apologized to him?"

"No—not yet," said Chip. "I may, in time."

Chip parried this subject off as well as he could. He was again too much in love with this girl to want anything like disagreement to come between them. Yet he was in no mood to apologize to the young Hindu. His belief was growing that Kadir Dhin was tricky; that he was imposing on the confidence of Colonel Gunn and Rose Maitland. He wanted proof of it, and meant to try to get it. So how could he go to Kadir Dhin and say to the young Hindu that he thought he had wronged and was wronging him? It had to be parried off. It was a dangerous subject.

There were ever so many pleasanter things to talk about, and Chip contrived to bring them forward; so that when he took his leave, it was with a sense of having had a pleasant time and of having made a good impression.

"I wonder if I am fickle-minded?" he thought, as he walked away, his mind turning to Rhoda Realf. "No, I don't think I am. I like Rhoda—she's fine; but Rose Maitland——"

Then he thought of Kadir Dhin.

"I can't get it out of my nut that he is playing a double game. Of course, if he isn't, and I see that he isn't, I'll apologize to him, and do it freely; though I'm afraid I can never like him."

CHAPTER XIV.

When the Plot Went Wrong.

DEAR me! Dear me!" said Colonel Gunn, twisting his glasses about on his nose, as he stared in astonishment at the crumpled note which had been brought to him by the servant girl.

The colonel had arrived at home late, having remained at the academy looking over some examination papers.

This is what his eyes rested on, and why he exclaimed and stared:

COLONEL GUNN: The scandalous doings of some of your students is the limit. They drink and gamble right under your nose, and you don't know it. If you want proof, go down to the Pavilion right now. You will find Chip Merriwell there, intoxicated, so much so that he can't get back to the barracks. There has been a drinking bout down there, which has lasted ever since Fardale let out its students for the day. When the others left the Pavilion, they had to leave Merriwell there because he couldn't walk. You ought to know about this.

A FARDALE WELL-WISHER.

Colonel Gunn did not like anonymous communications. But here was something he could not overlook. It called for attention and action.

He rang for the servant.

"Mary," he said, his voice hoarse and shaky, "will you—er—be kind enough to inform me where you—ahum—got this singular note which you brought me?"

"At the dure," said Mary; "a b'y brought it. He said it was fer you, and I'm sure yere name was on it."

"My name was on it—very true. Ahem—you did not recognize the boy?"

"I niver saw his face befure."

"Ahum—thank you, Mary. If you will help me on with my greatcoat, I—ahum——"

Mary helped him get into his overcoat; and, with his cane in hand, Colonel Gunn sallied forth. The unpleasant note was in his pocket.

"A—er—a distressing thing," he

was thinking. "Until recently I have thought so well of young Merriwell! I fear he will never be the man his father was. Dear me, the pranks that fellow used to cut here; he, too, was quite wild! Nevertheless, there was a saving grace in him; a—er—thoughtfulness. I was younger then, too; and my dear father, Zenas Gunn, of blessed memory—yes, the older Merriwell annoyed him a great deal."

The night was falling, and the early lights of the village were shining. There were no lights to-night on the lake, unless carried by some skater, and Gunn's way lay in that direction, along the lake to the Pavilion.

The colonel reflected that he ought to have company, and was on the point of turning aside and telephoning for the constable; but was deterred by the thought that he ought not to expose a student in that way, even though the student deserved exposure.

"By going alone I may be able to prevent a scandal. Yet—er—of course, Mr. Merriwell will have to leave the academy; I—ahum—see no other way. I shall write to his father a full explanation; tell him that recently there has—er—been a great change in his son; I shall have to speak of this violent animosity against the youth, Kadir Dhin, who came here as a foreigner and stranger, under—er—my protection. Such base calumnies as Kadir Dhin assures me young Merriwell has heaped on him—there is even an element of insanity in it! Is the whole world going mad?"

The worthy head of Fardale grew warm with indignation as he stumped along, prodding the snow angrily with his walking stick.

"As for Gunga Singh, Kadir Dhin thinks that the money I have been furnishing him for the purpose of hiring men to hunt down that Hindu murderer will soon bring results. I—ahum—I hope so; I hope so! It is growing

very expensive. If results are not attained soon I shall—ahum—be compelled to desist in making further advances. A terrible state of affairs! And the—er—constable makes no progress."

His mind turned back to Chip Merriwell.

"A drinking bout of Fardale students down at the Pavilion, and Mr. Merriwell left there in so beastly a state of intoxication that he cannot even walk. Dreadful!"

A merry jingling of sleigh bells reached him, as he approached the lake, in the road which turned there and passed along the lakeside toward the Pavilion; the sleigh was coming up behind him, and it seemed that Gunn would be run down by the horses.

He gave a skipping jump which must have surprised him and landed in the snow at the side of the road.

"Ahum! Dear me! How very reckless! A lot of hoodlums from the village, no doubt; and very probably intoxicated. What is the—er—world coming to?"

Then the colonel discovered that the sleigh was filled with young fellows who were, nearly all of them, in the Fardale uniform. They had been laughing; but they drew up beside him and fell silent with respect.

This show of deference pleased him; he was especially gratified when he saw their hands go up in the military salute.

"Are you going far, Colonel Gunn?" he was asked, with politeness.

"Ahum! Er—that is to say——"

They were leaping out of the sleigh, surrounding him.

"We are out for a drive down the road here; beautiful night, isn't it? If you're going far, we offer you a seat in with us. The sleighing is delightful. It will honor us."

Colonel Gunn was flattered and flustered.

"I was—er——"

"Then, right in! Here is a good seat. We're going to drive down by the Pavilion, and beyond; and then back to Fardale by the other road. It will be a lovely ride."

They had him by the arms, still trying to be courteous, though in reality they had literally taken possession of him; and before the colonel could say whether he wished to go in the sleigh or did not wish to, he was in it, sinking back in the seat.

"Er—er—— Ahaw—ahum! This is aw—— I have lost my stick in the snow there, I believe."

It was rescued and passed up to him.

The young fellows were climbing in beside and behind him; and to keep him from wanting to get out, the driver quietly touched up the horses and sent them dancing along, jingling their bells.

"Ahaw—ahum! I—er——"

Gunn looked around him.

In the faint light, he recognized his companions; he saw Bronson Avery clearly, for Bronson sat beside him, and had been one of the politest. Behind him he heard familiar voices. He was displeased on discovering one of the voices to be Bully Carson's; he detested and suspected Carson.

"I shall have to speak to these boys about Carson," he thought, as he tried to get a grip on his scattered faculties.

"Ahum!" he coughed, and touched the driver on the arm. "I shall—er—be obliged if you will put me off in the road near the—er—the Pavilion. From there I shall—er—walk back. This is—er—very pleasant, but on a night like this—so glorious—I prefer to walk; so if you, er——"

"Oh, we'll put you off at the Pavilion," was the significant statement with which he was reassured.

But when the road by the ice was reached, the fellows in the sleigh with Gunn were given a surprise that was as great as Gunn's.

Chip Merriwell, skating on the ice there with Clan and Kess and some others, had stopped at the edge of the ice, curious to see the sleigh go by; not dreaming who its occupants were.

Chip was recognized by the fellows in the sleigh, and by the driver, who gave a little ejaculation of amazement and drew hard on the reins, bringing the horses to a stop.

"Merriwell!" he said, gasping the name.

Gunn, electrified, craned his neck; and Chip, thinking himself addressed, stepped into the road, walking on his skates toward the sleigh.

"It is—er—it is Mr. Merriwell!" Gunn exploded. "This—er—this is you, Mr. Merriwell?"

Chip saluted; and Clan and the others, coming up behind him, repeated the action.

"Yes, sir," said Chip.

"But you—er—were—that is to say can it——"

"Yes, sir?"

Colonel Gunn tumbled out of the sleigh—almost fell out—in his amazement. He hooked his glasses on his nose and stared at Chip. He saw that Chip was steady-limbed, clear-eyed, and sober.

"Hello!" one of the fellows exclaimed suddenly, with a startled emphasis that drew attention. "What's that mean? The Pavilion's on fire!"

A flame had flashed from a window in the lakeside building some distance down the road, and by the light of it two men were seen running away over the snow.

CHAPTER XV.

Cowardice and Heroism.

THE two men who sat at the table in the front room overlooking the icy lake were as sinister a pair as Bully Carson could have picked up anywhere, and they were not dis-

posed to heed the young fellow who lay bound on the floor by the door.

"Le's carry him upstairs, Bill, and shet him in that back room, where he can't make himself heard by anybody passin' 'long the road; we either got to do that or gag him."

"But—see here! You're making an awful mistake, donchuknow! I'm not the fellow you were told to get, donchuknow. This is a hideous mistake, fellows."

It was the Duke who was making this piteous appeal.

But he had little hope that it would be heeded, since up to this time he had not been listened to and had been given such shameful treatment; moreover, there was small hope that he would be rescued soon by his friends. The Pavilion had been chosen by him because he knew it was far down the lake and isolated.

It was a lakeside place of entertainment, unoccupied in the winter as a rule. The previous winter the Duke had hired it, and it was understood he had some sort of occupancy claim on it this winter.

The men were still disposed to be rough with him.

"We've heard all we want out of you," he was told; "so, shet up! You was pointed out to us plain."

"By Bully Carson?"

"No matter about that. Here, Bill; we'll put him upstairs. Either that, or we got to gag him."

They took him upstairs and locked him in the little room, just as he was. Then they went back to the lower room, with its table, its pack of cards, and the bottle of whisky that was on it.

That whisky had been furnished by Bully Carson; and their prisoner, according to Carson's directions, was to be drugged with it; but they liked the taste and smell of the liquor too well to waste it in that way; they meant to drink it themselves.

Sitting down at the table again, they sampled the contents of the bottle and applied themselves to the cards; the day was at its close, and they fancied themselves in the greatest security for an hour or more.

Acting up to Bully Carson's instructions, they had waylaid the Fardale cadet as he came swinging up the lake on his skates, not long before. They thought they knew him; Carson had pointed him out to them, so they were sure there was no mistake, even when he declared there was.

They had made their mistake naturally. The Duke had been standing close by Chip Merriwell, on a street corner, when Carson had indicated the latter; they had simply looked at the wrong man when Carson was talking.

They knew what was expected of them. When they had forced intoxication on their prisoner, they were to depart, and leave him in the Pavilion, to be seen there by Colonel Gunn and any others who chanced to be with the colonel.

They found the cards interesting, and the liquor more so. They had not intended to light the lamp they found on the table; but decided to do so when their caution became less active. They couldn't see to play without a light, and stakes were then on the table.

How long they played they did not know, but they went very speedily to the bottom of the liquor bottle. They began to quarrel, each accusing the other of cheating. Drawing a knife, one lunged at the other with it, across the table; the other rose and flung back to avoid the blow.

The table was overturned with a crash, and the lamp went to the floor; it shattered, and the kerosene caught from the burning wick. In a moment the room was filled with flames.

Stunned for an instant by what threatened, they made a feeble attempt

to fight out the fire; then they threw open the door, and, running out into the road, they fled.

In the room into which he had been flung, the Duke had been trying to get the cords off his wrists; he was in a vile temper. He piled anathemas on Bully Carson and on the men downstairs. If Carson had not been a fool, and chosen fools for this work, this mistake could not have been made. He had planned it and given Carson the money to carry it out, and this was the result. He had come skating down the lake, wondering how near he could be to the Pavilion and be safe when the trick was pulled off; and the ruffians had seized him, instead of the one chosen, who was Chip Merriwell.

The treatment he was receiving was meant for Chip.

What made his fate more bitter was his belief that there had been a clever turning against him of the tables; he thought the ruffians had been tampered with by Chip after Carson had hired them, and that this was done deliberately by them, for pay. So he heaped his curses on Chip as well as on Carson and the two stupid fools.

Then came the fire, and the terror it conveyed to the occupant of the upper room.

He heard the quarreling below, then the crashing of the overturned table and the yells of the men when they tried to stay the fire. He heard them throw the door open and run away like the cowards they were, forgetful of him and of his fate.

The Duke screamed with fear when he heard them go.

For a moment the terror of his situation almost overcame him; he felt sick and faint, his heart pounded up until it seemed almost in his throat; a panicky fear clouded his mind.

This passed. There was some courageous fiber in the Duke. He had been

spoiled in his training; he was always made to think he was finer and better than any one else, was always petted and flattered, and constantly treated by servants and even friends as if he were a superior being. If there had not been some good stuff in the Duke, he would have been far worse than he was at present.

As soon as he could control his jumping nerves, the Duke tried again to get free of the cords that held his wrists; but he could not do it. He could not break the cords, and struggling only drew the knots tighter.

Rolling over against the door, he drew up his legs and began to dash his heels against the panels, trying to break through.

The fire was roaring so that he could hear it plainly when he was not making too much noise, and the smoke that had begun to creep through the rooms reached him.

"Help!" he screamed, as he hammered with his heels against the door. "Help! Help!"

That some one passing in the road well out beyond might hear him, was his hope. He was beginning to hope, too, that the fire would be seen in the village in time for fire fighters to get out to it before it had made a finish of him.

As if in answer to his calls, he soon heard the jingling approach of a sleigh, and from the sound of the bells he could tell that the horses were galloping.

The fire had reached the stairway which led to the room where the Duke lay; he could see, under the door, the fiery licking of red tongues of flame, as gusts of air drove the flames higher; and now the smoke, getting into his room more and more, was troublesome, and threatened soon to be suffocating.

He was yelling himself hoarse, bawling for help to the occupants of the sleigh. When he heard them shouting

to each other outside in the snow, his screams to attract their attention became screeches.

He had been heard; he could soon tell that.

At the same time it was being said that no one could get up to the second floor; there were no ladders to be had, and the stairs were on fire.

Some one jingled away in the sleigh, going to the village to get ladders; the others, it seemed, were waiting for the ladders, or for the coming of the Fardale fire department.

The Duke knew that before the slow-moving local fire department could get there, or the sleigh return with ladders, he would be beyond the need of aid.

"Help!" he screamed.

His feet, flailing, could not shatter the stout panels of the door.

A little later, when the hot breath of the fire seemed trying to reach through the door to him, he heard a voice. It was followed by a crash that drove the door inward.

Chip Merriwell, head and shoulders wrapped round with a sleigh robe soaked in melted snow, groped into the room; he had come through the fire-filled stairway with it round him; he had dared the fury of the flames to reach and help the Duke, when Carson and Avery, and all the Duke's own followers, refused the risk, claiming that whoever tried it would be burned to death. The stairs were like a furnace.

"There's the hall yet," Chip gasped. "Here!"

"My feet and hands are tied!" the Duke shouted.

Chip got his knife out and cut the cords.

"Here!" he panted. "Can you walk?"

"I'll help you. Pull your coat up around your head. The hall here is free yet, and we can reach one of the windows."

"It's Merriwell!" said the Duke, bewildered.

He had been thinking Chip had sent him there, and he wondered about this; yet it was dull wonder, and a very active thankfulness. No one rejects the hand that is stretched out to save.

He did not need Chip's aid; he even scrambled ahead, along the hall, driven by fear; and he was at one of the windows, smashing it, when Chip came up. He was about to throw himself out through the window.

"No!" said Chip. "We can take time; we're safe now, unless the house falls. The fire is following, but we're well ahead of it here. I've got the driving lines from the sleigh for ropes."

He pushed the Duke through, after passing a length of the leather reins around the Duke's body, under his arms, and hung to the loops he had set, while the Duke slid downward to the ground.

Securing the lines to the support of a wall bracket, Chip Merriwell followed and dropped; but the sleigh robe and his clothing smoked from the heat.

"Burned much, Chip?" some one was asking, as he reeled into the arms that were stretched out to assist him.

"No," he gasped; "I—I think not; I think I'm all right!"

"Well, it sure was close; you didn't have much time! The old Pavilion is going."

Ten minutes later it was a flaming tinder box, with a tornadolike roar as the fire drove skyward, and a glare that reddened the snow for great distances around.

Trooper Stewart, Substitute

By H.E. Williamson

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

AFTER a seventeen-hour ride in pursuit of Jim Cowley, a crook, who has cheated a settler named Ballard, "Big Ben" Stewart, of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police, arrives at his home, where he finds his father, Dugald Stewart, and his younger brother, Denis. After resting, Ben takes up the pursuit, but is wounded and returns home. Denis dons his brother's uniform and takes up Cowley's trail. The "substitute trooper" meets with various exciting adventures, and is eventually made a prisoner by Cowley and Smoking Duck, a Cree Indian. Stewart is removed to Cowley's camp, where he is left in charge of Smoking Duck. He succeeds in making his escape, and, without weapons, he continues his flight. He meets Napoleon McShayne, a French Canadian, in whose company Stewart encounters Bray, a fur trader, who is on his way to Cowley's camp on Hay Lake. From the trader Stewart learns that Cowley has been purchasing an unusually large amount of corn. Stewart orders Bray to return to Fort Vermilion. A plan is arranged with McShane to secure Stewart's canoe and rifle, which had been left on the river bank when Stewart was captured. The trooper swims the river, and while he stands drying himself and clothing over a fire, two canoes appear on the river, which prove to be occupied by Ballard and his friends, all of whom are in search of Cowley. The settlers have made up their minds to deal with Cowley in their own way, without the interference of the law. During the night Stewart escapes from Ballard's camp, and makes his way to the point where he is to meet Napoleon McShayne.

CHAPTER XII.

Tightening Up.



LOSE beside his tiny signal fire, Denis waited there in the night. As he watched, he remembered one thing to which he had given little thought.

This was that Cowley was going to the foot of the lakes some time that same night to meet Bray. Presumably Cowley would not start until an hour or so before dawn. But what would happen when he reached the foot of the lake?

"He'll take Ballard's camp fire for that of Bray," mused Denis, frowning.

"When he gets close up, he'll discover his mistake and put for home. Then I'll be there to nab him—if nothing happens. Well, no use gathering trouble till the time comes."

Perhaps half an hour later, Denis sighted a dark blur on the lake, and heard a low hail. He flung a few scraps of birch bark on the fire, allowed them to blaze up until he himself was fully revealed; then he stamped out the fire and scattered it.

Waiting at the edge of the shore, he presently saw two craft come gliding in. The first was Napoleon's dugout, with Napoleon himself wielding his clumsy paddle. Towing after this was

the light canoe which Denis had left at the head of the lake on his unfortunate attempt to arrest Cowley.

"B'jou!" came the half-breed's voice. "I got heem. What you do dat man Bray, huh?"

"I took care of him, all right," said Denis, smiling. "He's gone back to Fort Vermilion, and you'll find your camp waiting as you left it. When you're at the fort, go in to Bray's store and he'll settle with you for whatever grub he used."

The 'breed grunted deep satisfaction at this information. Denis pulled in the canoe. To his delight, he found his duffel bag, blankets, and the rifle exactly as he had left them.

"Mebbeso' you make for pay?" suggested Napoleon diffidently.

Denis reflected.

"The man Bray sent you to find—the man named Cowley—has a camp half-way up this shore," he returned. "I'm going to arrest him. Also a 'breed named Petwanisip. Cowley has some fine pelts up there, and you can have your pick. Want to come along?"

This did not strike Napoleon's fancy.

"Mebbeso I come back. I'm want for sleep now," he said, which was a lie, since he had probably slept all the preceding afternoon, after reaching the head of the lake. "Huh? Mebbeso I come back dere to-morrow."

Denis chuckled.

"There's a bunch of four white men down at the foot of the lake," he rejoined. "They have rifles, and they'll be up here to-morrow——"

That was enough for Napoleon, who grunted deep:

"Mebbeso I go 'way quick, whatever. Got um pain in belly. Want for sleep. Mebbeso I come back, mebbeso not. Whatcheer!"

He edged his dugout toward the lake shadows. Denis laughed, glad to be rid of the fellow, who would be of no use in a fight.

"Run along, then, 'Poleon. You come back to-morrow afternoon, and the coast will be clear, I think. Then I'll pay you—and pay you pretty well, too. Don't come later than that, but come then sure. Sure?"

"Huh! Sure!" was the answer. Napoleon would keep his word also—to the police.

Denis watched the dark, slim shape of the dugout float out into the night and disappear into a speck under the starlight. Then he turned to his own canoe, and, with a feeling of deep relief, knelt once more on his blankets and took up his paddle, the rifle ready to hand. Ballard's canoe he left on the bank.

To land at Cowley's Creek about dawn would be time enough for his purposes. He could let Cowley go to the foot of the lake—probably to return faster than he had gone. In the meantime he could arrest Smoking Duck and make an investigation.

That was an important point—the investigation. Besides the original charge against Cowley, and that of resisting arrest, the police must know what the man was doing here, how he had gained possession of so much fur, and just what kind of an illegal game was forward. It might be that he was simply dealing out whisky without a permit, which was in itself a grave offense in a land where the vanishing Indians are protected by laws of iron against such men as Cowley.

With ten miles to travel against a steadily increasing headwind, and three hours in which to cover it, Denis fell into a steady, even stroke that he could keep up for days on end if need were. Keeping close to shore, he worked his way gradually along up the lake, noticing a perceptible increase in the wind as the night wore onward.

When the stars began to dim and die, and the grayness of dawn slowly lifted the darkness, Denis ran to the beach

and landed. It was vital that he make no mistake now, and he must be sure of his ground before going ahead.

For half an hour he lay on the bank, watching and waiting. Then an exclamation of satisfaction broke from him. Through the lifting gray dawn light he could discern the hills a half mile farther along the shore, where Cowley's camp was located. Sweeping the waters of the lake with his eyes, he then caught a moving speck halfway across, in line between the hills and the foot of the lake, and moving toward the latter.

Cowley was well on his way down the lake!

"Looks as though things were breaking my way at last," thought Denis, as he scrambled down the steep bank to his canoe. "Now I think that I'll have a little surprise for Mr. Smoking Duck before he gets through his breakfast."

Save for the cartridges which The Pigeon had expended, the Winchester rifle had a full magazine. Certain of this, Denis pumped in a fresh cartridge, knelt in the canoe, placed the rifle in front of him, and shoved out.

Now he paddled swiftly, putting all his strength into the work. In a short fifteen minutes he found himself lying outside the almost concealed creek entrance. Into this he headed, scanning the bushes and trees ahead for any sign of Smoking Duck.

No danger threatened, however. Without sighting a moving thing, he reached the log landing, jumped out, and lifted his canoe from the water. Then, rifle in hand, he stepped out on the trail to the shack.

Five minutes later, he was standing at the edge of the clearing, eying that odd cluster of buildings. From the chimney of the shack itself no smoke ascended, but from what seemed to be the lean-to just behind, a thin trail of wispy smoke was winding into the sky.

"That must be the 'fire' to which Cowley referred," thought Denis,

frowning. "If Smoking Duck isn't asleep, he's probably around there in back."

Hesitating no longer, he went across the clearing at a run, half expecting a rifle shot from the silent shack front. None came. Reaching the door of the shack, he peered inside and found the place empty, but from the back came the regular strokes of an ax!

Slipping around the side wall of the shack, to the right, Denis passed the lean-to which held the baled peltries. At the corner he paused, cocking his rifle, then stepped out around the end.

A dozen feet away stood Petwanisip, leaning on an ax; even that cocking of the rifle had attracted the half-breed's attention. Denis covered the man instantly.

"Hands up, Smoking Duck!"

Smoking Duck stared as if at an apparition. Then he cast a wild glance around, and Denis saw a rifle leaning against the wall. But it was three yards distant, and not even the desperate half-breed dared risk it. His hands rose slowly.

Each lean-to adjoined the other, here at the back. To the left of the rifle was a low doorway, near which Smoking Duck had been throwing the wood as he had cut it. Denis observed that this was firewood.

"Go to the left of that door, stand with your face to the wall, and stick your hands out behind your back!" commanded Denis.

There was a snap to his voice that spelled earnestness. His brown face convulsed with helpless rage, the half-breed did as Denis had ordered. Advancing to the man, Denis stuck his rifle in Petwanisip's back.

"Be mighty careful, now—this gun is cocked!"

With one hand he unlaced his mocasins, knotted the lacing, and drew it about the swarthy wrists. Then he set down his rifle, and in a few seconds

had knotted the buckskin thongs stoutly. Smoking Duck was trapped beyond escape.

"Walk around to the front of the cabin."

Driven by that relentless rifle, the sullen half-breed led the way around the shack to the door. Denis ordered him on inside, and so to the same little room where he himself had been confined. Removing the fellow's knife, he locked him in the inner room.

"Things are certainly coming fine for me!" he reflected, as from Cowley's stores he replaced his moccasin lacing. "Now we'll begin our investigations—and I'd better start right here."

Ben's Ross service rifle was in a rack, as was the revolver with its lanyard. Denis gladly took back these weapons, and found Cowley's revolver hanging to a nail. No other rifle was in evidence, however, and he conjectured that Cowley had not gone forth unarmed. This, however, he had expected.

Leaving Smoking Duck locked up safely, Denis sallied forth on his tour of inspection. First he visited the lean-to at the right, and in this he found a few sacks of corn, together with several sacks marked "Beans" and "Potatoes." A slash with his knife showed that all these were filled with corn.

"So Cowley has been importing all the corn he could, under every disguise possible!" thought Denis, looking down at the sacks. "The question is, why? In about two minutes your little game will be up, my friend!"

As he closed the rude door of the lean-to and stepped out into the early-morning sunshine, he paused suddenly. The night wind had died away; the morning was perfectly calm and clear. He stood motionless, listening—and the sound came again. It was a distant but still recognizable rifle crack. A third sounded instantly, then two or three shots came almost together. After that, silence.

"That's Cowley and Ballard!" thought Denis, his blue eyes narrowing. "If they haven't got him, he'll be back presently. If they have—then it's up to me to arrest Ballard's crowd. By Jasper, I don't like this business a little bit!"

No further sounds of conflict reached him. While he could sympathize with Ballard and the latter's friends, he knew perfectly well that he must arrest them if they had killed Cowley. He was representing Big Ben Stewart, and his uniform typified the law, and Ben would be held responsible for the upholding of the law.

Frowning uneasily, he passed on around the corner of the log structure, and again came to where he had found Smoking Duck at work. He stepped to the doorway, set down his rifle beside that of the half-breed, and entered the mysterious lean-to.

This proved to be unlighted save by the door, and for a moment his eyes could not pierce the semidarkness. Then, as he saw what manner of place this was, an exclamation of slow surprise broke from his lips.

"By Jasper! And to think that I never even suspected it—and dad was the closest guesser of all!"

To either side of him were piled small kegs, and above these were neat rows of glass half-pint flasks, precisely similar to that which he had found on the person of The Pigeon a few days previously. About half of them were filled with a white liquid, and the subtle odor of whisky which pervaded the room betrayed the nature of that liquid. But Denis merely noted these things in passing—his gaze was riveted on what lay beyond, across the room from him.

There, with a small fire still burning, was a complicated arrangement of metal which he did not understand at all, but whose usage was quite evident to him. He had seen pictures of stills before this, and knew at once that he

had solved the mystery of Cowley's corn and trading and illegal work. Every detail lay clear before him.

Here on Hay Lake, hundreds of miles from anywhere, Cowley had located a private whisky distillery. From Fort Vermilion to the summer Hudson Bay Post, farther down the Hay, he had brought up corn under various disguises, to avert possible suspicion, and had calmly proceeded to manufacture his own whisky and trade it to the Indians in the neighborhood.

"This is going the whisky-running game one better, all right!" exclaimed Denis, as he eyed the place. "Well, my job is clear—so here goes!"

Stepping outside, he took up Smoking Duck's ax and reentered. First drawing what was left of the fire and carefully stamping it out, he then waded into the still, ripping the copper worm and everything else into useless shreds of metal. He did his work thoroughly and left nothing undestroyed.

Then he turned his attention to the kegs and bottles. The latter he smashed where they were; the former he rolled out into the yard. Ten of the kegs were full of whisky, and these he smashed in and emptied. Satisfied at length that the whole affair had been destroyed, with the exception of one flask to be used as evidence if necessary, he wiped his dripping face and took up the two rifles.

"Here's a good morning's work for Ben, anyhow!" he muttered happily. "Now I'd better prepare my little reception committee for Mr. Cowley—or Ballard. I wonder which will come?"

CHAPTER XIII.

Cowley Cries "Enough!"

FROM the front of the shack, the lake was, of course, hidden by the intervening hill. Denis remembered that the presence of his canoe would warn Cowley if the latter ar-

rived in flight from Ballard, and struck off to the creek at a sharp trot.

Once here, he went on to the edge of the lake, and scrambled through the bushes to a vantage point. And here his mental question was answered instantly.

A scant quarter mile away was a canoe bearing a single paddler—evidently Cowley. The canoe was heading for the creek entrance, and was traveling fast. A mile or more behind it was another canoe bearing four men, and for a moment Denis eyed them, wondering why they did not catch up with Cowley. Then he laughed shortly.

"Overloaded, by Jasper! All four of 'em in her, and she must be right down to the water, so they don't dare put on speed. This simplifies things for me, then."

So, apparently, it did, since Cowley was coming squarely into the trap. At the moment it did not occur to Denis that Ballard's arrival might bring him a new problem, and the most difficult one which he had yet faced.

Returning to the log landing, he picked up his canoe and carried it a dozen yards away, placing it among the bushes, where the hurrying Cowley would never notice it. This done, he made his way back to the shack.

With his Ross rifle under his arm, he set the other weapons out of reach in a corner. A glitter on the floor caught his eye, and he stooped to pick up the handcuffs which he had intended to place on Cowley and had worn himself by the irony of circumstance. He slipped them into his pocket and opened the door of the prison chamber.

Smoking Duck was sitting on the floor, in sour apathy, his wrists as Denis had left them. Denis smiled cheerfully at him.

"I suppose you heard the sound of wreckage, my friend? Yes, your little game is up for good and all. By the

way, where's the key of those handcuffs? I want to use them on your precious partner pretty quick."

Smoking Duck glared up at him, and finally grunted out that the key was lost.

"So much the worse for Cowley, then—he'll have to reach headquarters before getting released from bondage. I see you still have some coffee on the fire—want a hot cup that'll cheer but not inebriate?"

The scowling half-breed emitted a flood of mingled Cree and English, which Denis rightly imagined to be a profane refusal, so he barred the door and left Smoking Duck to his own reflections.

A pot of coffee stood on the tiny fish-shanty stove, and in a couple of moments Denis had a fire going, for he had not eaten since the previous evening. Keeping one eye on the edge of the clearing, he swallowed some half-warmed coffee and a cold sour-dough biscuit—and looked out to see the figure of Cowley coming at a run, rifle in hand.

Denis cocked his own rifle, drew to one side of the doorway, and waited. On his way across the clearing, Cowley let out a roar for Smoking Duck, but the half-breed had not the presence of mind to call out a warning, or else he had not yet comprehended the full situation of affairs.

Thus Cowley came leaping into the trap. At sight of the man's brutal face, Denis saw that he had been badly frightened; but that would further his own ends.

"Hands up—hurry!"

That snappy, curt command stopped Cowley as if shot. He was looking squarely into the muzzle of the Ross rifle.

For a moment he was paralyzed. His undershot jaw dropped in blank amazement, and the ragged mustache drew back from his yellow teeth in a snarl.

Over the rifle sights the blue eyes of Denis were blazing at him, and with a single curse Cowley dropped his rifle and lifted his hands. As he did so, he took a backward step toward the door.

"Stop that!" snapped Denis. "Walk this way and put out your hands, wrists together. I mean business, Cowley, and you'd better believe it."

Cowley flung a hunted look over his shoulder at the clearing, then slowly obeyed the command, advancing toward Denis.

His heavy face showed mingled fear, bewilderment, and fury. But when Denis took the handcuffs from his pocket Cowley cried out sharply:

"Not that, Mister Trooper—fer Gawd's sake, don't iron me! There's four fellers right after me——"

"I know that," said Denis warily. "And one of them's Ballard, the man you cheated down on the Peace River. Your chickens are coming home to roost with a vengeance, eh? Stick out your hands!"

He held out the open handcuffs. But Cowley, breathing hoarsely, drew back in fear that was by no means assumed.

"I tell ye they're after me!" he repeated. "Look-a-here, don't lay me up where I can't shoot, ye fool! Them fellers aims to murder me, an' I got to handle a gun in about two minutes!"

"You'll handle no more guns for a while." Denis was smiling slightly, his eyes steady. "Bray has gone back to Vermilion, and I've just had the pleasure of smashing up your liquor stock and distillery. So you ran into Ballard, eh? I heard some shots—what happened down there?"

Cowley made as if to wipe his dripping brow, but halted as Denis' finger tightened on the trigger.

"They seen me first an' let drive. I dropped one o' them—leastways I winged him a bit, then I shoved fer home. Now, use sense! You ain't a-goin' to fix me where they'll pump

lead into me without me gettin' a chance to shoot——"

"Shut up that nonsense!" broke in Denis. "You're not going to be hurt unless you get gay with me. If you don't stick your hands here in ten seconds, I'm going to drop you with a bullet in your leg—take your choice!"

He meant the words, for he saw that the situation was grave in the extreme. Cowley had shot one of the four pursuers, and that meant trouble. Men of Ballard's stamp would require tenfold vengeance for that shot. None the less, Denis saw his duty clear-cut before him, and intended to protect his prisoner to the utmost.

With a growling snarl, Cowley advanced and held forth his hands, wrists together. Denis lifted the open handcuffs in his left hand—and, as he did so, Cowley swiftly struck the rifle aside and bore him down with a pantherlike leap.

Taken utterly by surprise, Denis went back and the rifle was knocked across the shack with a clatter. Cowley's fist drove home on his cheek, knocking him into the wall; but as the ruffian followed, Denis flung himself to one side and scrambled up.

A fierce rush of anger swept from his mind all thought of the revolver at his belt, and he went into the man with both fists, his blue eyes blazing. He landed right and left to the face, then went staggering away, groaning, as Cowley's heavy boot took him squarely in the side. Cowley was after him with a roar.

That foul kick infuriated Denis as nothing else had the power to madden him, and when the ruffian tried the same tactics again his anger drove new life into his veins. Disdaining to employ such tricks himself, he lifted a blow through the other's guard that went straight to the mouth and sent Cowley reeling back with broken teeth. On into him went Denis, placing blow

after blow, his lips clenched in silent fury and his fists beating a tattoo on the man's face.

Cowley lurched into the wall, cursing; flung back, met a smashing left hook that rocked him on his heels, and then swung himself bodily into a clinch. At the same instant, Denis stepped into a bearskin heaped loosely on the floor. Endeavoring to get clear of Cowley's hug, the bearskin tripped and brought him down on the floor—underneath.

The breath was knocked out of Denis by the impact. He lay gasping and helpless while Cowley, above, hit him twice heavily. Then the ruffian gripped Denis by the throat in an effort at systematic choking. Aware of his advantage, without pity, he was deliberately trying to get Denis out of the way.

Vainly and ineffectually Denis struck upward—a man flat on his back cannot hit much of a blow. Cowley tore at him with snarling oaths, the great fingers digging into his throat until it seemed that his flesh was coming asunder. His breath was stopped.

With all things going black, and the black changing to specks of fire that danced through his brain, a final coherent thought came to him. It was the recollection of his revolver.

His fumbling hands went to the lanyard in blind desperation. Even in that moment Denis fought against himself; he must not fire! He must take Cowley alive, he must bring in this man a prisoner. With that great thought pounding against his brain, Denis pulled out the gun and struck upward with it wildly.

Cowley caught the full effect of that blow. The fore sight of the revolver took him just above the temple and ripped to the bone. Again Denis struck out blindly, and again the heavy revolver landed, almost in the same place.

Those two blows were enough. Denis felt the terrible grip on his throat relax, and felt Cowley's weight tumble away

from him. Little more than conscious himself, he rolled over and dragged himself up by the logs of the wall.

He leaned against the wall, hanging on weakly and panting for breath, fighting against the terrible faintness that oppressed him and threatened to conquer his reeling brain. That life-and-death struggle had all but drowned him.

Gradually his sight cleared, as air returned to his gasping lungs. There at his feet lay Cowley, stretched out, his head bleeding. Denis' first thought was that he had struck too hard; dropping to his knees, he breathed quick relief at finding Cowley's heart beating. The man was only stunned.

A glance at the clearing showed no sign of Ballard's forces. After all, that battle had taken only a few moments, though it had seemed an age to Denis.

For a little he stood gazing down at Cowley, while strength came back to him and his throbbing lungs drank in the sweet air. To one side lay the handcuffs where he had dropped them. Picking them up, he drew Cowley's wrists together and snapped the bracelets in place.

"I've landed him at last," he muttered, with a deep sigh of relief. "And it's a lucky thing for me that I made sure of Smoking Duck first! I can't leave this fellow to bleed to death, though."

Searching through Cowley's pockets, he discovered a ragged bandanna. With this and his own handkerchief he bandaged the man's bleeding scalp, roughly but effectively. While doing so, Cowley's eyelids fluttered, then opened.

"Lie still!" cautioned Denis. "You can get up in a minute."

Cowley lifted his wrists, saw the handcuffs, and relaxed with a low growl. When the bandaging was finished, Denis went to the door of the smaller room and unbarred it. Smok-

ing Duck still reposed on the floor, wide awake and glaring like a trapped beast. Denis turned to the watching Cowley.

"Come along, now, and get in here! Ballard may show up at any minute, and I want you off my hands——"

"Ballard!"

Cowley sat up, fright stamped anew in his coarse features.

"Ye ain't goin' to let 'em have me, Mister Trooper? Fer the love of——"

"Shut up!" snapped Denis curtly. "Ballard and his friends won't lay a finger on you, I'll promise you that. You join your friend and fellow citizen in here, and go to sleep. I'll attend to the rest."

Cowley looked at him. Into the man's rough face crept a slow gleam of admiration as he met the steady gaze of Denis.

"Mister, ye sure are some man!" he exclaimed. "Ye got me—ye got me proper, and I give ye the best I had at that. I thought I'd slide out o' here with a good wad, but ye sure played the game hard. No, I reckon I got to take my med'cine now, and I ain't got any kick comin'. You blasted redcoat!"

With this grudging tribute to his conqueror, Cowley lifted himself and staggered into the smaller room, sinking down beside Smoking Duck. Denis shut the door and dropped the heavy bar into place.

The clearing was still empty of life outside the shack. Sinking down on one of the two bunks, Denis rested his aching head in his hands.

"The worst of the job is done," he thought, "unless—unless that lynching party is after gore. If they are, it looks to me as if they'll have to get it. By Jasper, I have Cowley safe, and I mean to keep him!"

He lifted his head at sound of a distant shout. Then, picking up his Ross rifle, he laid it across his knees and waited, facing the doorway.

CHAPTER XIV.

Ballard Shows Fight.

DENIS STEWART was unutterably weary, both physically and mentally.

He had been on a tremendous strain for the past three days, and the sleep which he had gained had been fitful and at odd intervals. He had drawn heavily on his splendid physique, and as he waited for Ballard's coming he realized that he could not endure another physical struggle. Nor did he intend to.

"If I can't down him by sheer will power, I'm gone," he thought wearily. "If I add a bit of target practice, I may pull through—but it may not come to that."

No false hopes were his. He knew the temper of those settlers, and knew that they would be savagely determined to get hold of Cowley. He was there to prevent their doing so—that was all.

Another shout sounded, closer this time, and another. Denis realized that they were trailing Cowley, having found the creek entrance and evidently being without knowledge of what lay ahead. He sat quietly, gazing through the open doorway at the sunny clearing, and waited.

There was a note in those shouts which he did not like, a menacing, bloodhound note which spelled danger. This was a man hunt, firing the hunters' blood with ferocity, demanding a victim, knowing neither reason nor mercy. And at the end of the trail sat Denis, his blue eyes cold as ice.

Then he sighted the hunters.

They appeared in a group, running, and halted abruptly at the edge of the clearing as they scanned the cabin. One of the men, that same "Ed" who had on the previous evening pierced through Denis' similarity to his brother, had left his arm in a sling, but held a revolver in his right hand.

That silent cabin evidently puzzled

them, and they were not sure whether they had run Cowley to earth, or whether he had taken horse and fled. They discussed matters; then, at a gesture from Ballard, the other three scattered and took to cover along the edge of the clearing. Ballard himself, rifle under his arm, stepped out and walked toward the shack, his eyes flitting over it searchingly.

"If Cowley was here with his rifle, Ballard would be a dead man—and knows it," thought Denis admiringly. "There's one brave man, at all events!"

Ballard evinced no hesitation, though he must have known that he was taking his life in his hand by that open advance. He strode across the clearing, and paused at the doorway, too dazzled by the sunlight to make out objects within.

"Come in, Ballard!" spoke up Denis quietly. "Come in; this is Stewart speaking. But leave your men where they are."

Ballard stared in blank astonishment, as his eyes finally made out the figure of Denis sitting on the bunk opposite the door. With one swift glance around the otherwise empty room, he stepped inside and eyed Denis.

"Well, for the love of Mike!" he ejaculated slowly. "Thought you had vamosed down the river last night."

"No," smiled Denis. "I borrowed one of your canoes and left it on the shore, half a mile below here. You'll find it waiting."

"Hang the canoe!" snapped the other. "Where's Cowley? We want that cuss."

"That's really too bad," returned Denis pleasantly, keeping his finger on the trigger of the rifle across his lap. "You won't find him."

"Eh?" Ballard's face set savagely. "Has he cleared out o' here?"

"Not exactly. By the way, there's some coffee on the stove. Help yourself."

Ballard was puzzled by this cool reception. With a bare nod, he crossed to the stove and poured out some of the bitter black coffee, swallowing it at a gulp. Then he set down the cup, his eyes fastened on the barred door.

"What's behind that door, Stewart?"

Denis shifted his rifle a trifle.

"Hold your rifle just as it is, Ballard!" he said, his voice biting like a whip. "Cowley is behind that door."

The settler stiffened. His eyes went to Denis in keen surmise, noted the rifle trained on him, and rested on the eyes of Denis. The two looked at each other steadily, neither wavering. But Ballard did not lift his rifle.

"Look a' here, Stewart; we'd better have a little talk. I want to know where you stand, and I want to know mighty quick."

"I'm not standing at present," and Denis smiled. "I'm sitting on Cowley's bunk. Meanwhile, you have the floor, and I'm ready to listen. Shoot ahead!"

"I'll do it," nodded Ballard, his face hard and inflexible. "You know what we come here for, and why. Mebbe you don't know what happened at the foot o' the lake this mornin', do ye?"

"I do," assented Denis quietly. "I believe you shot at Cowley."

"Uh-huh. And the skunk put a bullet into Ed's shoulder, curse him! Now we aim to life him in a rope necklace, where he belongs, and we don't aim to be interfered with, none whatever. I hope you get me."

Denis smiled again—that same deceptive smile.

"I understand you perfectly well, Ballard. You intend to commit murder by hanging Cowley. Cowley may deserve it, of course, but I'd hate to see you four men getting into court on a murder charge."

Ballard stared at him.

"Out with it, Stewart—what's your position? You ain't figgering on playin' any low-down tricks, are you?"

"Quite the contrary, Ballard. I came here this morning and arrested Smoking Duck, a half-breed. I then arrested Cowley, when he returned from meeting you. The two are in the next room together. Cowley has been making white whisky up here, or what passes for whisky with the Indians, and has been trading it for peltries."

"Making whisky?" ejaculated Ballard. "You sure?"

"You'd better take a look at what's left of the still and whisky around in back. As I told you last night, I'm representing my brother, Big Ben. Also, I'm representing the law. That's exactly where I stand, Ballard."

The other looked steadily at him.

"There's four of us, all told, and one o' you," he rejoined slowly. "D'you mean to say you're goin' to stop us takin' Cowley?"

"Exactly," nodded Denis.

"Mebbe you figger on releasin' Cowley and the 'breed to take a hand?"

"They are my prisoners, Ballard. They remain my prisoners—in that room. I have promised them protection from your lynching party, and intend to keep my promise."

"Then all I can say is, you're a durned fool," exploded Ballard angrily. "We're goin' to get Cowley, hear me? If you start any foolin' like you talk about, we'll pile into you and make you wish you was somewhere else——"

"Don't forget, I'm representing the law here," interposed Denis.

The settler spat scornfully.

"Law—thunder! You ain't representin' nothin', no more'n I am! Just 'cause your brother is Trooper Stewart don't give you no license to parade around in them clothes, does it? Not much. You ain't no soldier at all; you're just an ordinary man like me, and a blamed fool to boot. Are you goin' to get out the way or not?"

Denis smiled again.

"I'm very sorry, but I must refuse

your invitation to move, Mr. Ballard. Please observe that this rifle of mine is cocked, and is trained on your left knee. Now step outside and tell your friends what you've heard."

Without a word more the settler turned and departed scornfully. Striding a dozen feet from the shack door, he waved an arm.

"Come on in, boys!"

The other three appeared, and Ballard went to meet them. Denis watched their meeting and saw that Ballard was evidently describing what he had found in the cabin. The other three men broke into strident laughter—and that was a bad sign.

Denis rose and walked to the door, pausing just outside. All four turned to gaze at him, and he held up a hand.

"Just a moment, my friends," he called pleasantly. "Do you see that stump, twenty feet to your right?"

The stump which he indicated was small, and from one side a jagged splinter of wood stood up for six inches. It was white spruce, plain to see, only a hundred feet from the shack.

"Just watch that stump for a moment," went on Denis.

Lifting his rifle to his shoulder, he sighted at the splinter and pressed the trigger—seemingly without an instant's hesitation. At the crack the splinter seemed to blow away into nothing.

"Thank you for your kind attention," smiled Denis. "That's all."

A moment's silence greeted this display of shooting ability. Denis turned and went back to the bunk, seating himself as before, facing the door.

The four men conferred together. Then, with another laugh, they marched forward to the shack, Ballard in the lead. Denis waited until they came close to the doorway, then he lifted his rifle.

"One moment, please, gentlemen!"

They halted. Ed, the wounded man, called in rough but earnest tones:

"None o' the old stuff, Stewart! We know darned well you ain't a-goin' to shoot us, so don't try no bluff. We don't want to hurt you."

"An' we know you ain't no soldier, so cut it out," added another.

"All that is perfectly true," Denis smiled. "Take a look at my rifle—you see where it is pointing?"

They squinted in at him, Ballard leaning over. Denis was pointing his rifle at the doorsill.

"What you say is quite correct," he went on steadily. "I wouldn't shoot you down at all. But I am equally correct in saying that you won't get Cowley unless you shoot *me* down—which I don't think you'll do by a good deal. I have several cartridges in this rifle, perfectly good ones, and you've seen that I know how to shoot."

"Of course, you can rush me. Very likely you will. But let me impress on you just one thing. I can fire at least two shots before you reach me, and then I have a revolver for quick work. The first man of you who sets his foot on that door threshold will get a bullet in it—in his foot. It'll make a nasty wound, too. Step right along, Ballard! You'll have to murder me to get Cowley, you know. Step up, gentlemen!"

No one accepted the invitation.

The seated figure of Denis, the rifle leveled and waiting, gave them pause. By his steady voice and cold blue eye they knew that he was in deathly earnest. The first to step on the threshold would probably be crippled for life.

"Hurry up!" snapped Denis suddenly. "Ballard, you're the prime mover of this lynching expedition, so step along with you! If you don't choose to chance it, put a bullet into me. You set out to do murder, so here's your opportunity. Step out, Ballard!"

"Don't ye do it!" cried one of the

men hastily. "He *means* it—look at his face! Don't ye do it!"

Most certainly Denis meant it, and his resolution was reflected in his battered face. Under the blaze of his cold eyes the four men paused, irresolute.

Then, with an oath, Ballard shoved forward, throwing up his rifle.

"You shoot me an' you get a bullet!" he cried.

"Step up!" said Denis coldly.

The settler heaved forward, but his face was whiter than that of Denis, and sweat was on his brow. With a quick motion he raised his right foot over the threshold, brought it down, and then poised it an inch from the floor.

"Touch the floor!" said Denis. "I'm ready."

Ballard heaved his shoulders forward, straining, as if some invisible wall were holding him back; then—he turned and stepped away.

"Go to thunder!" he snapped. "Come on home, boys. I guess Stewart is competent to get that skunk into jail without us helpin'."

Denis lay back weakly in the bunk and watched them go.

CHAPTER XV.

The Back Trail.

SORRY, Cowley, but you'll have to wear those clear into headquarters. I wouldn't trust you an inch without 'em, either."

Denis smiled genially at the swindler, who grunted sheepishly.

With Smoking Duck, they were seated about the ruins of Cowley's table, enjoying the repast of venison and coffee which Denis had prepared.

Ballard and his friends had departed to the foot of the lake. Convinced of their going, Denis had taken a plunge in the creek and freshened himself, then had set about getting a meal.

He ate amid due precautions, how-

ever. Cowley wore his irons. Smoking Duck, with his hands free to eat, sat in the corner across the room from Denis' rifle.

"I heard what you said to them fellers," said Cowley gruffly. "Mister, I take off my hat to ye. As I said, I'll have to take my med'cine, an' I'll hold it agin' ye for a while, too—but you're some man, believe me! Any one who can lick Jim Cowley, an' then pull off the stunt ye pulled off on them——"

"Forget it!" smiled Denis.

"Ye would ha' shot, wouldn't ye?"

"Maybe I would," nodded Denis, keeping a wary eye on Smoking Duck.

Before he could say more he was startled by a shadow at the doorway. Catching at his rifle, he whirled—to see the grinning face of the half-breed, Napoleon McShayne.

Behind McShayne were two other figures. One was the Slave Indian whom Denis had encountered on the upper Hay River, old John Tadetecha, the other was a Slave unknown to Denis. These last two paused outside, while Napoleon entered.

Before the "Whatcheer!" of greeting had been exchanged, Denis had swiftly leaped at a scheme which would relieve him of much labor and trouble. No more speech passed for a moment, Napoleon filling a pipe with whittled tobacco; then, seeing that Smoking Duck had finished his meal, Denis ordered him to stand up.

"Tie that fellow's hands behind his back, Poleon!" he directed. "Tie 'em tight, and do the job well!"

When the scowling Petwanisip was safely secured, Denis ordered him and Cowley outside, following them promptly.

"Now, Poleon," he went on, "you go around to that left-hand lean-to, and you'll find a very good bunch of fur. Haul it all out here. You go and help him, John; I expect you traded some of those furs yourself,

didn't you? Well, you'll get no more whisky here. Hop along, all of you!"

The two Slave Indians grinned as if at some excellent joke, and followed Napoleon. The three broke into the fur cache, and presently began to haul forth bale after bale of fur. Most of the pelts were common, two or three bales being separately wrapped and proving to contain some dark marten and cross fox pelts of better promise.

Two of these better bales Denis handed over to Napoleon, as the pay which he had promised for assistance rendered. The second Slave gave his name as Tommy, and it proved that he had come to get some whisky in return for a few sorry muskrat pelts. Dennis addressed him straightly:

"Tommy, you clear out of here in a hurry! These pelts are going to stay here till your people come for them. Spread the word that whoever has traded to Cowley for whisky can come and get his furs back; that ought to be simple enough, because each fur is marked by the man who caught it. Don't try any stealing, or you'll go to jail. Run along now!"

Tommy departed toward the creek, wondering.

"You ain't goin' to hand back all them peltries!" groaned Cowley, seeing the fruits of his long illegal labors thus scattered. "You got to take 'em along, by law——"

"I'm the law in this case," snapped Denis. "You shut up! John, you and Napoleon come here!"

The two stood before him, grinning vacuously.

"I have to take these two prisoners up the Hay to my father's homestead—you know the place, John. Did you take that message to my father?"

Old John nodded his head, and reported that all was well at the homestead. Denis continued:

"Napoleon, I want you to paddle them up in your dugout. John and I will come with you in my canoe. I'll have to go all the way without sleep, and I won't be able to put in any work at the paddle. After we get there, my brother will want to take these men on to the Peace River, and will probably hire you to help him. You take us up, as I have said, and I'll promise you good pay in goods and tobacco. How about it?"

Neither of the aborigines was anxious to work, but on the other hand, Denis represented the law to them, and it is not wise to refuse aid to the law.

Five minutes later, with the two prisoners safely barred in the smaller room, Denis rolled up and lay down across the door. They were to start up lake at sunset, and until that time he was going to make up sleep in anticipation of his long watch on the river trail, for he would not dare trust either Indian to guard the prisoners.

"By Jasper!" he thought sleepily. "I've made good for Ben, after all. But, believe me, I've changed my mind about going into the mounted. Yes, sir; I'm contented to remain a plain, unadorned American—this law-and-order business is just a bit too strenuous for Trooper Stewart, substitute!"

The End.

A RECORD-BREAKING BEET

A RED beet that weighs eight and one-half pounds was grown by Mrs. Peter Glatfelter, of Spring Grove, Pennsylvania. It is twenty-two inches long, and twice as many inches in circumference. She says she has not been able so far to find a pot large enough to boil it in.

Skates, Skis, and a Saphead

BY
William Wallace Cook



DEEPLY steeped in gloom perfectly described the condition of young Nixon J. Peters. Loneliness and bitter regret pervaded his soul as he sat by himself on the rear seat of the flying sleigh and thought of what might have been. He had reason to believe that he was the best skater and ski jumper entered in the winter sports' contests at Devil's Lake, on the preceding afternoon, and yet he had lost both main events by an apparent failure to look well to his equipment at the last moment. Every one had expected that he would blunder somewhere, and so no one was greatly disappointed; that is, no one except Nixon J. Peters.

Almost at the take-off of the jump, one of Nixon's skis had broken. He had taken a wild header, and landed in a snow bank with heels in the air. A big laugh had been the result. Also, he had cast a skate at the critical moment of the skating race, and the other contestants had slid past him, Porter Markham in the lead. This same Porter Markham, too, had won the ski jump. Now, Porter Markham was on the front seat of the sleigh, driving

blithely, and exchanging jest and small talk with Hesther Morton, who sat beside him. Truly, Nixon J. Peters' lines had fallen in hard places!

Nixon was "Nix" to those who knew him best. Often he suffered the crowning indignity of being referred to as the "Saphead." He had heard the unlovely nickname applied to him many times while digging himself out of the snow bank. It had punctuated the merriment released by his sorry mishap. Hesther Morton had joined in the riot of laughter. Nixon knew this only too well, for she was the first person he had seen after digging the snow out of his eyes. For Hesther to be amused at his expense—well, that was something that hurt.

Then, while seeking, with dogged resolution, to retrieve himself on the steel runners, a strap had broken, and a skate had shot off across the glittering ice. Peters had slipped and slammed around on the course like a crazy curling stone, finally cutting the feet out from under a fat spectator, who called him Saphead right to his face! Ah, what a wind-up for a sorry afternoon! Peters clenched his hands in his bearskin gloves and crouched down on the rear seat in a fruitless effort to efface himself.

He was nineteen, and Porter Markham was twenty. They both worked for Uncle Silas Goddard, who had a ranch in Montana, and made a business of sending range horses into North Dakota to be halter broken and sold to the settlers. Goddard was "uncle" to all his men, in the sense that gives an avuncular character to every genial, middle-aged person who looks after the welfare of younger employees.

In the early summer, Uncle Silas had sent a hundred horses into North Dakota. Business had not been good, and late fall found half the horses still on hand. These horses were being wintered at the Morton ranch, on marsh hay, cut and stacked by Peters, Markham, and Reece Bailey, who had been sent by Uncle Silas to take care of the horse herd. When spring came, there was a promise of turning off every head of the stock at a good profit.

The winter, so far, had not been particularly lonely for the Montana men. The snows of December had been light, and it had been possible for the horses to paw out considerable forage in the hills. January, however, brought in a good fall of "the beautiful," and it had been necessary to corral and shelter the animals and to go extensively into the feeding.

Reece Bailey, Uncle Si's foreman, found time to play cribbage with Lance Morton, Hesther's father; and Peters and Nixon acquired leisure for skating and skiing, popular sports at their home ranch in the Rockies. A river—it would have been a creek in a country of large streams—flowed through the Morton holdings, and its glassy surface offered a resistless invitation to the steel runners. As for the skiing, there were plain and hill for running, climbing, and glissading. While Bailey and Morton were busy at their eternal "fifteen-two, fifteen-four," Peters and Markham were skating or skiing, often with Hesther, who was fond of both sports. The

girl, if appearances were to be believed, was rather fond of Markham, also, but had few smiles to waste on Peters.

In his bashful, blundering way, Peters tried to make himself agreeable to Hesther. He was big and awkward, however, and had tow-colored hair, a slow wit, and few graces of speech or manner. His efforts to impress Hesther were overwhelmed by the never-failing persiflage and the rakish dress and carriage of handsome Porter Markham. Markham possessed a confidence in himself that was sublime, a confidence that shone brilliantly in contrast with the clumsy ineffectiveness of Nixon J. Peters.

Peters realized this, and nourished a bitter grudge against his physical and mental shortcomings. He used to dream of a fire at the ranch, in which he posed as a hero, and bore the fair Hesther to safety from the ranch house, through a furnace of flames. Then, in his visions, he pictured the girl as taking his hand and humbly asking his forgiveness for her failure to perceive his sterling qualities from the first. During such moments of illusion the Saphead was almost happy. But the ranch house never took fire, and the chance to prove himself a hero by rescuing Hesther Morton was denied by fate.

In mid-January, however, an opportunity presented itself, through the winter sports at Devil's Lake. Markham and Peters entered themselves in the ski-jumping contest and skating race. They drove the fifty miles which separated Morton's from the lake, and Hesther went with them, to see the "carnival of sports" and to spend a night or two with relatives in Devil's Lake City. Again Peters had dreams; but now, on the homeward drive, every hope was shattered, and he longed for a period of blank obscurity and complete retirement.

He could have declared that one of his skis had been tampered with, and

that one of his skate straps had been all but cut through with the point of a knife. Examination made him sure of both facts, yet it had not occurred to him to "sob." He had blundered in not making certain of his skis and skates beforehand, so he could not see how any one but himself was at fault. As he crouched in the back seat of the sleigh he considered requesting Uncle Silas Goddard to recall him to the Montana headquarters. There, at least, he would be rid of Markham, and cut off forever from the demoralizing and disdainful eyes of Hesther.

Yes, he would go back to the home ranch, and he would do this in spite of something which he knew, and which was very important to his future. It was common knowledge that a place of preferment was to be given by Uncle Silas either to Peters or to Markham—a foremanship at a newer ranch, with a chance to acquire an interest in the horses and cattle. Reece Bailey was watching Peters and Markham, and on his report Uncle Silas would act. To retire from the North Dakota venture of the ranchowner now would cut Peters off entirely from promotion, and drop the plum in Porter Markham's hand. But Peters, in the bitterness of his heart, was allowing nothing aside from his own peace of mind to influence him. Yes, he would ask Uncle Silas to recall him to Montana.

"You still there, Nix?" Markham suddenly asked, turning to look rearward.

Peters grunted.

"You're so blamed quiet," went on Markham, with a laugh, "that I reckoned you might have taken another header into the snow, back a ways on the trail."

Hesther joined in the laugh, and, in spirit, poor Peters writhed.

The short day was closing, and the sun went down beyond the white horizon in cold glory. They were five

miles from Morton's, and Markham had driven the horses so hard that they were nearly fagged. They breathed wheezingly, and frost coated their heaving sides. The pace dragged, in spite of Markham's relentless use of the whip.

"Anyhow," spoke up Peters suddenly, "you might think of the team a little, Porter. They're near tuckered."

"Who's doing this driving?" cried Markham. "I never yet had to ask a saphead for advice in handling horses." And again the whip fell on the straining flanks.

Peters clenched his fists in the bear-skin gloves. It occurred to him that he could lift Markham bodily out of the front seat, take his place, and do the driving himself; but he did not.

The horses struggled on, and in the falling dark the travelers topped a "rise" that gave them a dim view of the buildings of Morton's ranch. A light showed in one of the ranch-house windows like a star, and toward it Markham drove, and presently halted at the door.

"Now that I've handled the reins all the way from Devil's Lake, Nix," remarked Markham, as he jumped out, and helped Hesther to alight, "I allow it's up to you to take care of the team. Cold, Essie?"

"Not a bit," the girl answered, and hurried toward the door. Markham followed her, and Peter drove on to the stable.

As he unhitched and brought the horses into the shelter, he was a little surprised to discover that there were no other animals in the place. The team was Morton's, but Bailey's cow horse, together with those of Peters and Markham, should have been in the stable; unless Bailey was out at the corral and shelter sheds, looking after the fifty range horses that were kept there.

Peters lighted a lantern, removed the harness from the horses, and, after put-

ting hay in the mangers, began rubbing the animals down with an old gunny sack. He was hard at this when a call reached his ears from the house: "Peters! This way—on the jump!"

It was Markham's voice, and there was a note of alarm in it that startled Peters. Lantern in hand, he hurried out of the stable and made his way to the house. Flinging the door wide, he crossed the threshold into the ranch-house sitting room.

"What's wrong, Porter?" he asked.

The "cannon-ball" stove glowed with heat. That, and the bright oil lamp, dazzled Peters' eyes for the moment, and he could not see what was going on in the room.

"Bailey has been hurt," came the voice of Markham. "Every horse in the herd has been driven off by thieves—and they even took Bailey's mount with the rest. Biggest outrage that ever happened in these parts! I'd like to know what the blamed country is coming to!"

The blur lifted from before Peters' eyes. He saw Bailey, his face twisted with pain, lying on a couch. Mrs. Morton bent over him, bathing a wounded shoulder from a basin of hot water. Her husband was walking up and down, fuming and sputtering. Markham stood beside the couch, looking down at the foreman with a queer expression on his face. Hesther, all excited, was removing her wraps with shaking hands.

"Horses stolen!" gasped Peters, dazed by the weird calamity. "How could it happen? Is Bailey badly hurt?"

"Don't stand there gawping!" fussed Morton. "Something has got to be done, and it's up to you and Markham to do it. A gang of scoundrels from across the line made off with the stock; and it's been no more than three hours since it happened. Take my team and get to Roscommon. The sheriff's got to be notified. Bailey says the thieves

are making for the north, and if you and Markham are quick a posse can get between the gang and the boundary line. For heaven's sake, Peters, wake up!"

Peters shook himself, put down the lantern, and came to the side of the couch.

"Why don't Markham wake up?" he asked. "Hasn't he suggested anything yet?"

"Nothing to suggest," Markham answered, flashing a sharp look at Peters. "It's twenty miles to Roscommon, and no chance of getting there ahead of the thieves and the stolen stock. The only animals we can put our hands on are the two that brought us from Devil's Lake, and they are done up. You know that, Peters."

"What about using skates or skis?" inquired Peters. "By thunder, there is a way of getting to Roscommon in time to help the sheriff head off the stolen stock!"

II.

There was a dominant, compelling note in the voice of Peters. It was so unexpected in its assertiveness that every one in the room was startled. His washed-out blue eyes fenced aggressively with the snapping black eyes of Markham.

"Skates or skis!" repeated Markham, his upper lip curling. "Why, it's all of thirty miles to Roscommon, if you follow the crooks o' the river! And how much would you figure it by skis, if you crossed Bear Butte instead of going around it? Talk sense, if you know how, Nix! Don't forget the fellows who rustled our stock have three hours the lead."

"How far will three hours of driving in this snow get the stolen herd?" returned Peters. "The thieves will have a tough job of it. They——"

Bailey twisted his flushed face from under the ministering hands of Mrs.

Morton. "The varmints are goin' north by the Long Knife Dry Wash," he said, his voice shaking with the pain of his wound. "That's only three miles west of Roscommon. If you boys could get word to the sheriff somehow, I reckon he might head off the raiders with a posse. But if you do anything, you'll have to do it quick. Porter," and his eyes swerved to Markham, "I'm lookin' to you—Uncle Si Goddard is lookin' to you. Nigh on to five thousand dollars' wuth of horses are being pushed to'rds the border, and here I'm helpless to do a thing."

"It don't seem possible to do a thing, Reece," returned Markham. "If we could round up a crowd of men in short order, and take after the thieves on fresh horses, like enough we might overhaul 'em. But where's the riding stock? Why, Morton's nearest neighbor is ten miles away!"

Peters flashed a disapproving glance at Markham, pulled off his bearskin gloves, and slumped down in a chair by the stove. From the pockets of his overcoat he took his skates, also a new strap he had secured in Devil's Lake City. Quickly he replaced the broken strap with the new one.

"You going to try and get to Roscommon by river, Nix?" Morton inquired.

"I figure the chances are better that way than going over Bear Butte on skis," Peters answered. "The river's clean of snow, and mostly the ice is like a lookin'-glass. I'm going to do my best to get word to the sheriff and to start a Roscommon doctor this way to look after Bailey."

"You're locoed!" growled Markham. "It's all right to get a doctor for Reese, here, but there ain't a chance to save the stock this side of the line. Let the raiders get it across the boundary, and then take the matter up with the Canadian Mounted Police. That's my advice."

"If you wait till the stock is out of this country," put in the rancher, "there won't be a chance."

"Not a chance on earth," agreed Bailey. "That outfit o' thieves knowed exactly what they was about. Everything was cut and dried, and somebody sure tipped 'em off regardin' the lay-out here. I'll bet a thousand ag'inst a chink wash ticket that them bronks will be took care of across the line so'st they can't be located by nobody. Them thieves picked a time when I was alone at the shelter sheds and Porter and Nix was to the winter sports at the lake. They dropped me out o' my saddle without any whys or wherefores, and then made off with my mount and sent a man to the stable for Peters' and Markham's ridin' horses. By the time I covered the mile back to the ranch house the stock was well on the way north. I—I——"

He broke off abruptly, clenching his teeth hard as a spasm of pain ran through his body.

"I'll get another coat," remarked Peters, rising from his chair and starting for the door that led to his room. "It won't be possible to make any kind of time in a long overcoat like this." He disappeared.

Markham came to the side of the couch. "If Peters has a chance, Reece," said he, "he'll make a bobble of some kind and spoil it all. That's his way. I better go to Roscommon myself. Peters can use his skates, and take the river trail, and I'll use my skis and go over the butte. I don't think we have a ghost of a show to head off the stock, but it's up to us to see what we can do."

"That's the talk!" exclaimed Morton approvingly. "The thieves had help from this ranch," he added darkly, tossing a significant glance toward the door through which Peters had just passed, "and I haven't got a whole lot of con-

fidence in at least one man around here."

"Peters is square," Bailey averred. "Square as a die. He jest don't seem to have the knack for puttin' his idees across. The man that saves them bronks, Porter," he added significantly, "is goin' to make the biggest kind of a hit with Goddard."

"If any one connects with the sheriff at Roscommon in time to save the bronks," Markham returned, "it will be me." He spoke with a confidence that thrilled every one in the room, and Hesther, if the red in her cheeks and the sparkle in her eyes were any indication, most of all. "I'll be ready," he finished, moving toward the door, "in about two shakes."

"You must have some hot coffee before you start," said Hesther, "and I'll see that it is ready for you."

Markham was back in the room before Peters had reappeared. He wore a leather coat, and the bottoms of his trousers were laced inside his high shoe tops. Trim and handsome he looked, and ready for a grueling night's work. Hesther was just placing the coffee on the table, and she lifted her eyes to flash a glance of admiration at the young ski runner.

"I'll be ready in a minute, Essie," said Markham, with a nod and a smile.

Taking his skis from a corner of the room, he sat down, laid them across his knees, and proceeded to grease them well from a can which he had brought into the room and had placed on the stove. While he worked, Peters came lumbering in.

Peters had donned a ragged sweater, whose collar came up around his ears. Over this was buttoned a faded and threadbare coat. His old-fashioned skates were under his arm. From beneath the rim of his moth-eaten fur cap his tow hair showed in a sort of fringe. The cap had ear flaps, with strings at their ends. The flaps were loose, and

the strings fluttered as he moved his head. His shoes were of cowhide, strong and serviceable, but not at all ornamental. He had tied the bottoms of his trousers to his ankles with pieces of cord.

The contrast between Peters and Markham was very striking. So far as appearances went, Markham had it "on" Peters by about a hundred to one.

"I'm going, too, Nix," observed Markham, laying his skis to one side. "I'll go over the butte, and I've got a month's pay that says I beat you into Roscommon."

"Maybe you will," returned Peters, starting for the outside door.

There was more bitterness in Peters' heart. He believed he understood the situation. Markham had won the ski jump and the skating race, and now he wanted to round off his triumphs by being first to carry the news of the horse thieving to the sheriff. Markham was planning a spectacular bit of work, for Uncle Si Goddard incidentally. Mainly, he was thinking of the effect of his night's success on Hesther Morton.

"Wait, Nixon!" called Mrs. Morton. "Essie has got some hot coffee ready, and you must have a cup before you leave."

The rancher's wife was the only one who ever gave much thought to Peters. She considered him now, when the consideration and confidence of the others seemed to center wholly in Markham.

"Much obliged, Mrs. Morton," Peters answered, "but I don't reckon I'll take the time. You see," he added, as he laid a hand on the doorknob, "it's a case where every minute counts."

Before the good woman could answer, the door had closed behind Peters. Markham pulled up his shoulders in a shrug as he lifted the cup of steaming coffee.

"There's Nixon's first blunder," he

remarked. "He has a habit of going it blind, and without giving any preparation to the work ahead of him."

"I hope he won't meet with any accident," murmured Mrs. Morton. "That boy's got a good heart, even if he is a little odd."

"He'll always be a blunderer and a saphead," grunted her husband. "If the stolen horses are recovered, it'll be Markham who makes it possible."

Markham did not tarry long over his coffee. Within a few moments after Peters left he was out in the nipping air. Hesther, a shawl over her head, stepped through the doorway to watch while he crossed the trampled snow around the ranch house and then knelt to thrust the toes of his shoes in the Bilgeri binding of the skis and to buckle the ankle straps. He arose presently, and, shouting a farewell to the girl, glided away over the snowy level gracefully, swiftly, with his ski stick biting into the snow and propelling him onward.

"He's doing a man's work this night," murmured Hesther, "and he will win—just as he won at Devil's Lake City carnival." Then she went back into the house, to describe in detail how Peters had lost and Markham had won in the winter sports' contests at the lake.

III.

Puyallup River had many twists and turns in the thirty miles which it covered between Morton's Ranch and Roscommon. Passing within a stone's throw of the ranch house, it flowed almost due north for six miles, then, entering the rough hill country, it doubled back on its course for three miles, rounded the base of Rawson's Bluff, in a four-mile curve, came east by south around the base of Bear Butte, and then curved in a northwesterly direction for the last twelve miles that carried it through the outskirts of the county seat.

Markham, on his skis, could con a

direct course to Roscommon, bisecting the river at three points, and finally climbing the butte for a long glissade into the town. That glissade, right into the edge of the settlement, measured ten miles of down grade. The slopes of Bear Butte were smooth, and directly under its crest the descent was steep. A mile of this, and then the course fell away more gently.

Markham, if he made good time to the eastern base of Bear Butte, would very likely reach that particular spot ahead of Peters, for he would have to travel only seven miles, while Peters was going sixteen. Where Markham would lose would be in climbing the butte; and where he would make up his loss would be in the long glissade down the opposite side.

At the river's edge, Peters screwed the skates into his heels, pulled the straps tight, and buckled them, then put on his bearskin gloves and struck out. He was well away toward Rawson's Bluff before Markham made his first crossing of the river, near the ranch house.

The ice was in splendid condition. A strong wind had swept it clean of loose snow, save here and there at the turns, where drifts had formed. Then a slight thaw, a few days before, had been followed by a tightening of the cold, and all rough spots had been smoothed away.

Markham, whose steel runners were the very last word in all-metal skates, excelled as a figure skater. He could cut all sorts of graceful figures on the ice, and, with Hesther Morton, would do a sort of waltz, which the girl seemed to consider rare sport. Peters, on the other hand, was not proficient at that sort of thing. He preferred straight skating, possibly because he realized that fancy capers were quite out of his line. The steel, wood, and leather with which he was shod seemed best adapted to straightaway work, anyhow.

Peters knew every foot of the river between the ranch and Roscommon. He had covered that long stretch of ice several times while getting himself in trim for the skating race at Devil's Lake. There was "white ice" under the shelter of the bluff and the butte, caused by a fall of snow while the first crystals were forming. This had been full of air bubbles, and had been treacherous up to the time the severe frost had followed the thaw. After that the liquefied snow had congealed into a sound and superlative smoothness. There was not a spot to be feared on the entire course.

With long, steady, swinging strokes, Peters swept around the first turn and came south on the stretch which Markham was to cross in order to thread a seam through Rawson's Bluff. But, although the moonlight was brilliant upon the sparkling snow crust, he could see nothing of his rival. It might be, he reasoned, that Markham had already effected his second crossing of the river, and was even then in the gash that cut through the bluff. Peters ground his teeth, and, with his runners ringing musically, passed like a gliding specter around the bluff's base. Three miles farther, and he might obtain a view of Markham as he emerged from the shallow defile and pushed over the open levels toward the butte.

He was having queer thoughts about Markham. Why had the fellow protested against any attempt to reach Roscommon and notify the sheriff? Then, in the face of his protests, why had he determined to pit his skis against Peters' skates—to accomplish the thing which he had averred could not be accomplished?

There was but one answer to this, according to Peters' conclusions. Markham could not bear to think that Peters *might* succeed, that he *might* win favorable notice from Uncle Silas, and that he *might* gain some credit in the eyes

of Hesther Morton! Markham was not thinking of saving the horses; no, he was impressed with the idea of his own prestige and importance, and he could not take a chance of losing out to a "saphead." That was all there was to it, so Peters believed.

A determination to win that race and save the stolen stock grew stronger and stronger in Peters' breast. Here, after the miserable failures at Devil's Lake, was a most unexpected opportunity to retrieve himself. It was his business to make the most of it.

Three straight miles lay ahead of him to the westward of the bluff. Coming down the stretch like the wind, he surveyed the shadowy opening of the swale, in the hope of catching a glimpse of Markham. But the ski runner was not in sight. In the distance, the sparkling crest of Bear Butte could be vaguely determined; yet, between the bluff and the butte no dusky figure could be seen toiling on the skis.

"He hasn't cleared the bluff yet," thought Peters exultantly. "I'm leading him, by ginger!"

The river, at the end of the three-mile stretch, described a curve like a gigantic horseshoe. In its first beginning, the stream had attempted to run west by south; meeting the rough country, its course had been deflected toward the northwest; then, striking the wide-spreading base of Bear Butte, it had followed northeast and east on its way around the huge uplift. On clearing the butte, the Puyallup struck off due northwest, and so, in a dozen miles, came to Roscommon.

Peters, although he had not timed himself, knew he had been making excellent speed. He was seventeen miles from the ranch, and coming rapidly under the shadow of the butte. Markham could scarcely climb the massive "rise" and glissade into Roscommon ahead of him. So far as he had been able to

discover, Markham was not yet anywhere near Bear Butte, nor—

"Peters! I say, Peters!"

Peters was amazed. Above his ringing steel a sharp cry echoed in the frosty air. It was Markham's voice, and calling his name. Peters dug into the ice with the heels of his runners and came to a quick halt.

"That you, Porter?" he called.

"Yes, Nix. I'm in hard luck. Stop a minute, will you?"

The voice came from a shadowy overhang at the butte's foot. Peters skated toward the black cavity, and was met by the dusky figure of Markham, limping out of the darkness and across the ice. Markham had his skis under his arm.

"By George!" cried Peters. "You got here in a hurry! What's wrong?"

"I fell from a six-foot bank, as I was crossing the river, and splintered one of my skis," was the answer, "and I can't go on with the wood runners. I reckon I'll take your skates," Markham added coolly.

Peters caught his breath. "I reckon you won't," he returned, with spirit. "I'm going on to Roscommon, start the sheriff and a posse for the dry wash, and get a doctor for Bailey. What do you take me for?"

"A saphead—just a plain, everyday saphead," said Markham. "Down on the ice, Peters, and off with those skates! *Pronto* is the word! There's no time to lose!"

Markham had dropped the skis, and stripped a glove from his right hand. The bare hand was in the pocket of his leather coat. Suddenly, as the two stood facing each other, the hand emerged from the pocket with a short, ugly-looking bulldog revolver. Markham leveled the weapon, and the moonlight glinted frostily on the barrel.

Again Peters caught his breath. He was dazed, bewildered. To be threatened in that manner by one whom he

had believed to be a friend—or, if not a friend, at least a fellow employee of Uncle Silas Goddard, with interests in common—was a decided shock.

"You crazy, Porter?" demanded Peters, when he could find his tongue.

"Hardly," was the reply, with a husky, ill-omened laugh. "It will be a long time before you reach Roscommon, my laddybuck. Take off those skates, I tell you! I mean business, Peters!"

There was that in Markham's words and manner which left no doubt of the fact that he meant business. Peters was wild with indignation and anger, but he was also helpless.

"What'll Reece Bailey say to this, when I tell him?" he asked, dropping to the ice and working at the skate straps.

"We'll cross that bridge when we get to it," was the response. "Throw the skates over here when you get 'em off. You had to butt into this deal with the fool suggestion of getting word to the sheriff, now, blame you, take your medicine!"

"You're bound to win," grunted Peters, "if you have to do it with a gun! You ain't square, Markham. I may be a good deal of a saphead, but I found, when it was too late, that one of my skis and one of my skate straps had been tampered with at Devil's Lake. You did that!"

"Why didn't you tell Hesther about it?" jeered Markham; "or the judges of the contests? Didn't you have nerve enough to put up a holler?" Peters gave the skates a shove across the ice.

Ten feet away, Markham sat down to screw the skates to his heels and adjust the straps. The revolver lay at his side, and he watched Peters sharply as he worked.

Peters, a desperate purpose forming in his mind, was awaiting the moment when he could spring to the attack. He was not to be conquered in that way.

There was plenty of fight in him, and Markham would discover it to his cost.

Markham worked rapidly. The skates were on, and snugly buckled, and he was just rising when Peters went after him, with a short run and a slide. But if Peters was quick, Markham was a shade quicker.

Crack!

The revolver exploded in the air, and Peters' left arm seemed suddenly to have been scorched with a hot iron. The shock caused him to lose his footing, and he fell in a sprawl on the slippery surface of the river.

"You would have it!" shouted Markham fiercely. "That's something more for you to tell Bailey!"

The last words faded in mellow ring of sliding steel. Peters, sitting up on the ice, and clasping his numbed arm with his right hand, watched Markham slip from sight around the curve at the foot of Bear Butte.

IV.

Peters was thinking less of the pain in his arm than he was of the rascally work of Peter Markham. The fellow must be mad, to make such an attack! He had planned the whole thing, of course, and had armed himself before leaving Morton's. Reaching the butte ahead of Peters, he had gone into hiding against the moment Peters should come skating down the river. Then, by way of making his treachery more contemptible, he had called to Peters for help, only to threaten him with a revolver and steal his skates.

"You bet I'll tell Bailey!" muttered Peters. "I reckon this'll cook your goose with Goddard, even if you do get to Roscommon in time to have the sheriff head off the bronks! What can a fellow make of a man like him, acting thataway?"

With difficulty, Peters removed his coat and shoved up the shirt and

sweater sleeves. The wound was in the forearm, and was bleeding profusely. With a bandanna handkerchief he bound up the injury tightly, knotting the handkerchief corners with his fingers and his teeth; then, getting into his coat again, he began considering his next move.

It was twelve miles by river to Roscommon, and eighteen miles back to the ranch. Even if it was now useless for him to get to the town, in order to carry the news of the horse stealing to the sheriff, returning to Morton's would have been a fierce pull on his strength, and he dared not attempt it. He would make his way to Roscommon. If he could reach the settlement before Markham left it, he would lodge a complaint against the treacherous scoundrel, and have him held in the town jail. Peters was burning for revenge. Yes, that is what he would do.

He got up, feeling a little dizzy and faint, and started down the river. His feet struck against Markham's skis, and another idea came to him. Perhaps he could tinker up the splintered ski and use the runners. After the accident that had lost him the jump at Devil's Lake, Peters had bought a little fine wire for the mending of his own broken runner. That wire was still in his trousers pocket, and it might be that he could use it in fixing Markham's splintered ski.

Picking up both runners, and holding the damaged one between his knees, he struck a match and made a careful examination. The stout ash had been cracked under the binding mechanism. A few wraps of fine wire might yet make the runner serve. With his jack-knife, Peters dug a shallow groove across the ski's bottom, and in this he imbedded the half dozen coils of wire that he wove over and over and made fast on the upper surface.

For himself, he had never fancied that Bilgeri binding. Although light,

and well made, it was not nearly so strong or dependable as the Lilienfield binding, with which Peters' own skis were equipped.

Peters' work had been done at a tremendous disadvantage. He could work with one hand only, and in lieu of his other hand he made shift to use his teeth. The moon, although brilliant, left much to be desired in the matter of light for such fine and exacting labor, and sense of touch had to help him where that of sight failed. In the main, however, he did very well, all things considered, and when he had secured his feet in the bindings he arose on the ash runners with a feeling of exultation in his breast. Where was the stick? His search for it carried him to the overhang, and there he found, not only the ski stick, but two strips of gunny sacking, each heavily knotted in the middle.

Those strips of sacking rather puzzled Peters. Markham had brought them as an aid in getting up the steep eastern slope of the butte. But why had he prepared himself with them if his object was to waylay Peters and secure the skates?

"Markham always figures a matter out both ways," Peters reflected. "He brought the gun to help corral the skates, but, if I happened to beat him to the butte, then he'd have to keep right on over the rise. If he couldn't do one thing, then he was ready to do the other. What's more, he splintered that ski a-purpose, and he didn't do it until he knew I was behind him at the overhang. He didn't want me to have a chance to use the ski, that's all. It never occurred to him that I'd have something along to use in patchin' up the runner. That's once, anyhow, that a saphead fooled him."

Peters shuffled his way to a point beyond the overhang, then paused to tie the strips of cloth around the skis, knot side down. This maneuver would help to keep him from sliding backward.

He flashed an upward look at the difficult grade he was to negotiate. If his heart failed him for a moment, because of his useless arm and the shock his whole body had suffered because of the wound, it only resulted in letting him get a firmer grip on his resolution and strength. The wound was nothing serious, being merely a clean gash through the fleshy part of the forearm. He would not allow it to endanger the success of his night's exploit. Markham must be made to suffer for his lawlessness, and it was up to Peters to see that he did not escape.

The first easy slopes of the butte were taken just as one might travel over level ground—a forward movement, in long, gliding steps. The skis were merely advanced, never lifted. As the ascent stiffened, Peters turned out the ends of the runners slightly, in what is known as the "half fishbone step." There was a trick in this, and Peters had long since acquired it. Steeper and steeper became the course as the snowy slope was climbed, and the full fishbone step was gradually brought into requisition.

For such a long ascent the work was extremely tiring, and Peters was forced to do a number of "serpentines," tacking back and forth, and executing the difficult "about face" at each turn.

A good deal of time was required in making the climb, but Peters' handicap of awkwardness had taught him how to be patient and doggedly resolute in carrying out his aims. He kept unflinchingly to his tiresome task, and in due course was rewarded by finding himself on the flat crest of Bear Butte, ready for the long glissade. By this time his sporting blood was aroused, and he looked forward with keen enjoyment to the breathlessly swift glide that lay ahead of him.

He rested a few moments, tucked the hand of his injured arm into the front of his coat, removed the knotted strips

from the runners, took firm hold of the ski stick, and then let himself over the butte's crest.

With skis so close together that they touched, the point of one leading the other by a foot, body not bent, but inclined forward, Peters was off down the steep slope like a bullet out of a gun.

He was at a disadvantage in not having both hands for use with the stick. Where it was necessary to brake, and avoid a small crevasse or a boulder, Peters did it entirely with the skis, by executing the "telemark swing." It was not often that he was confronted by such an emergency, but he was proficient in that method of dodging possible disaster, and unhesitatingly availed himself of it.

At lightning speed he shot down the butte, the air humming in his ears and snowy particles stinging his face. His exhilaration mounted higher and higher. In his delight over the coasting he forgot the stolen horses, the treachery of Markham, and the reprisal he was counting upon when he should reach Roscommon. His every faculty was called into play, and busied itself with the flying skis to the exclusion of everything else.

The slope flattened, and Peters' speed lessened perceptibly, although he was still going at a rate comparable to that of a limited express train. On and on, mile after mile, his sensation was that of one falling through space. He scarcely realized that he had any connection whatever with the white-clad earth beneath him.

At last, in the distance, he saw a twinkling light, and a confused blur of buildings. Roscommon! The town jumped toward him as though crazily bent on fouling his course. He gave rather more attention to Roscommon than to the slope ahead of him, and suddenly he pitched into the air as the runners hit an obstacle. He fell with the skis braided around his neck, fell

hard upon the cleared tracks of the Roscommon railroad yards, and so suddenly that he had no time to realize he had gone over the embankment at the side of the network of rails.

Instinctively he tried to lift himself, only to drop in an awkward huddle, with a blaze of shooting stars criss-crossing before his eyes. Then the bright lights faded, and Nixon J. Peters quietly went to sleep.

V.

When Peters awoke, he found himself on a bench in the railroad station. A local train was expected, and there had been men on the station platform when Peters shot over the railroad embankment and hit the tracks. Three or four of the men went forward to investigate the strange phenomenon, and they were the ones who had brought Peters into the waiting room. They had no more than laid him down, and stripped off his skis, when he opened his eyes.

"Sheriff gone to the dry wash yet?" he inquired faintly.

A man bent over him. "I'm Jordan, the sheriff," said he. "What dry wash do you mean? Why should I go there?"

"Has—hasn't Markham reached town?" went on Peters.

"Haven't seen a thing of Markham. Oh!" Jordan exclaimed. "I know you now. You are Bailey's man, Peters, from the Morton Ranch. Why were you sliding into town, at this time o' night, on a pair of skis? Thunder! It was as much as your life was worth! You——"

"A gang of horse thieves ran off our horses—more'n fifty of 'em," cut in Peters wildly. "It happened early in the evening. Get a posse, Jordan, and head off the gang at Long Knife Dry Wash. When Markham shows up, leave somebody in town to arrest him. He shot me in the arm. And send a doctor to

Morton's to look after Bailey. He's wounded, too! I——"

Then Peters went to sleep again. When he next came to himself, and picked up the chain of events, he was in a bed in a room at the Roscommon House. Broad day looked in at the room windows, and Peters could gaze dreamily out at roofs covered with snow, and sparkling under the sun's rays as though covered with diamonds. Hours had passed since he had had the brief awakening in the railroad station. Now he was in a comfortable bed, his left arm neatly bandaged, and Toynbee, the proprietor of the hotel, was sitting beside him.

"Did they get Markham, Toynbee?" asked Peters.

The landlord was reading a newspaper. He jumped in his chair as the unexpected words reached him from the bed.

"Oh, you're back, eh?" said he. "You've been a long time on the road, although the doctor said we needn't to mind. Get Markham? Well, I guess!" And Toynbee chuckled. "Jordan got him, and four others, along with the stolen horses. They were pushing through the dry wash when the sheriff and his party arrived there. You bet they got him, Peters, and red-handed at that. Big surprise to everybody. Why, Markham had put the whole thing up! He was back of the entire scheme! It has all come out. Markham won't talk, but the rest of the gang feel different. Across the line there were men waiting to take the horses and rush 'em off where they'd never be found. Say! I guess you ought to have a medal for what you did last night! How are you feeling, anyhow?"

Peters was stunned. Porter Markham one of the horse thieves! Could Peters believe his ears? Markham had had a reason for driving the horses off their feet on the return from Devil's Lake. With all the other stock taken

from Morton's, it had been Markham's plan to make the sleigh team useless, so far as a drive of twenty miles to Roscommon, with news for the sheriff, was concerned; and Markham had protested against Peters' plan of using skates in carrying an alarm to Roscommon; but when the method had been put into effect, in spite of him, Markham had taken to the skis and had waylaid Peters at the eastern foot of Bear Butte. In the light of recent events, the motive for that attack could be seen at an even more treacherous angle. Markham's scheme was not to beat Peters to Roscommon with news for the sheriff, but to keep all knowledge of the robbery from the authorities until the stolen horses had been delivered across the line. Instead of making for the town, after securing Peters' skates, Markham had followed the river bends beyond the town, to a point where he could join his rascally confederates with the horse herd.

"How do you feel, Peters?" repeated Toynbee, after waiting a long time for a reply.

"Mighty nigh locoed," said Peters.

"No wonder! Say, you hit the railroad iron with your head when you went over the embankment. Any other head but yours would probably have been cracked."

"You can't crack a saphead," commented Peters, but not in bitterness.

Next day, when Peters was thinking of getting out of his bed and helping drive the horses back to the ranch, no less a person than Uncle Silas Goddard walked into his room. Uncle Silas was an iron-gray man, big and broad, and with a regular heart under his ribs. He had received a telegram, signed Reece Bailey, per Morton, and had come to North Dakota by first train.

There were greetings, not those of a pleased employer for a worthy employee, but more in line with what one's

next of kin might say in circumstances altogether creditable. Bailey was "coming fine," and would be on the job again in two or three weeks; and Peters, the doctor said, would be fit as a fiddle in seven days, at the outside. The horses were on the way back to Morton's.

"What about Markham?" queried Peters.

Uncle Silas Goddard's cheery face grew troubled. Well, Markham was only a boy, and a very foolish one. He had had a hard lesson. No stock had been lost, and Uncle Silas felt that he ought not to be too hard on Markham. He was going to let Markham go, on a promise to leave the country and make something of himself in other parts. Any one at all acquainted with Uncle Silas might have known he would do that very thing.

"As for you, Nixon," the big ranch-

owner went on, "there's a job waiting in Montana for a chap of your heft and disposition. But do you want to return to the home ranch?" he asked quizzically. "Miss Hesther Morton sends a very kindly message to you by me. She is sorry for a lot of things, she says, and hopes to see you right soon."

But Nixon J. Peters had seen another light. He recalled his saphead dreams of rescuing Hesther from a burning house, and the shamed red stained his cheeks to the tow-colored hair.

"Miss Morton, all at once, is wasting her consideration on the wrong party, Uncle Silas," said Peters. "I'm for Montana as soon as you want me there."

"Good!" exclaimed Uncle Silas, and clasped Peters' hand with a fervor that suggested not only good will but hearty congratulations.

SOME INTERESTING FACTS

In Austria women are now employed as undertakers and gravediggers.

The ancients credited the raven with unusual longevity, but modern investigation shows that it is not warranted. The bird rarely lives more than seventy years.

United States government irrigation projects completed or under way represent an expense of eighty-five million dollars and involve the reclamation of more than two million five hundred thousand acres.

Geese are fattened for market in some parts of Europe by confining them in dark rooms, to which light is admitted at intervals, causing them to eat seven or eight meals a day.

Rabbit fur is said to be supplanting wool in felt-hat making in Australia, where thirty-two factories are in operation. The fur is considered much superior to the finest merino for this purpose, and millions of rabbit skins are used annually.

The Ottoman Empire is made up of Turkey in Europe—the strip of territory stretching across from the Black Sea to the Adriatic—Turkey in Asia, which includes Arabia, Syria, and Palestine, and provinces in the isles of Samos and Cyprus are also under the sultan's rule.

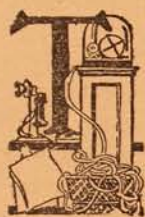
The Municipal Building, New York, is the largest structure under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Public Buildings and Offices. It contains about one thousand offices and has about ten thousand visitors daily. It is the world's largest building of its kind.

The Basket-Ball

by

Leslie W. Quirk

BOSS



HE deal can be closed at your earliest convenience. Very truly yours. . . . That's all, Miss Ticknor. Bring in the letter just as soon as you write it, please."

As the stenographer closed the door behind her, Freeman Judd spun his pivoted desk chair in a half circle, and, with hands clasped across his stomach, gazed thoughtfully at the calendar on the wall. For a full minute he sat this way without moving; then, whirling back again, he pressed the button at the side of his desk.

A freckle-faced, red-headed office boy answered.

"George," said Mr. Judd, "I guess he's waited long enough. Tell him to come in now."

The office boy grinned appreciatively. A moment later the door opened to admit a dapper young man, who looked something as Freeman Judd must have looked twenty-five years before.

The embarrassment as father and son faced each other ended when Judd, senior, said brusquely, "Sit down, Vern; sit down! Chairs don't cost anything in this office. What's the matter now? What are you here for?"

The boy looked him frankly in the eyes. "Thompson Brothers fired me this morning."

If his father was irritated, his face did not betray the fact. "As a business man," he grunted, "you don't seem to be much of a success."

The boy swallowed. It was like downing a bitter dose of medicine. "You see, father," he blurted out, "I've come to believe you were right and I was wrong. I want to start in the business here just the way I did four years ago."

"Ah, you do!" Freeman Judd surveyed his son a little grimly. "Suppose we review this thing, Vern. You're a rich man's son. When you went to college, I gave you a good big allowance. I wanted you to have all the advantages that I had missed. What did you do there? Did you stick to anything? Did you learn one thing—one single thing—thoroughly?"

"Not a thing," admitted Vernon Judd cheerfully, "unless you count basket ball."

"Basket ball? H'm! I don't see how that is going to help you make a success of life. Well, you graduated, though Heaven knows how, and came in here. Three months later you quit. Things were too slow for you. Your grandfather had left you a little legacy, and you wanted action."

The younger Judd chuckled. "Didn't I get it?"

"You did," admitted his father, al-

lowing his face the luxury of a smile; "you got the action and the Wall Street boys got your money. Since then you've tried a dozen things, never holding on to one of them longer than a month or six weeks. And now you breeze back and ask me to give you another chance."

The boy leaned forward earnestly, his mouth tightening into the same lines of determination that marked his father's.

"Dad, a week ago I took myself into my room and had a frank talk with myself. When I was through, I'd made up my mind to quit being a chump and to turn myself into something useful. I wasn't fired from Thompson Brothers' because I didn't do my work, but because I wouldn't stand for a piece of dirty office politics. I've found myself. This time I'll stick it out. Do I get another chance, or not?"

Freeman Judd looked the boy over, much as though he were eying a horse. "Vern," he said finally, "I never thought I'd do such a thing, but I'm inclined to give you another go at your old job. I know you've got the goods, and I believe at last——" A knock at the door stopped him. "Come in, Wallber."

"Sorry to disturb you, Mr. Judd," said the head clerk, as he entered, with an envelope in his hand, "but the man who brought this said it had to have an answer right away."

As he made out the letterhead, the boy's face became a shade paler. His father scanned the communication with a frown.

"Vern"—the voice had taken a harsher tone—"this is a statement from Flett & Son. They say you owe them one hundred and fifteen dollars for some evening clothes, and that if it isn't paid they will be obliged to sue."

"It's a rotten trick, dad. I bought the stuff eight months ago; I'd have paid for it, too, if I hadn't lost my jobs while I was laying aside the money. I haven't been dodging them. I ex-

plained how it was. Anyhow, they hadn't any business sending a bill to you. I'm over age and——"

His father stood up abruptly. "It's legalized blackmail," he snapped. "They think I'll pay this rather than allow it to get into the papers. And they're right." He paced up and down the room without speaking. Suddenly he faced the boy. "Vern, I've changed my mind about you. I don't want you in here until you can prove to me that you are able to get a job paying enough to live on, and to hold it for a reasonable time."

"But, dad——"

His father held up an interrupting hand. "No use talking. I have decided. When you have learned to stand alone on your own two feet, then you may come in with Judd & Company—not before. Any more bills? No? All right; I'll pay this one. Then I intend giving you an order on the cashier for thirty dollars. Take that and buy a railroad ticket that will land you the greatest distance from New York. I don't care where you go; the only condition is that you finally land a job, and that you keep it for a full six months. That shall be the test. Understand? Six months in the same position."

Vernon Judd nodded soberly.

"When you've shown you can do that, and have lived on what you earn without running bills, come back and you'll find a desk waiting for you. If you can't do it, I don't want to see you again. Well?"

"That's a fair proposition, dad. Six months at the same job on a living wage. I'll do it."

Freeman Judd sucked in his lower lip. "Here's your order for the thirty dollars, then. And remember, Vern, nobody wants to see you win more than your old dad. Good-by. As you go through the outer office, tell Wallber I want to see him."

II.

The round football struck the branch and descended, bouncing merrily upon the head of the innocent bystander.

"We didn't mean to, mister," apologized the small boy who had done the kicking.

"Don't mind me. I'd rather get a crack on the head than not." In spite of a stomach that lacked breakfast, Vernon Judd managed a smile as he tossed back the "association" football.

Hard knocks aplenty had toughened Vern since the day the train dropped him into the bustling Middle Western city, an unknown person, in an unfamiliar place; and, what was more, he was without trade or profession. For three days he had been an "extra" hotel porter; for a week, till the dull season set in, he had opened boxes in a department-store basement; and twice he had earned scraps of money by unloading trucks. But of continuous employment he had found none.

He squared his shoulders now at the cheering discovery that both factories had entrances within a hundred feet of where he was standing. Along the big shop on his right ran the sign, "Landon Sporting Goods—Used All Over the World"; across the street, equally large letters shouted, "Bloss Company—Perfection Sporting Goods—For Sale Everywhere."

Both Landon and Bloss, the original owners, were dead; but for years the managers of the rival factories had waged an advertising war from Cairo, Illinois, to Cairo, Egypt. Basket balls, baseballs, footballs, hockey sticks, bats, gold clubs, boxing gloves, and everything else for the athlete had been boosted and knocked by each side. And here the two competitors glowered at each other less than a stone's throw apart. To Vern, who all his life had read their advertising and used their goods, it seemed like coming suddenly

upon the Duke of Wellington and Napoleon Bonaparte.

The job hunter meditated. "Let's see. The year we had the big championship team we used the Bloss basket ball; the year after that we used the Landon. It wasn't as good, and we weren't as good. All right, Bloss, old boy, you'll get the first chance."

He entered boldly. A pugnacious office boy on the other side of a wooden railing stopped him.

"Whatcha want?" demanded the guardian of the gate suspiciously.

Hard experience had taught Vern that discretion is sometimes half the battle.

"I want to see the superintendent," he answered evasively.

"Creighton? Lissen, if you want a job I'll save you a lot of time right off the bat by tellin' you there ain't none."

"You tell Mr. Creighton that Mr. Judd—Mr. Vernon Judd, of New York—wants to see him," insisted the caller, with as much haughtiness as a man without a thin dime can muster.

Reluctantly the office boy slouched toward the door marked "Private."

"All right," he said, emerging a minute later. "Go on in."

Vern had no more than entered the room before he saw that his hopes were doomed to failure. He had counted upon finding the superintendent an athletic type of man, to whom his own experience in athletics might appeal. Instead, he was greeted by a frowning, cigar-chewing individual, who plainly had never taken an active part in any game except from the side lines.

"Well," he snapped, as he thrust some papers under the desk blotter, "what do you want? A job?" His voice rasped like a file. "Can't you see that sign out there? Go to the other entrance between seven and eight Thursday morning. Don't take up my time."

"I know I am taking up valuable time, Mr. Creighton," Vern returned

quietly, "but I think I've had valuable experience that might fit me for——"

"Haven't a thing for you. No use talking." The shrill voice rose higher. "Not a thing. Nothing at all. *Good morning!*"

The young man found himself on the street again, with a sense of injustice rankling in his mind. As he stood there trying to soothe his temper before tackling the Landon people, his eye caught the end of a tiny tragedy.

He heard an excited little scream. He saw a white-sleeved arm thrust frantically from one of the second-story windows of the Landon factory. He watched a square of snowy linen float out on a passing gust of wind. For a second it seemed that it would escape the clutches of the waiting tree and come safely to the ground; but just at the critical moment the breeze died, dropping the white handkerchief, like an opened parachute, across a network of autumn foliage. There it rested, twenty feet or more above the sidewalk and a dozen from the girl at the window.

Vern looked up. The instinct of mere politeness that had first urged him to offer assistance tautened into enthusiasm. He told himself the girl was more charming than any girl he had ever seen.

"I'll get it," he called encouragingly, though without the slightest idea in the world how he might bring about that end.

"If you will, please," she begged. "It's a bit of real Irish lace, and I haven't any business owning it—let alone losing it."

As he stared at the girl and the handkerchief, the inspiration came.

"Here, buddie," he said, "lend me your football for a minute."

Obediently the small boy tossed it over. It was round, but slightly smaller and not as heavy as the basket ball to which he had been accustomed. Also,

the handkerchief was much higher than any basket for which he had tried in a game.

He poised it carefully, swinging it up and down in his two hands to gauge the weight. Then, with a quick flirt of his arms, he shot it up and over.

It curved in a long arc and plumped squarely into the middle of the white patch in the tree. The twigs bent. The handkerchief fluttered down into his waiting hands.

As he stood there brushing the dust from the fragile fabric, the girl from Landon's hurried out to him. "I want to thank you," she said gratefully.

He looked at her. Risking the chance of being thought impudent, he said boldly, "And I want to know you. My name is Judd—Vernon Judd."

She stared straight into his eyes for a moment, and was apparently satisfied with what she saw there. "I—I don't think it will be difficult," she said, almost in a whisper, and turned away, confused and blushing.

"Say, young fella!" Vern turned to the new speaker, who proved to be Creighton, the disagreeable superintendent of the Bloss factory, his face now stretching into a smile. "Say! I saw you make that basket-ball throw. Where did you ever play? What! You mean you were the center of that champ team, the 1911 five that were never licked? Listen!" He put his hand ingratiatingly upon the boy's arm. "We have a basket-ball team in this factory that's a world-beater, and we need a new man for center. Lemme see you throw again, to make sure that other toss wasn't a lucky accident. Hey, Murph!"

A carrot-topped head popped out of the window over the entrance. "Get the big wastebasket, Murph, and hold it out there. I wanta see this guy make a throw. Come on, you; I'll give you three chances, because it's a hard shot."

For once in his life, Vern felt nerv-

ous. The skill that had made him star of a star team seemed to have oozed quite away.

"Try!" the girl whispered. "You can do it. I know you can."

Again he poised the ball and threw. Then, holding his breath, he watched it wing its curved path through the air—up, over, down; down, fair, and true, into the mouth of the waiting wicker basket.

"Yea, bo!" shouted the enthusiastic Murphy. "He can thread the needle all right."

"Look here, my man!" Superintendent Creighton caught Vern's coat lapel. "If I give you a job in the stock room at ten a week, will you get out and play on our basket-ball team this winter?"

"Will I?" asked Vern. "Try me and see."

The girl from Landon's extended her hand to him. "Here's wishing you good luck," she said, "till——"

"Till when?"

"Till the Bloss five meets the Landon five—till your team plays ours."

III.

The "big five" from the Bloss Company lined up for the last minute of the final practice before the championship game of the season.

"Fast now!" jerked Captain "Red" Murphy as he tossed the ball to "Curly" Clark, who shot it to Clif Sefton, who underhanded it to Felber, who dribbled it a moment and then bounced it to Vernon Judd, who completed the circuit and play by landing it neatly and accurately in the basket.

"Attaboy!" Red growled. "Now the same thing on the other side, fellows—and lots of pep!"

Three times in succession, from three different and difficult angles, Vern had the pleasure of seeing his throws drop safely inside the iron-rimmed net.

"Good enough!" admitted Red. "We'll show those Landon counterfeits how to play to-morrow night. Now just a minute." He gathered the four regulars and the two substitutes about him. "Boys, you all know we've had the best season ever, and you all know this mix-up with Landon is going to be our biggest and most important game—and our hardest. We want to win a little worse than we want to go on living." He turned to Vernon Judd. "But maybe you don't understand what I mean, Judd. Of course, you've only been working here for five months and you——"

"Pretty nearly six," corrected Vern. He had been marking them off on the calendar in his room.

"Well, anyhow, unless you've been through a basket-ball season with the sporting-goods teams, you can't know how much it means to everybody in this place to beat the Landon bunch. We've got to do it, understand? Everybody that works here feels the same as college fellows feel about their team. But that ain't all. This game gets into every sporting page of every big newspaper in the country. That means big advertising for the winners. And advertising—sport-page stuff in news—means better business, and better business means more money to all of us—oh, not a lot, maybe, but every little bit helps. Get me?"

"I think I understand, Murph."

"Don't do no harm to tell you, anyhow. The people we work for want us to win; the people we work with want us to win; we want to win ourselves, the same as all real players do. And, Vern"—he put his hand affectionately upon the young fellow's jersey—"if you shoot baskets Saturday night the way you did just now, we will win—sure!"

As Vernon Judd left the factory's model gymnasium, where the team had been holding its final practice, his body

tingled from the rough-towel rub that followed the shower; but he also tingled internally from sheer pleasure and the joy of living. He had made good. Coming into the Bloss works practically a nobody, by merit alone he had won friendship and respect, as well as a place on a cracking good basket-ball five. Best of all, for the first time in his life, he was really interested in the business of earning a living.

Life as a whole had changed for him. Hard work in his department had brought him a boost in the pay envelope, and his spare moments were busied with a correspondence course in advertising. He wished his father could see him jump out of bed before the winter sun rose, to hurry to a job that had become a pleasure.

He was so busy patting himself on the back that only chance prevented his colliding with a footfarer bound the other way.

"Hazel Wayne!" he blurted, as his surprised glance showed him the girl from Landon's whose acquaintance he had made through the rescue of the lace handkerchief.

Her face was pale and troubled. His quick eye noted that she was holding her library book almost ostentatiously.

"Practicing hard, Vern?" she queried, with a nervous little laugh. "Do you really think you're going to beat us Saturday?"

"Sure of it, Hazel. You'd better order your mourning suit right now." As he turned to walk with her toward the corner where the Weldon Park cars passed, it became growingly evident that she was ill at ease.

"What's the matter, Hazel?" he asked finally. "If you don't like something I've said or done, tell me what it was and I'll apologize."

She shook her head. "No," she said, in a low voice, "no, there—there's nothing like that."

"But something's wrong. What is it?"

We've been pretty good friends for over five months now. Surely you can tell me."

Still she was silent.

"Is it Creighton?" he asked lightly. "Haven't you changed your mind about him yet? Do you still think he's a 'low-down——'?"

"Ss-s-sh!" She put her hand over his mouth. "Don't—don't ever repeat what I said about him—not to anybody."

The Weldon Park car was bowling nearer.

"What's wrong, Hazel?" he asked, leaning closer. "Tell me."

It was plain she was struggling with herself. Twice she opened her mouth as though to speak. "No," she said firmly, in the end. "I—I haven't anything to say—nothing at all—except to wish you luck to-morrow night. That's all."

Thirty seconds later, as Vern watched the car whirl around the corner into Moneta Avenue, his face bore a puzzled twist that was still in evidence after a brisk walk had brought him back to the factory entrance.

"Hello, Billy!" he greeted the night watchman. "I left some correspondence-school stuff in my locker. I see there's a light in the supe's office, so it will be O. K. to pass me in."

With a grunt of assent, old Billy led the way to the coat room and watched Vern take the leaflets from the locker shelf. Partly deaf, the watchman did not heed the fragment of conversation that floated down the corridor from Creighton's open door.

"It's all right," the superintendent was saying. "Monday night ends it. I tell you, I've worked three months getting things fixed so I can tangle the factory into a dozen knots just before I——"

The voice trailed away into a confidential whispering that Vern could not catch.

Vaguely the words disquieted him. Was it possible that Creighton was all Hazel Wayne had said? How could she know? Hazel had never worked in the Bloss factory. Her job was in the Landon cashier's office, and her father and brother were employed in the Landon leather-working department. Probably her distrust of Creighton was a woman's whim, sprung of the natural bitterness resulting from his successful management of the rival factory. But the boy's suspicions were not allayed at the sight of the superintendent's startled face when he met Vern at the outer door.

"What the devil are you doing here?" demanded Creighton, with a worried glance at his late visitor, now turning to trudge up the street.

Vern's answer seemed to reassure him a little.

"Come back," he said abruptly. "Come into my office. I meant to have a little talk with you to-morrow, but we might as well thresh it out now."

They sat down, facing each other.

"Judd," said the superintendent, "you like your job, don't you?"

Vern responded with all the enthusiasm he could muster. Creighton cocked his cigar in the corner of his mouth.

"You've done well here. You're getting fifteen a week now, and you are in line to get more"—he paused—"if you can keep your mouth shut and obey orders."

The tone of the talk was objectionable, but Vernon Judd's six months were too nearly at an end for him to object. "Yes, sir," he said quietly, "I want to advance, of course."

Creighton leaned forward. "Judd," he confided, "there's one way for you to hang on to your job—and only one way." The change in his voice was startling.

"What do you mean?"

The superintendent's heavy eyebrows contracted in a sinister line. "The

Bloss basket-ball team must lose to-morrow night. You've got to let Landon win. Understand? You—not the team, but *you*—must see that the game goes to them."

Vern could hardly believe he had heard correctly. "Let Landon win! You mean I—I must throw the game?"

"Exactly! I'm glad you understand. You know how to do it, of course, and you can do it alone, because you make more baskets than all the rest of them put together. Get hurt; pretend you've injured your arm. I don't care how you do it. But throw the game. Remember, I am your boss; I am the boss of the Bloss basket-ball team. If you expect to hold your job here, throw—that—game!"

Vern tried to think quickly. "But—don't you want——"

"No, I don't!" Creighton stood up, glaring fiercely. "No! No! I want the Blosses to lose that game. Never mind why! That's none of your business. You want to hold your job. All right. Throw that game. If you don't, the first thing I'll do the following Monday morning will be to fire you."

"But I haven't done anything to warrant——"

"Bah! What are you doing here this time of night? Do you think the police will take your word before they take mine? You've got folks somewhere. How will they like it when they hear you've been hauled into a police station for being a petty thief? I can do it all right, and I will—if you don't throw that game. Think it over. Don't try to double cross me, because it can't be done. That's all."

Uneasy and troubled, Vernon Judd spent his trip to the boarding house trying to figure out a solution for the mystery. What was the tangled undercurrent? Was Creighton doing all this simply to win a few dollars by betting? The notion was ridiculous. Then what was the answer?

On the table in the front hall of the boarding house lay a note from his father that thickened his difficulties. It had come by the late mail. It ran:

DEAR VERN: Glad to learn from your letter that you've been doing so well. As long as you have held out over five months already, I am going to make this the test. Win or lose this Bloss job—that is the deciding factor in our wager as to the stuff of which you are made. There is no reason why you should be fired from Bloss & Company, and you must not let yourself be fired. Stay with them till the six months are up—or don't come back. FREEMAN JUDD.

Vern crumpled the letter in his hand. A pretty mess he had gotten into! All his notions of honesty and sportsmanship recoiled at the thought of throwing the game. Yet if he did not—

"Br-r-r-r!" It was the boarding-house telephone that roused him from his reverie.

"Hello! Excuse me for disturbing you, but I must speak to Mr. Judd. . . . Oh, is this you, Vern? This is Hazel Wayne speaking. I must see you now. I did have something to tell you before, but I couldn't make myself say it. I've come all the way back to tell it to you now. I am at Baker's Drug Store, just a block from your house. You'll come right over, Vern, won't you?"

He buttoned his overcoat and plunged out into the snowy night air. Hazel was waiting for him just outside the store, and as he appeared she hurried toward him.

"Vern, I had to see you to-night. I hadn't been to the library when I met you before. I'd been waiting to talk to you after you finished your basket-ball practice. But I was—afraid."

"What is it?" he asked gently. "You needn't be afraid to tell anything to me, Hazel."

She winked back one tear, but another rolled down her cheek. "Vern, you mustn't think the—the wrong way about me, but that basket-ball game to-

morrow night is a matter of life and death—almost. And your team mustn't win. You must let the Landon five beat you, because— Oh, I can't tell you why, but you must do it—you must. For my sake, Vern!"

She put both hands in his; then, before he could stop her, she was plunging blindly toward the car. He watched her as she stood a moment on the platform, shoulders shaking and a handkerchief to her eyes.

Boss, father, and girl all urging him to betray his trust! If he tried—if his team won—he would lose his job, his chance to make something of himself in the bigger business world, and the friendship of Hazel Wayne.

For the first time since he had known her, he realized that she was necessary to his future happiness.

IV.

As the referee's whistle sent the Bloss and Landon basket-ball teams scurrying to their positions the following evening, Hazel Wayne leaned forward, with a quick intake of breath. The game was about to begin. Whatever the outcome might mean to the workers and friends of the two factories, it meant infinitely more to her. She told herself that the Landon five would win, that it must win; but she could not stifle the fear in her heart.

"We'll beat them," said the girl at her right, a fellow worker in the Landon executive offices; "yes, we'll beat them if——"

"——if Vern Judd doesn't score too many baskets against us," finished another Landon worker. "They say he's a wonder."

They both nodded sagely. The fear in Hazel Wayne's heart became a hysterical laugh. Of course! And Vern wouldn't try too hard, after what she had told him; surely he wouldn't!

"Ready, Landon?" asked the referee.

"Ready, Bloss?" He shot the ball high into the air, piped a shrill blast on his whistle as it began to descend, and the great game was on.

The two opposing centers leaped for the yellow ball. But Vernon Judd was the quicker and the surer. His right hand slapped it, shooting it unerringly to Captain Murphy. The thud hurt Hazel Wayne like a blow.

Dully, despairingly, she watched Murphy catch the ball and pass it to Clark, who shot it clear across the court to Felber. By this time Judd was racing up the middle, practically unguarded. As the ball came to him in a long, driving throw, he dropped it to the floor, tapped it closer to the basket, and then, with a pretty toss, looped it upward and forward, scoring the goal. At the end of the first minute, the score stood: Bloss, 2; Landon, 0.

Huddled forward in her balcony seat at the other end of the gymnasium, Hazel Wayne allowed her breath to escape with a gasp. He was trying, then; he was playing his best. Perhaps, though, this was only a flash, to allay suspicions. She would wait a little while before she condemned him.

Again the opposing centers leaped for the ball; again Vern shot it to a member of his team. This time, however, a lanky Landon youth intercepted the throw from Murphy to Clark, and the ball bounced out of bounds.

It was Bloss' throw-in, and Felber, left guard, picked it up. Captain Murphy called a quick signal, dodged under the arm of the player who was covering him, and took the throw in the extreme left-hand corner of the court, in Landon territory. The other three players shifted to the boundary lines. Vernon Judd, dodging free, sped down the middle of the unprotected court.

Hazel Wayne watched him with fascinated eyes. She knew the play; it was the old crisscross forward pass.

Why didn't the Landon boys cover Vern? Must he assume the entire responsibility for the failure at the end? For she told herself positively that he would fail, that he had done all they might reasonably expect of him.

Murphy threw, gauging ball and player to a nicety. Ten feet beyond the center Vern caught it while running at full speed. Then, with a single bewildering movement, he lifted it high above his head and shot another basket with clean precision.

The score was now: Bloss, 4; Landon, 0. The Bloss adherents raised the rafters with their mad cheering. In the little balcony at the other end, Hazel Wayne leaned back with clenched hands.

"He doesn't care enough for me to do what I asked," she told herself bitterly; and she forced herself to smile and nod when the girl at her right expressed the hope that something would happen to Vern Judd before the game was done. She wished something would—almost! Not a serious hurt, of course, but—

By the time the ball was in play again, the Landon team seemed to have found itself. It reasoned rightly that if the other four Bloss players were to act as "feeders" to Judd, counting on him to shoot the baskets, the thing to do was to corner and pocket and guard him so closely that he would have no opportunity for unhampered throwing. So effectively did they carry out this campaign that for ten minutes or more he was hopelessly entangled in the mesh of opposing players.

They went farther. The Bloss star now began to bear the brunt of every attack. His arm was hacked on throws. He was tripped and fouled in all the artistic ways that could escape the eyes of the official. Twice he went to the floor with a crash, and once he was tumbled headfirst out of bounds.

But Hazel Wayne, watching the

game with the eye of an expert, dared hope there was another reason for Vernon Judd's sudden eclipse. And when the Bloss rooters began to move uneasily as he failed to score goals, and shrunk back when he should have charged, and submitted tamely to an opponent's making a pass when he should have scrimmaged for a toss-up, she grew more and more convinced that he was no longer doing his best.

A little later, the referee caught a Landon player fouling him, and Vern took the ball for a free throw. Poising it carefully, he shot it high in the air, a good five feet to one side of the basket. The Bloss sympathizers, mouths open to cheer the scoring point, allowed them to close with dumb amazement. It wasn't even a good try.

"Now watch us!" bragged the girl by Hazel's side. "I heard this afternoon that Vern Judd had sold out, and I guess he has."

Hazel looked at her with troubled eyes. All at once she felt cold and sick, as if something terrible had happened.

"It looks that way," agreed the girl on her left. "Well, every man has his price. Sometimes it's money, sometimes business politics, and sometimes a woman. I wonder——" And she glanced at Hazel out of the tail of her eye.

"He—he wouldn't sell out," Hazel told the girl weakly. "He isn't that kind."

The other laughed meaningly. "Isn't he? Oh, I don't—— Look! Look! What do you think now?"

Vern had been clear for once. The ball came to him waist-high—and he dropped it! Like a flash, the captain of the Landon five caught it up and shot it half the length of the court to another player near the boundary line. He passed it to a third, who scored a neat goal on a side diagonal pass that gave him the ball directly in front of the basket.

The score was now: Bloss, 4; Landon, 2.

"A goal at last," said one of the girls, sighing, "thanks to Mr. Judd."

"It was an accident," defended Hazel, angry without reason. "Anybody is apt to drop the ball now and then."

Both teams scored again from the field before the end of the first half, and, during the last minute, Landon crept closer on a palpable body-check and free throw. When the whistle blew, the score was: Bloss, 6; Landon, 5.

The teams changed goals. The Bloss basket was now at the balcony end, where Hazel Wayne could lean forward and look straight down into it.

On the toss-up that began the second half, Vern's attempt to whack the ball was so weak that it brought a hiss or two from the spectators. Worse still, it made them watch him suspiciously after that. When he failed twice on free throws, and Murphy took his place after the next foul, the crowd began to mutter.

"What do you think now about the little angel named Vern Judd?" triumphantly demanded the girl on Hazel's right.

"I—I don't want to talk, please!" said Hazel. She couldn't think; she couldn't understand her own emotions or the wonderful metamorphosis of her desires. Something had changed her whole point of view. The integrity of Vernon Judd meant more to her, all at once, than anything else in the world. Indignant at first that he should play so well when she had asked him not to, she was now praying that he would yet do his best, that he would strive to win like a clean sportsman, that he would forget everything save his own honesty and good name. If he wasn't that kind—— She dared not complete the thought.

The game wore on, with varying fortunes. Players from first one team and

then the other rushed the ball up and down the court in zigzagging passes, tapping, tossing, dribbling, shooting it from man to man, looping it for the basket, scrambling for it when it missed, and trotting back to their positions when a goal was scored.

Eventually the Landon five began to assume the upper hand. There was no denying that its center outclassed Vern—or, at least, the Vern who was playing to-night. He could throw better, he could block better with his arm, he could bat the ball better on the toss-up. Because of these advantages, Landon finally assumed the lead by the slender margin of a single point in the 9-8 score.

"If I could only talk to him for a minute!" Hazel whispered to herself, watching the player fail in encounter after encounter. "If I could tell him to forget me, and play—play! I must have been mad to ask him to sacrifice himself for me!"

She watched, with staring eyes, as he whacked clumsily at the ball.

"Vern!" she called appealingly. "Vern!"

But he couldn't hear her, of course. The whole gymnasium was a Babel of confused shouts. She could only lean forward, with her hands clutching the balcony rail, and follow him with her eyes; gloating when he broke free or handled the ball, wincing when opponents crashed into him, and telling herself always that if the opportunity offered he would prove his true character yet.

Some official at the side of the court made an announcement. Hazel could not hear what he said, and she turned to a man behind her for the information.

"It's the usual warning that there are only three minutes more to play," he explained.

Three minutes! Why, it couldn't be possible. There must be some hideous

mistake! Only three minutes before the game ended—and Landon one point ahead! That meant, unless some miracle took place, Bloss was beaten—beaten because a girl had asked a man to forget honor for her sake.

She had no watch. Yet she must time the game to its bitter end. The torture of waiting constantly for the final whistle, without knowing what moment it might come, was too great a strain to bear. Already her heart was pounding—

With a sudden inspiration, she dropped the finger tips of her right hand upon the pulse of the other wrist. The normal heartbeat was a little over seventy, wasn't it? That meant practically a surge of the artery for every second.

She began to count—one, two, three, four, five, and so on up to the end of the first minute. Out on the floor, the ten players were scurrying here and there like frightened ants, apparently without aim or purpose, but in reality dodging and running with preconceived plans. But neither team scored again. Nor did Vern stand out conspicuously in the playing.

The second minute measured itself by her pulse beats. Now and then, during some tense moment, her fingers pressed so hard that she lost the steady throb-throb of the wrist. But she knew within a second or two when the final minute of play began.

The antlike players shifted toward the Bloss goal. They were almost constantly within throwing distance now, and one accurate toss would win. A dozen times the chance seemed to have come, but always there was some blocking Landon opponent.

"Fifty-two, fifty-three, fifty-four," Hazel went on mechanically. Then, with a convulsive start, she realized what the figures meant. They were the final grains of sand in the hourglass. Her finger tips shook free of the wrist,

and it was three seconds before they pressed the pulse again.

"Fifty-eight, fifty-nine, sixty," she resumed her counting, and lost the next beat as her heart stopped with the shock of apprehensive fear. Then she laughed with nervous relief. Sixty pulse beats weren't quite a minute; there were from ten to fifteen still to record before the final whistle.

The ten players bunched just below the balcony, in front of the Bloss goal. As if realizing that the game depended upon their work during the next few seconds, they roused themselves above their natural speed and skill.

"Five fighting to prevent another basket," Hazel told herself, "and four fighting just as hard to make it—no, five! Five! He is trying! I know he is! Oh, he must be!" But she could not be quite sure.

She saw Captain Murphy whisper something to him. Vern nodded. Then, so suddenly that she could hardly follow the play, the Bloss team scattered. The ball catapulted to the side of the court, where the whacking arm of Felber drove it back and toward the other end. Murphy caught it, whirled completely around to throw off the guard hovering near him, started a dribble, and finally made the pass straight toward the Landon goal.

Hazel raised her eyes in wonderment. Nearly halfway down the court Vern was sprinting. A warning cry from the captain made him turn on his heel and throw up his hands. But he was an instant too late. Clean and hard, with the crack of a gun, the ball caught him full in the face, staggering him backward.

He stood there, blinking like one who has suddenly lost his sight. The ball was in his hands. From all angles the Landon five rushed toward him. His own players shouted for the ball. His test had come, Hazel told herself breathlessly. Then, as he made no

move, she stopped breathing altogether.

Her eyes were blurring with tears. She lifted her handkerchief to dry them, and saw that it was the square of Irish lace he had rescued the day they first met.

"Vern!" she called, putting all the breath of her full lungs into the cry. "Vern!"

He lifted his head. His eyes were winking rapidly, and he had difficulty in seeing her at all.

"Vern!" she called again. Leaning far out over the protecting rail of the balcony, she allowed her handkerchief to flutter down toward the basket below. It settled on the little ledge where the bracket of the iron rim met the wall.

There must have come to Vernon Judd the memory of that other time when he had arched a ball up and over and down upon Hazel Wayne's Irish-lace handkerchief. Perhaps the recollection brought confidence in his ability to do it again. Now, with a swinging, overhand-loop shot, he hurled the yellow basket ball at the white target.

Like a winging swallow it rose till it reached the apex of its arc; then it sped downward to the backing board just behind the basket. The rebound drove it against the front rim. It bounded back again, brushed the handkerchief caressingly, and finally toppled gently into the netting for a goal. Almost on the instant, the final whistle shrilled.

The game was ended. The Bloss five had won by a score of 10—9.

V.

Judging by the expression on his face, Vernon Judd was about as elated over scoring the winning basket for the Bloss team as a criminal in court would be over receiving a stiff sentence.

"And that's just what it amounts to,"

he told himself, marching glumly off the playing court. "My sentence is that I be fired in disgrace from the factory, lose my six-month test to prove my right to a desk with Judd & Co., and sacrifice whatever chance I had of winning—her."

Somebody slapped him on the shoulder. He looked up irritably, only to discover that it was his father.

"Why, dad," he greeted, "what in the dickens are you doing out here?"

"In town on business," explained Freeman Judd cryptically. "I heard there was a basket-ball game to-night, and I figured I could find you here. Quite a game, eh?"

Vern clenched his hands. "A bigger, more important one than you think, dad." It was hard to go on and explain that his job at the factory hinged upon the outcome, but he managed it bravely.

His father heard him to the end, without interrupting. Once or twice he frowned a little, as if there were some worry on his mind, but he offered no comment. When the boy was quite done, he looked at him steadily.

"You played to win?" he asked.

"Of course. You see, I——"

"All right. I wanted to be sure, Vern. Now, about this job proposition of ours. You won't stick out your six months with Bloss, you say. Too bad you came so close, my boy, but you know I never budge an inch. A bargain's a bargain with me."

Looking up quickly, Vern fancied he detected a twinkle in his father's eyes. But when he searched for it again it was gone.

"I'm not asking you to go back on your proposition," he said. "I don't know exactly——"

"Vern!"

It was Hazel Wayne's voice. He whirled quickly, and took the hand she extended.

"I want to congratulate you, with all

my heart," she said. "I'm glad you won, Vern."

He was glad, too—now. It was the first thrill of the victory, but it was well worth while. Some day, he promised himself, he would make Hazel understand how much it had hurt him to win against her wishes.

"You don't know how ashamed of myself I felt!" she rushed on. "You see, Creighton met me yesterday and told me he was coming over to Landon's as superintendent and——"

"Creighton! At Landon's!" exclaimed Vern in astonishment. A new hope sprang up in his heart. "When?"

"Next Tuesday, he said."

"Oh!" The hope withered and died. On the intervening Monday Creighton would discharge him. "Go on, Hazel!"

"Well," continued the girl, "he explained that as he had already signed his contract and was the Landon manager, he wanted the Landon people to have the winning basket-ball team this season. If you didn't try too hard, Vern, that would be possible, he thought. I—I was to ask you not to."

"But—why?"

"Because if I refused—if Bloss won—I was to lose my job. Father's and brother Ben's depended upon the game, too. Tuesday we'll all be out of work. I don't know how we'll manage to live, but"—she smiled at him through her tears—"but I'm glad you won, Vern. It nearly killed me when I thought you weren't trying honestly to win."

"I was, Hazel. I know a lot of people didn't think so, but I was." He touched his arm gingerly. "Early in the game I bruised the biceps in my right arm in a nasty tumble. My whole arm got sore and stiff. I wanted to drop out and make way for a substitute, but Murph wouldn't listen. And then, at the end, just before I scored that last goal, the ball hit me an awful whack in the face. It stunned me and blinded me. But I heard you call, and I caught

a glimpse of your white handkerchief dropping. I remembered that other day—the first day I ever saw you—and I knew absolutely I could shoot the basket. You really won the——”

“Listen, Hazel Wayne!” The voice was Creighton’s; his face was convulsed with rage. “Listen to me, young lady! You double-crossed me to-night, but you’ll pay for it. Out you go Tuesday, along with your old man and your kid brother—the whole kit and parcel of you. And I’ll see to it that you never get another job in this town.” He turned to Vern. “As for you, you young whippersnapper, I don’t have to wait till Tuesday. You’re fired! Understand? Fired! Just as soon as I can swear out a warrant——”

Freeman Judd stepped forward leisurely. “Just a moment,” he interrupted. “You can’t fire this young man.”

“Why not? I’m superintendent of the Bloss Company.”

“Wrong!” The elder Judd spat out the word with evident enjoyment. “You *were* superintendent. But you can’t fire anybody now because you were fired yourself this afternoon at a meeting of the board of directors.”

“It’s a lie!” blustered Creighton. His eyes gleamed slyly. “If it ain’t a lie, though, I don’t care. I’ll be superintendent of the Landon works next week, and the Bloss Company will find——”

“Wrong again!” Freeman Judd stepped closer. “At five this afternoon the final papers were signed whereby the two concerns come under the same management and ownership. If it’s of any interest to you, I am the man who is merging them. I kicked you out of

Bloss’ to-day after reading the reports of an expert accountant and a detective who’ve been checking you up for several weeks; I’ll make sure you stay out of Landon’s. So, Mr. Creighton, you see, you won’t be able to fire anybody from either factory.”

Creighton did not wait to argue. With a sudden leap, he lost himself in the crowd that was making for the outer door.

“Shall I go after him, dad?” asked Vern, his fingers working hungrily.

“No need,” smiled Freeman Judd. “He’ll run across some plain-clothes men just outside. Misappropriation of funds, malicious damage of property, and other charges to answer in court.”

Somebody plucked at Vern’s coat sleeve, and he looked down into Hazel’s startled eyes.

“Is he your father?” she asked, pointing.

“Why, yes! Let me introduce——”

“But he’s just bought both factories,” she said, “and he must be very rich, and—and I thought you were poor, working in the Bloss stockroom. I suppose now——”

“If dad’s new superintendent is willing, I’ll stick to my same job,” promised Vern; “at least, till I’ve been there a full six months. How about it, dad?”

“Vern, I’m going to like you better.”

“Thanks, dad. A little later, if you think I measure up, I want a desk job, with more money.” He looked into Hazel Wayne’s eyes once more. “Because, to tell the truth, I’m thinking about getting married as soon as the girl says ‘yes.’”

Hazel Wayne said “Oh!” But she meant “Yes.”

WISEHEAD: “All food when it is being thoroughly masticated contains the germs of tuberculosis.”

Do-tell: “No!”

Wisehead: “Yes, it does; because it’s in the last stages of consumption.”

Clem Frobisher's Man-sized Job

By Allan Hawkwood



THE scenario writer and partner to Clem Frobisher let out a whoop in response to Clem's proposal:

"Ed, let's take a vacation. I'm getting tired of making films. Let's go

back to San Pedro, hire the old boat, and go fishing."

"Wow! Say, cap'n, I had that notion myself! Do you mean it?"

"You bet I mean it!" Clem rose, and strode up and down, frowning. "I can be cooped up only so long, Ed; then something has to bust. Now that we've finished that big five-reel film, I'm going to get back to salt water for a few days."

"Say, I can smell them fish now!" exclaimed Ed, in ecstasy. "An' the engine-room oil an' the ol' bilge-water stink— Oh, golly! When do we go?"

"Catch a Pedro car, after lunch, charter the old *Sadie*, and off with us! Are you game?"

"Game?" The lanky Iowan grinned. "Say, cap'n, I'm so game that—that I'm growin' horns right now!"

The Frobisher Producing Company, with Clem as its head, and Ed Davis as partner and scenario writer, had been established in Easthampton for

some months. Further, it had made good, largely because of Clem Frobisher's distinctive ability.

Before getting into the motion-picture business, Clem had run a fishing launch out of San Pedro, Ed being his engineer and chum. He had finally awakened to the fact that, despite his splendid body and brawn, he was backward in education; that ahead of him lay nothing but endless years of fishing and taking out tourists after tuna; and that, if he so chose, he could make something more of himself than this.

Clem had chosen promptly, had sold his launch to old Captain Saunders, and had started in to make the fight. Hampered financially, and by lack of prior education, he had, none the less, flung himself into the work with all his dogged, pugnacious will power. Ed Davis had accompanied him, largely for friendship's sake, but also with the dream of getting rich by writing plays.

Events had favored the chums. Ed had been victimized by a fraudulent motion-picture concern, whereupon Clem had pitched in and fought the owners; the result had been that he and Ed Davis owned the film company. Since that time the chums had worked it up, until now it was really a well-established business, with a golden future.

Naturally, therefore, they were both

ready for a vacation. Clem quite forgot that a man, and particularly a young man, can never entirely get away from his past.

In the old days, Clem had had a reputation along the Pedro water front.

He had never been a hanger-on at bars, or a pool-room loafer; but nature, combined with hard work at sea, had endowed him with a vigorous body and an inclination to use his fists. Along the water front he had been thrown in contact with fishermen, bucko mates, and ordinary seamen of all nations, and when it came to fighting, Clem Frobisher's name was one to conjure with.

He had been whipped, of course. Yet he was locally known as the toughest young fellow to whip and the best fellow to stand beside in a scrap in all San Pedro; and it must be admitted that he did his best to justify the reputation. Not that he ever sought a fight, or forced one on the other chap, but when the fight came to him he went into it on the jump.

Clem had thought these old days gone forever; but, as he and Ed Davis climbed aboard their San Pedro car that afternoon Fate was waiting for them with a big stick.

II.

"If Cap'n Saunders ain't here," said Ed Davis, "we'll get another boat?"

Clem nodded. Together they were walking up a side street of San Pedro to the little cottage where Captain Ezra Saunders, a retired veteran of many seas and seasons, was living on the income furnished him by two or three fishing boats, which were run by his son Tom, a young fellow a year or two older than Clem.

As they turned in at the gate of the vine-shaded cottage, however, they knew that the captain was at home from the foghorn voice which bellowed forth:

"Howdy, Clem!"

Ezra Saunders was a remarkable old man—though he was scarce sixty years of age. He was crippled by rheumatism, and had lost a leg at the knee from a shark-bite, while his right arm had been paralyzed on his last voyage—when he had brought the schooner *Mary Connors* through a thousand miles of typhoon and had saved the lives of twenty men.

With all this, however, Clem had never seen the old man in gloomy mood. Ever was Captain Saunders smiling, optimistic, cheerful. As he and Ed Davis shook hands, and stepped up to the porch, where easy-chairs awaited them, the skipper bellowed to his wife, and Mrs. Saunders also came forth, to fold each of the visitors in a warm embrace.

"Well, well!" she exclaimed, wiping a tear from her ruddy cheeks. "Clem, if you ain't become a real city man! Say! Wouldn't your mother ha' been proud of you now!"

"I hope so," and Clem's brown eyes saddened a trifle. Since his mother's death Mrs. Saunders had been the only mother he had known—and that had been twelve summers past. Then he looked up, with his old cheerful smile. "I do believe you're getting thin!"

"Nonsense, you vagabone!" Mrs. Saunders, who weighed two hundred, and knew it, laughed through her welcoming tears. "Don't you flatter me, now! You boys ain't goin' to run right off, I hope? I been makin' pies to-day, and it seems to me you two rascallions used to like Ma Saunders' pies right well before you got stuck up an' citified."

"Nothin' stuck up about me, 'cept my collar," said Ed Davis, grinning. "I been hankering for your pies, ma, ever since we left Pedro. You bet we're goin' to stay a while! How's Tom? Everybody well?"

Mrs. Saunders' ruddy face seemed to assume a slightly less cheerful expression.

"Yes," she said, turning to the door. "Tom's well. You folks set and talk while I see to them pies. They're in the oven now."

The door slammed. Clem looked at the captain's white-whiskered face and frowned.

"What's the matter, cap'n?" he asked directly. "You're looking kind of peaked around the gills. Rheumatism bad again?"

"No-o, I reckon not." Captain Saunders stroked his beard, and summoned up the ghost of his olden-days smile. "I'm hungerin' for salt water, I reckon."

"First time I ever knew you to lie to me, cap'n," said Clem quietly.

Captain Saunders flushed. He looked at Ed Davis, and then met Clem's accusing brown eyes. With fumbling fingers he began to fill his pipe.

"Got a match, Clem?" he asked, with a little quaver in his voice.

Silently Clem produced the article in question. It began to seem as though something were very wrong, indeed. Ed Davis sat watching and listening, his grin gone. When the old skipper had lighted the pipe he leaned back and looked at Clem again.

"Well, Clem, I—I guess it was the first time. I ain't much used to lies. But sometimes lies has to come."

"Not between us, cap'n," and Clem's strong, bronzed face lightened. "What's the trouble?"

"You," said the old man, puffing out a huge cloud of smoke.

"I! What do you mean?"

Captain Saunders sighed. His weather-beaten face was set in lines of sadness.

"Clem, you allus been a mighty good boy, and I know it better'n most people. But when it comes to a scrap, you got a reputation around here like a down-east mate. I don't blame you none, o' course."

"Go on," urged Clem as the skipper

paused. He wondered what was coming next.

"Well, Tom allus did admire you a heap, Clem, but since you been gone to the city Tom's kind o' got the notion that he's stepped into your fightin' boots, and he's gone around handin' out some fine lickin's. For a fact, Tom can fight like a streak."

"I guess he came by it honestly," was the reply, and Clem smiled slightly as he eyed the old skipper's broad shoulders.

"Well, mebbe so. But—say, Clem, you know Tom's a good boy, don't you?"

"You bet he is!" said Clem, frowning.

Inwardly, he commented otherwise. While he knew Tom Saunders pretty well, he also knew that Tom had companions who were not of the old Saunders strain.

"To tell the truth, Clem, Tom's been gettin' kind o' out o' hand." The skipper sighed again. "He's been comin' home drunk every once in a while, if you want it straight. He's tryin' to be cock o' the walk around here, like you used to be—but he ain't doing it your way, Clem."

Clem Frobisher felt as though a cold hand had touched him and had sent a shiver through him.

He was not responsible, of course; and, very likely, Tom Saunders was no worse than the average young fellow. But that was far from the point.

Clem loved the honest, simple, manly old skipper, and he loved Mrs. Saunders. Sooner than hurt them in any way he would have cut off his right hand.

Yet he knew that he had hurt them grievously, if unintentionally. He knew that Tom Saunders, misled by the wrong sort of friends, was heaping sorrows upon these kindly old parents of his largely by aspiring to walk in the tracks of Clem Frobisher. And Ezra

Saunders had hit the nail on the head by saying that Tom was not doing it Clem's way.

"He's running the boats all right, I suppose?" queried Clem, with sinking heart.

"Oh, he 'tends to 'em well enough—nothin' extra. Clem, I wish to thunder these was the ol' days! I'd ship that boy A. B. under the toughest, hardest pair o' bucko mates ever stepped, an' I'd ship him around the Horn! When he got back, by glory, he'd either be dead or—different! And"—the skipper sighed heavily—"I dunno's I'd give a darn which way it come out. I b'lieve it's breakin' Ma Saunders' heart—I do so!"

Suddenly Ed Davis leaned forward, his lean frame quivering with eagerness. For five minutes he spoke rapidly, excitedly, earnestly. Clem and the skipper listened in amazement, that changed, on Clem's part, to narrow-eyed calculation, and finally to swift resolve.

"That's enough!" he broke in suddenly. "Cap'n, we'll go out on a fishin' trip in the old *Sadie*, after supper tonight. If Tom ain't—hasn't—come home, I'll find him. And I promise you this, on my word of honor: If I don't change his lookout on life I'll never show my face here again!"

The old skipper gazed at Clem with dewy eyes.

"Clem," he said brokenly, "Clem, mebbe ye can. But, lad, it's a man-sized job! I reckon you've bit off more'n ye can chew—but Heaven bless ye, lad!"

"And now for ma's pies!" said Ed Davis, with a grin.

III.

Clem Frobisher and his chum waved farewell to the old folks and walked toward Beacon Street. The California evening was just closing down in all its swiftness.

"Ed, you go 'tend to the boat," directed Clem, at the next corner. "Have her gas tank full, and make sure the batteries are working right. I'll bring Tom."

"Mebbe I'd better go along with you," volunteered Ed.

"Maybe you'd better obey orders!" snapped Clem, his square-hewn face set in hard, determined lines. Here! Take my coat with you!"

Peeling to his flannel shirt, he tossed his coat to Ed and turned away. The other looked after him with a sour grin.

"Want all the fun yourself, eh? All right, cap'n. You ain't goin' to shake me!"

Ed Davis followed his partner—at a very respectful distance.

Clem strode along in the gathering dusk. Crossing Beacon Street, he headed for a large pool room, where he was pretty certain to find his quarry.

"So he didn't come home for supper—hasn't come home all day!" he muttered savagely. "Huh! Claims to be walking in *my* shoes, does he? Huh!"

Clem turned in at the pool-room entrance, where a noisy phonograph was grinding out ragtime. About the rear of the place he saw a dozen young fellows grouped about a pool table, with a cloud of tobacco smoke hanging over them. With a curt nod to the proprietor, Clem strode back past the tables.

He soon picked out Tom Saunders, a big-boned, rather handsome fellow, three inches taller than Clem, and built along the same lines as the old skipper. But Tom's strong, even powerful, face was marred by the undeniable touch of liquor, and a cigarette trailed smoke between his fingers. His companions laughed uproariously at his jokes, and gave him an acclamation, which he seemed to enjoy hugely.

"Clem Frobisher, by golly!"

As the cry went up from the assembled fellows, all of whom knew Clem, Tom Saunders turned and came for-

ward, cue in hand, with a quick smile of delight. He stretched out a big hand toward Clem.

"Hello, cap'n! Say, you old chump, where you been hidin'? I——"

Under Clem's steady, scornful gaze, his words of greeting faded. His hand fell to his side. He stared in blank amazement, while a portentous silence fell upon the others.

Then Clem made a sudden movement and plucked the cigarette from Tom's fingers. He tossed it into the corner.

"Tom," he said quietly, "I hear that you claim to be filling my shoes. How about it?"

"Hey?" Tom Saunders laid aside his billiard cue, still staring. "What you mean?"

"You heard me!" snarled Clem, watching the other with grim intentness.

"Say, what's eatin' you?" demanded Tom, in frowning wonder. "Ain't we allus been mighty good friends? What the devil are you talkin' about?"

"I'm talking about you," said Clem, as he took a forward step. "Tom, you used to be a prince of a fellow. You're some scrapping guy, too. Well, I been hearing a lot about you to-day. I hear, for one thing, that you're doing a lot o' talking about fillin' Clem Frobisher's shoes. I'm telling you right here that my shoes never left tracks in a saloon! Get that?"

"Say, what's the matter with you?" said Tom, with a scowl, seeing beyond all doubt that his former hero was bent on trouble. "Do you want to start somethin'?"

"When I get ready, I'll start it quick enough," snapped Clem. "Ed Davis came over with me, and we're going out in the *Sadie* to-night, Tom, on a three-days' trip—maybe longer. I want you to come along."

Tom was puzzled by this invitation, and was also half mollified.

"Why, Clem, I'd like to—darned if

I wouldn't! But we got a big kelly game comin' off to-night—dollar a corner——"

"And your dad's house rent is owing," said Clem quietly. "Will you come or not?"

"Don't see how I can——"

Like a flash, Clem's right shot out. It drove fair and square to the big fellow's jaw. Tom went staggering back, and his friends surged forward at Clem with a snarl of rage. Gripping the pool table behind him, Tom Saunders turned on them hotly.

"Git back, you flatfoots! Keep out o' this!"

"Bully for you, Tom!" said Clem approvingly. Then, as Tom turned, Clem was in, with a leap, and the row began.

And, as a water-front row, it was historic. Tom Saunders was no bluffer. He had size and brawn, he took punishment like a punching bag, and he had a kick like a mule. When he started in to fight he usually demolished everything in sight.

But from the start it was evident that he had no chance.

Clem Frobisher in action was a whirlwind. If he lacked size, he had a savage earnestness which won half his battles. He went into a scrap heart and soul and body, for, if he had to fight, he wanted no halfway measures. He was not a halfway man.

The battle was short, sharp, and furious. Foolishly, Tom drove for Clem's face and jaw, but Clem fought otherwise. He was out for blood, figuratively speaking.

Taking a smack that brought a black eye, without a wince, he broke through the other's guard and slammed his fists into Tom's body time and again. Never had any one seen him go into a fight with such savage, deadly fury. Within thirty seconds, Tom Saunders was backed into a corner, mouthing oaths and lashing out half at random, while Clem's terrible right and left

swings pounded over his heart and stomach.

Unexpectedly, Clem shot up a swift uppercut that rocked Tom's head back. The other's arms flew up, and Clem's right bored into the solar plexus. It was almost a finishing blow. Tom emitted a gasp, and flung out his arms to save himself from going down. Clem swung down his arm for the knock-out.

At that instant, the rage of Tom's followers broke all bounds. One of them came in, swinging a billiard cue, and aimed a blow that would have resulted in the penitentiary had it landed. But it did not land.

As the cue flashed up behind Clem, a lean figure came from nowhere, apparently, and placed a blow under the fellow's ear that landed the would-be murderer under a table and kept him there. Then Clem heard his chum's voice ringing behind him:

"You fellers better scatter quick! There's two cops headed this way!"

Clem's arm shot out. Tom Saunders groaned and collapsed. The others were hastily streaming out the back entrance; and Clem, gripping his late opponent's collar, turned to Ed Davis with a panting gasp of relief.

"Good boy, Ed! Pick up his feet, now—move fast!"

And, as the police entered by the front door, they vanished into the alley at the rear, carrying the unconscious Tom Saunders between them.

IV.

"Shanghaied him, by thunder!"

Ed Davis grinned down at the sleeping Tom. The *Sadie* was dancing to the lilting ground swells, at dawn, far out beyond Catalina Island.

"Below there!" rang the voice of Clem, on deck above. "Ed, rouse that fellow up, or I'll do it myself!"

Ed, who was about to turn in, after

standing watch all night, shrugged his shoulders and grinned. Then he caught the sleeping Tom Saunders by the leg, hauled him roughly out of the bunk, and, planting two stinging blows, sent him up the tiny companionway with a kick.

Furious, half awake, cursing, Saunders gained his balance on the deck and stared at the ocean in blank bewilderment. Clem, at the wheel, let out a roar.

"Wake up, you slob! Take one o' them buckets and a broom, an' wash down the decks!"

Tom stared at the pilot house, saw Clem's battered features, and comprehended at last. His heavy face contracted in anger.

"By thunder, I'll make you sweat for this!" he burst forth, and came on the run.

Clem slipped a loop over the wheel and met Tom halfway. Nor did he waste any time or sympathy, for he was a captain, and his crew was in mutiny. Before Tom could get within fighting distance, Clem smashed him across the head with the butt end of a gaff. He reeled back, caught at the rail, and clung there weakly.

"I've a word to say to you, Tom Saunders," remarked Clem quietly, watching him for signs of further trouble. "You think you're something of a boss scrapper, and a deuce of a sporty chap. You're not. You're a cheap, low-down drunken loafer!"

"You keep away from your old father and mother as much as you can, and you loaf around the water front, gambling and fighting and drinking. Well, you're going to get your fill o' fighting this trip, believe me! You're going to realize that you got a blamed sight better home than any pool room will furnish——"

Tom, partly recovered from that stunning blow, leaped in again.

Clem raised the gaff, then dropped it.

He saw that Tom was a glutton for punishment, and determined to administer it. Yet he admired deeply the dogged courage of the other.

Cool, confident, smiling, for a good ten minutes he smashed Tom Saunders about the deck. At the end of that time Tom collapsed, both eyes puffing, and his face hammered black and blue. Clem caught up a canvas bucket, trailed it over the side, and sluiced Tom with cold salt water until Tom sat up, gasping and half drowned.

"If you've had enough, get busy and clean them decks!" snapped Clem.

Tom had not had enough, as his curses showed, but he set to work cleaning the decks. During breakfast, he eyed Clem in sullen silence, and after breakfast Clem set him to work cleaning out the fish boxes and untangling lines and leaders.

Shortly afterward, Clem caught sight of a flock of gulls far to the south, and headed the *Sadie* for them. Where the gulls were there were yellowtail, and skipjack also. Calling Tom, he put him to work at the outriggers.

These were long ten-foot poles, set into sockets just abaft the pilot house, and projecting over the rails. From each pole were set out three hundred-yard lines, the outermost of which bore automatic strikers, the others bearing hooks and minnows.

Five minutes later they got the first strike, and then the fun waxed fast and furious. Clem let out a yell for Ed Davis, and they began to haul in fifteen and twenty-pound yellowtail as fast as the trolling lines could be drawn taut. As Clem and Tom hauled in the fighting, darting, leaping fish, Ed gaffed them.

By noon they had over twenty, with a few barracuda and skipjacks. Then Clem hauled about for San Clemente, looped the wheel, and settled down with the others to lunch.

"When you get the dishes washed

up, Tom," said Ed Davis, "you'd better clean one of them barracuda for supper. Then give that cabin a good cleaning and then——"

"Say, you fellers are almighty fresh!" said Tom Saunders, feeling his black-and-blue eyes tenderly. "How long is this thing goin' to last?"

"Until we get ready to quit," said Davis, grinning pleasantly. "Your proud spirit needs a whole lot o' chastening, friend Tom."

"Well, what's the idea? What have I ever done to you guys?"

"Nothing," broke in Clem coldly. "But you're becoming a pretty worthless sort of citizen, Tom. If I had a father and mother like yours, I'd try and make something of myself, instead of hanging around——"

"Yes, you're a beaut!" sneered Tom. "'Cause you're a city guy, now, you're all stuck up, hey?"

"I don't think you quite understand." Clem smiled slightly. "You're out of proportion with the real facts of life, Tom. Your outlook is warped. Instead of seeing things as they are, you see them from the viewpoint of your pool-room and saloon friends. Well, when we get back to Pedro you'll have forgotten all your dreams of being a tough fighter and gambler and drinker. You're really such a splendid chap at bottom, Tom——"

With a snarl of fury, Tom Saunders leaped to his feet. Unobserved, he had worked himself into position by the rack holding the fish gaffs. With the rapidity of lightning, he seized one of the ten-foot poles and made a vicious lunge for Clem.

Clem ducked. The curved, sharp, unbarbed steel missed his shoulder by a hair's breadth and tore through his flannel shirt. It would have gone through his flesh quite as easily.

Before Tom could extricate the weapon Ed Davis was on him in one leap.

Let it be understood that it was contrary to the natures both of Davis and of Clem Frobisher to treat any one with the brutality which they were displaying toward Tom Saunders. Yet it was not brutality. They were both thinking, not of Tom, but of the two old people in the vine-wreathed cottage.

Ed had mapped out a course, Clem had approved it, as had Captain Ezra Saunders, and now the two partners were following it rigidly. If it turned out badly, Tom would get no more than he deserved; if it turned out well, so much the better.

Blinded though he was, however, Tom gave the lanky Iowan the fight of his life. It was full seven minutes before Ed had his opponent on the deck, and even then Tom still lashed out blindly at the figure sitting on his chest. Not until Clem doused him anew with bucket after bucket of water did he give in.

"All right," he mumbled, rising unsteadily. "All right! You guys wait till I can see, that's all!"

"There's no waiting aboard this hooker!" snapped Clem. "You get forward and clean that fish, and do it right, see?"

"I'll do nothin' o' the sort!" returned Tom through his split lips. "You can beat me up all you want—I ain't goin' to stir a foot." A volley of oaths escaped him.

Clem, his lips tight clenched, inspected him for a moment, then turned to Ed.

"Get that bit of line out o' the locker aft, Ed—the rope's end that's tarred. Go after this guy, and give him a taste of deep-sea sailors' life."

For the rest of the afternoon Tom Saunders worked like a horse. A bit of thin rope, tarred into a stiff club, is a wonderfully effective inducement, when properly applied. Poor Tom made close acquaintance with it.

"We'll be off San Clemente at dawn, Ed," said Clem that evening. He and Ed Davis were eating fried barracuda while Tom coned the helm. "It'll be watch and watch all night, and we'll have to keep him awake and working till he drops."

"Haze him, eh?"

"Haze him until he's darned near dead!" And Clem compressed his lips. "Ed, it's an awful thing to do—but by golly it's a whole lot more awful to think o' him breakin' poor old Ma Saunders' heart!"

"We'll break *him*!" said Ed, nodding as he spoke. "We'll kill or cure, Clem—and I ain't right sure which it'll be."

Neither was Clem, unfortunately.

V.

Dawn came upon the sea—and fog.

The *Sadie* was somewhere off San Clemente, that desolate, rocky, almost unknown island. The dense fog hid everything from view.

Clem, who would be on duty until eight o'clock, was seated beside the pilot house, cutting off yellowtail heads to use as bait for jewfish. The *Sadie* lay motionless on the oily waters, swinging listlessly to the swell of the channel. Up in the bows was a huddled, miserable figure—Tom Saunders, asleep at last.

That had been a terrible night for the shanghaied man.

Kept awake and at work, kept scrubbing, painting, untangling lines, oiling the engines, driven to the work and kept at it by boot and fist and rope's end, Tom had finally given way.

When Clem took the deck, at four o'clock, the sight of Tom smote his heart. Yet he drove him relentlessly. An hour later the end had come.

Sobbing, praying, pleading, Tom had crept to him, begging for sleep, begging for release from the torture. Even then Clem had steeled himself, and

had renewed his driving, but not for long. He had not the heart.

Tom Saunders had been broken at last—had promised everything and anything, had wept and prayed anew. At six o'clock, Clem had told him to sleep, and he had dropped in a pitiable heap where he stood.

"It's a mean job," thought Clem, as he baited the huge hooks on his line. "But he's had an hour's rest now, so we'll try him out. Besides, he can stand a lot more—and it's necessary. Kill or cure!"

Accordingly, he awakened poor Tom by repeated sluices of water, thrust a rod into his hand, bade him angle for a jewfish, and baited his own line. Somewhat to Clem's surprise, Tom said nothing whatever, and did not rebel; but he sat on the rail, shivering, and gazed miserably at the water.

A moment later, just as Clem was unreeling his line, he saw Tom start to his feet, and heard the buzz of the automatic drag.

"Got one?" he cried. Tom merely nodded.

A glance showed Clem that the jewfish was running out ahead of the launch, and he leaped to the engines.

"I'll give her half speed!" he exclaimed swiftly. "Reel up as we get over him."

He noted that the fog seemed to have thickened rather than diminished.

With the *Sadie* running slowly ahead, Clem regained the deck to find Tom reeling in his line, the stubby, powerful rod bent almost double. The jewfish, for all its great size, is not a wonderful fighter; none the less, it was a good ten minutes before Tom got the fish close to the surface.

Yet he seemed not a whit excited. He reeled mechanically; his hands were blue with cold; he seemed broken in spirit. Clem watched him with some anxiety, wondering if the hazing had been carried too far.

"Here!" he exclaimed suddenly, as the line came in. "Take this gaff, and bring him up, Tom! I'll hold him at the surface!"

Clem thought he saw tears on the other's cheeks.

The exchange was made. Tom took the gaff and stood on the rail, clinging to a stay, bending over the water. Clem, taking the rod, was astonished. The fish must be a four-hundred-pounder at least, he decided. Then, peering over the side as he forced the jewfish up, he saw the great oval mass below. The surface water broke into a mass of foam.

Tom lunged with the gaff—lunged again—missed both times. Then, with a muttered word of exasperation, he leaned far over and caught the fish squarely.

He did not lift quickly enough, however, to get the fish out of water. There was a surge and a swirl beneath, and a short cry broke from Tom.

"Give me a hand——"

Before Clem could move, he saw Tom, hanging grimly to the gaff, drawn out by the fish's wide, circling sweep. In a flash, the dogged San Pedro boy had his hold broken, had lost his balance—and was overboard.

"By golly, he's too cold and stiff to swim!" thought Clem swiftly. He lifted his voice in a ringing shout:

"Ed! Ed! On deck! Man overboard!"

With the words, he caught up the life preserver hanging at the rail and tossed it over the side. Then, his coat off, he leaped after it, in wild fear lest his own driving tyranny had been carried so far that Tom would have no strength left.

In that desperate fear, he came to the surface almost beside the struggling figure of Tom Saunders. A few yards away was floating the round life buoy. Catching Tom by the collar, Clem

gained the preserver in a few strokes, and bobbed Tom up inside it.

"Get your arms over the sides—that's right! Now take a turn of the line about your arms. Good!"

Satisfied that Tom was sure to float, Clem turned on his side and sent a glance around for the *Sadie*. With a shock, he remembered that her engines were set at half speed.

She was gone in the fog!

Still the momentary panic that seized him, Clem lifted his voice in a shout. He knew that Ed Davis would be on deck by this time, but at sight of the swirls of fog, that hid the water ten feet away, his heart sank.

"How you makin' it, Tom?"

"All right," said the other mechanically. "I lost the fish, I guess."

"I guess you did." Clem chuckled. "Can you give a yell?"

Tom emitted a feeble cry, that betrayed his weakness more than words could have done. A wave broke over them, and Clem took his weight off the preserver, allowing it to float higher. It could not well sustain them both.

Also, there was a choppy sea running—the island current cutting up the long, easy ground swell. It was hard swimming, and the water was cold.

"What on earth's the matter with Ed?" exclaimed Clem anxiously. "We ought to hear the horn—— Ah! There it is! Thank goodness!"

Muffled, but unmistakable, the blast of the *Sadie's* foghorn pierced its way to them. Clem shouted again and again. Ed was on the job!

"It don't seem to be gettin' much closer," muttered Tom.

Clem listened. No—it was not growing closer. It was hard to tell from which direction the sound came, but certainly the launch was receding from them. Resting once more on the life preserver, Clem bellowed for all he was worth.

"Better quit yellin'," mumbled Tom. "It'll tire you out quicker'n any——"

The rest was lost in a splutter as a wave lapped over them. Clem again released the life buoy, which lifted Tom well above the water.

Ridding himself of his clothes, Clem swam more easily, but he felt the chill of the water keenly. Owing to the choppy back lash of the waves, it was impossible to float. He had to swim continually to hold himself up.

"Hang on to the cork, ye blamed fool!" said Tom.

"I will, if I need to. I'm all right."

The horn was sounding no longer!

Clem knew that their situation was desperate in the extreme. Which way the island lay, no one could tell. They were in a spot reached only by an occasional fishing boat. The fog would not lift before noon. Unless Ed Davis found them by chance, they could not both last—the preserver would only keep one man up.

Clem found himself becoming weakened by that continual struggle.

How long he swam beside Tom, he never knew. It seemed like days. He swam now on his side, now on his back. Change position as he might, however, he could not get away from the choppy, short seas. The sound of the foghorn came to them no more, and Clem forbore to shout, knowing the effort useless unless Ed Davis came close by them.

"How are you, Tom?" he said, resting on the preserver. A wave broke over them. Clem hastily drew away, yet with an inward groan.

"All right," responded Tom, lying nobly. "Catch on here."

Clem smiled a little. The faintness of the other's voice had told him all he wanted to know. Tom was incapable of any exertion.

"And I'm responsible for Tom's condition," was the thought that drove into Clem's heart with paralyzing truth. He

called up his reserve strength and breasted the waves, but the effort wasted him alarmingly. His limbs were stiff, numbed. He prayed for the *Sadie*, but she came not.

"Tom," said Clem, as he turned, swimming beside the buoy and watching Tom's white, stern-clenched face, "we've hazed you pretty hard this trip, but it was for your own good. Ed and I came to Pedro, and found—" A wave plunged over him. Clem fought it down, gasping.

"We found your dad ten years older than he was a month or two ago. Ma didn't say much, but she was pretty hard hit—and it was your fault, Tom. You've been running with the wrong crowd, and because you're a good deal above them in every way they've toadied to you and got you on the down grade to their level. Ed and I—"

Again a great quantity of green water curled over him. The crest swallowed him. Desperate, Clem lost his head, and flurried wildly, frantically, wasting precious strength. When he emerged, half strangled, his own danger frightened him into coolness.

"Grab hold o' the buoy, you fool!" growled Tom weakly.

"Shut up!" gasped Clem. "Listen! I want you to understand why we acted as we did, Tom. Your drinking and loafing and general cussedness has darned near wrecked your—"

Once more a smother of water dragged him down. He fought against the wild impulse to grab the buoy, but he struggled up to find Tom's hand on his arm.

"Git aboard here—"

"Quit!" snarled Clem, flinging back and breaking the other's hold. He gazed at Tom with desperate, convulsed features. He knew he could not last long. His strength was going fast. "We can't both hang on there, you idiot! It—it won't hold—more'n one—and—"

"Then I'll drop!" And Tom tried to heave himself up and release the lashing about his arms. He failed, through very stiffness and weakness.

"No, you won't—you go back home and—tell ma that—that—" Clem went under, fought frantically, felt the terrible weakness overpower him. Then he caught a breath of blessed air again. "So long—cut out—the booze—"

With a groan, Clem found his strength gone. He seemed to collapse utterly. He felt the water close over him, choking, strangling, smothering—and then he knew nothing more.

A moment afterward the *Sadie* poked her nose out of the fog, almost above Tom.

VI.

"Golly! I thought I was gone—"

Clem opened his eyes and stared.

He found himself in the cabin of the *Sadie*. Above him was standing Ed Davis; and Clem, feeling himself almost naked, knew that his chum had been working over him.

"You were blamed near gone!" exclaimed Ed anxiously. "I got the water out of you, though. How do you feel?"

"Tired. Where's Tom?"

"Up above. He's all right—kind o' went to pieces when I got you aboard."

Ed heaped blankets about Clem. Then he continued swiftly:

"I got some coffee on the fire now. Say! Do you know what that cuss done?"

"Who—Tom?"

"Yep! I found him hangin' on to your collar—both o' you danged near drowned, by thunder! He made me haul you up first, too! Say, what happened? I ain't understood yet how you come overboard—"

"Get the coffee," muttered Clem, closing his eyes. "Talk later."

With a mutter of self-accusation, Ed rushed away.

Clem lay in a coma of exhaustion. He felt a gradual warmth steal through him, and realized that he was safe enough; but he was too weary to move. A moment later he caught a step at his side, and opened his eyes, thinking that Ed had returned.

Instead, however, he saw Tom Saunders. The big fellow, staring at Clem with wild eyes, lowered himself to the edge of the bunk. He was white and shaken. As he met the gaze of Clem he broke down, and lowered his face in his arms, sobbing unrestrainedly.

Clem wondered, but was too weak to speak for the moment. At length Tom lifted his head.

"Thank Heaven, you're safe!" he mumbled. "Say, Clem, I——"

"Thanks, old man," broke in Clem, putting out a hand. "Ed told me how you held me up—it was fine work——"

"Oh, shut your blamed mouth!" growled Tom, sitting up. "I got somethin' to say—you shut up till I get through!"

Clem watched him, waiting in puzzled silence.

"You know what you said when—when you was goin' down?" blurted out Tom. "About ma and dad—and what you——"

"I know," said Clem. "Well?"

Tom's white face flushed slightly.

"Clem, it's darned hard to explain—but just then, when you went down, an' I seen how you was givin' up so's I could go back—it kind o' made me realize that you'd meant every darned word o' what you said. I hadn't thought of it that way before—but it came to me all of a heap—well, I can't say any more, Clem—only I want to tell you that I've been a darned fool, and——"

"Say, you two guys better drink this coffee in a hurry," broke in the voice of Ed Davis, who had paused for a moment behind Tom, listening.

He came forward with two steaming cups of coffee, handed one to Tom, and helped Clem to put down the hot fluid in the other. With a sigh of increasing comfort, Clem fell back in the bunk and smiled faintly, his hand touching that of Tom.

"Ed," he said, "head the old hooker for Pedro, full speed! When we get in to-night——"

"When we get in to-night," broke in Ed, with a wide grin, "do you know what I'm goin' to do?"

"What?" asked Clem, with a smile.

"I'm goin' to eat one o' Ma Saunders' pies—all by myself."

"And I'll be there to help," said Tom.

In his handgrip and in his eyes there was that which told Clem more than words could say. Tom Saunders was headed home.

ENTOMBED MINERS RESCUED

THE nine miners who had been entombed for a week in the Foster Tunnel of the Lehigh Coal & Navigation Company, at Coaldale, Pennsylvania, were taken out alive. Though the men had crouched in water most of the time, and had subsisted partly on wax, they were able to walk to the ambulance.

Eleven miners were entombed when water and culm broke into the tunnel. Two who were nearer the mouth of the tunnel were saved after a few hours. Gangs, working in relays of four hours, dug through the fallen coal and rock in order to make an opening through which the other nine could be rescued.

The Shock

BY Grant Trask Reeves



WHEN "Rube" Reynolds crawled out of bed and began to dress, it was near to noontime. Within his head, to all feeling, a gigantic, throbbing trip hammer was seemingly striving to pound its way through his skull with regular, painful thumps. His lips felt parched and drawn, and a sickish, bitter taste stayed upon his tongue, as if his mouth was crammed with coarse, moldy earth, and by no means of futile gulping could he swallow the stuff.

Out of the confused muddle of his brain flashed a thought of morning practice.

"Guess'll have to skip breakfast to get out to the field on time," he thought.

But a glance at his watch, lying upon the bureau, made him aware that haste was useless; for probably at that moment his fellow members of the Sox were leaving the ball park for their homes and boarding places. Again he had missed a morning session on the home grounds of the Sox, and he sullenly wondered what Manager Kineally would say.

Slowly he continued to don his clothes. At times the bed, the chairs, and other articles of furniture seemed to be dancing and whirling weirdly about the room; and when he leaned forward to lace his shoes, his throbbing head pained as though it would burst.

Moving to the bureau he pulled out a lower drawer and brought forth a

bottle partially filled with a brownish liquid. To his lips he tipped it, and for several seconds his Adam's apple bobbed convulsively to a gurgling accompaniment.

Barely at the halfway mark, between twenty and thirty years, Reynolds had already reached the stage where a morning drink seemed a necessity. He lowered the bottle, its contents emptied by half, to the bureau top; and an artificial sense of buoyancy pervaded his being. The throbbing pain in his head was deadened to a dull ache, and the burning flavor of the liquor upon his tongue had washed away the moldy taste.

He dully pondered as to what had taken place on the previous evening, but his remembrances of events occurring after eleven o'clock or thereabouts on the night before were decidedly limited. Some one had escorted him to the front door of his lodging house; he had dizzily ascended the stairs and managed to open the door of his room—that was all he could recall.

A gentle tapping on the door broke in upon his thoughts.

"What is it?" he grunted.

"Mr. Kineally wishes to see you," was the reply. The voice belonged to his landlady.

Reynolds hesitated momentarily. He was tempted to have the landlady say that he was not at home. But what was the use! Kineally would "bawl him out" later; so why not have it over with!

"All right! Send him up!" Reynolds answered.

He had hardly time to whisk the bottle from the bureau to its place in the drawer when an imperative rapping threatened the door panel.

"Come in!" he called.

As the door swung inward a big, brawny form filled the doorway, almost from casing to casing. The square-jawed visage of Owen Kineally, with its twinkling eyes and smiling lips, had appeared on sporting pages the country over; but now the smile was missing. His eyebrows were puckered forward, as Reynolds had sometimes seen them when Kineally took a parting shot at a nearsighted, obstinate umpire.

The big manager remained standing, his gaze upon the ball player.

"G' morning!" Reynolds greeted, as he continued the knotting of his scarf.

"Good *afternoon*!" retorted the manager. And he added: "You're fined fifty dollars."

Reynolds whirled about.

"What for?" he demanded, his voice raised to nearly a shout.

"For not showing up at morning practice, and for drunkenness last night. You're half drunk now."

"You're a——" Reynolds hesitated to speak the word.

His lips were curled back in an ugly snarl, and he glared rebelliously into the steady, piercing eyes of the manager. Silently they faced each other—Reynolds, the tiger; Kineally, the lion. Both were equally tall, though the manager was stockier than his black-eyed, dark-complexioned pitcher. Kineally removed his panama and combed his fingers through his reddish-brown hair.

"Your face is as flushed as if you had a fever," he said. "Your eyes are bloodshot, and late hours have smooched half-moons of charcoal under them, so's any one could tell that you

are traveling straight plumb to the dogs!"

Reynolds muttered inarticulately.

"Yes, that's where you're bound!" continued the manager. "I'm not old enough to be your father, but I've been kicking around in this world for some fifteen or sixteen years longer than you have, and I've had plenty of chance to learn that a pitcher, or any other ball player, can't work as battery mate with Old Demon Booze and last long in the diamond game.

"You were the best pitcher on my staff last year, and you twirled your team into a championship; but now you're a-hitting the toboggan just as fast as any one can. When you are sober and in good physical condition there isn't a better man ever toed the slab than you are; and that's why I haven't traded you during the past month. I hoped you'd wake up and cut out the booze and the gang of high-living sports you are traveling with; but if you don't get your eyes open and quit drinking before we start on the Western trip, I'll try to make a deal with some other club, and trade you before the other managers get wise to the fact that you are drinking yourself out of the game."

Reynolds mumbled something.

"What?" Kineally asked.

"I guess some o' those other managers'd be glad to get me," Reynolds repeated.

"Yes, until they found that you were a souse," Kineally added; "and then they'd shunt you back to the minors in double-quick. You'd probably last a year or two in the bushes, and then some little one-horse minor-league outfit would give you your unconditional release; and you'd be a has-been, while you were yet a kid. Some future, eh?"

Reynolds slouched against the bureau, his hands deep in his pockets. A sullen, defiant expression distorted his features.

Kineally wiped a handkerchief across his forehead.

"I'll be hanged if I know why I've stood for your drinking and violation of training rules as long as I have!" he exclaimed. "I reckon it's because I remember what a likable, clean young duffer you were when I first bought you from that little bush league up-country."

As he paused, the manager happened to glance past the ball player at a picture standing on the bureau. It was the photograph of a girl, in her early twenties; and the face—the expression of the eyes—the mouth and chin—portrayed that rare combination of beauty of character as well as of feature.

The manager pointed toward the picture.

"To ask a personal question, Rube," he began; "is she your sister?"

Following the direction of Kineally's extended finger, Reynolds shook his head.

Kineally's eyes gleamed his satisfaction. Another avenue of appeal was open!

"Then she must be your sweetheart, for I know that you're not married," he stated; and he added earnestly: "I suppose you hope to be married some day?"

Reynolds failed to reply. His liquor-inflamed brain was busy mobilizing the little devils of rage and rebellion. What right had Kineally to catechize him, he angrily pondered. Who gave the manager a license to butt into his private life?

"Why don't you quit the booze and go straight, for her sake if not your own?" the manager inquired, after an interval. "You can hardly expect a decent girl, like the original of that picture must be, to marry a drunken sot, such as continuing your present pace will make you."

Drunken sot! No decent girl would marry him! Even through his liquor-

soaked brain, Reynolds realized that the words rang true; but their very truth was like the red rag fluttered before the bull.

"You're a liar!" he rasped. And he sprang toward the manager, one fist lunging forward as he leaped. Though heavily built, Kineally was quick on his feet. Swiftly he side-stepped and parried the blow. Reynolds whirled about and rushed a second time. Again and again his fists struck out, and Kineally took blow after blow on his hands and arms, turning them all aside. Obsessed by his whisky-stimulated wrath, Reynolds forgot all his knowledge of boxing. His one thought was to beat down the big man before him, who so steadily blocked the punches, and kept forcing him backward without striking a blow.

Back, step by step, they went, until Reynolds stumbled. Instantly the manager closed in, grasping the pitcher's wrists and endeavoring to force him down into a chair. Back and forth they struggled, reeling about the room, until, with a crash, they brought up against the bureau. With a sudden twist, Reynolds wrenched one hand free from the manager's viselike grip. The pitcher reached behind him and groped over the bureau top; and an instant afterward something flashed through the air, thudding dully against the manager's head.

Reynolds heard a gasp, and the fingers about his wrist relaxed. The manager's knees buckled forward, and he crumpled backward on the rug—a motionless heap.

Breathing heavily, Reynolds stood above the inert form, a heavy brass ash tray still grasped in his fist. Particles of blood dotted its edge. For a moment, brute satisfaction was reflected from his face. Then his expression changed to that of alarm. Why did Kineally lie so still? Why was the fallen man's face so pale? Dropping to his knees, Reynolds pressed a hand

against the manager's shirt front. The pitcher's hand was trembling, and his own heart pounding furiously, as he fumbled anxiously about on the manager's breast. He could feel no action, and a crimson stain, like red ink on a sheet of blotting paper, was spreading, with ragged circumference, upon the manager's hair.

The pitcher grasped the manager's shoulders and shook the deathlike form.

"Kineally! Kineally! Owen Kineally!" he cried.

He jumped to his feet and seized the water pitcher, pouring all of the stale fluid it contained over the manager's face; but the eyes remained closed; the form still.

Slowly Reynolds backed away from the prostrate man.

"Heavens!" he whispered. "He—he's dead! I'm a murderer!"

And with the words came another thought. He had killed Kineally! They would arrest him! Into his vision flashed the picture of a chair with straps on its arms, legs, and back, and a few solemn spectators gathered about. No, they mustn't catch him! He must get away!

Moving hurriedly about, and ever averting his gaze from the form on the floor, he donned a few garments for street wear. Ready to leave, he spied the picture upon the bureau. He snatched it up and turned it over. Penned on its back in a feminine hand was: "From Dora to Bob."

Hastily tucking it into his inside pocket, he opened the door and stepped into the hall. His nerveless fingers swung the door shut, and he trod softly down the stairs.

When the evening train coughed into Farmhill station, Reynolds, clad in a dark suit, and with his cloth hat pulled far down over his eyes, swung off on the side farthest from the station, and making a detour to avoid the well-

lighted section of the town, he struck out into the country.

Once during his flight, while changing trains at a junction, he had heard one diminutive newsboy mention the name "Reynolds" to another grimy-faced little urchin, and Rube had stolen a sidelong glance at the bunch of papers folded beneath the boy's arm. The paper, being folded in the middle, prevented him from reading the whole of the big black headline, but on the side of the sheet near to him he spelled out: "M-U-R-D——"

As he tramped along in the soft dust of the country road, with the frogs and insects peeping and shrilling strange noises out of the dusk of the night, his thoughts rose in rebellion. It wasn't murder! Murder was something fearful—something repulsive, and he hadn't intended to—to kill Kineally. He had struck in self-defense! He strove to convince himself that such had been the case, but every frog—every insect kept shrilling: "Murder—murder—it was murder!"

Not until he reached the Whately farm did he realize that it would be impossible for him to see Dora that night. The chimes of a church in a distant town were sounding the curfew hour, when he paused by the stone wall encircling that part of the Whately farm. Why he had returned to Farmhill, he did not know. Something had seemed to draw him to that little town in the valley; and he wanted to see Dora just once more before disappearing to some far corner of the world, where no one would know him, where no one could find him.

For a moment he thought of boldly entering the house, but he quickly dismissed the idea. They must have read the papers and knew of his crime. Noel Whately and his wife had always liked young Bob Reynolds; and Dora—he knew that Dora's regard was more than friendship for him, but he hesitated to

thrust himself, branded as a criminal, into that family circle.

He easily vaulted the stone wall and moved around the house to the barn. As he picked his way across the barnyard, another thought came to him. What folly his return to Farmhill was! It would only make more painful the breaking of the ties!

"I mustn't see her!" he whispered to himself.

But no train left the town until early morning, so he resolved to stay in the barn until nearly daylight, and then return to the station.

As he neared the barn, a prolonged sniff caused him to start and crouch near to the ground. Then he remembered. It was Wolf, the dog—the companion, who had accompanied Dora and him on their tramps across the fields, and on their fishing trips to the lake.

"Wolf!" he called softly.

The big collie came bounding through the darkness.

"Still, Wolf! Be still, boy!" he commanded.

To his relief, the dog recognized him and refrained from barking. Two paws pressed against his knee, and the animal whined joyously.

"Go back, Wolf!" he ordered, as he patted and fondled the collie.

Reluctantly, the dog turned toward his kennel, and Reynolds slid open the door of the barn. A restless horse tramped in his stall and a frightened rat scuttled across the floor, as he felt about in the darkness and found the ladder leading upward. Nimbly he ascended to the loft, and, creeping far over to the wall, he stretched himself upon the odorous hay.

He closed his eyes, but sleep would not come. He faintly heard the clock in the farmhouse striking the hour. After an age of sleeplessness, it tinkled again. The smell of the sun-dried grass brought remembrances of his boyhood, and he thought of the plans he and

Dora had made for the future. Then he remembered the "good fellows" of the city, with their invitations to "have another," and their shallow praise. He groaned in despair. He had severed himself from all of the real joys of life, and now he was but a hunted thing—to prowl forever from place to place, in his efforts to escape the relentless hand of the law.

As he lay there, an almost uncontrollable desire to scratch a match, that he might relieve the awful blackness, possessed him.

"I can't," he reflected. "It might set fire to the place."

Suddenly he sat up, gasping, with a whistling intaking of breath. What had he heard! Again they came! The faint strains of music were permeating the loft, as if some stringed instrument was being played close by. He dug his fingers into his ears, hoping that the sounds might be the product of his imagination. But no! As he removed his fingers, they continued; a strange, weird tune, unlike anything he had ever heard before.

Again he jammed his fingers into his ears to shut out the sounds. Had his crime driven him mad? Was he haunted, he wondered fearfully. With unsteady, trembling legs, he made his way to the ladder and lowered himself downward. He crouched in an unoccupied stall and waited. A rat squeaked beside him, but he failed to move. He was listening for that fearsome music; and whenever he closed his eyes, the white face of Kineally would spring before his vision.

Of what avail was his freedom if this continued, he thought. Ideas of giving himself up entered his mind; but he remembered the high-backed chair with its straps and its horrible death-dealing wires. What a death! No! He couldn't surrender himself! But still, if he was to be forever haunted, why, maybe it would be better. Maybe it—

With a start, Reynolds awoke—not from sound sleep, but from one of the fitful dozes, into which he had lapsed just before the gray light of morning began to lighten the barn. With an ejaculation of self-rebuke, he sprang up and stood, blinking, in the shaft of sunlight which blazed through a cobwebby, dusty window. He, who had intended to depart before sunrise, had overslept. He could hear persons moving about in the farmhouse, as well as the occasional rattling of crockery and the sputter of grease in a frying pan.

Then footsteps sounded outside of the barn, and before he could turn—could dart to cover—the door slid back, and a girl stood before him. Her face, crowned by a wavy mass of fine-spun, fair hair, was the flesh-and-blood likeness of that portrayed by the picture he carried in his pocket. She wore neither hat nor bonnet, and a dotted bungalow apron covered her from shoulders to ankles. She stared in amazement, her brows puckering as she noted the rumpled condition of his clothing—his drawn features and his bloodshot eyes.

"Why, Bob!" she exclaimed perplexedly. "What—why—how——"

As she paused, he moved forward a step, his nails biting into the palms of his clenched fists. Oh, how he longed to take her in his arms and tell her the whole miserable story! Little beads of moisture surged into his eyes; and in a moment she was close to him, resting her hands on his shoulders.

"Tell me, Bob!" she said anxiously. "Tell me what is the matter. Why didn't you come to the house? Why are your clothes all mussed up?"

Choking back his emotions, he hesitatingly placed his hands on her arms.

"D—don't you know?" he inquired brokenly.

"Know what?" she demanded.

"I—I——" He hesitated to say the words. "Heavens, Dora, you must have

read last night's paper! Don't you know that I'm a—a murderer? Oh, Dora, I'm a murderer!"

Her fingers clinched convulsively through his coat and pinched into his shoulders.

"I've killed a man—the man who was giving me a chance!" he groaned. "All because of the cursed drink!" And, with his head bowed on her shoulder, he poured forth the story of his fight with Kineally—of his trip to Farmhill—and of his night in the barn. Then his arms relaxed and he gently tried to push her away.

"Don't touch me, girl!" he told her. "I'm a murderer—not fit to touch!"

Her arms slipped about his neck, and she held him closer.

"I won't leave you—I won't!" she cried. "Oh, Bob! don't you know that I love you? We'll go somewhere together."

"No!" he protested. "Why, Dora, I'm haunted. I lay up there in the loft last night and heard music—that dreadful, unearthly music; and Kin—his face kept coming before me out of the darkness. No; I'm going to give myself up and have it over with."

With the passion and entreaty of one who loved, she argued, but he steadily persisted in his resolve. He gently drew her arms from about his neck. She made one final appeal.

"Wait, Bob!" she pleaded. "Let me go into the house and get last night's paper. I'm sure that there wasn't any—any murder headline on it." And she darted from the stable.

Her mother, busy in the kitchen, glanced up in surprise at the flushed cheeks and excited eyes of the girl.

"What in the world——" she began, but Dora interrupted.

"Where is last night's paper, mother?" she asked.

"On the sitting-room table, I think," Mrs. Whately replied.

Dora hurried from the room. The

paper was not on the sitting-room table, and she searched frantically about the room. Finally she found it, half hidden under a pillow on the lounge, where her father had left it the evening before. Spreading out the first page, she read:

MURDOCK TESTIFIES.

Iron King Goes Before Congressional Committee.

Nowhere on the page was Reynolds' name mentioned. She hurriedly rustled over page after page, until at last, on one of the sporting pages, she discovered a small paragraph commenting on his poor pitching of the day previous. Paper in hand, she sped back to the barn. Reynolds was not in sight.

"Bob!" she called softly; but received no answer.

Into the loft she climbed, but he was not there. As she stood on the hay, she became aware of a peculiar sound. Music! That was what it resembled, and across her mind flashed the words of Bob. For some seconds she listened in bewilderment, and then the little wrinkles of perplexity cleared from her forehead. She climbed higher upon the hay, until she reached a tiny window, far up near the roof. Over its opening were stretched several taut elastics—the work of her little brother. With each gust of breeze they vibrated and twanged, making sounds not unlike the music of a harp or a zither.

Descending from the loft, she hurried out of the barn. The man whom she loved must have taken advantage of her absence to hasten away, she reasoned, that he might carry out his resolve to surrender himself to the authorities. So down the dusty road she hurried, determined to overtake him ere he should reach the town.

A great gray touring car hummed its way along the country road, a continuous cloud of dust, like rising smoke,

trailing in its wake. A big, burly man, with tanned features, and whose eyes were obscured by masking goggles, gripped the wheel; while beside him sat another man, not so big, but with a bristling black mustache and keen piercing eyes.

"Remember, Mac!" the big man was saying; "if we find him I don't want the newspaper men or anybody else to ever hear a word of this. I called on you for help because you are a friend of mine as well as a police inspector, trained in the ways of tracing men."

"Don't you worry, Owen!" the other replied. "Never a word will get out. Nine times out of ten a young fellow who has committed a crime, or thinks he has, will risk a trip to his home or old surroundings. If we don't find the boy somewhere about Farmhill, we'll change our tactics. He must have landed quite a crack on your skull," he added.

"He surely did," the big man agreed. "I was unconscious for a half hour or more; and I guess your idea, that he imagined he'd finished me, and was thus frightened into running away, is right."

The man with the wiry mustache nodded and tightly gripped the side of the car as they jounced over a particularly high bump in the road.

"But if the experience proves to be the shock necessary to break the boy away from the drink and that gang he was traveling with," continued the big man; "why, I'll be mighty thankful that he struck the blow. He's not only a wonderful pitcher, but I like him. He—look, Mac, look! So help me, John Rogers! Look ahead, there!"

Appearing around a bend in the roadway, from behind the trees of the roadside, a solitary figure was tramping toward them.

Stopping the engine and jamming his foot against the brake pedal, the big man jerked the car to an abrupt stop

beside the young fellow, who had turned out and halted by the edge of the road, waiting for the automobile to pass.

"Rube!" the big man cried, pushing his goggles up on his forehead and springing from the car.

The man by the roadside stood as if paralyzed. He stared wildly at the big man who had leaped from the automobile.

"K—Kineally!" came from between his lips in a throaty whisper. "Kineally! Owen Kineally!"

He slowly—fearfully extended a hand as if to touch the big manager—to make sure that he was a reality and not the fantasy of a haunted mind.

The big man quickly reached forth and firmly grasped the hand.

"It's me, all right, Rube!" he assured, with the flicker of a smile. "It takes a mighty hard wallop to put a tough old geezer like me down for good."

Drawing free his hand, the young fellow dropped upon one knee in the dusty, sun-scorched grass of the roadside, and burying his face in his arm, he gave vent to his pent-up emotions, his body shaking with convulsive, boy-

ish sobs of relief. The bareheaded girl, who had appeared around the bend of the road and was hurrying toward them, was unnoticed by Kineally and the inspector.

"I—I'm glad! I'm glad!" the kneeling man choked out. "I'm going to stay here away from the drink, and so help me, Heaven, I'll never touch another drop!"

The big man rested a hand on the young fellow's shoulder.

"No, I don't think you will drink any more, boy!" he said. "But," he continued, "you are coming back with me, and I'll make you the greatest pitcher in the game, and you and *the girl* can marry and be happy."

Before the young fellow could reply, the girl was beside them, her eyes aglow and her bosom rising and falling rapidly as she breathed. Many a picture of Owen Kineally had smiled at her from among the pages of newspapers, and she recognized the big man standing over Reynolds. Unmindful of the others, she dropped to her knees beside the man she loved, and with her arms about his neck, she murmured: "Oh, but I'm happy, Bob! I'm so happy!"

UNIQUE NAMES FOR CREEKS

THAT Iowa is a farming State is reflected in the names of many of the streams that flow through it.

To begin with, there is a Farm Creek, so that Farmer's Creek has a place. Then there is a Chicken Creek, a Duck Creek, a Goose Creek, and a number of Turkey Creeks, as well as Pigeon Creek. There are Fox, Hawk, and Rat Creeks to make way with the domestic animals, and some Crow Creeks, while there is also a Fly Creek and Mosquito Creek to worry the summer boarders. Milk and Cold Water Creeks are present, likewise a Hog Run and a Mud Creek, so that Bacon Creek is not strange.

It seems natural that with a Bee Creek and a Bee Branch there should also be a Honey Creek. There are a couple of Cherry Creeks, a Crabapple Creek, and plenty of Plum Creeks, and, for wild animals, there are Bear, Beaver, Buck, Crane, Deer, Doe, Elk, Otter, Panther, Raccoon, Skunk, and Wolf Creeks.

With a Keg Creek there is a Whisky Creek and a Whisky Run. Finally, there is Purgatory Creek.

Cap'n Dan's Son

By Bernard Teevan



THE old sailor, Cap'n Dan, sat on the edge of the deck house of the sloop *Agnes T.*, watching the fleet coming in from the day's work at "dragraking." The "handrakers" were already in, the contents of their baskets emptied into his, and piled up neatly in the hold, their scores tallied up in the little leather-covered notebook that was Cap'n Dan's daybook, ledger, journal, and everything else known to the practice of accounts.

The handrakers had all brought in a good day's catch. If the dragrakers did as well, the *Agnes T.* would have a heavy load to carry to the city, and the money to meet the note which would soon be due would be ready when the time came to pay it.

Cap'n Dan cast an eye aloft at the empty bushel basket which had been hoisted at the masthead to let every one know the *Agnes T.* was ready to buy clams. Then he looked out toward the mouth of the harbor, where the first of the fleet of dragrakers was coming in around the point. In that instant the expression of his face altered, and his troubled glance changed to one of pride and pleasure.

The cut of the head of the mainsail told him that, as usual, it was the *Victorine* that was leading the fleet, outpointing and outfooting the *Ranger*, *Nautilus*, and the *Dashaway*, to say nothing of the other sloops less famed for their speed. Parental pride shone clear in his gray eyes, for was not the *Victorine* his own boat, and was not his only son, Young Dan, sailing her?

Young Dan, at twenty-one, had already won the reputation of being the smartest boatman in Lockport. The way he would carry on sail was, in the words of the clammers, "a caution." He was the light of his father's eye, and Cap'n Dan had begun to lean rather heavily on his son.

He was looking forward to the time when Dan's already keen business ability would be sufficiently recognized to have the dealers up in the market place the same reliance on his word as they had for so many years placed on the father's. Then he could step aside and take a rest, that rest so many men look forward to before the great rest comes.

When Young Dan caught sight of his father he arose from his seat on the wheel box and swung his arm in salutation. Then he gave the wheel a couple of turns, shot the *Victorine* up in the wind, and laid her alongside the *Agnes*

T. as if the sloop were a fast horse, that a skillful driver had stopped at a carriage block.

"What luck, Dannie?" called his father. "I see you wasn't the last one in."

"Had a bully day, dad. Struck a fresh bed off West P'int, and got a jim-dandy load. Goin' to send any to market to-night?" Then, casting back to his father's allusion to his beating the other boats, he added dryly: "Oh, yes, there's some go in the old *Victorine* yet. Them fellers make me tired with their talk about beatin' her."

"Just as soon as we c'n git the *Agnes T.* loaded, Dan, I want you to start for the market. Dolan telegraphed me to-day they wanted all I could send 'em, and as soon as I could get 'em off."

As the boy had stepped aboard the sloop by this time, the captain added, in a whisper: "You know that Voorhees note falls due day after to-morrow, and I need the money to meet it."

Dan nodded his head, and some of the gravity that had settled down again on his father's face was reflected on his own. Then he started in on the heavy task of transferring his day's catch from the deck of the *Victorine* to the hold of the market boat.

While he and the three men who made up the working crew were hard at this, the remaining boats of the fleet were coming up, one by one, and ranging themselves on either side of the market boat. With jibs hauled down, and mainsails slatting in the breeze, they all lay head to the wind, while their crews passed basket after basket down into the hold of the *Agnes T.*, to the accompaniment of loud interchanges of talk and chaff.

Before the sun had vanished in the west, the loading was accomplished, the sloops had pushed off, one by one, and worked away to their anchorages for the night, and Young Dan and Jim Humphreys, who comprised his crew,

had hoisted the mainsail on the *Agnes T.*

His father hauled his skiff alongside as Young Dan and Humphreys went forward to get in the anchor, and, as the pawls clinked against the ratchets, with that sound which is so musical to a seaman's ears, Cap'n Dan picked up the oars and started to pull toward the shore.

"Be careful, Dannie," he called across the water. It was the usual warning and farewell. "Don't carry that tops'l after dark. It begins to look squally off to wind'ard."

"All right, father!" yelled Young Dan, as the anchor broke from the ground and he ran aft to the wheel. "We've got to get these clams to market, you know."

He spun the wheel over as Humphreys hoisted the jib, and the sloop filled away, with her bowsprit pointing out toward the mouth of the harbor.

By the time the *Agnes T.* had cleared the point, Young Dan found that the wind had freshened considerably, and was now coming out of the northwest in such vigorous puffs that carrying the topsail was out of the question. Humphreys suggested turning in a reef, but Young Dan said he guessed that wasn't necessary just yet. He asked Jim to take the wheel while he went below to put on his coat. When he had taken his place again, Humphreys dropped down into the cabin, lit the fire, and put the kettle on for tea.

Young Dan ate his evening meal as he sat at the wheel, and before it was finished the increasing force of the wind made steering with one hand and holding his teacup in the other a rather difficult business. When it was finished, and Humphreys had cleared away the dishes, he came up on deck and settled down in the lee of the deck house, with his coat collar turned up around his ears.

"Gee, Dannie, but it's blowin'!" he

commented. "And ain't she a-travelin', though? Do you want me to get out the lights?"

"Oh, never mind 'em," replied Young Dan, with the sailor's too common disregard of the use of side lights. "We can light 'em up when we get around the fort. Come and take the wheel, will you, Jim? I want to fix that jib. She's slattin' round there, and ain't half drawin'."

Jim uncoiled himself from his corner, in the lee of the house, and took the wheel as Young Dan went forward. They were off Coffin's Beach by this time, and Jim could see the summer hotels lifting their huge bulks up against the dark-blue sky, studded with stars that twinkled with unusual brilliancy in the frosty night air.

As the sloop was running dead before the wind, the mainsail was doing all the work, and the jib was slatting to and fro, and not doing what the young skipper thought it should. That was how his passion for carrying sail showed itself, and that was the cause of the tragedy that followed.

Picking up the long oar lying along the rail, he took a turn of the sheet around it at the clew of the jib, and boomed the sail out to port, where it caught the full strength of the wind. As it bellied out, causing the sloop to fairly jump through the water, Young Dan watched it for a moment, and then called out to his companion:

"How's that, Jim? Ain't she a-pullin'?"

Before Humphreys could make a reply, he heard a crash, and the wheel was jerked out of his hands.

To his horror, he saw the mast break off just under the hounds. With the topmast and all the gear, it fell to the deck, striking Young Dan, and burying him beneath the wreckage.

The shock of the accident stunned Humphreys for a moment. Then he jumped forward along the tossing deck

to drag his companion's body out from under the splintered spars, sails, and rigging.

The jib was lying in a tangled heap, and the mainsail was hanging broad off to leeward, dipping down into the seas as the sloop rolled, and coming up with a jerk, as if it meant to pluck the cleats and blocks and traveler clear from their fastenings.

Humphreys caught hold of Young Dan's feet, and, gently as he could, pulled him out from beneath the piled-up gear. Stricken as he was by the shock of the catastrophe, terror caught a fresh grip on him as he saw the boy's face.

Ashy white, he lay with his eyes closed as if in death. Across his forehead a great cut ran, with the blood slowly and steadily oozing out, and down through his hair, already matted with the thick stream.

Humphreys sickened at the sight, and tried to turn his head away. For the moment he was panic-stricken, then he shook himself together, and half carried, half dragged the body of the boy down into the cabin and stretched him gently on the blankets in the berth. Then he jumped on deck again.

For the time one idea possessed him: He must get a doctor for Dannie. He never thought to let the anchor go, never thought to light a signal lamp. He wanted to get a doctor at once, and he knew there were two or three doctors at the quarantine station over by the fort.

Humphreys had lost his head, in the desire to carry out this plan of action. He tumbled the skiff overboard, shipped the oars, and, hatless, and without taking time to pull off his coat, he began to row to the government reservation, where the one thing needed, a doctor, was to be found.

No one knows how long it took him to pull across the mile of water, nor

how long it was before he rushed, breathless, up to the doctor's door. Without even sinking down into the chair the kindly health officer pushed over to him, he stammered out the story of the tragedy that had been enacted out in the bay, on the deck of the *Agnes T.*

Before Jim had finished his tale, the health officer called to one of his assistants to ring up the boat and let the captain know they were going out. Then he busied himself putting some instruments into a black bag, and, before Jim had completely recovered his wind, he was in danger of losing it again as he followed the doctor and his assistant down the path to the landing, where the little white tug, with its tall, yellow stack, was moored.

As they went along, the health officer asked Humphreys for the address of the injured boy's father.

"We'll send him a telegram," he said. "Then he'll probably come out to look for the sloop, too. You say she had no lights burning? Hum! That makes it so much harder to find her."

They stopped at the office of the press association, down at the pier, and the operator sent the message to Lockport, following it with a brief story of the accident to the main office up in the city. Then they stepped aboard the tug, the lines were cast off, and the search for the *Agnes T.* began.

What that night was to Humphreys, and to Cap'n Dan, who, on receipt of the telegram, had hired the only tug in Lockport and started out to find his son, only they could tell. Calculating on the direction of the wind, and the set of the tides, the two tugs cruised about until the day began to break along the eastern horizon.

Working gradually to the eastward, backward and forward on long stretches, the tugs gradually, as if by a common instinct, drew together. By

the time the dawn had broken, and Humphrey could make out the other tug, he told the health officer she was from Lockport, and that probably Cap'n Dan was aboard her.

He stepped outside the pilot house, with a pair of binoculars in his hand, and, as he did so, he noticed a man do the same thing on the other boat.

Putting the glasses to his eyes, a glance told him that it was Young Dan's father. Humphreys swung his arm over his head, and then saw the captain turn and speak to the man in the pilot house. A moment later, just as the tug headed for the health officer's boat, the captain of the latter, who had been scanning the horizon, gave a start, and cried out: "There she is!" Pointing off to the eastward, he twirled the spokes over, gave a pull on the jingle bell, and whistled down the tube to the engineer to "give her all the steam she could carry."

The eyes of every one on the two boats turned in the direction in which the quarantine tug was headed, and then the sound of the jingle bell on the Lockport boat came across the water.

Head and head, they raced to the eastward, smoke pouring from their funnels, and a broad wave of foaming water piled up before their bows. The light was now strong enough for them to make out the *Agnes T.*, aground on the long, sandy beach at the eastern end of the harbor.

As she lay with her bow buried in the sand, and listed over by the weight of the outswung boom and the wreck of the topmast, the sloop made a tragic picture in itself. The cold, gray light of the dawn fell down and around the *Agnes T.*, making her stand out against the steel-blue water and the pale sand hills, looming large against this background until her proportions seemed gigantic.

The mainsail hung idly down from

the gaff, that had been held just below the break in the mast by the jamming of the hoops. The main sheet trailed overboard in long, tangled loops, the shrouds and halyards drooped in picturesque confusion. Jib and mainsail were gray with the night dew and the reflected light.

The little waves rolled up and broke along her sides and spent their tiny force upon the beach. So they were doing yesterday, when Young Dan was living; so they were doing to-day, when the boy was lying stretched out in the berth, a ghastly, solitary tenant.

As the two tugs came nearer and nearer to her, the Lockport boat gradually drew ahead of the health officer's tug. They could see Cap'n Dan go aft with one of his best men and stand by the painter of the skiff that was towing astern. Humphrey noticed a couple of men standing on the beach, near the wrecked sloop, and through the glasses he made them out to be patrols from the life-saving station.

He could also see a big power boat coming down from the village that lay inside the point, still farther to the eastward, and he wondered if her business lay with the *Agnes T.* The leading tug slowed down as she reached a point in the channel, off the wreck. Cap'n Dan and the man near him dropped over into the skiff and pulled like madmen for the sloop.

Just as they came alongside of her, the power boat swung up by the wreck, and a man standing up in the bow called to the captain:

"Keep off that boat! There's a dead man aboard of her, and I'm the coroner. I warn you——" His words trailed off into silence as he caught sight of Cap'n Dan's face.

Even the crass spirit of a jack-in-office could not resist the mute protest he saw in every line of it. Stern, rigid, a very mask of immobility, given a dig-

nity that made it noble by its grief and suffering, the father's face awed everything into silence.

Moving as in a trance, Cap'n Dan climbed over the rail of the sloop and stepped down into the cabin.

As he disappeared from sight, the spell of silence laid on the coroner was broken, and he began to mutter protests against "violations of the law," and declaring "he'd stop this thing right now, before it went any further."

Presently Cap'n Dan emerged from the cabin, carrying the limp body of his son in his arms. As he stepped into the cockpit, the coroner's voice was hushed.

The father straightened himself up with a dignity that made the movement noble, and faced the official with eyes that looked across the boy's body.

Between the time he had gone down into the cabin and came out of it, twenty years seemed to have been added to his age. In his grief, he looked like some old chieftain who had given up the life of his favorite son in his country's cause, and was now bearing the body home to his castle to mourn over it.

A little shadow of deeper pain passed across his face as he looked at the intruder on his woe, and then he said simply:

"He is my son."

At the sound of his voice, and the look in his face, the coroner recoiled from the captain as if he had been struck. The man in the skiff uncovered his head. He thought Young Dan was dead.

The captain, still holding the boy in his arms, stepped down into the skiff and held him close to his breast as the man at the oars pulled slowly toward the tug. By this time the health officer's boat had come up to the skiff, and the doctor, leaning over the rail, said quietly: "Let me see him, captain."

Cap'n Dan looked up at the doctor.

"He's dead," he said, almost in a whisper.

"Won't you let us see him? There may be a chance," the doctor pleaded.

Then Cap'n Dan held his son out to the two doctors, who laid him down on a blanket on the deck.

There was a moment of silence as the two worked over the body; then, with an exclamation of satisfaction, one of the doctors sprang to his feet.

"I thought so!" he cried. "I thought he was still breathing! He's badly hurt, but the poor lad is not dead!"

Cap'n Dan stood as if turned to stone. A great tear rolled down his face, but he said nothing. He watched with in-

describable pathos as the surgeons brought their skill into play, and finally, when Young Dan began to babble an incoherent string of words, he drew one weather-beaten hand across his eyes, as if in a daze.

A while later, Young Dan sighed and looked into his father's face.

"Was I in time, dad?" he whispered softly.

Cap'n Dan smiled down at him, and lied so bravely that the recording angel must have stopped to mend his pen just then, and forgot to mark it down against him.

"Plenty, Dannie, plenty," he replied.

And then he leaned still farther down and kissed him.

ODD BITS OF NEWS

JAMES CARROL, of Tacoma, Washington, drove a motor car weighing one and one-half tons down a wooden staircase of seven hundred steps.

Truman C. Allen, of Oquawka, Illinois, has not taken a drink of water in forty years. His sole drinks are coffee at breakfast and tea at supper.

Conrad Dubosiki, a twenty-one-year-old Russian giant, who is working on the farm of J. Polokof, in Lebanon, Connecticut, is seven feet two inches tall.

Mrs. Joseph Cummings, of Bernardston, Massachusetts, has a thoughtful hen which has laid an egg with a "C," which is taken to stand for Cummings, plainly marked on one end.

Mrs. A. A. Morse, of Lewiston, Maine, brought from Durham a specimen of a tree resembling hemlock, which bears red berries the size of huckleberries. Botanists of the neighborhood are at a loss as to the name of the tree.

Alderman Henry A. Lewis, of Bridgeport, Connecticut, is said to own a cat which is part Angora and the rest just plain cat, and which is so strictly vegetarian that it refuses to eat meat or any delicacy covered with meat gravy, but relishes corn on the cob, turnips, cold potatoes, and watermelon rinds.

Charles H. Heeps, of Oxford, Massachusetts, one Thursday evening recently bought an acre of land; Friday morning he bought some lumber, and had it on the ground at eight o'clock, and with the help of his wife, who held the uprights, he finished a two-room house, fifteen feet by twenty, and moved his furniture into the building by Saturday night.

W. A. Rauls, judge of the probate court of Jasper County, South Carolina, has lived successively in three counties without ever having moved out of his house. At first the house was in Beaufort County; then Hampton County was formed, and the judge's house was included; and finally Jasper County was created, and the house was in this area.

Applause

Edited by
Burt L. Standish

YOU want me to be a crook?"

Grant Seward's jaw squared, as he shot this from between his set teeth, and there was a dangerous flash in his dark eyes.

"I wouldn't put it that way, Grant."

"There isn't any other way. You don't call it *straight*—do you?"

This was what Grant Seward replied to his unscrupulous employer, when the scoundrel wanted him to cheat the customers by filling up the five-gallon Beaver Spring water bottles with ordinary river water. There were other frauds suggested by the rascally storekeeper, too, which Grant spurned.

The upshot of it is that Grant Seward finds himself in the business of cutting ice on the St. Lawrence River, among the Thousand Islands, with the thermometer near the bottom of the tube, and winds that threaten to saw his ears off, even through his thick cap.

Besides battling with the ice and an arctic temperature, rather than be a party to the groceryman's mean trickery, Grant has to fight several human enemies, who have a habit of "hitting below the belt." You will read all this and much more in the new novelette,

A BATTLE BELOW ZERO,

BY WELDON W. BRODERICK

to be published in the next issue. The story is full of thrilling adventures, with some novel and narrow escapes for this thoroughly American hero. He strikes all his own blows fairly and squarely, giving the other fellow always a fair show—often when he hardly deserves it. I can promise the novelette to be one of the breeziest, most convincing, and absorbing that has ever come from this author's facile pen.

There have been many calls from readers for more stories from Cornelius Shea. In a recent issue, you were promised that this call would be answered. It has been, for Shea has just completed a serial which he has entitled

THE LOST PLACER

and it carries an appeal to every reader of fiction who has a drop of red blood in his veins. The first chapters of this serial begin in the next issue, and depict

Western life in a manner that has made Shea famous as a writer of stories dealing with stirring doings on the borderland.

In the opinion of many, Leslie W. Quirk is the best writer of sport stories in this country. Certainly it is true that he is an authority on all sports, and you feel when you read his description of a contest of any kind that the author knows what he is writing about, that he has been right down there himself, and has not just sat up in the grand stand, or read about it the next day in the morning paper. Not only does Quirk know all sports, but he knows how to tell about them in a most interesting manner. His plot is always a good one, and he draws his characters so well that they "stick."

THE YELLOW MORNING-GLORY

which you will find in the next issue, is, in my humble opinion, the best running story that Quirk has ever written. It is quite a long story, but, take my word for it, you will wish that he had made it twice as long.

There is a particularly well-assorted and well-written collection of short stories in the next issue. Let me hear what you think of my selection, and which of the stories you like best, and, what is of more importance, why?



FROM OUR HONORARY EDITORS

FOR THE EDITOR: I have read TIP-TOP for many years, and, though the name has grown to mean more to me and my whole family than I can tell, I agree with you in that the name "TIPTOP SEMI-MONTHLY" is too unwieldy and suggests too much the old five-cent-weekly form of publication, which is now obsolete. So let us all cry long live WIDE-AWAKE!

BARTON HEDGES.

Buffalo, N. Y.

GLAD IT DID

FOR THE EDITOR: I am greatly pleased with your magazine, and think

it is a fine publication. I have been taking it since its first issue, and took the weekly for twelve years. Of course, as an old reader, I prefer the Merriwell stories, and would like a novelette of that family every other issue. The cover on the November 10th issue was fine. Have yet to strike a poor issue. "From Hank to Geo" is great! So are the stories about Clem Frobisher. Can't we have another animal story by Harold de Polo? Every lover of nature likes them. Excuse this long letter, but it had to come. Will close now.

RALPH SMITH.

Lawrence, Mass.



OF INTEREST TO ALL

You readers, gentle and otherwise, certainly were weak on fish, but, oh you birds! Here are the names of the five readers whose letters showed the greatest amount of ingenuity in solving the "Concealed Birds" puzzle in the October 25th issue: Miss Irene Evans, Grassmere, Washington; J. E. Price, 89 Academy Street, Malone, New York; Frank Chalfaut, 404 North Marion Street, Bluffton,

Indiana; F. Gleason, 5702 Ayala Street, Oakland, California; and F. R. Rudderham, U. S. S. *Georgia*, Care Postmaster, New York, N. Y.

Those who sent in correct answers to the puzzle are:

A. Stanley Bowles, Geo. Conner, G. S. Tuttle, Frank Lonsford, Mrs. H. L. Drake, John Verner, Thos. L. Welch, Theodore Blake, Shaw Livermore, G. H. Brunner, M. Case, H. English, Gerald Garsch, A. Martin, F. W. Kramer, E. E. Crompton, Thos. W. Bond, C. H. Lenze, E. Walter, G. E. Missing, J. A. Winkler, G. A. Marsh, Chas. E. Drummond, Ross Merrick, H. N. Jennings, Earl Seckel, Russel Hardy, Albert Muench, E. G. Smith, Forrest Forsyth, John R. Jordon, Myron Bilderbeck, G. C. Matheson, Jas. K. Darling, Ivan McCune, R. Hovel, Edwin Beggerow, Frank H. Bartz, Murray Weems, Jr., R. Ford, Roscoe R. Keeney, F. H. Bice, H. Johnson, J. M. Keley, C. E. Shipley, H. Goodwin, E. A. Collins, Guy Greeman, Wallace J. Geck, J. W. Covert, Miss Lora Clarke, Miss C. E. McComas, Wm. A. Mullen, Lawrence Mody, J. T. Thompson, C. L. Harrer, B. Elkin, M. Steinberg, J. F. Travers, C. F. Jones, Geo. Pregrin, C. J. Butts, Myron A. Jenkins, R. Khugler, Sam Powell, C. L. Barton, Neil Parsons, H. Page, Coy Williams, P. H. Riel, Clarence H. Clay, O. Deutschmann, J. Burke, Clifton Alford, R. Altmeyer, James Mossburger, Harold Nelson, Chas. Smith, Anton Pateron, O. W. Slusser, C. Kilburn, Mrs. O. D. Rhea, Walter E. Goodwin, Mrs. A. J. Nurse, Milond Nellans, E. W. Inyart, Miss

Mabel Mullikin, Harold Thune, W. Culbert, H. E. Davis, Harold Stonehill, N. Woldehoff, G. L. Fowler, R. W. Older, Geo. H. Hogan, F. Quantmeyer, H. L. Wickey, Alden Bermingham, W. E. Outman, Herbert Reine, C. Noethling, J. S. Riddle, H. A. Bridenbecker, Frank Spoon, L. R. Cantwell, Chas. Schnell, U. G. Figley, Vernon Beightol, Theodore Phillips, Clifford Johnson, C. W. Gillman, D. A. Gardner, Rollin W. Cowles, J. F. Howell, S. Melvin, J. W. Schroeder, Vernon Headapohl, Otto A. Lohmeyer, Jr., Frank Mora, Harold A. MacNain, I. M. King, T. M. Poyle, Hy. Bokarny, F. W. Brooks, Paul Malloy, Elbert Bedwell, Carl Shoemaker, Frank Branson, S. S. Reilley, W. E. Quigley, C. M. Haller, R. W. Lawrence, C. Ingwersen, Roger Saldarine, Ray Barriger, Chas. Duffy, James McNamara, W. Verschooe, James Shortell, S. E. Wood, F. E. Cowley, Jr., Mrs. Carle F. Williams, T. Hayes, A. C. Smith, T. F. Chesebrough, Andrew de Comsey, E. J. Kohler, E. F. Johnson, R. Anderson, Miss Winifred Whitham, C. Murphy, Howard Holiday, Wilmer Taylor, Carlo Izzi, Miss Elizabeth Greer, Miss Marion Reaves, E. O. Hayden, N. Hatlestad, Phil. Thomas, Carl Cohn, John L. Foley, R. C. Vallmore, and Miss Edith Whipple.

Here is the answer to the puzzle, which was entitled "Concealed Birds."

1. Robin. 2. Turkey. 3. Magpie. 4. Harpy. 5. Hawk. 6. Crane. 7. Crow. 8. Tern. 9. Kite. 10. Chickadee. 11. Linnet. 12. Curlew. 13. Loon. 14. Hornbill.

But don't get discouraged, for, once again you have an opportunity to secure a free subscription to WIDE-AWAKE MAGAZINE for a year.

One year's subscription to WIDE-AWAKE MAGAZINE will be given to each of the five readers whose letters indicate that the writers exercised the greatest amount of ingenuity in arriving at the correct solution of the following puzzle. These letters should not be over one hundred words in length, and will not be judged from the standards of penmanship and grammar. The answers must be received by January 24th.

To inform our correspondents as to whether they worked out the puzzle to a proper conclusion, we will print the names of all those who send in correct answers.

How are you on sports? What, every one of you has his right hand up! Well, then, try this:

SPORTS PUZZLE

This sports puzzle consists in guessing the names of certain games, or sports, as shown in the following example:

The initials of all nouns in the sentence given below, when placed in their proper order, form the name of a sport. One letter, however, is omitted. This letter must be supplied.

The undercurrent washed away the trestle, the only safeguard against the quicksands surrounding the island.

The initials of all the nouns in the order in which they appear in the above sentence are U T S Q I. Arranging them in proper sequence, the result will be: Q U I T S. Supplying the missing letter, O, the name is Quoits, a well-known sport.

In like manner, the name of a popular game, or sport, is contained in each of the following sentences:

1. The farmer had a good output of tomatoes, beats, and lettuce; but his onions, beside the apples he produced, were the most profitable of what he sold.

2. Landscapes, lighthouses, armories, and drawings of houses filled the book, and afforded considerable amusement.

3. The crow circled the edge of a thicket, soaring over the rocks, and landed on the crest of a little knoll.

4. Life in the summertime, when amusement supplants tedious lessons, is most enjoyable, with its appeal for bathing and boating.

5. Elks, skunks, otters, lions, and rabbits are some of the animals whose cages we visited.

6. Each section of the notebook contained entries of special interest at the time it was exposed.

7. The foul gave the apparent losers the game.

8. The eyes of the listeners stared out of their sockets, as the lecturer continued his account of the thrilling adventures depicted in "Bandits' Trails and Blood."

9. The song of the canary was carried across the courtyard, to the room occupied by the old studious ecclesiastic.

10. Quinine is the best remedy for a cold, although it is a widespread opinion that other things can be used to bring about the same end.

YOUNGEST UNIVERSITY STUDENT

STUDENTS and faculty of the University of Chicago are expecting much of Benjamin Perk, of Indianapolis, thirteen years and four months old, who has registered as a freshman. Perk was graduated last spring from the Indianapolis Manual Training High School, and was awarded a scholarship at the university. He is enrolled in the junior college of philosophy.

Perk follows in the footsteps of Harold Fishbein, who came from Indianapolis a year ago at the age of fifteen and has continued his remarkable record at the university. Perk is the youngest student ever matriculated at Chicago.



Are You Too Fat?

Reducing Outfit Sent Free

With permission it will be my pleasure to mail two very important free gifts to every over-fleshy reader of this publication (male or female) who writes a postal to me. If you, reader, are putting on fat or are excessively fleshy at the present time, then you certainly must have this free outfit, because it includes absolutely everything necessary to give you an immediate demonstration of what the very latest and greatest (1915) health and Nature methods are so marvelously accomplishing for stubborn obesity cases. One of these free gifts is a neatly bound copy of my world-famed "new-thought" Treatise, telling in easy language the simple things you can do for yourself, and much you must NOT do when reducing. No other book is like it—every person over-weight should study it. The other gift is surely going to please and surprise you. It is a complete, ready-to-use testing package of my wonderful reducing materials, the like of which you have never seen before. They are delightful to use and are meeting with tremendous favor. Your own doctor could not possibly object to my healthful preparations. He will tell you it may be positively dangerous to use old-fashioned methods of starvation, excessive sweating and continuous strong purging of the bowels with drastic, poisonous cathartics. How can a weak heart stand this enormous strain? Why take such chances when my absolutely safe, health-giving method is ready for you and waiting? There is no delay. It starts at once. I purpose it to put the system in vigorous health, to vitalize weakened organs and strengthen the heart by perfectly reducing every pound of superfluous flesh on all parts of the body, double chins, large stomachs, fat hips, etc. You will never know until you try it. Remember, just a postal request will bring all to you absolutely free by return mail, in a plain wrapper. You can then judge by actual results, and may order more of the reducing preparations later if you need them.

CAUTION! My Method is being widely imitated. None genuine unless coming from my laboratory.

Please write your address plainly.

F. T. BROUGH, M. D., 51 Brough Building, 20 East 22nd St., NEW YORK

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

THE OPENING CHAPTERS OF A SERIAL BY

CORNELIUS SHEA

ENTITLED

THE LOST PLACER

For years Cornelius Shea has been one of the most popular authors of stories of adventure in the West. Mr. Shea wrote a serial for you, "The Kid From Bar B," which we published during the early summer months. At that time you were asked if you wanted more stories by Mr. Shea. We received a flood of replies in answer to this question, and all of the letters spoke most highly of Mr. Shea's work, and requested more of it.

Mr. Shea says that "THE LOST PLACER" is a far better story than "The Kid From Bar B." We agree with him. What do you say?