August

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WAYSIDE TALES

AND CARTOONS MAGAZINE

WAYSIDE TALES AND CARTOONS MAGAZINE

Edited by H. H. WINDSOR

Volume 20 Contents for AUGUST, 1921 Number 2

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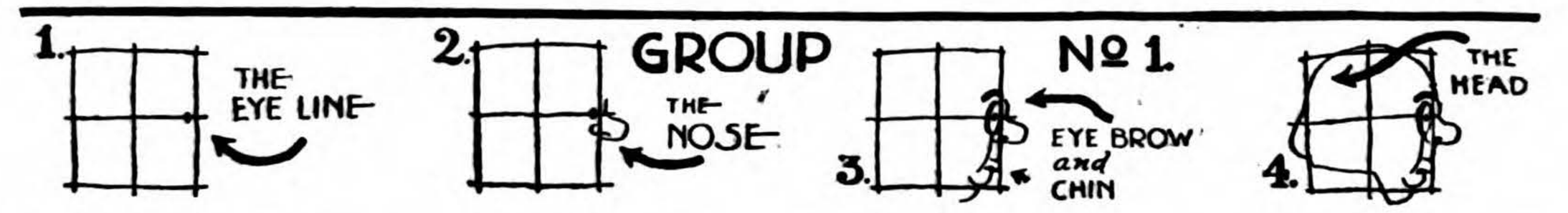

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What One of America's Greatest Cartoonists Thinks About the Landon Course

Feb. 10, 1921.

Mr. C. N. Landon,
The Landon School,
Cleveland, Ohio.

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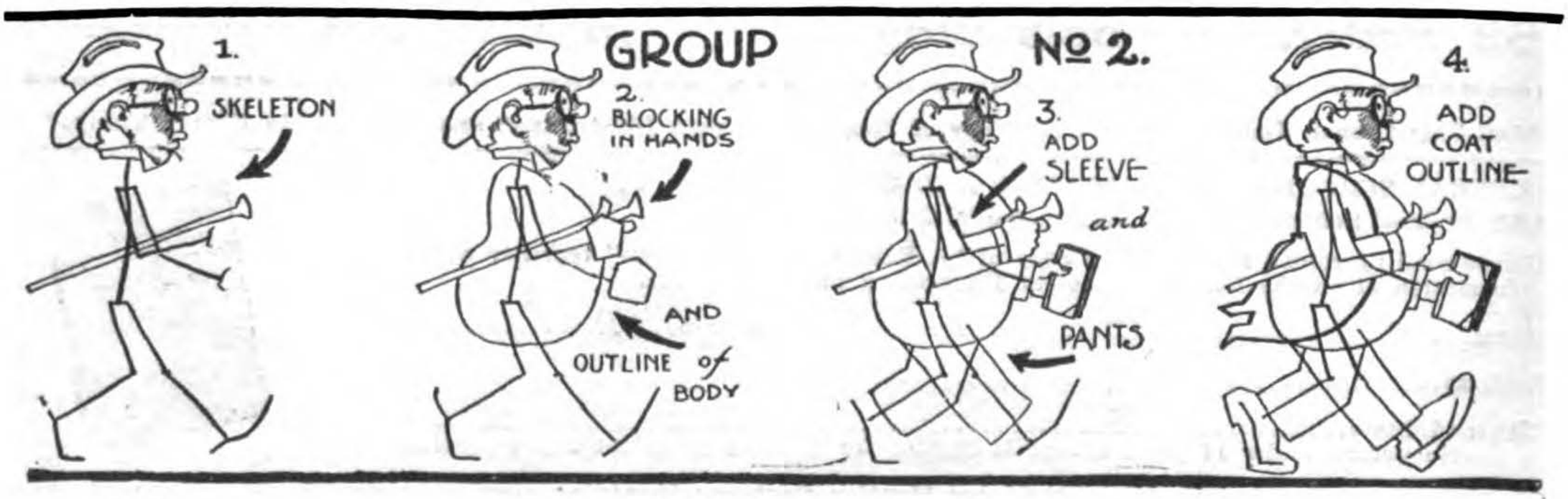
Yours sincerely,

J. H. DONAHEY,
Cartoonist, "The Cleveland Plain Dealer."



Cartooning

The PICTURE CHART method of teaching here illustrated was originated by Mr. Landon. These charts are fully protected by copyrights issued from 1914 to 1920, and this method of teaching is used exclusively by The Landon School.

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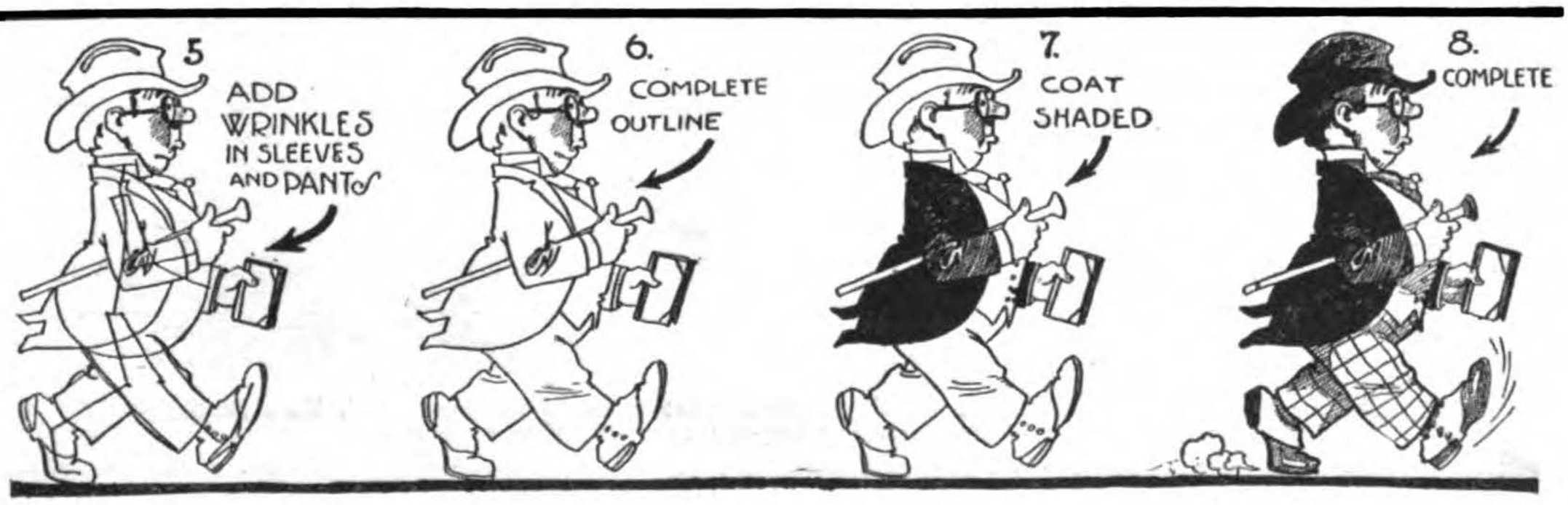

"Prince knew what he was to do. . . . He gingerly went down to the lower rail, Ezra paying out the rope, and without hesitation leaped forward." (See page 183.)

WAYSIDE TALES
AND CARTOONS MAGAZINE
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Volume 20 AUGUST, 1921 Number 2

The Lucky Dog

By Walter Scott Story

He was a derelict, from a derelict schooner. But in the crisis he made good on the name which the skipper of The Golden Hour and his daughter bestowed upon him—Prince. A poignant story of the sea and those who go forth upon her in ships.

Low with her luck and heavy with ice, The Golden Hour, of Gloucester, every barrel in her crammed full, stepped away down south in a driving snow and a following bitter wind that was becoming a gale, smashing and thudding in the sullen upheaving gray waste, now throwing up a sheet of spray, now plunging and taking the sea across her ice-crested bows with a jar and a roar. The snow was coming thick now, about four in the afternoon, and the wind was steadily making up stronger in keeping with its promise. Already, because of the snow and the early gloom, the two-sticker had her lamps lighted—tiny, blurred stars in the murk and swirling snow.

Ezra Perkins, the skipper, with his back to the quartering raw wind, stood forward with his mittened hands grasping the frozen ratlines and peered intently and steadily across the welter into the gray gloom from which it came.

Clancy, his mate, cautiously worked forward along the pitching, icy deck and joined him at the port rail, and for a moment stood without speech, looking at the uprearing, crested waves that came in from the distance, now going partly under her, now piling in a green flood over the low, ice-bound bulwark.

"You thinking o' making Gloucester tonight, Ezra?" he asked, putting his head forward and shouting the question. "It's going to blow up bad, and we'd save time. . . . We ought to be getting Thatcher's lights pretty soon."

Ezra, a great and hulking figure in his skins, half turned, lowering his head so that the wind could not get a full sweep under the brim of his sou'easter.

"See anything off there, Mike?" He

pointed seaward through the wind-driven snow and thickening gloom of night.

Clancy turned and stared out across the gray-green, tumbling waste. After a time he detected something rising now and then dimly into view—caught an occasional glimpse of something almost at the point where the gloom became impenetrable; and for a few moments he studied the vaguely-seen object without speaking.

"A derelict, Ez!" he exclaimed abruptly, with conviction.

"I thought I *heard* something!" shouted the skipper, still staring outward.

Clancy gave him an odd glance, but said nothing.

They listened intently, and as they listened and stared strainingly they could with certainty make out that what they saw was a vessel in distress or a wreck. But all the sound they heard was the tumult of the waves, the whistle of the wind, wilder and fiercer increasingly, and the schooner's thudding and pounding in the heavy seas—and, even above such sounds, the weird, faint, yet distinct, incessant tap, tap, tapping of the snow against the iron-hard sails.

Clancy moved closer to Ezra. "Tide's flood," he roared, "and she'll set in up north of the cape here. Guess she won't be no danger to anyone."

"Her sticks are gone, and she's listed and awash," declared Perkins.

Mike nodded in agreement. He too could now see that.

"I thought I *heard* something!" shouted Ezra again, after a short silence between them.

"Gull, maybe."

"Gull—hell!" roared the other. "Tell you I *heard* something!"

Clancy grinned, as much as possible with his half-frozen cheeks.

"I'm going to have a look at her, Mike," shouted Perkins, in a moment. "It's going to blow hard, but a half hour or an hour won't make no difference probably. Put her out!"

Clancy did not like to change course—considering their fish, the weather and the chance that they might not be able to make the harbor if the weather got too bad—but, notwithstanding, he had in his breast the same humane instinct and thought that animated his friend and skipper. Hard reason prompted him to speak a word of remonstrance, but, with a shrug of his broad shoulders, he turned and went aft, cupping his hands and roaring to Buckner at the wheel, and sending his stentorian call below for a couple of men.

•

THE heavy-laden, lucky schooner changed her course and turned her icy bows seaward, her frost-stiffened jibs and sails snapping and crackling savagely as they gave to a battling wind, and, hammering and wallowing, forged outward, close-hauled.

According to Clancy's order, Buckner, who himself had picked up the wreck, held the schooner on a course that would bring her off to starboard.

Ezra stood, as before, at the foremast ratlines, bracing himself to withstand the rush of the green seas that rolled up over The Golden Hour's low, dipping bows and charged and swirled down upon him knee-deep.

All the fishermen had come above when the schooner made her change in course, the reason for the change going through the little vessel like a message sent by electric spark; and when the schooner bore down upon the unknown there was a silence of expectancy and dread among them.

The gloom was deepening quickly; the fall of snow was thicker and night was settling down—but it was possible to see clearly enough a few fathoms.

The sight they saw wasn't much to the crew of The Golden Hour—a dismasted hulk, cluttered with her fallen gear, rolling and wallowing sidewise in the sea, subject to wind and current.

Ezra Perkins stared—and swore. The thing was a derelict, half-coated with ice, a desolate wreck—firewood for up and down the coast north of Cape Ann. He

had come on a fool's errand, wasted precious time with a laden vessel, with a gale making. A mere glance in the murk at close hand showed him that no one remained aboard the wreck, that the unknown schooner had been derelict without doubt for several days.

He drew his heavy brows together and stared again, puzzled. He *had* heard something. Even now he did not think he had imagined. It was possible, though, that he had heard a bird or even a wind-distorted, wind-muffled shout or burst of laughter aboard his own vessel from those below.

As he turned to roar an order in exasperation, he saw something moving on the rolling hulk, caught a glimpse of movement from the corner of his eye, and he stopped and stared, yet again, at the hulk as The Golden Hour pitched and began to bear off.

A dog, slipping and clawing, emerged from the shelter of the battered deck house and tangled gear above it, and, securing a precarious hold on the slippery deck, sat down gingerly and sent out a ululation that came weirdly over the intervening waste, long-drawn and whipped by the wind—a despairing, heart-gripping howl. He saw the schooner in the gloom and understood. Arising after that one long howl, he came to the lower rail, slipping most of the way, and there braced himself, half standing and half sitting, and barked again and again, furiously, frenziedly, whenever he was free of the flood that foamed down upon him from the upper rail.

EZRA peered hard at the miserable creature through murk of snow and night as The Golden Hour bore off. A slight smile came to his grim face. He *had* heard something. He realized now that what he had heard was some wind-flung note of the dog's wolfish howl into the night.

"Poor devil! Poor devil!" he muttered to himself. A warm wave of pity ran through him. He was not a hard-hearted man, but he was a man of business. Time was precious, especially under the circumstances of a great catch aboard and a gale that might mean peril. And yet, as he thought to himself, a man who would not take off a dog would shut his eyes to a man in extremity if it suited his convenience, and he dared.

With a crisp oath, half amused, half angry, he wheeled and threw his bull-like voice down the deck of The Golden Hour.

When the schooner came up a bit under Buckner's skillful maneuvering, ready hands swung off the first dory of the port nest, and Ezra himself went down into it and put out towards the hulk plunging and tossing on the wild welter.

Under the lee of the wallowing, ice-crusted derelict they crept, Ezra bellowing his orders.

The dog still occupied his precarious position at the lower rail, half of the time in a swirl of icy foam. He watched the pitching dory without barking once. Possibly he was wondering whether the human beings were giving him false hope, were drawing near his terrible prison without thought of him.

"Now, men!" roared Ezra, as the dory came within a rod of the hulk. "Hold her!"

The dorymen turned the noble little craft and held her in the comparative quiet.

And now the dog barked, barked furiously, barked till he choked. He was mad with hope and joy. He now knew they were come for him.

"Come on! Come on!" shouted the skipper, with an oath. "Come on!"

Barking sharply, the dog tried to clamber over the rail, but fell back. The derelict schooner at that moment lurched under the onslaught of an unusually big sea and dipped heavily toward the pitching dory. A wave piled green over the upper rail, broke in foam and shot downward in a cascade, and the dog, desperately clawing, was taken up and swept outward as it rolled over the dipping rail.

Ezra scanned the white rushing waters

in the gloom, as excited and anxious as if the dog were a human being.

"Pull!—starboard!" he bawled, suddenly, catching a momentary glimpse of a black object bobbing in the foaming sea. "Pull!"

The dorymen, as eager as he, pulled skillfully, and in a moment the skipper leaned over and made a quick grasp. He secured a grip upon something soft, and as the dory heaved upward he pulled the dog inboard and dropped him unceremoniously into the bottom of the boat at his feet.

Clancy had maneuvered The Golden Hour in toward them; but, because of the dimly-seen, rolling derelict, he could not come in very close; and in the heavy sea and now deep gloom of night and of snow it was no easy task for Ezra to regain his vessel. As the dory came up out of the foaming valleys to the wind-whipped crests of the big waves, he kept his eye on the dim and misty green light of his starboard lamp, shouting orders through cupped hands to his oarsmen.

The dog slowly edged up to Ezra and put his snout between his knees and tried to lick his hands. Ezra paid no attention to him, and the dog ceased his attempts to kiss him and laid his heavy head on the skipper's knee and remained motionless so, apparently understanding that he was not repulsed, but could have no attention then.

After fifteen minutes of very strenuous work, the dory came under the schooner, and Clancy brought her inboard and lashed her in place.

As soon as the dory was aboard, The Golden Hour stood about and tore off on her course in a wind that had become at length a veritable gale.

EZRA gathered the dog into his great arms and carried him below and set him down. For a moment or two stood he, staring at him with mingled amusement, pity and anger. He cursed under his breath presently. The cur had cost him an hour or more, and his delay of mercy meant that The Golden Hour must stand off for deep water. To make harbor now was out of the question. The delay meant the loss of a day, perhaps several days, and, also, the hazard of the schooner and of lives.

Swaying with the pitching of the driving schooner, Ezra stood and laughed. His laugh was hard, with an edge of bitterness; but, for all that, he had no more regret for his act of mercy than might naturally strike any man who had risked all—his own all and that of others—for a thing that had no comparative value.

It was not strange that he should laugh thus. The dog was a long-legged, gangling, shaggy puppy—dog and nothing more. His escutcheon was like a crazy criss-cross, but, although no one could tell at sight, every strain in him was royal. He was a nondescript, with long legs, a heavy, yet graceful body, long blackish-yellow coat and a noble head, a little out of keeping then with his build—probably, part Newfoundland and part Airedale. He lay sprawled where Ezra had half dropped him, and industriously licked away at his ice-matted coat, although now and then stopping and lifting his eyes to the captain of the Golden Hour.

At length, he arose and lurched against Ezra's knees and uplifted his head and rested it against his rescuer's dripping coat.

"Poor devil!" exclaimed Ezra, and he placed his hand on the dog's head and stroked it.

Clancy, mumbling curses, came down the companionway with a pail of heated condensed milk. He burst into a tantalizing laugh when he reached Ezra's side, mockery of his friend in the laugh.

"Hope you feel paid, Ezra," he grumbled savagely. "Lord! The beast's ribs stick clean out o' him!"

In spite of himself, the commiseration he really felt was in his exclamation.

"Gimme that pail!" snapped Ezra, taking the pail from his grinning friend's hand.

Ezra next tested the heat of the milk

with a forefinger, then kneeling held it for the half-frozen puppy.

The dog sniffed the milk, took a tentative lap, then, finding it not unbearably hot, wolfed it down in a way that made the two hard old fisherman exchange a pitying, understanding stare.

As might be expected, Ezra and Mike Clancy had little time to give a waif dog, with the schooner plowing and smashing heavily out before a gale; and, after this slight attention, they went above, Ezra, however, giving orders to old man Snow, the "doctor," to see that the cur below had plenty of grub.

FOR two long days The Golden Hour sped before the gale, most of that time in a steady, thick fall of snow; but early on the night of the second day they were able to come about and beat in toward port, a hard and tedious trip, heavy and low as they were with fish and the schooner's shroud of ice.

On Wednesday afternoon they lay fast alongside T-Wharf—in great luck, in spite of their seeming mischance, being the first full schooner in for three days.

On Saturday they slipped out past The Graves and tore along for Gloucester in keen, clear weather, everybody happy and cheerily at work with axes to clear away the great crust of ice.

Old "Doc" Snow had obeyed Ezra's orders about feeding the big puppy, and the waif had picked up in wonderful fashion. His ribs no longer protruded, and with the ice out of his coat he was not a scarecrow—in fact, was a mighty handsome dog.

Now, Ezra was not particularly a lover of dogs, but the puppy looked to him as master and acted accordingly in a discreet way that seemed almost uncanny, apparently realizing that the black-bearded man had no great use for him. The puppy worshipped the skipper, and probably set himself deliberately out to win his love.

Occasionally Ezra would stoop and pat his head, and then the puppy would wag his tail frenziedly—or, rather shake his whole body in sheer joy, his big brown eyes shining.

When The Golden Hour was at anchor in her home berth and snugged down, Clancy spoke about the dog. It wasn't the first time he had spoken about him, of course. Far from it, for he had for a couple of days taken a great delight in joking Ezra about the puppy.

"What you going to do with him, Ez?" he asked, looking down at the dog, which was then sitting near the skipper.

Ezra glanced at the dog, and the puppy "smiled" at him and vigorously thumped his tail on the deck.

"Doggone me, if that cuss don't understand what ye say!" exclaimed Clancy, knocking his pipe out against the rail and giving the big puppy a half quizzical, half earnest look. "Anyway, he's a luck dog."

"Huh!" snorted Ezra. "Come on alongshere!" He turned outward and bawled impatiently to the dory coming up under the rail to take them off.

When the dory came alongside, Ezra gave the dog a careless pat on the head and clambered down into place, Clancy following.

The big puppy gave out one whine, just one, a half-repressed whimper—and when the two men had gone down into the boat he rose up with his forepaws on the rail and stared down at the skipper.

Ezra looked up and met the dog's eyes of adoration and devotion.

"Hold on!" he ordered sharply, as the rowers were about to shove off. "Guess I'll take the cur home to the girl, Mike," he declared. "She's been pestering me for a dog, and I guess I said I'd get her one some day."

Mike grinned and said nothing. He knew that Ezra had right along intended to keep the dog, even if he didn't plan to take him home. He knew that the skipper regarded the dog as "luck" and because of a queer superstition—which he would never have admitted even to himself—would not voluntarily part with him;

and, also, he knew that Ezra responded to the dog's worship.

"Well—come on, you condinged nuisance!" called Ezra, standing up and holding out his arms.

Without an instant's hesitation, the puppy leaped to the rail and came outward, landing sprawling in the skipper's arms, gurgling in delight.

When Ezra and Clancy left the wharf and went up toward the main street, the puppy ran here and there in a frenzy of joy, barking wildly at every passerby, rolling in the snow and growling his transport, and every now and then darting back to Ezra to give his hand a lick and then dashing away again. He was in an ecstasy.

In the street, however, he quieted down at Ezra's sharp word and sedately seated himself beside Ezra, close against his leg, as the two men stood waiting and talking till the car came.

THE captain lived on the outskirt of the town in the big old Perkins' house, set among a grove of giant elms, and when he and the puppy were alone walking up the long path, newly cleared of snow, the skipper—safe from ridicule—unbent.

"Here's your home, boy," he declared, leaning and patting the dog's head and now honestly taking delight in the shine of the worshipping eyes. "And here," he exclaimed, suddenly, "is your real boss. Hello there! Annette! Ahoy!"

His "girl"—his daughter and only child—had come into view around the corner of the house, descending from the steps, with a pan in her hand.

Annette heard the hail, and turned and stared—momentarily blinded by the glare and sparkle of the afternoon sun upon the snow.

In just a second, though, she set her pan quickly upon the snow bank and flew down the path and leaped into the waiting arms of the burly skipper of The Golden Hour.

Ezra gave the little twelve-year-old mistress of his house a hug that almost crushed her, and gave her brown hair a stroke or two; and then, setting her down, after kissing her, looked at her keenly and saw as always—the mother of her, long before gone from him and lying under the snow just over the hill.

"How's this for a dog, Annette?" he asked, presently.

The great, shaggy puppy was now sitting on his haunches in the snow, staring at the little girl. He knew enough not to interfere in the meeting between his master and the stranger and not to show disapproval—yes, he knew enough for that. Probably, though, his canine heart dropped to a hind paw! What did it mean to him?

Annette looked at him, and he looked at her, gravely, wonderingly.

"He'll eat a great deal, daddy," responded Annette, practically.

Ezra gave a dry little laugh. Then he told briefly where he had got him and ingenuously referred to him as a "lucky dog" because of the early arrival in Boston harbor for an eager market.

Annette walked up to the puppy, and, after a moment of two of study, she knelt in childish impulse in the snow and hugged him, without doubt because her heart was touched by the thought of him forlorn and starving and freezing on the derelict when her daddy had found him.

The puppy met her childish perfect love with all the strength and ardor of his dog heart.

Prince, indeed, gave himself then and there to Annette!

"What's his name?" asked Annette, as she arose, holding to the puppy's neck as he rubbed against her.

"You can name him," said her father.

"Prince!" exclaimed Annette, promptly, and, leaning, she called that name into his ear, making him shake his head, because the breath of her tickled him and not in remonstrance at the name or to the pride of it all.

And it was so that the lucky dog found a home and a name.

JOYOUS years for him now followed. He lost his gauntness and puppy awkwardness of figure and carriage, and became sleek and trimly powerful, and his yellow-black, shaggy coat, inclined to curl somewhat, was like silk. In spite of his mongrel breed, the name Prince bestowed upon him impulsively by Annette seemed very fitting.

He and Annette were together always, winter and summer. Ah, those days of summer! Every day they went down to the beach and swam together and played till they had to hurry home. Everyone knew Prince—although he was never more than courteous in gracious canine fashion even to Annette's boy and girl friends—and whenever he appeared in sight the village people knew that Annette was near at hand.

Of course, time did not stand still with Annette any more than it did with Prince, and when she became sixteen she was a handsome girl. It was natural that a vivacious jolly young girl like her should reach a time when a dog cavalier was not all she desired, not entirely satisfying to the budding woman in her. She was beginning to put up her hair about this time, and now and then, with increasing frequency, she forbade him to accompany her to the village. Finally, almost all that was left, as in the first years, were the days of summer on the beach.

Prince was puzzled. It wasn't strange he should be. Annette seemed to have the same love for him as always, and yet there were times when she didn't want him. He couldn't understand. For his part, he was never happy unless he was with her.

Many and many a time he sat at the end of the long path before the house watching the lithe, graceful figure of his mistress going village-ward and wondering why he was ordered to stay behind. It is very like that in a dim, vague way he understood that they were growing sedate together. Yes, he was growing old—which is a bad thing for a young dog or a young person.

Upon these occasions he would finally get up and stalk slowly to the back porch, to lie down and wait for the sound of her step or her shrill whistle. And when either came, he would forget his bewilderment as to the way of life, and, bounding up, would leap away down the path and greet her as he had always done since the first glorious days of puppyhood when he had found home and her.

He had no animosity toward any of Annette's many visitors, and, indeed, was patriarchal with the girl friends. He did, however, instinctively see rivals in some of the boys who came to see Annette, particularly Joe Poole, a tall, sinewy, black-haired young fellow who came more often than any other. Joe made advances to him always, really liking him without putting on to please Annette, and Prince made dignified response, but charily.

After a time, however, Joe ceased to come to the house, and Prince was glad. Oddly enough, too, Annette's other boy visitors fell away with Joe's going. That seemed strange, but Prince was pleased.

Joe Poole left Rockport at the same time Annette's father started away on one of his trips, but Prince thought nothing of this. He knew, though, that while Joe did not come to the house he still was important to him, for now and then he heard "Joe" voiced by Annette and her girl friends. It seemed, however, that Annette was a little more to him as she had been when she was a small girl, played with him more and took him more often down town as in the days when he was a mere sprawly, huge puppy—enjoying life without the base alloy of fear.

THEN Ezra came home again—another day, almost the anniversary of the day when he took Prince, freezing and starving, from the unknown wreck, and it turned out that Annette had set her mind upon sailing upon The Golden Hour when he started off again. Of course, the talk about this trip—Annette's arguments and Ezra's sharp pooh-poohing of such a fool-girl notion—was quite beyond

Prince, and all he knew was—which troubled him and made him now and then raise his head and look anxiously from one to the other—that his mistress and the father were not on the usual smooth terms. Even if he could have understood their words, he would not have known that Annette wanted to go to sea with her father because Joe Poole was now a member of The Golden Hour's sturdy crew. But Ezra knew well enough why Annette had taken a fancy for rough cruising, and he did not hesitate to air his knowledge and joke her. Annette was the apple of his eye, however—the apple of both eyes and all else besides—and he hated like sin to refuse her anything. He balked at her proposal for several reasons, partly because the life was rough and because The Golden Hour, fine as she was, could be no place for his daughter at any time and very much because of the great hazard of winter sailing way down east.

"But what'll you do with Prince?" he asked, at length, when finally he had been driven to surrender against his wishes and good judgment. "Mike and the rest of 'em—including Billy Poole's boy—will think I'm going soft to let you go. And I guess I am! It's no place for a girl . . . What'll you do with Prince? You know Aunt Sarah don't like to bother with him."

"Why, I'll take him along, dad," returned Annette.

"He'll be a dummed nuisance, like, like —"

"Me, dad, I suppose," put in Annette, laughing and then throwing herself upon him.

IT WAS the last day of January when The Golden Hour left Thatcher's lights behind her on the port quarter and swept away down east in a stiff wind with the sting of a lash. The air was crystal clear; the schooner stood out in clear-cut beauty in the winter night, a speeding, ethereal wraith in a foam-flashing, dark sea. The sky was cloudless. The unfathomable vault of heaven glittered with its countless legions of frosty stars.

And what is there more wonderful, more mystically entrancing, more glorious than to be aboard a trim schooner running free! Ah, nothing, nothing—certainly if you are young and all's well.

On this night, Annette, her lithe, strong young body fur-wrapped, stood aboard The Golden Hour forward with Joe Poole and with him looked ahead into the mystic glint of the winter sea—and into the tomorrows.

Prince sat nearby, under shelter from the wind, and he too looked into the night. He was happy, of course; he was always happy when he was with Annette; but he was thinking of that moment when he had come for the second time upon the deck of The Golden Hour and found Joe Poole there.

He loved the water; he loved the wind —liked to face it and feel it blowing his silky coat. He hated the schooner, though, but had no fear or uneasiness upon her. Very likely, he had some recollection of his desperate holding to life on a desolate wreck when he was a mere puppy.

AWAY and away sailed the staunch, noble little Gloucester boat upon the winter sea. A mighty gay boat she was on this trip. They had little dances in the crowded space available, old Snow playing a wheezy accordion, and every man aboard danced with the skipper's handsome, jolly young daughter.

Prince renewed his acquaintance all around, and was particularly a favorite with old Mike Clancy. Joe took more notice of him than on shore, too, and Prince found him worthy of friendship and played like a puppy with him—when Annette was also playing.

When at length they reached the fishing grounds, The Golden Hour had great luck from the start, extraordinarily good luck.

This was enough to make the good times aboard doubly pleasant; but, of course, because of the luck and because the weather held—weather clear and bit-

ing cold, but fine—the times for play were few and short.

This run of unusual luck was especially pleasing to Ezra, for he called himself a fool for allowing Annette to come. He could have no real easy moment till The Golden Hour opened up Gloucester harbor.

As for Joe Poole—well, he was happy beyond words, for, capping everything, he was the man who saw the first run of mackerel.

And Prince was happy, too. He had finally surrendered to Joe, had decided that Joe was for him on the same plane with Ezra and Annette.

Toward the end of the second week, the wind veered into the northeast and blew up a sea that made fishing out of the question. The Golden Hour, like all the other craft on the grounds, put up a little canvas and lay to, but as the wind became a gale in the late afternoon she turned tail and flew before it in the night.

All next day the schooner ran before the northeaster, alone on a tremendous sea, scudding away with a rag of sail, rearing and plunging, now and again awash, always in a cloud of gale-whipped spray.

The second night came, and away The Golden Hour flew.

Late that night Ezra and old Mike Clancy put their heads together, apart from anyone, and each admitted to the other that he had a feeling of uneasiness. The truth is they were not half sure of their position, and it was impossible to beat outward. They must keep on running, and the outcome of the running was neither within their knowledge nor within their control.

All that long night The Golden Hour tore away before the gale, now climbing dizzily to the top of great surges from the tormented Atlantic, hanging there momentarily in a smother of spindrift, now plunging down into Stygian valleys. Her scant spread of steadying sail was torn to streamers; her nests of dories were smashed and carried away; and her rails were riven and splintered as if by cannon shot. But still she rolled up the great seas and plunged down, and still she swept away to what no man aboard her could say.

DURING these long, long hours of terror Annette remained battened below with Prince, and during many of these hours she clung to him and, with her head buried in his shaggy neck, dry-eyed prayed and feared and hoped and thought of home and of Joe.

Prince nuzzled her always and whined, and time and time again he licked her hands and face and stared at her with his eyes of devotion. He knew the sea; he knew as well as she what this wild plunging meant, what this pounding of waters, what this never-ending wrenching and groaning of timbers meant; but he had no fear.

There was no real dawn, although the night was done. The sky became visible—a low, sullen gray pall—and the blackness of night faded away to an atmosphere of dirty yellow-gray. This lifting of the impenetrable murk of that terrible night brought no cheer. It merely allowed the crew of The Golden Horn to see the wild sea, an expanse of wildly-tossed waters whipped to clouds of spray.

Away before them dead ahead, however, an uncertain, vague outline pricked itself against the drab of the sullen sky, and swiftly took form as the beaten schooner reared and plunged away. And that outline was land, the dreaded coast, a wall of rock, with treacherous reefs and shallows where so many a schooner had come to its end in the history of the Banks.

Ezra Perkins, gripping the wheel, stared forward through the flying spray at the dark cliffs becoming clear and near with a terrible speed, and his jaw set hard as he looked. He did no calculating upon his chances; he knew that disaster was inevitable, that nothing could save him from wreck upon some part of that long black coast, curving away before him to disappearance in the distance.

"Marin's Point!" he shouted to Mike Clancy, who held the spokes with him.

Mike, staring through half closed eyes, nodded his head and mentally crossed himself.

For half an hour the schooner rolled and pitched forward, and during this time Ezra and the desperate crew made prodigious efforts to put a rag of sail up in the hope of beating off enough to round the point that surely would catch them as they were going—an impossible thing.

The high black head of Marin's Point, a northward curving arm, grew out of the gray and mist, and soon they saw the break of the sea on the reefs before this point, marked by a gathering of the great surges rolling under and over them and an upthrowing of spray like geysers.

They drove on over the tumultous waters, riding high, dropping down into seething valleys, and presently they saw the wall to their left. They were caught! The reefs lay before them—the end of The Golden Hour.

When hope of escape was gone, Ezra went below and found Joe Poole before him girding Annette with a preserver.

Prince leaped in joy upon Ezra, and Ezra, his eyes upon Annette—bitter, bitter self-reproach in his heart—cursed him and struck him away.

"Father!" cried Annette, as he struck the blow.

Prince fell sprawling down upon the pitching cabin floor, and, head upon his paws, looked hard at the skipper and at Joe and Annette. He held no resentment for the blow. He knew they were in great trouble and fear, and he wanted to lick their hands and faces.

Ezra drew Annette into his great arms and with blurred eyes hugged her fiercely, and Annette, knowing what he felt, kissed him and clung to him and whispered in his ear—"It's not your blame, Dad, and—"

Ezra made a motion to Joe, and, turning, clawed his way above, gasping when he saw the reefs nearby and the cliffs of the point figuratively overhanging them.

Annette knelt and threw her arms about Prince and kissed his dear snout, and then with Joe clinging to her, and half lifting her, fought to the deck—for the slight last chance for life.

Prince, now unheeded, followed at her heels, in some way keeping safe upon the deck deluged constantly with swirling waters as the schooner rolled.

BY SOME STRANGE CHANCE The Golden Hour passed within the first series of reefs outlying the point, but soon she rolled broadside, swept up by the thundering seas, hurled down and half buried in foam.

The clinging crew, waiting merely for the end, saw through the sheeted spray a group of fishermen upon the narrow beach below the cliff, and just that human presence—although of no avail to them—cheered them in the last hour.

Up, up, up reared the schooner, broadside—for a moment clearly seen from the near shore—and then she dropped in a prodigious burst of foam. Again she rose, again she dropped. And then with a mighty crash and jar—with a rending and splintering—her sticks going down in a tangle of rigging—she came upon a jagged ledge and there remained, canted somewhat shoreward. The surges within the first barrier reef, re-formed, rolled in upon her and burst there, shot up and plunged over her uppermost rail and down across her listed deck in fierce cataracts.

But the brave little vessel remained immovable against the onslaught of the seas, although quivering and shrieking and giving under the terrific, incessant pounding. Dissolution, though, was inevitable, and it might be at any moment—a bursting asunder in the twinkling of an eye.

Every soul aboard her had seen the rocks upon which she was to strike, and, because of this, not one was then swept away in the terrible impact. And all looked across the narrow stretch of wild waters between them and the heart-straining watchers on the beach, and prayed in fervent longing and wondered how long The Golden Hour would hold before she

yielded and cast them out swirling to death among the maze of rocks.

To everyone aboard it seemed a miracle that the schooner held. When they caught a brief sight of the rocks in the swirling waters which meant the schooner's end—momentarily bared like the black fangs of a gigantic sea monster as the schooner was lifted up—they had expected instant annihilation.

The holding of the schooner—this brief reprieve—gave Ezra and the crew sudden hope, and animated them to action. They were not the men to let any chance go. Like all their kind, it was ingrained in them, it was their nature, to fight for life to the last gasp of breath.

Although almost continuously deluged, it was the work of a few minutes to get a line prepared and cast out a bit of planking to carry it in to the fishermen upon the beach.

The plank shot away from The Golden Hour and plunged and swirled shoreward, now in sight, now buried in foam. It jammed in a rock, end up, stuck a moment, then all of a sudden became loose and leaped upward like a living creature, whipping the rope after it.

NOT a word passed among those on the schooner or among the group on the shore. If that plank reached the beach, every soul on the schooner would be saved—if the vessel held sufficiently long.

Just as all on the wreck and all on the shore let out a breath of relief, joyous hope surging in them, the plank was cast among a maze of rock farther on—and remained there.

In this moment, Prince, secure in the shelter of part of the top-gear litter, gave out a shrill bark that sounded clear above the pound and rush of the sea.

Mike Clancy, braced next to Ezra, began excitedly to gather more rope, drawing it into a coil.

"The dog!" he shouted, after all had come free from another swirling rush of water down the canted deck. "The dog! Tie the rope to him! He kin make it!" He had been touched to certain hope by a deep superstition—and conviction was in his shout, and he worked with speed and urged Buckner and Anderson to finish their work on the boatswain's chair they had begun to make. Prince's bark had been to Mike an omen—a signal, a response to prayer.

Ezra grasped at the seemingly hopeless chance, like Clancy touched by superstition that Annette's dog was a "luck dog." It did not come to his mind, though, that perhaps now his rescue of the dog at peril of life and property—his wasting of time years before for a cur—was to have return. He looked up to Prince ensconced in the litter of the foremast rigging and called to him.

Prince barked again, and again, and wagged his tail. Then, after waiting for a clear moment, he came down across the slanting deck and safely reached Ezra in his hold under the cabin and kissed his bearded face when the skipper put his arms about him.

Annette, lying nearby with Joe braced at her elbow watching in fierce rebellion in his impotency, looked at Prince, and turned her head away and buried it in Joe's shoulder.

Ezra took the rope end Mike Clancy passed to him and quickly made it fast about the big dog's shoulders in a way least liable to choke or entangle him, and then he told Prince just what he was expected to do—as if Prince could understand.

Mike and the others stared with white, strained faces at the dog. To them it seemed impossible that any living creature could go through the terrible welter of waves and seething foam, avoiding the maze of rocks, and reach shore. And would their friend the dog—the cur they had saved a few years before—even *try* to go!

Prince knew what he was to do. He *knew!* There are many who are as sure of this as they are that the sun shines.

He gingerly went down to the lower

rail, Ezra paying out the rope, and without hesitation leaped outward—and was swept away in a great creaming, hissing spread of foam, for a moment visible as a black dot against the white—and then gone.

Ezra, with straining eyes and straining heart, let out the rope—excitement growing in him as the line ran steadily through his gnarled hands.

They saw the big dog tossed up by a curling wave—saw the wave topple over him. They heard the water pound and roar upon the rocks—their hearts faint. In a second, however, Clancy let out a choked shout, for the dog was beyond that rock where the wave had broken—shot beyond it before the roller burst in foam and spray. Even as they began again to hope they saw him borne forward toward a flat ledge, momentarily bared. And Prince issued upon that rock, ran across it and disappeared in the rush of waters that followed him.

They did not see him again for several moments, and, because of distance, they could not tell whether he had been dashed upon the ledge and swept away lifeless or still lived and was exerting himself prodigiously to thread the reefs and reach the shore.

But the rope kept passing through Ezra's hands, and all watched it as they could, their thread of fate.

Suddenly, Ezra Perkins gave a great shout.

As he raised his shout in the roar of wind and wave, Prince issued from the white surf upon the beach and was instantly surrounded by the waiting fishermen there.

In ten minutes from that great moment Annette, tied in the boatswain's chair, journeyed to the shore over the dread way the dog Prince had made his wonderful swim of strength and courage and wit; and one by one the others went to safety in the same way. Ezra was the last man to land, but he was dragged through the water part of the way, for when he was almost to the beach the schooner burst apart, timbers actually dashing upon the shore as he himself was hauled out scatheless.

As the stalwart skipper stood up and began to breathe in ease, his heart overflowing in thankfulness, Prince pulled away from Annette's embrace and came running to him and jumped upon him and barked joyously, capering about and jumping upon him again and again in his transport.

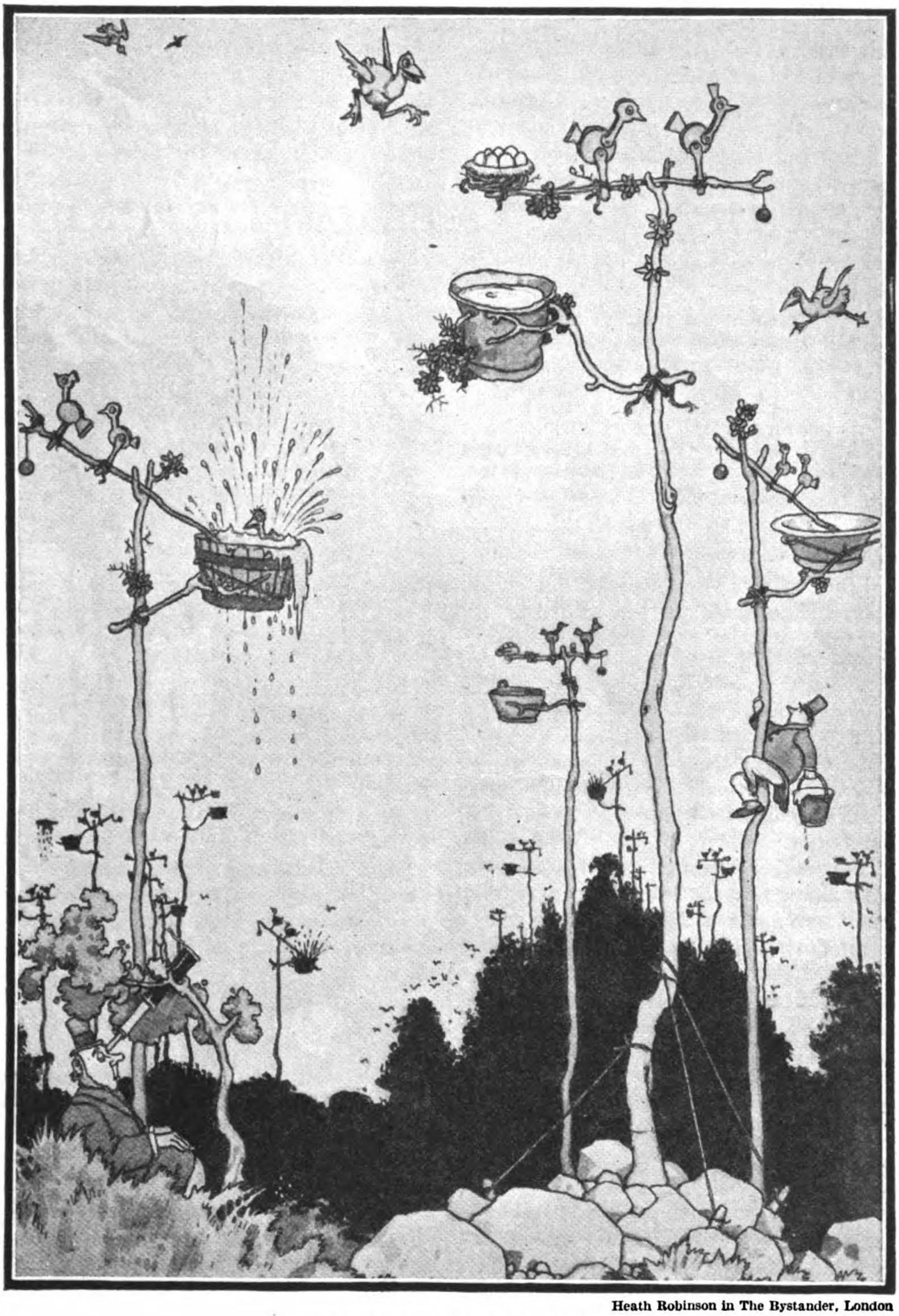
Suddenly, Ezra caught him in firm gentleness by the scruff of his neck as he leaped against him. He let him kiss his face as he willed, and then he held him off at half-arm's length and looked into his eager, loving eyes. He set him down and turned to Mike Clancy at his elbow.

"A great dog, Mike," he said. There was a catch in his voice, and he watched Prince gravely as the big dog ran back to Annette and Joe.

"A 'luck' dog," returned Mike, almost in awe.

TODAY old Prince—for now he really is in dog's sunset days—lies on Ezra's back porch in Rockport. Upon his collar there is a little engraved plate of solid silver. Prince knows what that means, no doubt, but he has no undue pride in it. Joe lives with Annette and Ezra now, and neither of these young people ever forbid him to go along where they go. He loves them—and Ezra—and is happy. And these three human beings love him—yes, love—and make his advancing age honorable and happy by showing their love for him.

What more could be said for Prince or for them?



Heath Robinson in The Bystander, London

THE REFORMATION OF THE CUCKOO!

The latest scheme for discouraging cuckoos from laying eggs in other bird's nests when the owners are looking the other way!

Sealing the Second Envelope

Here is the story of a man who made fifty thousand dollars by murmuring two words, "I do!" Twenty-five thousand dollars a word—more than our best writers ever made! But as it turned out it was a surprise package, and even if you're a man you won't feel so dreadfully sorry for the hero.

By
Courtney Ryley Cooper

When the waiter brought the check, John Ralston paid it, then smiled across the table.

"The last official act," he laughed, easily. "At that, we've got a good deal the better of a lot of married folks. We've never had a quarrel."

In the soft light of the table lamp, Mrs. Ralston leaned forward and smiled as she glanced at the wedding ring on her finger.

"I wouldn't say that too loud." came her remonstrance. "I'm very much afraid that I may have to charge you with everything from mental cruelty to throwing dishes. Divorces aren't as easy now as they used to be."

"No, I guess not, although I've never had experience before."

"Nor I—but a person can read, you know."

"Correct. If it hadn't been for reading, we wouldn't have been married."

She laughed again.

"Wanted—a husband. I'll never forget how foolish that looked the day I read it in the personal column. Just how did the ad read? I've forgotten."

"I haven't," John Ralston smiled. "A man never forgets his meal ticket, you know. If you want the exact wording, it went something like this:

> "'Young lady of wealth is willing to pay good sum of money to young man who will become her husband in name only for purposes of fulfilling provisions of eccentric will. Address Compton and Clay, Attorneys, 1452 First National Bank Building.'

"And if I remember correctly," Ralston continued whimsically, "I was the first person to apply. I think I ran there."

"You've done very well as a husband—"

Mrs. Ralston was looking out to where the purple lights flared on the dance floor. "Pretty music, isn't it?"

"Yes. You don't care to dance?"

"No, thanks. Someone might see us. It's bad enough to be dining together. Especially when I'll be suing for divorce in a week."

"True. But that'll be in a far country. Wouldn't you really care to dance? I'm trying my best—" he nodded his head slightly—"to be a model friend-husband to the bitter end."

"For which I thank you." Mrs. Ral-

ston's eyes beamed happily and she nodded in compliment. "In fact, I can recommend you as one of the best husbands I've ever known. Are you still going to live in the same place?"

"I? Oh, I've moved. Hadn't I told you about that? I guess not. Let's see, it was six months or so ago that we had our last meeting, wasn't it? Well, it was since then that I moved. I'm living here now. A much nicer place and better service. I suppose you're going to keep the house?"

She looked out toward the dance floor, where, to the swinging lilt of the orchestra, men and women were swaying and treading the steps of the dance. There were those who smiled and who were graceful. There were those who were awkward, but happy. There were those who were plainly distressed—but they all swayed on to the command of the melody. Mrs. John Ralston closed her eyes for just a second.

"I don't know about the house," came her answer at last. "I'd like to keep it—really I would. But then, it's too great a burden. Besides, now that the legal end of things has all been provided for, it seems too bad to handle all that expense just for myself, when there are so many good chances to sell it."

"Quite true. By the way, about the legal end of things, I suppose I should see your attorneys before you leave in the morning. I wouldn't like you to fail after this length of time—that is, fail in some of the provisions."

"Provisions? There's not the slightest chance. I know them all by heart." Mrs. Ralston raised a dainty hand and counted on her fingers. "First I must marry within six months. I did that. My husband must be someone of family and breeding. That was accomplished.—"

"Even though the subject himself hadn't taken much advantage of his lineal opportunities." John Ralston's voice was slightly sarcastic. "But pardon me; I interrupted."

"I must remain married at least five years. And that's been done. So I don't think that father could have the slightest objection to the course we're pursuing. He did enough to cause me trouble as it was. But I shouldn't say that—he meant well enough."

Mrs. Ralston was tracing out tiny patterns on the tablecloth.

"To tell the truth, I think he did it more for my own protection than anything else. He reasoned that I was a girl just out of college, and a father never gives a daughter credit for any too much business sense, you know. He naturally felt I was tender and trustful, and all that sort of thing, and that I ought to have a man trailing around somewhere, like the lonely old maid and her bulldog—to keep naughty tramps from carrying her off and holding her for ransom."

But John Ralston did not echo the bantering tone. He stared at the drifting smoke of his cigarette.

"Personally, I haven't anything but the deepest gratitude for your father. He—"

"He did help out, didn't he?"

"A life saver, you might call him. You and I have played a pretty cold-blooded proposition for the last five years, Mrs. Ralston. You had to, to gain the fortune that ought to be yours, and I had to—well, for a good many reasons. The morning I read that advertisement, I had just come back from engineering a little revolution down in Ecuador which would have done very well by me, if it had turned out. But it didn't turn—and I wouldn't have kept the money anyway. Not at the rate I was consuming the distillery output. So you see, it's meant a change for me in a good many ways—for the better. It meant food for one thing, and clothing, and an income, and a sort of a position. And I must confess," he smiled again, "your company has been very enjoyable—the few times we've met each other."

She nodded and smiled in answer.

"The feeling is mutual. As I said before, if I can recommend you to anyone as a husband, please be sure to let me

know; for I have found you faultless."

"And you never late for the theater."

"Thank you again. When a husband can say that of his wife, he gives her the greatest of compliments. By the way, you were speaking of drinking. I suppose there's been no change in the doctor's diagnosis?"

"You mean regarding that heart of mine and the liquor question? No. The same old prognostication. 'One drink, my son, and you shall travel in a conveyance not of your own seeking.' I palpitate even at the thought of malt, vinous or intoxicating liquors."

Then his voice suddenly changed.

"By the way, realizing that the end of the five years had come, I took the liberty yesterday of handling a little cold blooded end of our rather cold blooded proposition that I felt rather necessary to your welfare."

Rather brusquely he reached into an inside pocket and brought forth an envelope.

"If you don't mind carrying it?"

"What is it?"

"Your divorce."

"My divorce! But I thought—"

"Rather—" John Ralston smiled slightly—"the grounds for it. I felt it was easier for me to arrange things than for you to sit up nights thinking of charges. In that envelope is an affidavit I have sworn to, confessing love for another woman. That sort of thing is always good for divorce in any court."

"Confessing?" She looked up quickly. "But is it true?"

"True?" he arched his brows slightly. "Really, that part of it makes very little difference. It's an affidavit, you know, sworn to before a notary—even though it will be in a different State from the one in which you apply for a divorce. But I don't believe that counts against it. I think that will be all the charges you will need."

"But—" she fingered the envelope, then peeked within its unsealed flap— "I'd hardly like to use it unless it were true. I—"

"A divorce by any other means would be odoriferous—according to the scandal mongers," he joked. "So, really, I can't see that it makes much difference whether you charge the falsehoods, or I confess to them. It's all a matter of business."

"As a matter of business—yes!"

She had turned her head again, to look out toward the dance floor. Once more the music had begun again, droning and sweet and soft and lilting—the cadences of a waltz. The colored lights played upon the floor, shutting out by the opposition of their hues the remainder of the dining room, resolving the orchestra into a filmy set of musical shadows, softening everything, heightening the undulating beauty of the dance and its participants. Mrs. John Ralston folded her hands and rested her chin against them—and when she spoke, her voice had a bit of a different tinge to it.

"It *has* been a cold blooded proposition, hasn't it?" she asked, rather wearily it seemed. John Ralston watched her narrowly a second, then again reaching into his inside pocket, brought forth another envelope and laid it before her. But Mrs. Ralston did not see. "I wonder whether it's all been worth the trouble. Whether the money has been worth the sacrifice. You've lost five years of your life and I've lost five years of mine. You might have taken a hold on yourself and married some girl you loved, and I might have found a good deal more happiness without all the money. I wonder what it is about music that brings up thoughts like that? Do you know? She turned.

John Ralston regarded her closely in the half light.

"Thoughts like what?"

"Oh, like the thought that money isn't everything in the world. Now, for instance, look out there on the floor. There are women out there—and men, too—that haven't the money I have or the income that's been yours. But they're happy—a great deal happier than we've been. All we've had out of it is the fact that we've beaten the will of a dead man who tried

"What is it—another confession?"

to tie up my life to his own hard, shrewd way of figuring. As long as I can remember, the only picture that I can see of my father is that of a man figuring, figuring, figuring, all the time—working for more money. Maybe the same idea was born in me—but I can't help fighting against it sometimes."

"But you're free now."

"Nearly so."

"And you can do as you please."

"With my maiden name restored." Mrs. Ralston's voice had become rather hardened and cold. "And with every old hen that ever knew anything about me telling the story of how I got married to beat my father's will, and how I went West for a divorce and got it the minute I was free to do so and still keep the money. After which I shall be hounded by disreputable counts with faded lines of parentage and empty pocketbooks, and have my picture in the Sunday supplements as Miss Alice Harding, who recently gained her million after a business marriage to beat the provisions of her father's last will and testament. I sometimes wish I'd never even known what money was."

A waiter passed close. John Ralston lowered his voice.

"You at least have the consolation of company. I've been pointed out for the last five years as the fellow who married Alice Harding for ten thousand a year. But, then," and he looked at her queerly, "money has its advantages. It enables you to do a few things you couldn't accomplish otherwise. That, for instance."

He nodded toward the second envelope as the lights came on.

Mrs. Ralston looked at it curiously.

"Where did that come from?"

"I laid it there."

"What is it—another confession?"

"In a way."

"Bulkier than the other."

She raised it, and turned the flap. Her eyes went wide with surprise.

"I don't quite understand. I don't need anything like this."

"I think you do." John Ralston's voice was strangely cool and slow. "Every bit of it."

"But I don't. You're very kind—" she smiled again in a half embarrassed manner—"to endeavor to play the model husband even to the extent of furnishing her the money for her divorce trip, but—"

"Hardly that," he cut in dryly. "It's my salary."

"Your salary!"

As Mrs. John Ralston's husband at $10,000 a year for the last five years, interest added. I think you'll find $59,000 there—principal and interest in accordance with the legal scale."

"But I—I don't believe I understand. That was your contract."

John Ralston laughed.

"Contracts sometimes are broken. You and I made a contract for life, too—with no intention of keeping it. If one can break, so can the other."

"But why should you do it? I don't—"

"Conscience, perhaps."

"Conscience?"

"Even a soldier of fortune who comes back broke from a revolution in Ecuador, and marries a woman for the money it will bring him, can have a conscience," he answered. "And by some hook or crook I managed to get hold of one. So I've paid the money back, and I'm exceedingly thankful to you for the use of it. I've done very well."

"I hardly see how." Mrs. John Ralston still was staring at the pack of thousand dollar bills within the bulky envelope. "You've paid me back every cent you've ever gotten—with interest. You've had to live."

"Correct. But it didn't require all that money. And besides, a soldier of fortune can take chances. If you will remember, I got my salary for the year in advance. And ten thousand dollars capital is a pretty good start—especially with ten thousand more coming along in twelve months. And, if you will remember, the market was trying to go out through the bottom about the time I got my first year's

salary—and I was lucky enough to buy steel. Steel's changed a good deal since then. By the way, is there anything special you would like the orchestra to play?"

"The orchestra?" She stared at him wide-eyed. "Why? I don't understand—"

"Nothing—only they'll do anything I ask. I bought a half interest in this hotel yesterday."

"You?"

She looked at him with wondering eyes.

"And you're the same man that I saw in my lawyer's office that morning five years ago—"

"With my eyes still red from the aforementioned distillery products, with my overcoat on to hide the clothes I was wearing—"

He laughed again.

"Yes, I'm the same man." Then his expression suddenly changed and he leaned forward.

"No, I'm not the same man, either. I'm different, different all the way through. Different in my spirit, in my viewpoint toward life; different in my ideas of honor and of integrity, different in my determination and my vista of the future—different because I want to be different, because I want to be better, and worth something—to somebody, somewhere, sometime. That's why I fought so hard. That's why I got my mail at the Trailvern and lived in a boarding house on the other side of town. That's why I made up my mind that I was going to stop everything that had pulled me down, the foolishness, the whisky, the—"

"But you—" her hand had gone out a bit on the table—"you said that the doctor had told you it was your heart. You said—"

"I know it. I was afraid to tell the truth. A man can be forgiven for that, can't he?"

"Forgiven? Certainly—if there is anyone to forgive. But why evade a thing that was to your credit?"

"You might have asked the reason."

"I certainly would have."

"And I couldn't have told you—then!"

"Then? Do you mean you can tell now?"

He did not answer just then. Instead, he stared hard for a long time at nothing. At last—

"It doesn't make much difference now. You'll know some day."

"But why not now?"

"Because—" he smiled very queerly—"from the first day I saw you, I—well, because a husband in these days, is not supposed to be in love with his wife!"

There was a sudden silence at the table. John Ralston half turned away, striving dully to decipher the figures of a dining room that suddenly had become a maze of vagueness. For a long time Mrs. Ralston sat very quietly, looking at the envelope of money before her. Then as the great room darkened, as the orchestra again began its music and the colored lights played upon the glazed floor, her smooth, white little hand traveled very slowly across the table—until it touched his. He started and leaned toward her. Then he coughed in an embarrassed manner.

"Shall we—shall we dance?" he asked.

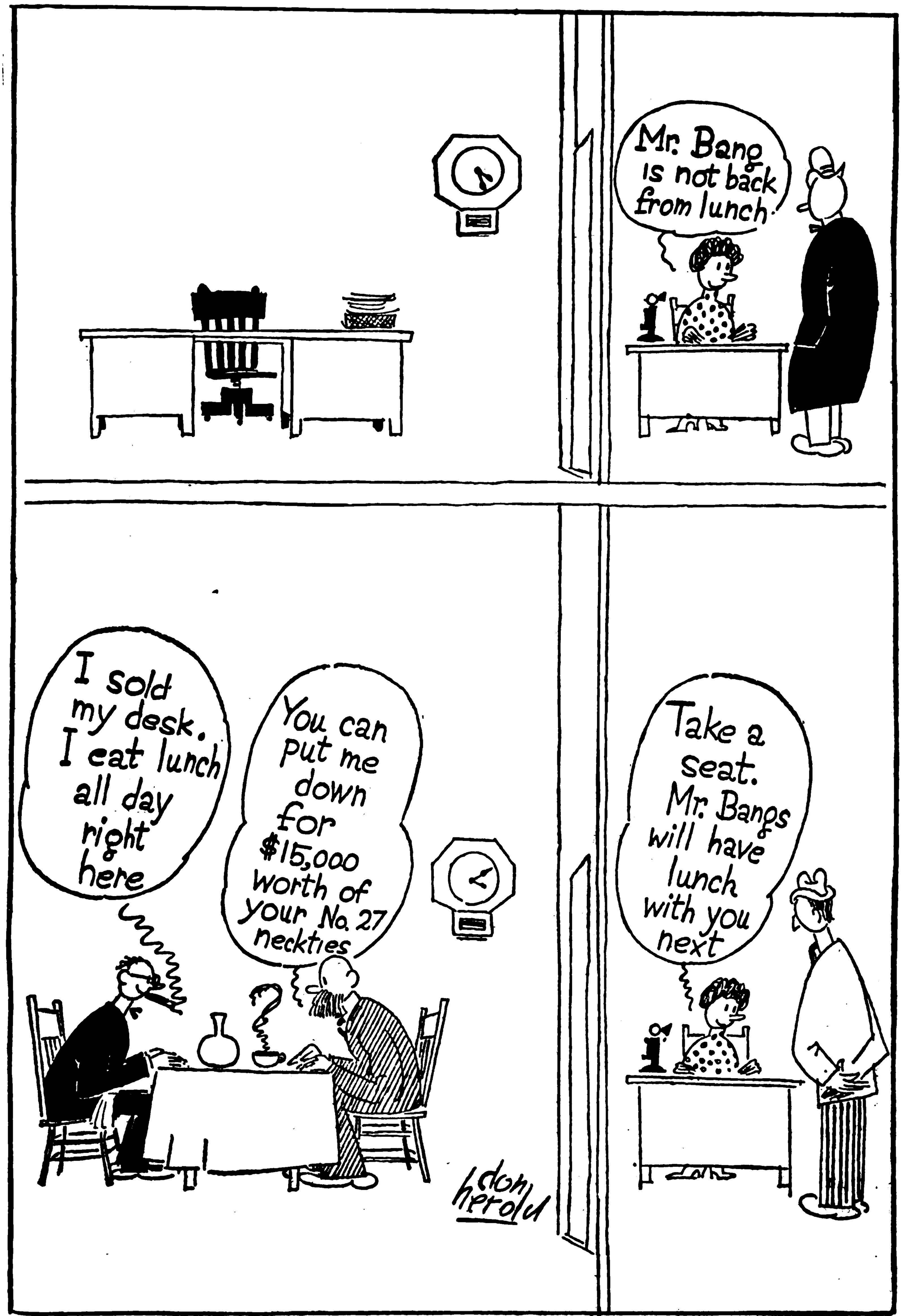
And as they reached the floor, and his arm went forth to clasp her, he saw, even in the half light that her cheeks were flushed and that her eyes were sparkling. And she leaned close to him, close enough for the softness of her hair to trace its filmy touch upon his cheek. And as they joined the rhythmic, swaying forms of the dance floor she raised her head until her face was close to his. Her lips moved.

"Hold me *tight*, John," she whispered.

Dixon in The Bystander, London

NO LITERARY LAPSES!

"I can read my husband like a book!"
"Then be careful to stick to your own library, my dear."



Protected by George Matthew Adams

Herold for George Matthew Adams Service

WELL, WELL, WELL!

If a man has to eat lunch all day in order to be successful, why have office desks?

Tale of the Three Suitors

There is no old lace about young Lavender, one of the cleverest clue hounds in detective literature. His solution of the celebrated Walker mystery in Vincent Starrett's story is a triumph for the detective's theory: "When the theory doesn't fit the facts, make the facts fit the theory, my dear Gilly!"

By

Vincent Starrett

"The murdered woman," said Lavender, "is Miss Sarah Walker!"

My friend Lavender lived up several flights of stairs, in rooms overlooking an elevated railroad station. I had climbed them, this cool spring evening, in response to his telephone call, to find the investigator engaged in fathoming nothing more intricate than the depths of a teacup. At his startling remark, I abruptly suspended my drinking.

"Good Lord!" I exclaimed. "Jerry Carter's cousin! I know her, Lavender! I've danced with her! This is shocking!"

"Quite!" he agreed, "and it's a nasty case. Jerry called me less than half an hour ago, and it was I who notified the police. I'm cock of the walk this time, Gilly! Harper won't move until I get there."

Harper was the police captain in the district in which, at the moment, we sat.

I was deeply agitated by my friend's revelation, but he made his preparations in leisurely fashion. He was the sort of individual who hurries without seeming to. In a few minutes we were briskly walking toward the Delmere Apartments, some blocks distant.

"The poor young woman was found dead in her flat," explained Lavender, as we proceeded. "Miss Arthur, who occupies the place with her, was away last night, and only returned a short time ago. It was she who discovered the crime."

"How was she killed?" I asked, in low tones.

"Strangulation, Carter said. I know nothing about it, yet."

Suddenly, with a sense of shock, a piece of gossip floated into my mind. I put it aside, instantly, but it continued to haunt me. At length, I blurted it out.

"Look here, Lavender!" I said. "I hate to suggest it, but it's pretty well known that Jerry, himself, was hopelessly in love with his cousin. Could it be possible . . ."

"Forget it!" said my friend, acidly. "That's your newspaper training. Your whole idea is to dig up something that will look well in a headline!"

His reproof galled. I bit my tongue upon a reply, and we finished the walk in silence.

A policeman in uniform stood at the door of the handsome apartment building. He nodded at Lavender as we passed him. A second policeman had superseded the elevator boy, and took us to Miss Walker's flat.

Entering the apartment, we were upon the scene of a magnificent activity. At first glance, it seemed that Harper had arrested everybody in sight.

From a little group in the background, Jerry Carter came forward eagerly and

warmly greeted us. He looked tired and anxious. In the group was Miss Arthur, whom we knew slightly. Harper was not in sight, but in a moment he hurried in from another room, greeted Lavender with a short nod, and seized my friend's arm. They entered the chamber from which the police captain had emerged.

I paused to greet Miss Arthur, and then followed them.

Two other men were in the room, bending over a bed—the deputy coroner and his physician. Lavender was already leaning across the silent figure, exchanging brief comments with the coroner's physician. Pushing forward, I was able to catch a glimpse of the handsome woman with whom, not many months before, I had danced.

Miss Sarah Walker had been a woman of considerable charm and animation; but on this night of tragedy she was pale enough and still enough to wring the heart. The set features spoke plainly of sudden terror and acute agony. Near the back of the plump white neck, as Lavender gently turned the head, were seen the marks of eight lithe fingers, and close together on the throat the impress of two cruel thumbs.

I HAD NO WISH to prolong my scrutiny, and with a shudder I turned away, leaving Lavender to his gruesome business.

"Miss Arthur should not wait longer than is necessary," I whispered to Jerry Carter, as I rejoined him.

"My mother is waiting for her," he replied, "but Captain Harper asked her to remain."

We sat in strained silence until the dreadful examination in the room beyond was finished. With infinite relief, I greeted Lavender's entrance. He was followed by the captain.

"Captain Harper has explained things to me briefly," said my friend, addressing the group as a whole, "so I shall not detain you long. Let me be sure that I understand correctly the movements of each of you, last night. You first, Miss Arthur, for I am sure you are under great strain, and are anxious to get to bed.

"You were out of town last night, on a singing engagement, and did not return until this evening, when, upon entering the flat, which you occupy with your friend, you made the terrible discovery of Miss Walker's death. You were naturally greatly shocked, and not at all unnaturally you fainted. When you had recovered, you called Mr. Carter, who hurried here to join you. Later, Mr. Carter summoned me, and it was I who summoned the police. When you left Miss Walker, yesterday afternoon, she was in good spirits—even high spirits, I believe—and was expecting a visitor. That is correct?"

"Quite correct, Mr. Lavender." Miss Arthur's voice was without emotion.

"And that visitor was—?"

"I do not know. A man, certainly; I believe an old friend. She did not mention his name."

"Did that strike you as unusual?"

"A little perhaps; but I had no time to think of it. She only mentioned her engagement as I was leaving the house."

"But she seemed pleased rather than displeased at the prospect?"

"Oh, yes!"

"So that, suspecting no ill, you went away to keep your own engagement, and had no idea of what had happened until you entered the flat?"

"That is true."

"At what time did you make the discovery, Miss Arthur?"

"I suppose it would be about seven o'clock. I took dinner at a restaurant, and then came directly home."

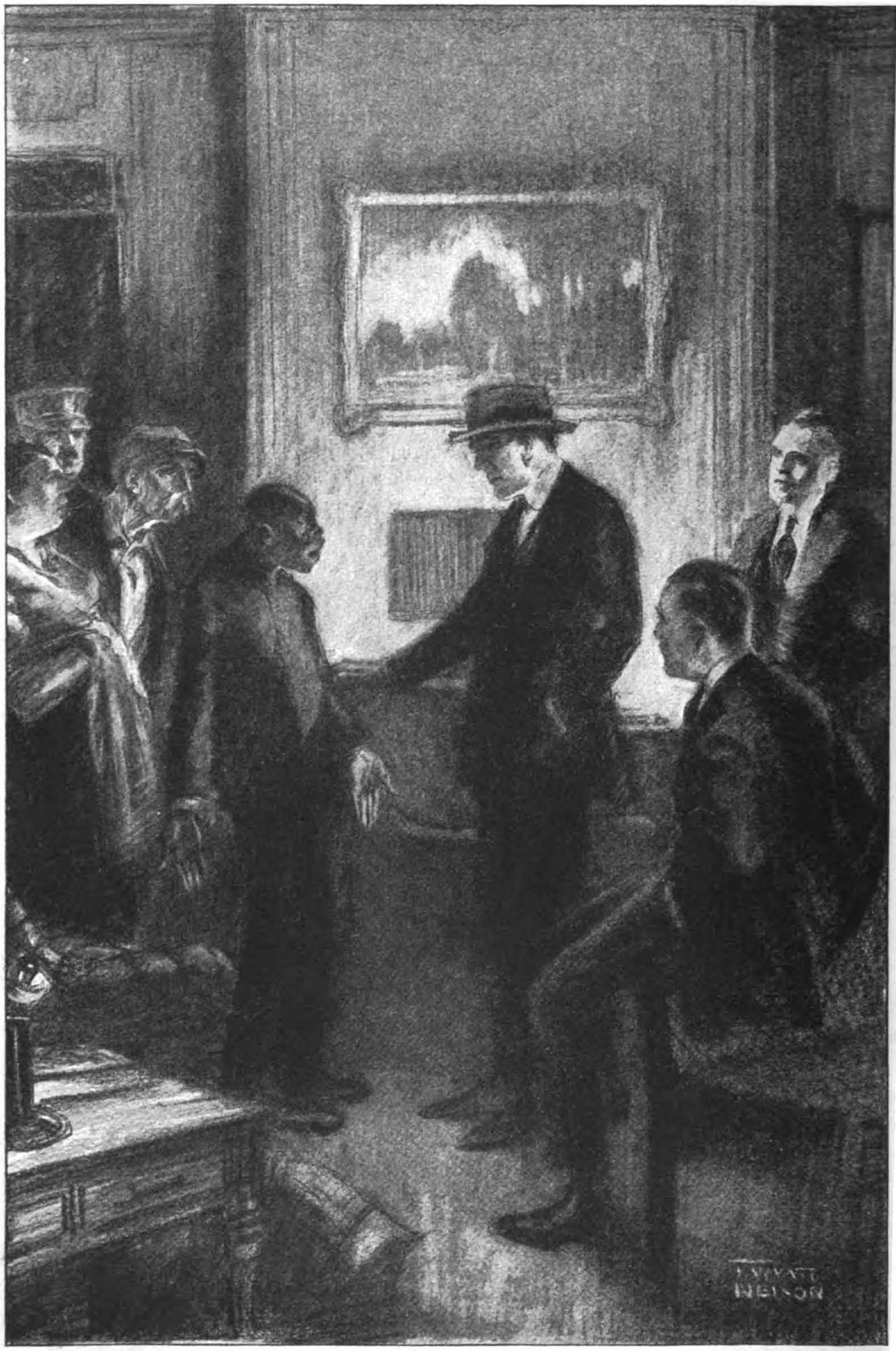
"So that the actual discovery was made less than two hours ago!"

Miss Arthur shuddered.

"Yes," she said.

"I understand that you fainted when you found your friend's body. Can you tell us how long you remained in that condition?"

"Not very long, I think. I can't be sure. It did not seem long. It seemed to be



" 'Ah—Ah didn't take a gennelman up at all, sah!' "

only a moment later that I was calling Mr. Carter."

"You called Mr. Carter because he was Miss Walker's cousin?"

"I suppose that is why. I was frightened—terrified! And I knew him quite well, and knew that he and Sarah were close friends."

"I see. That is perfectly clear, and I am obliged to you, Miss Arthur. And now you would better try to get some sleep. Mr. Carter, no doubt, will be responsible for Miss Arthur's appearance at the inquest."

"Certainly," said Jerry, astonished.

"Is that satisfactory, Captain?" Lavender persisted.

Harper nodded.

"All right, if you answer for Mr. Carter," he grumbled, "and he answers for Miss Arthur."

"There is nothing you can add to Miss Arthur's statement, Jerry?"

"No," answered Carter. "It is very clear. I have told the Captain much the same thing, and he was here shortly after I arrived."

"Good-by, Miss Arthur," said Lavender. "I hope you will not be too greatly distressed. I'll be obliged, Jerry, if you'll look in on us, after you've taken Miss Arthur to your mother. At my rooms, I mean."

"Sure," said Carter. "In half an hour?"

"That will do, very well."

LAVENDER turned and confronted the others.

"Now, Captain," he said, "I suppose this is the working staff of the building?"

"Part of it," grunted Harper. "The night staff, anyway."

"Bill, here is a friend of mine," said Lavender, smiling at the colored boy.

"This is John Hepperle, the janitor, and the woman is Mrs. Olson, who scrubs the halls." Harper's introduction was curt.

"I see. Both of them, I take it, were hereabouts at about the time of the murder."

"I don't know anything about any murder," said the man in overalls. "I came here at half-past seven, and I went away at eight, after fixing the fires. I didn't hear any noises, or anything."

Mrs. Olson merely fumbled with her apron.

"What were you doing at the front of the house?" asked Lavender, addressing the janitor.

"I wasn't at the front of the house," was the prompt answer. "I went around the side entrance to the back, at half-past seven, as I told you; and I was in the basement the whole time till I left."

He waved an arm energetically.

"Hullo," said Lavender. "You've lost your thumb!"

The man looked surprised. He turned up his hand and displayed it. The right thumb was missing.

"What about that?" he demanded, suspiciously. "That's been gone for ten years. No murderer bit it off!" he concluded, with savage irony.

"Who did?" challenged Lavender.

"Lost it in a machine," said the janitor. Staccato, he added: "Steel worker."

"I see. So you know nothing about this murder, or any murder, eh? All right, I didn't say you did! How about you, Mrs. Olson? Where were you at eight o'clock, last night, or just before, or just after?"

"I don't come on, sir, until eleven o'clock. I was home at eight o'clock."

"When you did come on, you went about your scrubbing as usual, no doubt. No sounds from Miss Walker's flat, I suppose?"

"No, sir. Very quiet. I thought perhaps she was out."

"You thought she was out, of course. Otherwise, there would have been sounds, eh?"

"Yes, sir. Miss Walker don't usually go to bed as early as some of them."

"Well," said Lavender, "she wasn't out, more's the pity! She was in; and I wish you had been on easy visiting terms with her, so that you might have dropped in, friendly-like, you know. We should have

been on the job some hours earlier, then."

The woman stared. This sort of grim humor was beyond her.

"Thank you," concluded Lavender, with a smile. "Now, Bill, of course you remember taking this gentleman upstairs, eh?"

"What gennelman?" asked Bill. "Mr. Gilruth, sah?"

"No, not Mr. Gilruth," answered Lavender. "The gentleman with whom Miss Walker had the engagement. About eight o'clock, or thereabouts."

"Where do you get that eight o'clock stuff?" demanded Harper, querulously. "You keep talking about eight o'clock."

"Merely assuming that the engagement was about that hour," smiled Lavender. "Most engagements are. I admit that it's possible it may have been ten o'clock."

"No, sah," said the colored boy, seriously. "Ah didn't take anybody up at eight o'clock, or at ten o'clock eithah, sah."

"Well, when did you take a gentleman up?"

"Ah—ah didn't take a gennelman up at all, sah!"

"What! Not all evening?"

"No, sah!"

Lavender turned a severe face on the boy.

"Look here, Bill," he said, solemnly, "I'll see you again tomorrow. Think hard tonight! Thy to remember the time you did take someone up! And now, if the Captain will let you, you can take us down."

"If he took anyone up at any time, I'll get it out of him!" said Harper, ferociously, as we turned to the elevator.

The policeman in the lift yielded the helm to its rightful owner, but remained in the car, apparently to keep an eye on Bill. Lavender said no further word until we had touched the bottom. As he left the elevator he whispered to the colored boy:

"How about *six* o'clock, Bill?"

In louder tones, he added: "Come and see me, Bill, if anything occurs to you that I ought to know. Good night, Bill!"

We left a shaky darky staring after us.

CARTER was lounging on the doorstep as we approached my friend's establishment. He looked keenly at Lavender, in the darkness.

"Anything definite yet, old man?" he asked, anxiously.

"Come up," said Lavender, leading the way.

In the privacy of his own suite, when he had turned on the reading lamp and thrown a log into the small fireplace, my friend did a surprising thing. He pulled a folded table napkin from his pocket, and handed it to Jerry Carter. On one corner, a soft pencil had roughly sketched a woman's head.

"Your infernal habit of fingering a pencil while you talk led me to pocket this," said Lavender. "I found it in Miss Walker's tea-room."

"Yes," groaned Carter, dropping into a chair. "I saw you take it. What do you want to know, Jimmy?"

II

I STARED my astonishment at the tableau: Jerry Carter collapsed in a chair, and my friend standing sorrowfully over him. What did Lavender know? What was Carter going to confess? What did a table napkin prove—a napkin that might have been in the flat for a week—even though it were certain Jerry had been the artist? A dozen questions raced through my mind.

"Great Scott!" I cried. "Do you mean to say Jerry had anything to do with it?"

"I am making no special accusation," responded Lavender, coolly, "but certainly he is guilty of concealing evidence that he feared might operate to harm himself. . . . There was a crumb or two about the napkin, and dishes are not left over night in the Walker apartment. The sketch was made last evening. If the police had found this napkin, Jerry, you would be under arrest at this moment, supposing them to know its significance."

"You are right," said Carter. "I funked, Jimmy. I *did* have tea with Miss Walker —with Sarah—last evening, and I did make that wretched drawing on the napkin. You've seen me do that sort of thing in hotels, I suppose? I didn't dare tell of it, for the time of my leaving was against me; it was not long before her guest of the evening was due to arrive. I should have told you, Jimmy, anyway, but with Harper on hand I couldn't, don't you see? I was probably the last person to see her alive."

"No," said Lavender, with a little smile. "You weren't the last."

"What do you mean?"

"The murderer was the last—if you are innocent!"

Carter suddenly went to pieces.

"My God, Jimmy!" he sobbed. "I've been holding out for hours, but I can't go on forever. I asked her to marry me, last night, and she refused. That broke me up, badly enough, and then on top of it—this! I didn't do it, but I can't prove it. Lavender! You've got to find the murderer!"

Lavender caught him by the shoulder.

"All right, old man!" he said. "I'll do it! Don't worry about that for a moment. There's nothing I can say that will improve the situation and I won't try. But go home, and get to bed. Try to get some sleep, for I may need you in the morning."

Carter shakily rose to his feet.

"Before you go, tell me one thing," continued Lavender. "Who was Miss Walker's visitor of last evening?"

"Before God, Jimmy, I don't know. I'd give an eye to be able to tell you, but I can't. All I can say is this: somehow, from Sarah's manner and her embarrassment when I asked her to marry me, I got the idea that the fellow was someone who admired her, and that perhaps his errand was the same as mine. I was jealous and angry, and perhaps my thought is the result of my disordered condition. I was so suspicious at one time, I remember, that I accused her of hiding someone in the room! I would have searched the place, if she had not stopped me."

"Do you mean you heard somebody, or thought you did?"

"No," admitted Carter, "I can't say that. I was just angry, Jimmy—mad!—and her evasions made me suspicious. I don't know what put the thought into my head."

"Odd," commented Lavender, thoughtfully. "Anything else, Jerry?"

"Yes," said Carter, "although it may not be of any importance. You can imagine, Jimmy, that when I left I was not in an amiable frame of mind, although I was trying to recover my reason. But as I left the flat and entered the elevator to go down, I heard somebody coming up! Somebody coming up the stairs, you understand, and I got the idea that he had already passed Sarah's floor, and was going higher. That's all. It was probably a tenant on the upper floor, but I remember cursing him, on general principles, as I went down."

"No doubt you are right, but I'm glad you mentioned the circumstance. Of course, if you took the elevator up and down, Bill, the colored boy, saw you—both times."

"Yes," said Carter. "Does he deny it?"

"His denial is sweeping and suspicious," answered Lavender. "He took nobody up, and he took nobody down."

"Poor devil! Don't be too hard on him, Jimmy. He likes me, and he probably thinks he's doing me a service."

"Oh, I know all about Bill," smiled my friend. "He thinks you did it, and to the best of his ability he is shielding you. I'll have another talk with him, tomorrow."

Carter groaned. Do *you* think so, Jimmy?" he asked.

WHAT I think hasn't anything to do with the case, just now. You're in a tight position, though, and I'll have to decide what to do about it. I ought to turn over that napkin to the police, but I won't do it tonight—and there's no telling what tomorrow will develop. Good night, Jerry!"

"Of course, Jerry didn't do it," I burst out, indignantly, when Carter had gone.

"Of course," agreed Lavender, "but we've got to find the man that did, to satisfy the police. Otherwise, Carter will be made the victim. I can't suppress the evidence against him, indefinitely. . . . Besides, Carter may know who did it."

"What!"

"It is within the bounds of possibility," nodded Lavender, "and we dare not refuse to consider any possibility. He may even know without knowing that he knows!"

"I don't understand."

"My own idea is vague enough," admitted my friend. "But what do you think, Gilruth, of Jerry's information about the man on the stairs?"

"Little," I confessed. "As Jerry says, he was probably a tenant."

Lavender chuckled.

"He might even be a tenant, and still be a murderer," he said. "But why was he walking upstairs to the fourth floor?—supposing Jerry is right in his belief that the man passed the third floor! Why not wait for the elevator? And again, my shrewd assistant, why should he go upstairs at all to an empty flat?"

"Empty!" I almost shouted my echo of his adjective.

"Just so," observed my friend, easily. "The fourth flat, as I ascertained, is empty."

"That," I observed, sagely, "is really suspicious, now, isn't it?"

"It certainly requires explanation," agreed Lavender.

"What will you do next?"

"Nothing, tonight. Tomorrow you and I will go to the Delmere, and overhaul the premises from basement to roof, if necessary."

"Look here, Lavender!" I cried, thrilled by an inspiration. "Is it possible to make any sort of an intelligent guess based on the marks on the poor woman's throat?"

"Fingerprints?" he mocked.

"No, you idiot! I'm not such a fool as that. But any peculiarities—you know!"

He answered me seriously: "Yes."

"What?"

"Within the indentation made by the right thumb of the strangler, there is a deeper indentation."

I closed my eyes and tried to visualize the picture he had drawn.

"A wart, or some malformation would do it," I submitted, at length.

"Yes," agreed my friend. "And Jerry has neither."

"Who has?"

'I don't know—yet!"

"But isn't that your best clew, Lavender?"

"In a sense, I suppose it is," he agreed; "but before we can use it intelligently, we must ascertain who Miss Walker's visitors of last night were."

"Visitors? Plural?"

"Possibly. As a matter of fact, they are already two in number: Carter and the man of the appointment. He certainly came."

THE telephone rang sharply. Lifting the receiver, which was close to my hand, I recognized Harper's voice, and turned the call over to Lavender.

"Thank you," said my friend, soberly, when he had listened to the message. "And say, Harper, you'll be seeing the entire outfit, tomorrow. Will you get their fingerprints, and let me have copies? All of them—yes! Carter, Miss Arthur, the janitor, the scrubwoman, and the elevator boy. Much obliged. Good-by!"

"Fingerprints!" I jeered. "So my suggestion bore fruit, after all! You think there may be definite traces on the throat!"

He smiled wickedly. The white tuft stood up like a plume in his tangled hair.

"Good night, Gilruth!" he said.

I slept poorly that night, and was in his rooms when the little mantle clock was striking eight. Lavender had been up for hours, it seemed. Inside of a few minutes we were again on our way to the scene of the crime, Lavender carrying a small satchel.

Without interruption from the guarding officers, we climbed the stairs from the first floor to the fourth. Lavender's eyes were busy as we ascended, but he made little comment.

"Keep away from that door, Gilruth," he admonished, when we had reached the top corridor, and stooping quickly, he applied his powerful glass to the doorknob.

Then, with keen eyes, he examined the panels. At no time did he touch any part of the door with his fingers. After a few minutes, he devoted himself to an earnest scrutiny of the hall rug, particularly that part of it at the head of the stairs, and that part of it immediately before the door of the empty flat.

"Someone has stood here," he announced at length, "but not being the equal of the good Holmes, I confess I'm afraid anything like a clear footprint on this rug is out of the question. Nor can I say whether what evidences we have were made last night, the night before last, or the week before last."

He turned again to the door.

"But fingerprints are better than footprints, anyway," he continued, with satisfaction, "and they make a better case in court. Just hand me that satchel, Gilruth, and we'll collect these accidental autographs for our gallery of memorials."

He dusted the doorknob with a fine powder, and similarly covered several spots on the panels. In a remarkably short space of time, he had photographed enough fingerprints to delight any crime expert, and seriously to involve the person who had stood in the upper corridor.

"They may belong to the janitor—what was his name? Hepperle!—or to Mrs. Olson, or to anyone under the sun, for all we really know," he grumbled, as we descended the stairs, "but somebody stood in that corner, by the door, not so long ago, and left fingerprints on the knob and on the panels. If it happened the night before last, we're in luck; if it didn't, we're not. I think it happened night before last, because I want to think so. When the theory doesn't fit the facts, make the facts fit the theory, my dear Gilly. In the long run, one system is as safe as the other."

IN THE LOWER CORRIDOR, an agitated darky clutched at Lavender's sleeve.

"Mistah Lavendah, sah," said Bill, "I has thought over things, like you tol' me to, and you was right, sah! There was a gennelman here, sah, at eight o'clock, that night; and there was another one here, sah, at half-past eight, and they both wanted to see Miss Walkah, sah!"

"The devil!" I said. "Two of them!"

Lavender's eye became steely. He placed it upon Bill, and then forgot to remove it. The darky squirmed beneath the gaze.

"That makes three in all, then, Bill?"

"Three, sah?"

"Yes. Mr. Carter, and the two unknown gentlemen."

Bill clutched again at my friend's sleeve.

"My God, sah!" he whispered. "I thought you was a frien' of Mistah Cahtah!"

"I am, Bill, and so, I notice, are you. But look here, Bill, the only way we can get Mr. Carter out of this scrape is to tell the truth. He didn't do it; but somebody did. I'm going to find the man that did. Now, how about these others?"

The colored boy hung his head and stood on one foot. At length, he lifted his eyes.

"All right, Mistah Lavendah, sah! This is the truth. Mistah Cahtah came about half-past six, and went away about half-past seven; maybe it was a little later. I took him up in the elevatoh, and I brought him down in the elevatoh. He hadn't been gone very long, sah, when along comes another fellow, and I took him up in the elevatoh, and he knocked on the door—an—and there wasn't any answer, sah!"

"He didn't get in?"

"No, sah! He stood around for about ten minues, and then went away. And

when he'd been gone, sah, for maybe twenty minutes, the third fellow came along, and he went up the stairs, sah, while I was at the top, for when I was coming down I saw him knocking at the door—and he didn't get in, neithah!"

"He went down in the elevator?"

"I took him down, sah, and he went away, like the first one. And because neithah of them got in, sah, no matter how hard they knocked, I didn't like to say nothing about Mistah Cahtah being there."

"I see. Particularly, as the first man came right after Mr. Carter went away."

"Yes, sah," said Bill.

"You didn't know either of these men?"

"No, sah, I did not."

"Can you describe them to me?"

"Well, sah, they was gennelmen, all right. The first man was a dark man, sah, but the second man he was darker still. The first man had a little mustache, and the second man had a bigger mustache. They was both well dressed, with them light gray overcoats. That is all I can say, Mistah Lavendah, sah!"

"What did they say to you?"

"The first man said: 'Boy, did you see Miss Walkah go out?' I said I didn't. He said: 'Well, if Miss Walkah asks you if anyone called tonight, tell her yes, a man called at eight o'colck, and waited awhile and then went away.' The second man, sah, asked me if Miss Walkah was out, and I said I didn't know."

"You didn't tell the second man about the first man?"

"I did not, sah."

"The first man came about eight o'clock, and the second man not later than eight-thirty. Is that right?"

"That is right, sah."

"All right, Bill. You seem to have done the best you could, according to your lights. I'm afraid Harper will scare you half to death when he knows how you lied, but I'll try to get him to let you down easy."

There was high satisfaction in Lavender's stride as we returned to his rooms.

"What a mess!" I observed. "It's getting worse every minute."

"No," said Lavender, "it's about over!"

"How so?" I asked, astonished.

"A great deal depends on my fingerprints, here."

THAT was all I could get out of him until he had developed his plates, a task about which he went, with his usual composure, when we had reached his rooms.

While he puttered in the bathroom, which was also his dark room, I admitted a messenger from Harper, who delivered the package of fingerprints asked by my friend, then went away. I called to Lavender, telling him what I had, and received a muffled reply.

In a little while, the door of the bathroom opened slightly, and I was invited to bring in the police prints. We stood close together in the little room, in the light of a red lantern, and made our comparisons.

"You see?" asked Lavender at length.

I saw what I did not want to see. I was horrified.

"I was bound to suspect it," said my friend, "and there is the proof. The prints on the door unquestionably were made by Miss Arthur. It was she who stood in the upper corridor, Gilruth. That is certain."

"She was out of town," I protested.

"She said she was," he corrected. "You remember Harper's call, last night? It was to say that she did not keep her engagement. Harper's men have checked on her statement. She lied. She was not out of town."

"But Lavender! Her thumbs! She couldn't have—!"

His reply was a pitying smile.

III

I EXPECT a caller this morning, Gilruth, said my friend, after a moment of silence.

He stood at the front windows, legs spread and hands in his pockets.

"He is the first of Miss Walker's unknown visitors," he added, "the man who called at eight o'clock, failed to gain entrance, and went away."

"You know who he is?"

"I have an idea. I have not seen him, however; but the newspapers have had the case since last night, and he is sure to read them, and come straight to us. No innocent person dare hide himself now!"

He lighted a cigar.

"There is a train stopping at the station, this minute," he continued. "What will you bet that one or the other of our unknown friends is not upon it?"

"I won't bet!"

"You are sensible," he laughed. "Three men are alighting. . . . Two of them are crossing the street. . . . One is turning this way." He cocked a listening ear. A moment later, there was a ring at the doorbell.

"Mr. Francis Hope," said Lavender, turning to the door.

The gentleman who stood in our presence, a few minutes later, was young—at least, he was not old—and good looking. He wore a light gray overcoat, and gray gloves, and his mustache was small and black and neat.

"My name is Hope," he said, "Francis Hope. You are Mr. Lavender? I have read of this horrible affair, and as it is quite on the cards that I am a suspect of the moment I came to you at once. I called at Miss Walker's flat at eight o'clock, on the evening of the day before yesterday."

"I rather fancied I should hear from you," smiled Lavender, shaking his hand warmly. "Please be seated. You will wish to tell us your story in your own way. Be quite frank. This is Mr. Gilruth, my assistant, to whose energy and ability I owe much of my success."

I glowered privately at Lavender, and nodded my acknowledgement.

Mr. Hope sat down, accepted a cigar, and composed himself for talk.

"I can tell my story in a very few words," said Mr. Hope. "Except for my name the papers have it nearly correct. I called at eight oclock, as no doubt you have been told, and failed to find Miss Walker at home—or so I thought. It is a terrible thing to realize that, even as I knocked, she may have been lying dead in the room beyond. I cannot tell you how shocked I was, for—it cannot be a secret, of course—I had gone to Miss Walker to ask her to be my wife!

"I have been away for some years—abroad—and have just returned. Miss Walker and I have been acquainted for years, and during my absence I treasured her friendship and realized how much she had meant to me. I determined to visit her, upon my return, and ascertain if that friendship might not be strengthened . . . you understand? I wrote her from New York that I would call, that evening, at eight oclock, and I could not imagine why she was not at home. I could only suppose that my letter had gone astray. I am afraid there is nothing I can add."

"You saw no one, while you waited?" asked Lavender.

"No one but the colored boy who runs the elevator. To him I spoke, asking him to tell Miss Walker, when she returned, that I had called."

"So he has told us. I may say, Mr. Hope, that I hardly expected you to tell us much more than you have. But you will understand that it was necessary to find you, none the less. It is much better that you have come forward of your own volition. We are greatly obliged to you. Captain Harper will want your finger-prints, some time today, and you will, of course, be required to give your testimony at the inquest, which is set for two o'clock this afternoon."

"Of course. I shall be there."

"Thank you. You did not know that Miss Walker had a second visitor? That another gentleman called after you had left?"

"I certainly did not. Do you mean *immediately* after, and that he was admitted?"

"No. Like yourself, he failed to gain entrance. He has not been found, and we do not know who he may be."

"Good heavens, Mr. Lavender! That is immensely important! He may be the murderer!"

"It is conceivable," admitted Lavender, "although, if that is so, he returned to the flat after committing the crime, since he failed to receive a reply to his knock on the only visit we know of. That would be a good trick, however, and is probably what happened. The murderer strangled Miss Walker, escaped, and then deliberately came back and knocked, to establish an alibi."

Hope slowly nodded.

"If I can be of service," he said, "please command me. I need not say how deeply I feel what has happened. In view of what I have told you of my intentions, you will understand."

"Yes, indeed," cordially said my friend. "I shall see you at the inquest, then? Good-by, and again thanks."

"A very decent fellow," I said, when he had gone.

"Yes," said Lavender. "He told a perfectly straight story, as I expected he would. I am glad, though, to have seen and talked with him, for it narrows the inquiry. We must have a talk, now, with the second man, eh Gilly?"

"You have no suspicion who he is?"

"Oh yes, a rather good suspicion. But I think Miss Arthur will tell us the story. And I think that we can do no better, just now, than call upon that fibbing young woman."

STEPPING to the telephone, he called a taxicab, and in a short time we were humming toward the home of Jerry Carter, where Miss Arthur had her temporary abode.

"Prepare for revelations, Gilly," said Lavender, as we sped along the boulevard. "Miss Arthur holds the key to this mystery. It is my duty to acquire it."

"You think she will object?"

"Not seriously, now. We know too much. The fact that she stood in the upper corridor, while her friend was being murdered, is damning. She dare not conceal what she knows."

"You think she is an accessory, then?"

"No, I don't think that. It is always possible, however. While I am reasonably sure of my ground, it is conceivable that she holds cards that will quite upset my reckoning. I hope not, for I prefer the theory I have myself formed."

Miss Arthur was lying down, but Jerry Carter, who was at home, took our message to her, and shortly she joined us in the library.

"Now, Miss Arthur," began Lavender, without delay, "this case is approaching a climax. The whole story will come out at the inquest at two o'clock, and arrests will be made. It is now eleven o'clock. Our time, you see, is short. Please conceal nothing. Tell us exactly everything you know."

Miss Arthur gazed at him in horror, and Carter stared, open-mouthed. Lavender continued:

"Let me tell you the story, then, if it will be easier, and you can correct me, if I am wrong.

"In the first place, you did not go out of town on the night of the murder. You went to the station, then returned, and, unseen by anyone, crept up the stairs to the fourth or top floor. There you stood in the darkness, leaning against the door of the empty flat, and, incidentally, leaving your fingerprints in a number of places. It was Miss Arthur, Jerry, whom you heard ascending the steps, as you left the flat.

"Shortly after Mr. Carter left, Miss Arthur, another man left Miss Walker's flat —a man who had concealed himself in that flat before Mr. Carter's arrival. You had not heard Mr. Carter leave, and so you supposed it was he who was then leaving. Still later, you saw the arrival of the eight o'clock visitor—a Mr. Francis Hope, I have ascertained, an old suitor of Miss Walker—and you saw his departure. You wondered that he was not

admitted. Later still, you witnessed the arrival and departure of another man. He did not gain admittance. You were very much surprised, and when the coast was clear you came down stairs, entered the flat, and made the terrible discovery of Miss Walker's body.

"Naturally, I admit, your thoughts leaped to Mr. Carter. Since his departure, as you thought, no one had been able to enter.

"The conclusion you reached seemed obvious. Mr. Carter was the murderer! For a reason of your own, which I suspect, you determined to shield him. For a somewhat similar reason, Bill, too, shielded him. The actual murderer, who came out after Mr. Carter left, stole down stairs unseen, and made his escape. He may have come back, later, and knocked on the door of the woman he had murdered, to establish an alibi. This, of course, he would do openly.

"Now, Miss Arthur, who was the man who came after Mr. Hope went away?"

"During this rapid recital, part of which had taken my own breath, Miss Arthur had suffered many emotions. From red to white she had turned, and now she was slipped down in her chair in a pitiful state.

"Jimmy!" protested Carter, almost timidly. "Can this be true? And this man—the murderer—was in the apartment while I was there?"

"Unquestionably. Come, Miss Arthur, I am sorry to have to be so firm; but we must know the name of the third man."

"He was—a Mr. Martin," she whispered.

"Martin!" shrieked Carter. "Good God! Sarah's former husband!"

"Ah!" said Lavender, with satisfaction. "Now we are getting on."

"I may as well tell you all about it," said Miss Arthur, making a brave attempt to control herself. "Since you have cleared Jerry, I have nothing to conceal. You are right, Mr. Lavender; I thought Jerry had done it, and I shielded him. Anyone would have thought so. The story is true, just as you have told it."

"There is one point unexplained," persisted Lavender, "a delicate one, I admit. Why did you take up your station in the upper corridor? What did you suspect, Miss Arthur?"

"I knew Sarah had this engagement with Jerry," she whispered, "and I thought I knew the object of his visit. I knew she did not care for him, and—I—I did! That is why! I knew, too, of this later engagement with Mr. Hope, and that he, too, hoped to marry her. She showed me his letter. And when he had gone, I waited, thinking he would come back. Instead, Mr. Martin came. I could see him in the little light above the door. I recognized him at once. When they had both gone, I was worried, as I have told you.

"That is all. It was—jealousy, if you like—but I prefer another word!"

"Yes," said Lavender, gently. "Thank you very much, Miss Arthur. Everything now is clear. I only hope Jerry will think as well of you, for what you tried to do, as I do."

Carter started to his feet, impulsively.

"My dear May—Miss Arthur!" he cried. "I had no idea—pardon me! I don't know what I am saying. I do appreciate it very much. I didn't understand!"

"What are the relations between Miss Walker and her former husband?" asked Lavender. "I should say, what *were* they?"

"Not very friendly, I am afraid," murmured Miss Arthur. "But he, too, wanted her, wanted to come back. I have no doubt that was the object of his visit, too —to ask Sarah to remarry him!"

"The third suitor!" Carter laughed wildly. "All in a night! My God!"

"This is all very distressing," said Lavender, "but it could not be helped. I thank you, and now I shall go. Gilruth and I have much to do before two o'clock."

"You'll catch this scoundrel Martin, Jimmy!" cried Carter.

"I'll catch him," promised Lavender.

"Find him," Miss Arthur implored. "Find him! Oh, the wretch!"

WITH a meaning glance at Carter, and a nod toward the distracted girl, Lavender took his departure; I, his faithful poodle, at his heels. Of course, I admired him immensely, but I was still desperately in the dark. And where was he to find Martin? That sinister person had vanished completely. I mentioned my doubts to Lavender.

"Oh," he remarked, easily, "don't fret about Martin. He's just fool enough to come to the inquest, quite unsuspecting our interest in him. Meanwhile, there is one more link in the chain. It has been a busy morning; but we're about through. Come on, Gilruth!"

Leaving the doorway of the Delmere, he turned briskly to the right, away from our rooms, and proceeded westward. A cigar now adorned a corner of his mouth, and he seemed very much at ease with himself.

As Lavender walked, he looked at the houses on either side of the street with keen eyes.

When we had walked two blocks, I protested.

"What are you looking for now, Lavender?" I demanded. "Can't you let me help?"

"I am looking for a brass door plate," he said.

At the end of the fourth block, he turned at right angles and walked two blocks, turned again after some moments, and then again; when to my intense amazement I found that we were back at the Delmere, from which corner we had started.

Undaunted, he turned this time to the left of the doorway, and proceeded eastward along the avenue, still closely scrutinizing the houses on either side. In time we approached a small thoroughfare, in the nature of a cul de sac. It was obstructed at the northern end of the block by the Northwestern Railway embankment. Along this street we proceeded for perhaps half a block; then with a grunt of satisfaction, Lavender came to a halt.

He had found a brass door plate. On it was a name:

JOHN BROWN PHYSICIAN and SURGEON

"Not a word out of you, now, Gilruth!" he warned. "And don't be surprised at anything I say or do!"

He led the way to the front door, and rang the bell sharply. A spotless maid responded, and in a moment we were in the sitting room of Dr. John Brown, awaiting the advent of that specialist in medicine and surgery.

The doctor, a small man, with a conventional medical beard, came into the room a moment later. Lavender rose.

"Good morning, Doctor," he said, and extended his hand. "I want you to cut off my right thumb, please, at the first joint."

Dr. John Brown literally jumped. Lavender's unsmiling face looked into the doctor's.

"Good Lord!" exploded the physician. "What is this, anyway? A secret society, sworn to have its thumbs removed? Only the night before last, I took off a man's thumb, and as good a thumb as yours, too, except for a wart on its end. And now you come, and—what's the game, anyway?"

Lavender smilingly withdrew his hand.

"No game, Doctor," he said, "and you needn't mind about the thumb. I'll keep it, on second thought. The fact is, I was a bit afraid of that mysterious thing known as medical ethics, and I didn't like to ask you outright about that other fellow, for fear your conscience wouldn't let you answer. As it is, you have told me all I really need to know. But in the interest of justice, I'd like to have you at an inquest at two o'clock to identify the man whose thumb you removed."

"Is he dead?"

"Not exactly; but he is likely to die before long. He is a criminal and is charged with a particularly revolting mur-

der, in which his thumb would have betrayed him. So he had it removed, and very sensibly, too. You will come?"

"I suppose I'll have to, now," grunted the physician, with something between a growl and a laugh.

"Great Jupiter, Lavender!" I cried, when we were outside. "That's the most brilliant thing I ever knew you to do! So it was that German janitor, after all! But how did you know where to find the doctor?"

"I didn't," said my friend, with a laugh. "I was prepared for a much longer hunt. It was pure luck blundering onto the right doctor, so soon. Sooner or later, of course, we should have found him, but this was Providence. I was bound to examine the immediate neighborhood first, however, for it stands to reason that the murderer would be in haste to rid himself of that tell-tale thumb. This fellow Brown is a man of small practice, and lives obscurely in a small street. He was quite the ideal man. Our friend may even have known where to come before he committed the crime, although the point is open to argument."

"Of course he would," said I. "He lives in the neighborhood."

Lavender laughed again.

"Poor janitor!" he said. "Just because he's German, and has a missing thumb, you abuse him this way!"

I stopped short in the street.

"Look here, Lavender," I said. "This has gone far enough. I've fetched and carried, and played dead, and jumped through, and made amusement for you, for two days now. I insist on being treated as part of the company. I've suspected everybody in turn, beginning with Carter, and a few minutes ago I thought the handcuffs were as good as on Martin. Then—this! Who is the murderer? Martin, of course; but you haven't seen his confounded thumbs!"

"The murderer," said my friend, "is a former partner of Miss Walker's father, who, having successfully ruined the father, would have liked to ruin the daughter. He did murder her, probably in a bad temper at her refusal to go with him. Martin has been under arrest, at the station, for some hours now. I saw him before you were up, this morning. He was taken on a newspaper man's tip, and Harper is holding him for the crime.

"Martin has been alternately holding his tongue and lying. When he found himself in a hole, he yelled for me. I had a talk with him. It seems that Martin did hang around, and he saw the murderer on the night of the murder, although he did not know—and isn't sure now—that the fellow was the murderer. But he gave me information that clinched it. From him I learned of the early relationship of Hope with Miss Walker's father. But it was the thumb that clinched it."

"Hope!" I echoed.

"The murderer is Mr. Francis Hope," said Lavender. "He conceals a missing thumb, so to speak, beneath a neat gray glove. You did not shake hands with him, I believe, but I did! Mr. Hope will be arrested at the inquest, at which he will undoubtedly be present, for he has been shadowed ever since he left my rooms."

IV

I NEVER would have believed it, really, Lavender," I said, that evening, as we foregathered for our inevitable post mortem talk.

"It was simple beyond words," said Lavender. "Even the police would have solved it in another day or two; but there would have been embarrassment for Jerry and Martin and Miss Arthur, so it's as well that it was my case. Have you seen me perform one single brilliant deed? Have you heard me vouchsafe a single ingenious deduction? You have not. I have never had a case in which ordinary common sense cut a larger figure in the solution. The key word is 'thumbs.'

"When a man has a connection, even a remote connection, with a murder in which thumbs have played an important part, and I find that man with a thumb short, I begin to wonder—just to wonder.

you know! Now the janitor had a thumb short, but I saw it plainly, and there was no doubt that he was telling the truth when he said it had been missing for ten years. Hope, too, had a thumb short, and was concealing the fact; not by a huge bandage, of course, but by a glove. He did a very sensible thing in having it removed; otherwise we should have discovered the wart. He did a sensible thing, too, in concealing the removal.

"The obvious deduction, when two thumbs have been used in a murder, is that one thumb is proof of innocence. That was what Hope first had in mind. But any fool of a detective knows enough to go behind prima facie evidence; and Hope, not altogether a fool, knew that although he was safer with one thumb than with two, he was not entirely safe. His big mistake was in coming to see me; in voluntarily courting exposure. It was a fine bold play, but he overplayed his hand. I forced him to shake hands; he didn't want to. And if I had not made arrangements to have him trailed after he left my rooms, I fancy he would have fled. He was beginning to realize his mistake.

"You know what happened; I told Miss Arthur. He got into the room burglariously, before Carter arrived, and left after Carter had left. Then he came back and knocked, to let Bill see him, and thereby establish his alibi. It was all very cute, until he went too far, and overestimated his cleverness."

ALL the same, I'm sorry for Jerry Carter," I said.

"I'm not," said Lavender, "that is, not because he lost the woman he wanted to marry.

"For it was a rather hopeless passion, and only a passion; and, as you know, he was refused. Miss Arthur will make him a better wife."

□ □ □

From Kasper, Stockholm

"See that man? He has made a name for himself in America!"
"Indeed!"
"Yes, he was named Peterson when he left here and now he is named Smith."

Bradshaw in Montgomery Advertiser

THAT EXTRAVAGANT DREAM OF AN ECONOMY DRESS

Miss Experienced: No, dear, just because you dreamed he raved over the way you made that pretty dress and asked you to marry him, I wouldn't take it as an omen. I'd consider it a warning.

Fiddler's Hatch

By F. C. Robertson

A bully story about a bear, a horse with a wicked disposition, and buried gold. Oh yes, there are some incidental characters, too, including Alpha and old Doc Emmet—but it's the grizzly who is the hero or something. And such a bear!

"Fiddlers," remarked old man Bates bitterly, the time Fiddlin' Charley wanted to marry his daughter, "are merely critters of luck an' instinc'. They know how to fiddle, but otherwise they don't know enough to pour sand out of a boot if they had the directions printed on the heel."

Said remark ain't exactly relevant to the story, as the lawyers say, except to furnish the title, and because that description of a fiddler fits our hero so admirable, exceptin' that he never learned to fiddle.

Me an' "Doc" Emmet, who has been ridin' bronks so long that his feet only need to be glued together to make a perfect barrel hoop, are just preparin' to leave the Last Chance saloon in Blackfoot when our hero breezes up. His name is Alfred Austin, an' he's called Alfie by his mother, an' Alpha an' Omega, meanin' the beginnin' an' the end, by other folks.

But after he's been out to camp a while we changes it to "The Few Clothes Kid." But that was after General Custer, the champion fool killer of the "O X" outfit had contrived to leave the major portion of Alpha's raiment on sundry roots an' branches.

Alpha is a long, lean feller, about eighteen years old, an' remarkably young for his age. His nose has a curve in it that gives his whole map the resemblance of a question mark. We learns later that he's a devoted reader an' student of thrillin' fiction about buried treasure an' the like.

In fact it was this buried treasure bug that caused him to address us.

"You punchers from the Grave Creek country?" is his openin' gun.

"That's our reservation, an' we ain't needin' no riders," Doc hastens to explain, aimin' to thwart at the start any ideals of the kid to become a twister. The fact is we never go to town but what some town kid that can't tell a hackamore from a halter wants us to learn him how to become a cowboy.

"Do you know anything about the buried treasure up there?" Alpha persists.

"Well, yes," allows Doc. "There is so much of that stuff up there that we never bother to ask for wages. When we need money we just go out an' dig up a few of them buried treasures. We only work for pastime."

"You can't kid me," says Alpha rebukingly. "I happen to know that Grave Creek is on the old Overland Trail to Oregon, an' that in the early days there was lots of money buried all along the trail, 'specially in a rough country like Grave Creek."

"Yeah?" inquires Doc, interested.

"Certainly. There was hardly an out-

fit went by that wasn't robbed at least once by road agents, or chased by Injuns. In the first case the road agents would hide the money so that they could come back an' git it some day if they happened to live, an' in the second case the people buried the money to keep the Injuns from gittin' it," Alpha points out at some length.

Doc seemed to be impressed. "Why, you seem to have made a regular study of it," he says. "Now I've heard," he goes on, "that a certain freight outfit buried a whole wagonload of whisky up there to avoid trouble because the smell of it was drawin' hundreds of outlaws an' Injuns around 'em. D'ye reckon that could be found?"

"I could locate that easy," opines Alpha.

DOC opens his eyes purty wide at that, for it is a tradition that a party of freighters with a wagonload of whiskey was chased by Injuns up there years ago, an' that they buried the whiskey, wagon box an' all in the night an' tried to git away on their horses after draggin' the runnin' gears of the wagon far enough away to make the Injuns look in the wrong place. But the Injuns killed 'em, an' nobody ever found the booze.

"What's all this leadin' up to?" Doc wants to know.

"I got a system," Alpha assures us, "an' if I just had a place to stay out there, an' a horse to ride I could locate unlimited treasure. All you have to do is use the old bean."

"Yeah?" again questions Doc.

"Sure. Now them road agents an' people didn't leave their money buried around promiscus."

"Come again," invites Doc, whose readin' has been confined to "A Slow Train Through Arkansas," an' whose vocabulary is correspondin'ly limited.

"I mean," Alpha explains carefully, "that they was careful to bury it where they could find it years later, notwithstandin' the natural wear an' tear on the scenery. Naturally, they would bury it accordin' to permanent landmarks. An' if the landmarks was permanent then they're there yet, ain't they?"

"I got to admit it," Doc concedes.

"Then if I can find them permanent landmarks, I'll find the treasure, won't I?" Alpha demands.

"Sounds like it," Doc agrees.

"I can't help it," Alpha affirms, "'cause I've made a study of the right methods to use. To 'lustrate: they might draw an imaginary line between four mountains, an' bury the treasure where the lines cross. All I'd have to do would be to sight through each way an' dig where the lines come together. That's only one of the things I've got up my sleeve."

"You might find something," Doc has to chime in. Alpha's logic is plumb relentless.

"If I could just git out there there's no tellin' how many buried treasures I might find," Alpha says wistfully.

"If there was any money hid out there the people that hid it would have been after it before this, wouldn't they, Bilious?" Doc says, appealin' to me.

But Alpha shows a flash of genius.

"If that whiskey had been found somebody would have heard of it, wouldn't they?" he asks.

"The man that found that much liquor could have been heard all over the county," Doc has to admit.

"If you'll board me an' furnish me a horse I'll find it," Alpha promises, with never a shadow of a doubt.

"What terms?" Doc asks.

"Fifty-fifty," Alpha says right off the bat, the same clippy way he's heard business men talk.

"No, I'll tell you what we'll do," Doc says, with a wink at me. "If you find any money you take it all, an' if you find any booze we take it all."

"That's agreeable to me," announces Alpha. "I ain't got no use for whiskey nohow." An' that was how our contrac' with Alpha came about.

As it was purty certain that the booze

was buried out there somewhere, Doc really begun to think that maybe Alpha might be able to liquidate his debt, so to speak. Grave Creek got its name, in fact, because them freighters that the Injuns killed were buried where the road crossed the stream, about five miles from our camp.

WE INTRODUCES ALPHA to the boys, an' they're all properly interested over the chance of findin' that booze; though Doc is at some pains to make 'em understand that they are not parties of the second part to the contrac', the same bein' limited to him an' me by virtue of our discovery of Alpha.

Alpha, on his part, now that he has achieved his first objec', is plumb scornful of us, an' rides us hard an' continual for not havin' found a few bushels of buried treasure—us ridin' over the top of it every day, as he remarks. Before he'd been among us an hour the boys were gittin' peeved, an' wonderin' what to do with him.

Some wants to give him a ghost ride after he's gone to sleep, which consists of slippin' a rope around the foot of his bed, an' lettin' some cowpuncher take a few dallies around the saddle horn an' draggin' him through an adjoinin' creek as fast as a horse can run. Others wanted to tie him up in an old cave that's just behind the cook tent, an' leave him there all night without any blankets. But Doc vetoes all those suggestions because he says Alpha is so young. The real reason, though, is that Doc is afraid Alpha will pull out for home without tryin' to find that booze. You know how hope grows with just a little feedin', an' Doc was already beginnin' to smack his lips. He had faith in Alpha.

In the end we compromised by agreein' to give him a regulation cow-camp initiation; namely, havin' him ride a horse that has been untrained especial for personna non gratases, as the bookworms say.

In the mornin' Doc digs up an old shell of a saddle that he'd taken away from a sheepherder in a poker game, an' stacks it on old General Custer, aforesaid.

THE GENERAL, or old Cus, as he's generally nom de plumed, is a hog-backed, cream-colored old reptile with a mania for stampedin', but gifted with occasional lofty thoughts which he goes aloft after to the embarrassment of whoever happens to be tryin' to fork his carcass.

This mornin', though, his thoughts are far away. He is no more conscious of Alpha when he clambers aboard him than if he didn't exist. Likewise Alpha's mind is separated from horseflesh. He's dreamin' about buried treasure when he climbs aboard the hurricane deck of General Custer.

"You see that sharp, peaked hill over there?" he inquires, pointin' at a pinnacle a couple of miles away.

Not bein' cursed with blindness we all admits it.

"An' you see that big mountain over yonder?" he continues, painstakin'ly pointin' out the white head of Teton Peak, a couple of hundred miles away.

"Proceed," says Doc, with all eyes hung on General Custer.

Alpha reached around an' put his left hand behind the saddle to support himself while he pointed out the connection with the other hand. Just then the General has one of them lofty thoughts an' he says, "Waugh! Want ye!" An' he hists Alpha skyward, an' over the fence.

"Durned if he ain't gone to diggin' fer buried treasure right under our noses," says Bluebell Scott. But Alpha is only tryin' to dig his face out of the sand.

Alpha gives the General a cold look of disfavor an' climbs back on. "I'm a goin' at the top of this closest peak," he continues his discourse, "an' sight a line through to that other one. Then I'm goin' to follow that line till I come to the intersection of a line between two other landmarks, an I shall no doubt turn up sunthin'."

With that he points out to the pinnacle, the General seemin'ly reconciled to treasure huntin', an' the rest of us sojourns about our daily duties.

ME AN' DOC are driftin' through the timber scarin' doggies out of the brush, when we comes to an open place where Doc gits off to recinch his saddle. He's fussin' with his horse, which is somethin' of a colt, when we hear brush a poppin' an' limbs a crackin'—tree limbs I mean—like a herd of cattle was stampedin'.

Doc takes a couple of dallies around a jack-pine with his McCarty rope to snub his bronk, it bein' plumb hopeless for him to try to git on with all that commotion, an' all at once old General Custer busts out of the timber like a whale comin' up to breathe. He's got his eyes shut tight, an' his ears pinned back to his neck, an' he is surely fannin' the breezee. He ain't seein' nothin' nor nobody. One thing about that old fantail—when he pulls a stampede he sure does a workmanlike job.

But Alpha, in spite of all the brush he's been contaminatin', is still somewhere amidships. He's lost both stirrups, an' is hangin' on by faith an' a death grip to the horn with both hands. His pants, or the remains of 'em, are up above his knees, an' the remainder of his vestments are chiefly a memory, as every brush he hits collects a souvenir of his passing, an' then some.

When it comes to leavin' a readable trail by tearin' pieces off their clothes to scatter along the way, Alpha could make the most intrepid of James Fennimore Cooper's abducted heroines look like simps.

"He's found it!" yelps Doc, as the General lumbers by. "He's found buried treasure!"

I heaves a rope over General Custer's head just before he hits the timber again, an' takes my dallies. The General does an Annette Kellerman, an' Alpha continues his journey for a space an' eventually comes to rest in the top of a hawthorne bush.

"You needn't be in such a hurry," Doc grins. "That buried treasure won't run away."

Alpha don't hear him. He's lookin' at General Custer kind of wonderin'ly, an' finally he says, "Now, how the hell do you think you'll git up here?"

I realize that his mind ain't very clear, so I reminds him: "You was huntin' for buried treasure."

"Buried treasure? Buried treasure?" he questions, when he finally severs diplomatic relations with the haw bush, an' the remainder of his clothes. "Buried treasures," he observes again. "Oh yes; buried treasure—that's my meat!"

We conducts Alpha back to camp an' anoints him liberal with turpentine, an' rustles all the spare clothes we can find. However, Bluebell Scott is there when we come in an' he christens Alpha "The Few Clothes Kid."

NEXT mornin' Alpha, reassembled, is ready to set out on the trail of buried treasure with renewed vigor. An' about noon General Custer comes a stampedin' into camp with Alpha clingin' to the horn, an' wearin' nothin' much but the hem of Doc's one pair of extra drawers an' a pair of socks.

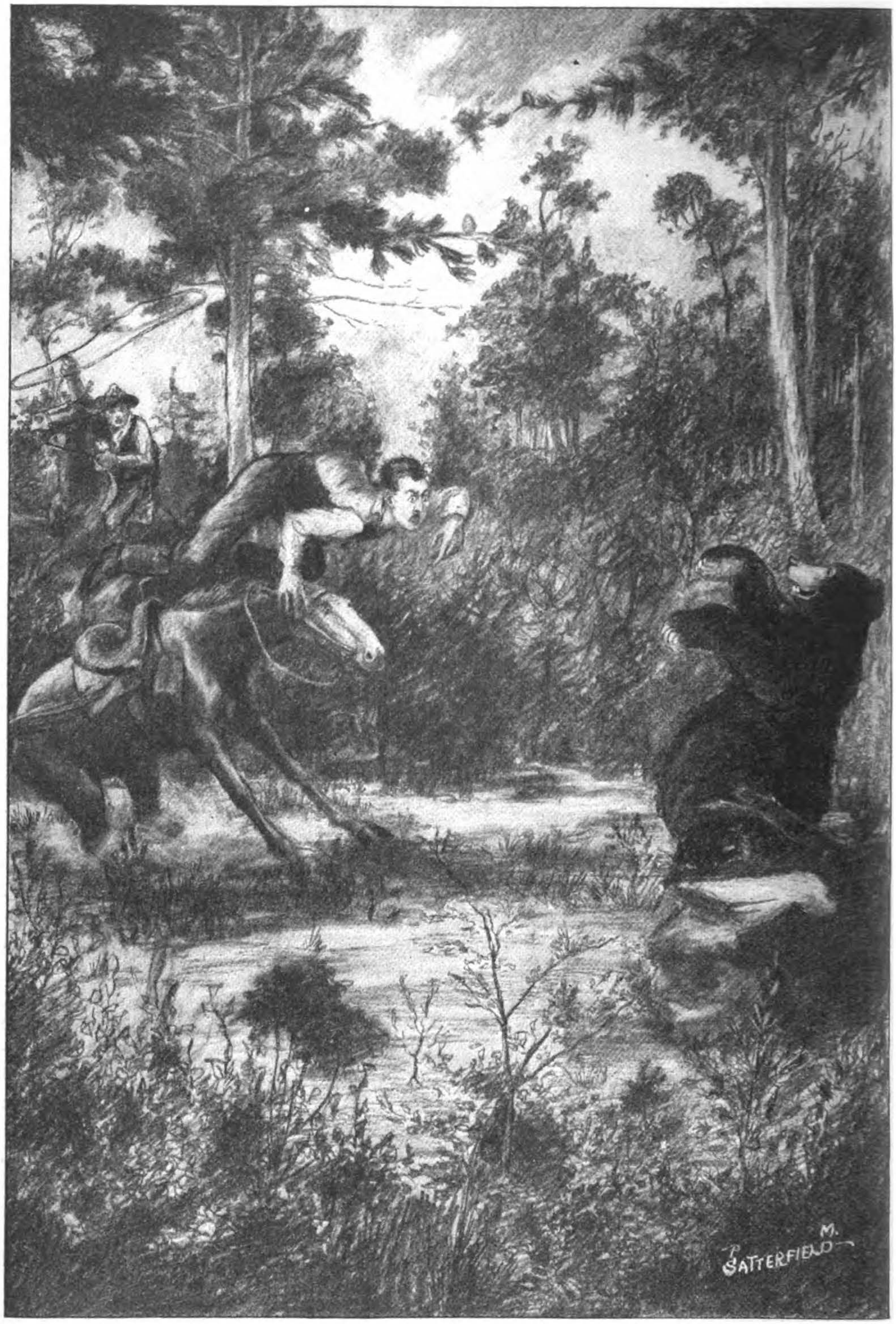
"Gold or whiskey?" Doc demands when the General has been roped.

The Kid looks at us scornful as ever.

"I've figgered out no less than nine landmarks," he brags. "If this old imitation piece of horseflesh hadn't got in a hurry I'd a had sunthin' to surprise you fellers with before night."

An' so it continues from day to day, Alpha on the lookout for buried treasure, an' General Custer on the lookout for patches of timber to run away through.

From the General's viewpoint the result is gratifyin'. Every day, 'most, he gits his chance, cause Alpha when he gits to follerin' them imaginary lines don't deviate from 'em a hair-breadth. Whenever they comes to a bunch of timber the Gen-



"An' I see that bear grinnin' from ear to ear as Alpha soars into the air straight towards the grizzly's arms."

eral just shuts his eyes, pins back his ears an' drifts.

It soon gets so we can't rustle enough clothes for Alpha, an' he is fairly entitled to the monicker of the Few Clothes Kid. But he is hard to discourage. We have buried treasure for breakfast, dinner, an' supper, an' any other time that Alpha ain't lookin' for landmarks or diggin' holes in the ground, or tearin' the limbs off the trees, an' the clothes off himself whenever old Cus takes a notion to run.

In the end the Kid gets so toughened to the lack of clothes that even when the mosquitoes flies off the icy water of the Blackfoot River an' lands in the middle of his naked back with their cold, wet feet he won't even holler.

But after all he'd be more than human if he could have went on an' on like Columbus an' never got discouraged. At that he never loses faith, but new interests begin to attract him. He decides to devote part of his attention to capturin' wild animals an' trainin' 'em, so's he could put on an original animal act in a circus.

BILIOUS," says Doc to me one day, "if Few Clothes is goin' to give up huntin' for buried treasure all the time we might as well can him. The minute he ceases to hunt for that booze he becomes nothin' but an obnoxion."

"Forgivin' you for usin' a word that ain't," I says, "Alpha sticks. We made a contrac' fair an' square with him to board him, an' furnish him a horse until fall round-up, or as long as he wants to stay, so we got to abide with it."

I'm really growin' fond of the jigger, or at least to respect him for the way he sticks to General Custer, an' the hopeless task of findin' buried money. But I notices that Doc begins to show signs of peevishness, an' when he does it's time for somebody to hunt a shell hole. I see other heads gittin' together with his, an' this communion, I take it, means that plans are afoot to make a Roman holiday out of the Few Clothes Kid. So I takes him under my wing to ride the outside circle, figurin' that maybe I'd git a chance to persuade him to shorten his visit among us for his own welfare.

It is a longer route than Alpha'd took before, an' he's so fussed up lookin' for wild animals an' landmarks that I don't git a chance to do nothin' but watch for storm signals in old General Custer's eye. I know that he is only lookin' for the right kind of brush to make his daily attempt to scrub Alpha off.

WE'VE just topped a high, hog-back ridge when I see the stuff is off. That ridge just dropped off first cousin to perpendicular on the other side, an' at the foot of it is the darndest thicket you ever see, with every kind of brush represented, from hawthornes to rose bushes, an' all supplied with briars.

Old Custer snorts with joy, shuts his eyes, lays back his ears, an' falls off that ridge in about three jumps.

There was nothin' for me to do but foller an' try to rope him before he reaches them brambles with Alpha.

As usual Alpha lost both stirrups, an' is hangin' on solely by grippin' the saddle horn with both hands, his feet stickin' straight back along the General's flanks, an' his long yaller hair standin' up like the quills on a mad porcupine.

I was just about to make one desperate throw with my rope when I see a big old, dead pine tree that's been layin' there so long that the brush has almost covered it, an' it's right square in the General's path of destruction. I breathes a silent prayer for Alpha if the General hits that tree; but just then the General must have opened an eye to contemplate the misery he was bringin' Alpha to, for he sees the unexpected turn of events the same as I did.

For right in front of that log is the biggest grizzly bear I ever hope to see—an' he rares up on his hind legs with his arms outstretched as though to say, "Come to papa."

I see old Custer dig in his toes till his feet go into the dirt clean up to his fet-

locks in a frantic effort to stop, an' then I see that bear grinnin' from ear to ear as Alpha soars into the air straight toward the grizzly's arms.

"That's Omega for Alpha," I thinks, but I makes a wild throw with my rope at the bear, an' then my attention is called elsewhere. My own bronk is performin' a few fancy gyrations of his own, an' I loses the rope, an' the next I know my bronk has disappeared an' I'm reposin' with the expanse of my overalls, the part that the chaps don't cover, in a bed of prickly pears.

I HOISTS myself off them spikes as gently as I could compatible with speed an' looks around for two things—a convenient tree an' the bear.

An' I'm a liar if that bear ain't givin' a correct imitation of one of Jack Dempsey's opponents, an' Alpha busy hog-tyin' him with my lasso rope!

It's simple enough when you understand it. Alpha, when he abandons the General that way is goin' with such speed an' gits such added momentum from the sudden stop that he hits the bear right in the solar plexus with both feet. Naturally the bear takes the count.

General Custer is sort of bewildered at this unexpected end to his little frolic, an' is still gallopin' around in a circle, so we manages to catch him.

A couple of hours later, when I comes toilin' into camp afoot, the excitement has subsided somewhat. Alpha has already set a post in the mouth of the cave back of the cook tent, an' has the bear, who has revived by this time, an' is fightin' mad, anchored to it by a log chain.

Alpha is tellin' the boys what he is goin' to do with his bear. He's sure goin' to train him for the circus, all disregardful of the fact that said bear is well into the sear an' yaller leaf, an' that General Custer has drug so much hair off'n him that he'll die from exposure in the first storm.

The bear, bein' bruised both in body an' in spirit, don't approve of so much publicity, an' he begins to dig a hole in the bottom of the cave to crawl out of sight in. He's makin' the dirt fly an' we're watchin' him, casual like, when we hears sunthin' crack. A minute later the bear spits out a piece of rotten board a couple of feet long. Everybody leaps to their feet.

"Buried booze!" roars Doc.

A dozen guns speak as one, an' we drag that unfortunate bear outside before he'd quit kickin'. Alpha an' Doc dig while the rest of us offer willin'ly but vainly to relieve 'em. Finally Doc gets a crowbar under the thing an' gives a heave an' a grunt, an' up comes an old wooden box. Alpha gives a whoop an' sprawls onto it, while we groans our disappointment.

IT CONTAINS gold all right; an' it must have been an outlaw cache, for there was nothin' t' identify the owners.

Alpha counts—sixty thousand dollars.

"It's too bad you fellers didn't accept my offer of fifty per cent," says Alpha. "You'd have had fifteen thousand dollars apiece, enough to have bought a whole barrel of whiskey," he goes on like he was tryin' to rub it in.

Doc undertakes to speak, but he can only gasp an' gurgle.

"Anyway, I'm much obliged for the clothes an' things," Alpha continues.

"But looky," gasps Doc at last, "you didn't have no more to do with findin' this than the rest of us."

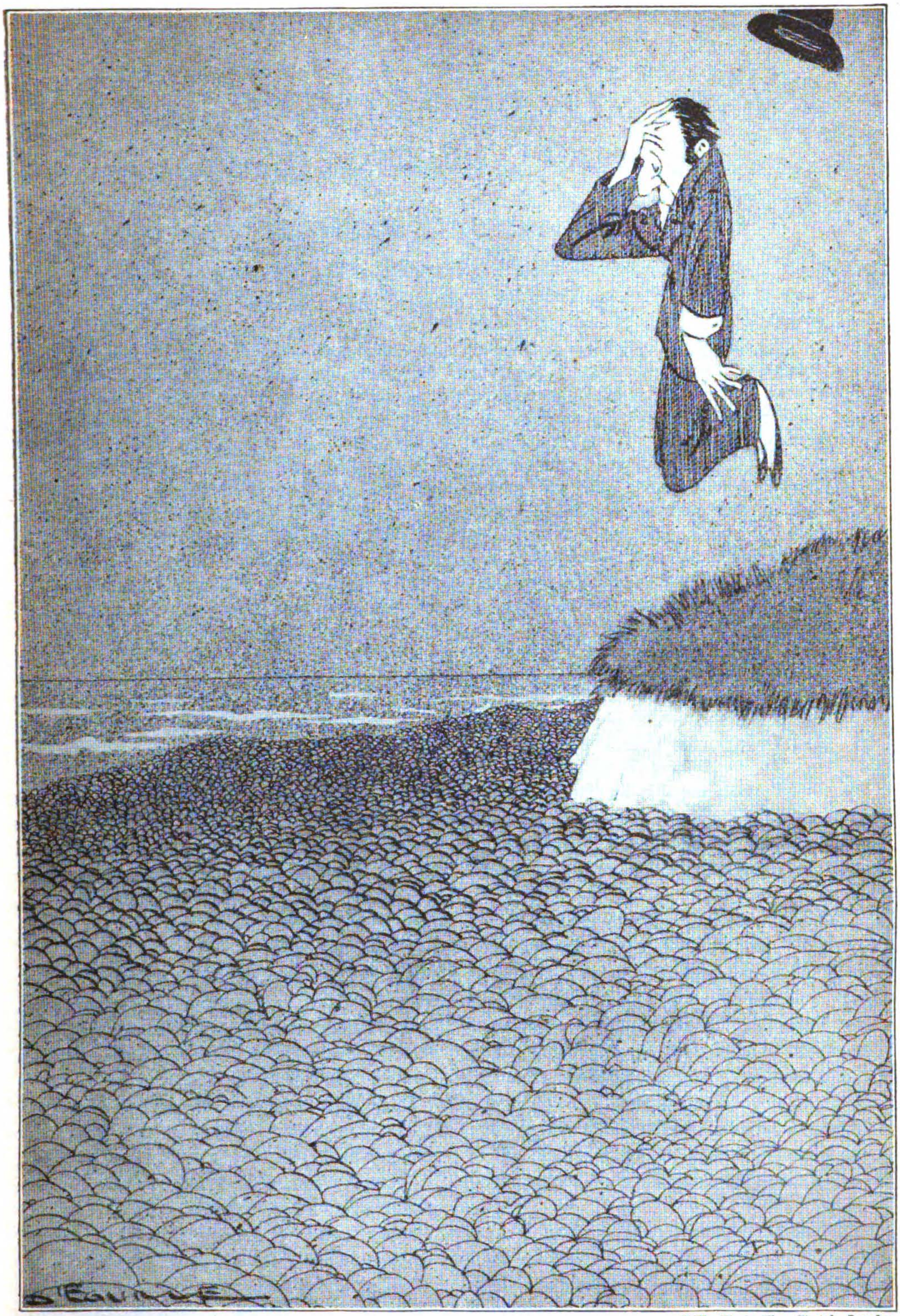
"It was my bear," says Alpha coldly. "An' besides, you've plumb ruined him for a circus animal. I ought to have damages, but I won't insist on it."

Accordin' to the contrac' Alpha was right, an' we had to swaller our wrath.

"There's one more favor I'd like to ask," says Alpha, unheedful of the fact that the time was not propitious for him to be askin' favors.

"I'd like to buy General Custer."

Which reminds me of what old man Bates said about fiddlers.



D'Egville in The Sketch, London

BEACHED!

Study of a famous detective repenting his rash promise to leave no stone unturned!

The Fifth Guardian

Part Two of a Three-Part Romance

By Victor Rousseau

Author of "The Big Muskeg," "The Messiah of the Cylinder," and "Wooden Spoil"

[TOLD IN PART ONE: When Colonel Sanford passed away he left his fortune to his stepdaughter, Miss Polly Seaton, a prim though comely young woman, with decided leanings toward the puritanic codes of conduct. The will provided that a capital sum invested for her should be held in trust until her marriage, and that until the age of twenty-five, she should be under the guardianship of one of five men named in the will. Her choice of guardian should be made only after she had become the guest for a longer or shorter time of one or more of the gentlemen named. The Colonel, who could not, even by the wildest flights of the imagination, be spoken of as puritanical, being a connoisseur of now prohibited beverages, of cards, of tobacco, and of affairs of the heart, cautioned Miss Polly particularly against one Richard Cresswell, as displaying a regrettable tendency toward prohibition and a general abstinence from the pleasures of life. Him Miss Polly favored with her first visit, only to find that behind his pretentions of virtue and uprightness he hid a profligate nature that displayed itself in a secret addiction to cigarettes and drinking and amateur theatricals. At the opening of the present installment she has just returned from the Cresswell home, and is reporting the harrowing details to Nan Draper, the colonel's old housekeeper.]

"My lamb, you wouldn't refuse to have a gentleman for your guardian just because he went to the theater?" asked Nan Draper. "Lots of good people go to the theater!"

"I know they do. I'm learning that," answered Miss Polly Seaton, mournfully. "I'm discovering just what men are. But Aunt Jane never went to the theater, and Miss Patience Tibbetts, my schoolmistress, was corresponding secretary of a society that is going to abolish theaters and depravity of all kinds pretty soon."

"I guess those old maids would have gone quick enough if they could have found a beau to take them," commented Nan.

"Of course, I'm not narrow, Nan," continued Polly. "And I know many men are brought up not to consider those things wrong. Why, President McKinley used to smoke cigars, I am told! If that had been all that was the matter with Mr. Cresswell I might have forgiven the deceit, and even the cigarette, and trusted to time and influence to wean him away to better things. But it was the vice, Nan!"

"Vice, my dear?"

"That horrid, detestable actress that was with him, all painted and powdered, and kicking up her—and kicking up, Nan. She looked more like a horse than a human being."

"She wasn't pretty, then?"

"Pretty, Nan? She was the homeliest thing I ever saw!"

"Hum! Then I don't see much vice about that, Miss Polly."

"They were laughing together, Nan."

"Well, that's better than kissing."

"Nan, don't you dare suggest that Mr. Cresswell is capable of—of kissing anybody."

Nan Draper beamed in motherly fashion at her young mistress. She seemed somehow relieved of a world of despondency.

"Come, now, Miss Polly, you don't hate Mr. Cresswell quite as much as you think, do you?" she asked.

"Yes I do! More! I loathe and despise him, Nan. And what crushes me is to think that I might have selected him to be my guardian, under the provisions of Stepfather's will, instead of somebody else, if it hadn't been for my fortunate discovery of his awful duplicity."

"Well, my dear, " said Nan, "I hope you will find a better guardian, I'm sure."

Nan sighed. She had always liked Dick Cresswell, and Colonel Sanford had liked him best of all the young men he knew, and had privately expressed certain hopes which Nan had promised to do her best to bring to fruition.

"And who are you thinking of trying next, Miss Polly?" she asked.

POLLY SEATON broke the second of the five envelopes that Mr. Brose, the lawyer, had given her.

"The next guardian on the list is Mr. Clarence Strutt, of 91 Hamilton Avenue," she said. "Look what Stepfather has written against his name! 'A good young man.' What a queer thing to write! And I don't like flying all around the country chasing young men. Do you suppose he is really good, Nan, or is it another of Stepfather's simply detestable jokes? Anyway, I am not going to be deceived again like last time, and I mean to study Mr. Clarence Strutt's character carefully before jumping at conclusions."

"My dear," said Nan Draper, putting a plump hand on each of her mistress' rounded shoulders, "remember this: there's more than just guardians in the case. Don't forget you're rich, Miss Polly, and there's not many young men wouldn't jump at the chance of marrying a girl with your money and looks."

Polly shook her finger reprovingly. "You mustn't talk that way, Nan," she said. "You are too romantic and imaginative. The man who would win me must love me for my mind and character, not for my face, which I'm sure isn't much to boast about. Besides, I'm never going to get married, anyway. I'm going to devote my life to char—to charity and so-social l-l-labor, and—oh, I'm so unhappy, Nan!"

"There, there, my dear, now you mustn't cry!" said Nan Draper. "I'm sure that you'll choose right when you've had the opportunity of looking about you at all these new faces."

"But they're only to be guardians, Nan!" protested Polly, quite scandalized. And Nan looked back at her with such an enigmatical smile that the girl went indignantly out of the room.

NEXT morning Polly departed for 91 Hamilton Avenue. The little suitcase, which had come back from Mrs. Cresswell's, had developed an unfortunate rip, and Polly took a small pigskin bag that had belonged to her stepfather. A not very long ride on the streetcar took the girl almost to the Strutt's door, and she rang the bell with fingers that quivered in the stress of her emotion.

It was such a fearful thing to ring like this at the doors of strange houses and calmly announce that you were looking for a guardian.

But the good-looking young woman who came in person to the door, anticipating the pretty, foreign-looking maid hovering in the recesses of the passage, seemed to size up Polly at a glance. And hardly had the girl begun to stammer out her errand before she flung her arms around her and kissed her effusively.

"I just knew it was you, and I knew that you would come," she said. "I am Mrs. Laura Beach, Mr. Strutt's widowed sister. I keep house for him, dear boy!"

"Yes," said Polly vaguely, following Mrs. Beach in the very dainty-looking house.

The living-room was more than dainty; it was artistic, and esthetically artistic. All the furniture was spindle-legged, and

looked as if a strong puff would send it over. There were Japanese prints upon the walls which were of an olive-green, and Japanese fans, and reproductions of swan-necked young women in heaps of garments which achieved the miracle of being both clinging and yet perfectly respectable.

"Burne-Jones," said Mrs. Beach, her glance following Polly's. We adore Burne-Jones and all the great masters. Don't you? Mr. Strutt—may I begin to call him Clarence?—is artistic by nature, poor boy!"

And, in answer to Polly's look of inquiry, she went on:

"I mean that Clarence—I may call him Clarence?—is so delicate, poor boy. So unfit to cope with the world in the grim battle of life, Miss Seaton. It is hard to have an artistic nature and to be misunderstood."

"It certainly must be," said Polly sympathetically—more sympathetically than actually corresponded to her feelings. Somehow the esthetic furniture made her feel depressed, and the sight of the swan-necked young women in draperies irritated her.

"Yes, indeed, Miss Seaton," said Mrs. Beach. "And so Clarence and I have established our little home here, a little nook of sequestered happiness, 'the world forgetting, by the world forgot.' You know the poem. Here we live our own lives happily together. And when we heard of the amazing provisions of Colonel Sanford's will, our first thought about you was: Will she prove artistic? Will she love the true and the beautiful? Or will she be a philistine? And I am happy to say," said Mrs. Beach, beaming, and raising her throat to display a necklace of antique silver, "that our question is answered."

"And how did my stepfather come to be interested in your brother?" asked Polly, in amazement at the association.

"It is a strange story, my dear," answered Mrs. Beach. "It happened at East Beach. Clarence and I were staying there and we had often noticed your stepfather on the promenade. Colonel Sanford was a strong swimmer, as you are aware. One day Clarence decided to take a sun bath. The essence of the curative properties of the sun bath, as of course you know, is the effect of the actinic rays of sunlight upon the human exterior when damp from salt water. Unfortunately, my brother, while wading waist-high through the waves, was thrown off his feet by an unusually large one, and, plunging into a hole in the sand, would inevitably have lost his life had not your stepfather, who happened to be swimming near him, rescued him and carried him ashore."

"Why, how splendid! My stepfather never told me anything about it," said Polly.

"It was a magnificent act, and Clarence called on him when he returned to town. In spite of a certain dissimilarity in temperament between the two men, Clarence paid him frequent visits. In fact, although my brother has never said so, I believe he tried to exercise his influence upon Colonel Sanford in the direction of improving his nature. We believe, you know, that the highest influence which can be brought to bear is that which kindles the emotions through the arts. But here comes Clarence from the garden. He has been supervising the planting of a bed of lilies."

A COUPLE of minutes later, Polly stood face to face with a fair-haired, undersized young man with a willowy neck and a pair of baby-like blue eyes that fixed themselves appreciatively upon her. Mr. Clarence Strutt's hand was very limp and moist. Mr. Strutt's voice was low and gentle.

Mrs. Beach rang a delicate little silver bell, and the pretty maid appeared.

"We will take our tea, Mathilde," she said.

"Mais oui, Madame," replied the girl.

"You take your tea with lemon instead of milk, of course?" asked Mrs. Beach of Polly. "There, I knew you did! My

dear, I am sure we are all going to get on well together. And you must make quite a stay with us. Clarence, dear, won't you carry Miss Seaton's bag upstairs to the peacock room?"

"How different from Dick Cresswell!" was Polly's constant thought that evening, as they sat chatting together. The girl found her host and hostess really cultivated and delightful people, in spite of their peculiarities. It was not until Dick's name was actually mentioned that she received her first sense of disillusionment.

"You have seen other of your possible guardians?" inquired Laura Beach, shooting a quick glance at her brother, which Polly intercepted.

"Only Mr. Cresswell," answered the girl.

"Mr. Richard Cresswell, of Cedar Avenue?" inquired Clarence, with a tightening of the corners of his mouth.

"Yes. Do you know him?" asked Polly, timidly.

Somehow the mention of Dick's name seemed sacrilegious, and yet a fearful joy lay in that very vicarious approach to the man who still, in some unaccountable way, interested, while his memory saddened her.

"I have met him," replied Clarence gravely.

"My brother prefers not to mention people whom he dislikes," said his sister. "The fact is, we are not partial to men of the philistine stamp. Mr. Cresswell and my brother have not, could not, have a thing in common."

"Richard Cresswell is wholly unworthy to be the guardian of a young, unsophisticated—pardon me!—girl," said Clarence. "He is—" he shrugged his shoulders expressively.

"My brother means that he cannot bear his noisy, vulgar ways," said Laura Beach. "Mr. Cresswell is a drinking man, and a frequenter of low theatrical houses. Only last year my brother sent him a complimentary ticket for a performance of 'Hamlet,' which was to be given by an artistic traveling company of amateurs, and meeting him a day or two later, Mr. Cresswell jocularly referred to the piece as—"

"No, no, Laura!" protested Clarence, putting up a lily-white damp hand.

"Let me say it. It is horrible, I know, but it will give Miss Seaton a complete idea of Mr. Cresswell's personality."

"I don't think I could bear it," said Clarence.

Laura Beach leaned toward Polly. "He called it 'Hamfat,'" she whispered.

Clarence Strutt put his fingers to his ears and emitted a tiny squeal.

At the door of Polly's room, a little later, Laura stopped for a brief chat.

"My brother is one man in a thousand," she said emphatically. "So delicate of mind, so true in his artistic perceptions! And not of this world, my dear. Neither liquor nor tobacco has ever crossed his lips. He is so—may I call it ethereal?—that even his admiration of the opposite sex is confined to a Platonic appreciation of color and form."

"Dear me," thought Polly, wondering.

"By form I mean, of course, grace and outline. I have often been afraid that Clarence will never marry. The woman who won him would need to touch his soul profoundly." She dropped her voice. "You noticed Mathilde?" she asked. "She is a Belgian refugee. My knowledge of the world tells me that not many sisters would regard with indifference the presence in their homes of so striking a young woman of a worldly and profligate continental training. For Mathilde was being educated for the ballet when the war broke out. My dear, Clarence has never looked at her."

She kissed her guest good-night, leaving Polly lost in wonder in the peacock room. Polly's emotions were manifold.

POLLY took down her hair before the antique mirror upon the spindly-legged dressing table, and she tried to analyze her thoughts. She tried hard not to feel irritated against the brother and sister.

"How different he is from Dick!" she thought again, and the eyes upon the tails of innumerable peacocks, staring at her from the border of the wallpaper, seemed to wink in deep significance.

Of course, this was an optional illusion. Polly was very tired, and just a little bit cross.

"I must try not to judge Mr. Strutt out of my own imperfections," she thought. "The very fact that I am forming my conclusions about him in comparison with Richard Cresswell's vices is proof positive that my own mind is warped. If Richard Cresswell is bad—and of course he is bad—then Mr. Strutt must be good."

But Polly could not get any satisfaction out of the contemplation of Clarence's goodness, although she was resolved to appoint Mr. Strutt her guardian if he lived up to her expectations. And it was just as she was falling asleep that an idea came to her which made her sit bolt upright in bed.

"He's too good!" she exclaimed. "He's too good a man for my liking. That's why I feel this little irritation. Oh, how wicked I am!"

When she opened her eyes again it was broad daylight, and the pretty Belgian maid was standing by her bedside.

"Mademoiselle wishes me to display her frocks?" she asked.

"I've only one frock, Mathilde. Yes, you may put it over the chair for me."

Mathilde's deft hands were already delving into the pigskin bag for the articles of Polly's toilet. But suddenly a roguish smile came over the girl's face. She looked at Polly with an expression as near to sympathetic understanding as her training and position would permit.

"What is it, Mathilde?" asked Polly.

"Oh, nothing, Mademoiselle," answered the maid, smiling quite broadly.

"Let me see what that is!" demanded Polly, vexed at the girl's strange air of familiarity.

Mathilde, however, having arranged Polly's tooth-brush, soap, hair-brush and comb in their proper places, dexterously withdrew, hiding the same sympathetic grin that had never wholly disappeared from her features.

Polly jumped out of bed and ran to the pigskin bag. Nattily perched upon the top of a frilled white garment she discovered—a very large and very black cigar, with a gold waistband!

She jumped back in consternation. But no masculine mouth was attached to it, nor a masculine hand. The cigar was alone. It might have borne mute witness to many scenes of male depravity in times gone by; it might have suffered agonies of anticipation while its companions endured the fiery ordeal at hands that still reeked of the rum-cup; but for the present it rested, snug, secure, and saturnine, in the most improper place in which it is conceivable that a cigar may be.

"Why," exclaimed Polly, suddenly enlightened, "it must be one of Stepfather's!"

And, taking it gingerly between her thumb and finger, she was about to hurl it from her, when another thought made her redden with humiliation.

"What must Mathilde have thought of me!" she whispered.

And, because she dared not let it be seen again, she slipped it back into the pocket of the pigskin bag, with the intention of destroying it ultimately.

CLARENCE STRUTT improved on acquaintance. Polly, who watched him anxiously, to make sure that her unfortunate experience with Dick was not in danger of repetition, came to the conclusion that he was absolutely sincere in his protestations.

Laura Beach threw them together, apparently from policy. Polly suspected this, but she was only amused. She had no intention of losing her heart to Clarence, but she had practically decided to ask him to become her guardian, in spite of that persistent subconscious feeling that he irritated her.

It was very subconscious, and only flashed through her consciousness at

night, when she lay awake trying to find out just what it was that warned her not to choose Clarence for her guardian. Outwardly he was quite fascinating.

Even an esthete can be fascinating. Polly learned all about Burne-Jones and Rossetti, and their swan-necked ladies, and began to appreciate them. And Clarence's mind was full of poetry. As the hardy male, in courting season, adorns himself with bright raiments, so the weakling puts on the poetical lure. And Polly admitted that Clarence was fascinating.

He read the passage about the last meeting between Arthur and Guinevere, from Tennyson's "Idylls," and when the pathos of the scene choked his voice, it seemed to Polly, seated beside him in the moonlight, not unreasonable that Clarence should take her hand in his and press it sympathetically. And afterward Clarence found an excuse for still holding it. It was really clever of him.

"A woman's hand," he said, "is the test of her nature. Long, white, supple, delicate fingers betoken a mind open to all artistic impressions and scornful of base things.

"A hand like yours should be perpetuated in marble, Miss Seaton."

"O, do you really think so?" said Polly, letting it linger a moment longer.

"Miss Seaton," said Clarence, "you can have no idea—or, pardon me, you can, but most cannot—of the rapture that the artist feels over form. You are divine, Miss Seaton."

Polly stirred in her seat a little uneasily. She was rather afraid; she did not know how far Clarence meant to go, and she did not know but that he might say something terrible. At least, she had an instinct that way. And, partly to ease the situation, and partly because she really thought a good deal of the little man, she switched off by a gentle gradient.

"Miss Patience Tibbetts, my schoolmistress," she said, "used to tell me that beauty of face is nothing, but a beautiful soul is a priceless pearl."

"Very true, Miss Seaton, but does not the one imply the other?" asked Clarence. "To me, your bodily form is a living proof of the true workmanship of the soul within."

"Indeed, Mr. Strutt?" asked Polly, holding the arms of her chair rather tightly. Like a thin, elusive ghost in the moonlight, Clarence's hand was hovering, ready to pounce upon her own.

"I always consider the body to be the temple of the soul," said Clarence. "It is trite, but how true! No woman has ever attracted me by mere beauty of face. If ever I marry, Miss Seaton, it will be one whose form"—his hand grasped Polly's again—"is but the mirror of the soul within."

Polly withdrew her hand under the pretense of seeking her handkerchief. Yet it was impossible not to feel flattered, and she was conscious of a sort of motherly feeling toward the little man which made her want to respond to his own intellectual processes and gently, very gently, help him to find himself. For Clarence Strutt, in his unreal and retired world, had very little grasp upon realities.

"But—but—you have only given me the esthetic viewpoint," she said. "I don't believe one can—can understand things without strong moral principles, Mr. Strutt.

"Just for instance, such things as drinking and smoking and—and—well, flirting. We know those are wrong"—she was sure he would take the hint, but he seemed not to notice it—"wrong from a moral point of view. Now artistic sensibilities don't cover them."

"On the contrary," said Clarence earnestly, "a man who is a true artist cannot profane his body with liquor and tobacco, nor his soul by that cheap pastime known as flirting—a horrid word, isn't it."

"I wish we could find out just how true that is," said Polly.

"It's all true," answered Clarence.

"That art is a guide to conduct?"

"Absolutely!"

"We'll see," thought Polly, and suddenly an idea came to her which struck

her dumb by its brazen boldness. But happily Mrs. Beach came into the room at that moment.

WHEN Polly went upstairs that night she took her stepfather's cigar from its resting place and looked at it critically. Gingerly she picked it up and raised it to the tip of her pretty nose. She admitted that the aromatic flavor was not wholly distasteful. As incense, or for fumigation, tobacco undoubtedly had uses.

"If he smokes secretly—" thought Polly.

"Now do be a good girl," interrupted her conscience. "Be nice. That isn't nice. It's just a catty little trick."

"Be quiet!" answered Polly sharply. "I'd like to know what business it is of yours."

"That's a good one," said conscience, laughing rudely. "You know I can't speak unless you call me."

"I didn't call you. I should think my experiences with Di—with Mr. R. Cresswell are reason enough. I've been fooled once, and I'm not going to be deceived again."

"Oh, very well!" said conscience. "Try him out with it by all means. Only you know what it'll mean."

"What will it mean, then?"

"You'll take the edge off me. You remember Miss Prudence Tibbetts telling you—"

"But Polly shook herself free and put conscience back under his trap door.

"A smoker just can't resist," said Polly to herself. "Aunt Jane told me that smoking is just as much a habit as drinking. If he smells it he'll turn white or something, and go out to smoke in the garden. Then I'll catch him!"

And the following evening, entering the living-room ahead of the others, Polly deftly dropped her stepfather's cigar into the coals of the open grate fire.

And, seating herself in the arm-chair beside it, she awaited events.

"Clarence, what a strange odor," said his sister, when a few minutes had passed.

Clarence sniffed. "Something's burning" he said. "Miss Seaton, do you smell anything?"

"Something is burning," interposed Mrs. Beach. "It smells to me like a carpet."

"Perhaps it's in the kitchen, Laura. Let me go and see."

"No, I'll go, Clarence. You stay here. It may be something that Mathilde has put into the stove."

She hurried out, leaving Polly overwhelmed with humiliation. The girl had not expected such a denouement. And Clarence, anxiously canvassing the possibilities, showed not the least guilty longing.

Certainly the cigar did smell abominably, and not in the least like the aromatic substance of the night before. Perhaps cigars smelled that way when they were burned all together at once, thought Polly. One thing was sure—Clarence Strutt was no smoker.

HOW Polly eventually escaped to her room she never quite remembered afterward. She had the idea that the cigar had probably burned itself away by the time Mrs. Beach returned from her fruitless search. But, in the peacock room, she held another dialogue with conscience.

"I know I was wrong," she said defiantly.

"Did I make any remark?" inquired conscience blandly.

"But I'm going to do it. Yes, and you needn't look so horrified. I tell you I'm going to, because I have a right to know what sort of man my future guardian is. Lie down!"

And conscience, which is rather persevering than contentious, lay down obediently, and did not stir until, the next morning, Polly found herself at the door of the drug store.

She entered with palpitating heart. It was really a situation that would have embarrassed the most hardened woman. She could scarcely control her voice, and, just as she was about to speak to the

" 'I want—I—it's for an experiment,' stammered Polly. 'I want—oh, half an ounce of—of beer!' "

clerk, a woman entered, and Polly slunk away behind the tall stand bearing an advertisement of a girl taking a temperance drink.

"Yes, Miss?" inquired the clerk, when they were alone again.

"I want—I—it's for an experiment," stammered Polly. "I want—oh, half an ounce of—of beer!"

"Of—I beg your pardon?" inquired the man behind the counter.

Polly keyed herself up with her last ounce of resolution. "I want half an ounce of beer—or a whole ounce. It's for an experiment," she said.

"We don't keep it in stock," said the clerk, in tones which sounded like reproach. As a matter of fact, they were the determined effort of a chivalrous man to mask his emotions. "You could get it at the grocery," he continued, "but I don't suppose you could buy less than a bottle. Is it for a sick person?"

"No, it's—it's an experiment!"

"I suppose whisky wouldn't be of any use," suggested the clerk confidentially, leaning over the counter. "I could let you have an ounce of that."

"O yes," said Polly in relief. "I'll take an ounce, then, please. You'll put it in an eight-sided poison bottle, won't you?"

The clerk was already pouring out an ounce of spiritus frumenti from a large bottle upon a shelf. He filled a tiny, blue, octagonal phial and, having pasted on the label, handed it to Polly in the most business-like way in the world. Polly paid him and fled.

"I know," she said, "that if Mr. Strutt is a secret drinker the odor will be irresistible to him. Miss Prudence Tibbetts always told me that if it weren't for the dreadful smells that emanate from the saloons the poor victims of the saloon-keepers would be able to make their way home without succumbing to temptation."

THAT evening, when Mr. Strutt and she were again alone together in the bay-window of the living-room, Polly, as if absent-mindedly, pulled a little handkerchief from her sleeve and began to fan herself.

"It's very hot, Mr. Strutt," she said.

"It is a warm night, Miss Seaton. Perhaps I can find you a fan."

"No, it isn't bad enough for that," said Polly.

As she fanned herself the subtle odor of alcohol began to be diffused through the air. Polly watched Clarence Strutt out of the corners of her eyes.

And, to her horror, she perceived that Clarence Strutt distinctly recognized the odor. His face assumed a look of ecstasy. Suddenly he leaned forward and almost snatched the handkerchief from her.

"Heavens, I've intoxicated him by the smell!" thought Polly, in terror. And she struggled quite hard to retain the corner of the handkerchief that was still in her possession.

"Miss Seaton," said Clarence, raising the handkerchief—at least the end which he held—to his nose—"Miss Seaton, what is that delicate instinct which leads a woman to select a perfume that expresses her own personality so perfectly?"

Polly could not believe her ears. She let her end of the handkerchief fall, and, leaning back in the chair, looked at Clarence in absolute horror.

"I have never, never smelled any perfume so entrancing as that which clings to this little handkerchief," said Clarence Strutt. "It is—well, it is you, Miss Seaton. It is the sum and total of your personality. It is the odor which, if ever I meet it again, will bring you back to me, complete in every detail. It is—"

"O please, Mr. Strutt, please!" begged Polly—and, snatching up the handkerchief, she fled to her room.

She flung herself down upon her bed and looked up at the peacocks. So, again, her suspicions had been proved groundless. Nay, more, Clarence, who had so palpably never smelled, let alone, tasted, alcohol before, was in danger of becoming a drunkard, and through her.

The faces of Aunt Jane and Miss Pru-

dence and Miss Patience Tibbetts rose vividly before her. How she had wronged those noble women! What would they have thought of her?

Suddenly, in the midst of her despair, a sense of Dick Cresswell came to her. Dick would have laughed. Dick, had he known, would have laughed—but he would have understood. If Clarence knew, he would feel nothing but pain. Dick had what Clarence could never have—humanity.

"That's the secret," cried Polly to the peacocks. "With all his vices, Di—Mr. Cresswell is at least a human being. He understands things. That's what irritates me in Clarence Strutt. He's the best man in the world, but, even if he is to be my guardian, I shall never feel at home with him. He's too unutterably good!"

Yes, she had to put him to the test, and he had escaped as innocently as a babe might escape from some conspiracy. And there was no further doubt of him!

A TAP sounded at the door. Mathilde came in. She stood beside Polly, and the girl, looking at her in admiration, realized that she had the figure and the grace of an Athene. Mathilde was standing in a posture that would have excited the admiration of a sculptor, her hands resting lightly upon her hips. Upon her face was an expression of half-conscious insolence and superb vitality. Polly, looking at the girl, wondered why Clarence had never observed Mathilde's beauties of coloring, and of what he called "form."

"Madame wished me to find whether Mademoiselle was sleeping, or whether she was unwell," said the maid.

"I—I have a slight headache," said Polly. "But I was going to sleep. Apologize for me, won't you, Mathilde, and tell her not to trouble about me. I expect to be quite right in the morning."

"Yes, Mademoiselle," said Mathilde.

There was an unmistakable, though veiled insolence in her manner. Polly knew what it was. It was the presence of the cigar. And she did not know what to say. How could she explain to her that she herself neither smoked cigars nor carried cigars for gentlemen?

But there was worse to come. Mathilde's next words shocked Polly more than any experience since she had been in the house.

"When one loves and one's love is not returned, one is very *triste*," said Mathilde.

"Wh—what do you mean?" demanded Polly staring at her in a stony sort of way.

"I offer Mademoiselle the commiserations of a heart that has known love too well," said the maid, smiling familiarly, as one equal to another.

"Mathilde, do you mean to insinuate that I have been disappointed in love?" demanded Polly.

"But take courage, Mademoiselle. None could discern it save those whose hearts have already been broken, for assuredly Mademoiselle conceals her feelings perfectly. Only I, of this household, can detect the signs, Mademoiselle."

"Whom do you think I am in love with, then?"

Mathilde smiled, shrugged her shoulders, and tapped her foot on the carpet.

"With—with Mr. Strutt?"

"O, Mademoiselle, assuredly it is impossible to deceive me. He is a good young man. Surely Mademoiselle could bring him to her feet if she knew the way."

"But I don't want him at my feet. I—I dislike him," faltered Polly.

Mathilde still smiled in her maddening way.

"Mademoiselle thinks he is of the nature impregnably cold, is it not?" she asked. "Pooh! That is nothing. I have made conquests of men much colder, and when I return to my dear country to resume the study of the ballet, and become a famous dancer, I shall bring kings to my feet."

"H-h-h-how?" whispered Polly, feeling that it was all like some terrible dream, and yet perfectly fascinated by Mathilde's extraordinary statement.

"Ah, Mademoiselle, that is nothing.

Would Mademoiselle like to see me bring Monsieur Strutt to my feet? Would you like to see him demand an embrace from me?"

"No!" shouted Polly, in consternation.

"And be refused?" continued Mathilde blandly. "That is nothing, Mademoiselle. Loving him with the devotion of a heart so ardent as yours, you naturally resent the question. But assuredly any woman can bring the most devoted lover of anybody else to her feet, to demand one kiss—"

"Mathilde!" cried Polly hoarsely, placing her hands over her ears.

"They aren't quite covered," said a tiny, tiny voice within her.

For indeed, Polly had left room for Mathilde's next words to penetrate.

"Listen, Mademoiselle! Tomorrow evening, when the ladies have withdrawn to the drawing-room, Monsieur Strutt will rise from the table to follow them. I shall come to clear away the dinner. I shall approach Monsieur Strutt at the door and look at him—nothing more. And Mademoiselle, watching from the hall, will see him demand an embrace from me. It will be the act of a moment, and Mademoiselle will be prepared. *Bien!* Then I shall teach Mademoiselle the secret."

WITH a graceful swirl of her lithe figure, Mathilde was gone, leaving Polly in utter prostration upon her bed.

It was the most terrible, shameless thing that had ever happened to her. She must leave the house at once, without explanations. O, if only she had Aunt Jane's counsel! Aunt Jane would have bidden her rise from her bed, hale the offender before a domestic court-martial, and have her ruthlessly dismissed.

And yet Polly could not. The statement had been made to her in confidence, under the false impression derived from the presence of her stepfather's hateful cigar.

Furthermore—

Yes, furthermore Polly was fascinated by the suggestion. She wanted to know what would happen.

"She'll find that she doesn't understand the nature of a good man," said the girl to herself. "Clarence Strutt is not my absolute ideal—yes, he is, though. For he has a beautiful mind, and the mind is everything. If he is undersized and—well, effeminate, his mind is perfectly wonderful. And I want him to be my guardian.

"Even if he isn't beautiful, Mathilde will find out what a good man is made of; she can't tempt him. She can't. I tell you, she can't."

"I didn't say anything," responded a meek interior voice, which Polly ignored.

"I have faith in men," said the girl, staring up at the peacocks' eyes, as if daring them to wink. Aunt Jane told me that some men are good. Mr. Strutt is one of them. If he—he yields my faith in all mankind is gone forever. I'll never speak to Mr. Strutt again, and I'll choose my guardian by letter."

She was in a state of awful suspense all the next day. The thought of countenancing Clarence's temptation was dreadful. But it was the third of the abominations of which he had spoken—wine, smoking, and flirting. He had weathered the storms of the two first without the least indication of foundering. He would withstand the last.

The girl was fully aware of Mathilde's furtive and meaning glances, but she ignored them. Still, as the dinner hour approached, her anxiety increased. Would her hopes of man be dashed to pieces upon the lips of this ballet dancer? Could they?

Clarence Strutt, wholly ignorant of the soul-searching test that was being prepared for him, had brought in a basket of early roses, and was inhaling their fragrance at Polly's side before dinner.

"A beautiful woman," he said softly, "reminds me always of a rose, and vice versa. Observe the purity and grace of outline. When one looks at a rose one feels that all evil things must shun it."

"Mr. Strutt, what a beautiful mind you have!" said Polly impulsively.

"I have tried to keep it free from weeds," answered Clarence, looking at her with a soulful gaze.

"And Dick doesn't care how many weeds he has," thought the girl, trying to fight down a sudden tenderness toward the man who had so grossly deceived her. The revulsion of feeling made her acutely conscious of her deceitfulness.

"I'll tell him. I'll confess. It is wicked of me," she thought, and placed her hand lightly on Clarence's sleeve. "Mr. Strutt," she said, "there is something I must say to you. A little confession—"

As Clarence turned his dreamy eyes upon her Mathilde entered.

"Dinner is served," she announced.

And Laura Beach followed hard upon her heels with the same information. And then it was too late.

Polly tried to eat, tried to join in the conversation, but all the while remorse was gripping at her heart. Mathilde, obsequiously waiting, watched her like a cat. Once Polly looked up and saw the maid deliberately wink at her.

The blood rushed to her face. A cloud seemed to gather between herself and Clarence, placidly eating spring asparagus from a fork.

At last Laura Beach rose. Polly, rising also, heard the slightest sound from the hall. It was Mathilde on her way to fulfil her contract.

"Mr. Strutt—" began Polly—and stopped. She had gone so far now that she might as well finish the drama. Afterward she would tell Clarence all and ask him to be her guardian. And shameful though the episode was, the revelation of Clarence's goodness would have an ennobling effect upon her.

Laura was already at the door. Polly, following her, saw Clarence methodically folding up his serviette. He was always slow in his movements; it would leave Mathilde half a minute for her dastardly attempt upon his character. And suddenly the half-minute had begun, and Polly watched as if she were watching a dream scene.

Laura and she were now in the drawing-room entrance. They had made the half-turn at the doorway. Clarence was at the door of the dining-room, and Mathilde had come forward from the kitchen and met him face to face.

The look on the servant's face was one that Polly had never seen on any face before. Mathilde had stopped stock still, and was looking at Clarence in a way that abolished all distinctions of class and caste as if they had never existed.

It was the simple challenge of her personality, the audacious daring of the man to snatch the opportunity which she offered him. Beyond that it was untranslatable, and yet unmistakable.

Clarence, his passage into the drawing-room arrested, stood still, looking back at Mathilde.

The situation, which lasted perhaps two seconds, at most, brought Polly's heart into her throat.

"If you yield," she whispered under her breath, "I'll never look at you, or any other man, again, nor believe in them."

And an immense resentment swept her, and she saw how a man may become a puppet in the hands of an unscrupulous woman.

Laura Beach was hidden from view behind the projecting fireplace. Polly, her movement forward momentarily arrested, was almost equally invisible to Clarence behind the curtain; and yet she could see everything.

For the full two seconds Clarence and Mathilde stood face to face. Then Clarence, utterly unchanged, made a light bow.

"Permit me," he said, in his pleasantest tones, and quietly made his way past Mathilde, who stood staring after him in chagrin and fury for just an instant before vanishing toward the recesses of the kitchen.

Clarence had not batted an eyelash. Clarence did not seem to have understood.

And suddenly Polly was overwhelmed with uncontrollable hysteria. She plunged forward through the curtain, found the open door of the house, and rushed hatless down the garden, heedless of whether or not Clarence had seen her.

"Oh, you're too good!" she sobbed. "I'm wicked, I'm wicked and worthless, but nobody could live up to you, even as a g-ga-guardian. O Dick! Dick! Dick! Dick!"

I SUPPOSE I've got to go through with it, Nan," said Polly gloomily.

"Now, my dear, you cheer up," said Nan Draper warmly to her young mistress. "Everything will come as right as rain if you only trust in providence."

"It's all very well to speak of trusting in providence," retorted Polly, half-tearfully, "but when Stepfather made that odious will, compelling me to go to five men and select one of them for my guardian, he seemed to positively hate me, or he wouldn't have chosen the five most odious young men in the neighborhood."

"Why, my dear Miss Polly!" protested Nan. "You've only tried two of the guardians, and there's three more to try out yet."

"Yes, and each one's wor-worse than the last," sobbed Polly. "They are either vicious or else inhuman, Nan. And the tragic thing is that the vicious ones are the more lov-likable. That's what's so terrible. I thought that I could respect Mr. Strutt because he was so good, and he—he was just too good, Nan. And Di—Mr. Richard Cresswell—"

"O, my dear Miss Polly, I am sure Mr. Cresswell is a perfect gentleman," said Nan.

"How can you say such a thing!" cried Polly indignantly. "Didn't I find him face to face, laughing and chatting with a dreadful, painted actress, after he had told me that he couldn't take me to the sociological lecture because he was detained at his office? And didn't he pretend that he never smoked, and tell me that the cigarette stain on his finger was iodine? And I just know that he drinks, Nan. No, Mr. Cresswell is dead to me forever!"

Her voice quavered in a manner suggestive of imminent tears. Nan turned away compassionately. She still hoped that Polly, after sampling the three remaining guardians, would turn to Dick. And she knew that that had been the hope of the late Colonel Sanford, her master, when he elaborated his curious will. But things looked bad for Dick.

Meanwhile the girl was breaking the third of the five envelopes which Mr. Brose, the lawyer, had given her.

"The name of my third guardian," announced Polly, "is Mr. Theodore Hammond, of 70 Newton Street. And here's something that Stepfather has written against his name. 'Watch this chap and look out for tricks!' What on earth did Stepfather put him on the list for if he distrusted him? I wonder what he's like," she continued, as the zest of the search grew in her again. "Anyway, I know who he is, and his family is quite well connected. And this time I'm going to write to him and announce my intention of paying his family a visit. He lives with his half-sister, doesn't he?"

"I believe so, Miss Polly," answered Nan Draper.

THE little suitcase was all packed, and Polly Seaton, at the breakfast table, was anxiously awaiting the expected letter from the Hammonds that was to invite her to pay them her visit, when the front bell rang.

"It's Miss Hammond," announced Nan.

And, whisking over to Polly, before the latter could utter any protest, she had deftly rearranged her hair with a few light touches. The effect was magical. The strained, flattened look was replaced by a crown of glorious brown locks that set off in the most effective manner the pretty, if rather puritanical face beneath it.

"O Nan!" said Polly, smiling in spite of herself at the old woman's earnestness.

"Now, my dear, I do want you to look

your best," said Nan. "Promise me you will."

"Well, I'll try," said Polly, rising.

She went into the reception-room to meet her visitor, and found a tall and rather angular spinster of about forty years, who was busily examining some of the late Colonel Sanford's pictures with a look that was distinctly one of appraisal, as if she wished to estimate the pecuniary resources of the house in art form.

The Colonel's taste in pictures had not been exactly what might be called classical. In deference to Polly's upbringing Colonel Sanford had sold all but the most conventional ones, and removed his sporting prints, but the remaining ones were out of harmony with the sedate furniture that had been Polly's mother's.

She swung round quickly.

"O, Miss Seaton, I am so pleased to meet you," she said. "I came in answer to your letter."

"Yes," said Polly. "Won't you sit down?"

Miss Hammond sat down and looked embarrassed.

"Of course I knew about the absurd stipulations of Colonel Sanford's will," she said. "And I know Theo would be delighted to act as your guardian. Too delighted, by far."

She hesitated again.

"The fact is, Miss Seaton," she went on, in a burst of confidence, "knowing what your upbringing has been—for Colonel Sanford always used to say he was unworthy of you—I hesitate to ask you to carry out your intention."

"Why, Miss Hammond?" asked Polly.

"Theo is not a good man," said the visitor candidly. "I am his half-sister, and I hesitate to speak against him, but when so much is at stake I feel it is my duty to warn you."

"What does he do?" half whispered Polly. The situation was an awful one.

"He is not a criminal. As men go, he is not considered to have done anything that places him outside the social pale of men's intercourse. You know, Miss Seaton, what men's standards are. Theo has been fast from his youth upward, and as he is thirty-five he'll probably be fast to the end of his days. He bets, Miss Seaton!"

"Bets?"

"On horses. And wins. A good man may be tempted to bet, I suppose, but only the bad men win. And he drinks. Not every day, but now and again, when the fit comes on him. And smokes!"

"D-d-does he chew?" whispered Polly, feeling that an overwhelming situation was confronting her.

"No," answered Miss Hammond half regretfully. "That he doesn't do. Not that he is above it, but because he thinks it low. And my brother is, after all, a gentleman. But he plays cards!"

"Not for money?"

"For money, Miss Seaton. Pinochle and bridge, and auction bridge."

And, with a sort of shamed hiss, she added, "and poker." And sat back, regarding Polly Seaton with inscrutable eyes.

"But this is terrible!" said Polly, not knowing what to do.

"There's worse," said Miss Hammond grimly.

Polly raised her eyes almost furtively toward her visitor's. And, significant commentary upon human nature, overwhelmed as she was by the recital, there was in her look a trace—of curiosity to know what "worse" was.

"He makes love to women without any intention of asking them to be his wives—I mean wife," said Miss Hammond in a low voice. "Not but what he isn't capable of committing bigamy. It's only chance that has preserved him."

Polly was silent. Stunned as she was by these revelations, somewhere deep in her heart a little voice was reproaching her. "You know you want to see this monster in human guise," the little voice was saying. And Polly knew that she did. For masculine depravity had sent out its challenge, its strangely piquing and provocative challenge to the inquisi-

tiveness of feminine purity. And Polly, like nearly all her sex, couldn't—she simply couldn't help feeling interested.

"Now I've told you the worst," Miss Hammond continued. "And yet there is something to be said for Theo. His mother died when he was young, and he has never come under the influence of a good woman. For I have never been able to control him. My brother has goodness in his heart, but it has never been touched, and his associates have not been of the kind to lead him toward higher things."

"Poor man!" said Polly, softly.

"That's all, Miss Seaton," said the visitor, rising. "Outwardly my brother appears the sort of man who can pass muster anywhere. He does not bear his vices on his face. You might have been deceived. I thought it my duty to let you know. And I hope you will take my warning in the spirit in which it is meant, and I wish you luck in your next attempt to find a worthy guardian."

"W-wait a minute," said Polly, as her visitor strode toward the door.

Miss Hammond turned and surveyed her with a look that was a blend of interrogation and expectancy.

"It's dreadful to think that Mr. Hammond has never had the opportunity to come under the influence of a woman with ideals," said Polly. "Miss Hammond, I—I wish I could help him."

"O Miss Seaton, you have helped him," said the visitor. "For Theo saw your photograph one day when he was visiting Colonel Sanford, and he has raved over it. He used to say that whenever any great temptation assailed him the picture of your face would rise up in his mind's eye and shame him."

She put her hand on the door. "None of us knows what influence we exert in the most unlikely places," she added. "But it wouldn't be right for you to visit us under the circumstances. You see that, Miss Seaton. Your life and Theo's are as the poles asunder."

"I want to come," said Polly. "I want to help your brother. I would rather use what influence I have than leave a struggling human being to founder in—in sin. Won't you let me be your visitor for a few days?"

"Well, Miss Seaton, if you put it that way, what right have I to refuse? And. indeed, your kindness touches me a good deal."

"Then do sit down for a moment and I'll get my hat," said Polly.

As she went out of the room she nearly fell into Nan Draper, whose face was flushed, as if from stooping. The old woman drew back hastily and looked at her compassionately.

If Polly hadn't known that Nan was incapable of such baseness, she might almost have fancied that she had been listening at the key-hole.

"I'm going with Miss Hammond, Nan," said Polly. "Did Mr. Hammond come here very often to see Stepfather?"

"No, Miss Polly, only once in a great while."

"What does he look like, Nan? What did you think of him? Come, tell me, Nan," she coaxed.

"Why, my dear, I never knew anything about him, or saw him, except to let him in and out of the door. I don't know what he's like at all, except that he looks like most gentlemen."

She turned away. "The Lord forgive me for saying that," she muttered under her breath. "There isn't many men I'd lie for, but the Colonel, God rest him, told me to watch and wait and say nothing, and I'd do more for him than that. That Mr. Hammond wants Miss Polly's money, and he's clever enough to fool anyone, and his sister, too, let alone a dear, innocent lamb like her that was raised among those old tabbies.

"I don't know why the Colonel put that Hammond man upon the list of guardians," she continued viciously, "unless it's because of what he told me the day before he died, about a good woman's instinct prompting her when she's in danger. And maybe he wanted her to find out the difference between him and a gentleman like

Mr. Cresswell, who's going to win her, or I'll know the reason why."

"What in the world are you muttering about, Nan?" asked Polly.

"I was just trying to remember the laundry list, Miss Polly," said Nan.

CONTRARY to her fearful expectations, Polly Seaton found Mr. Theodore Hammond a mild and harmless person. He was a pale, quiet-looking young man, with straight, smooth hair brushed back over a high forehead, clean-shaven and without the smallest external signs of dissipation. Certainly he did not look in the least like the terrible debauchee of whom Miss Hammond had warned her.

He took very little notice of her, and disappeared immediately after dinner into his private room.

"Poor Theo," said Miss Hammond significantly.

"But he looks quite different from what I expected," said Polly.

"I know," answered his sister mournfully.

"It deceives everybody. Did you think he looked happy, Miss Seaton?"

"Not very happy," said Polly. "Do you suppose it's sin, Miss Hammond?"

"I shouldn't wonder,' answered the other.

"My Aunt Jane told me that sinners are never really happy. Though they often think they are. Oh, if I only can be of some influence upon him!"

"And I will," she added to herself. From which it will be seen that the reforming virus was hard at work in her. And when the desire to turn a rake into a good man gets hold of a woman, one never knows where it is going to lead her.

Suddenly there sounded a terrific smash of breaking glasses from the private room. Polly leaped to her feet, quite pale.

"Oh, what is it, Miss Hammond?" she cried.

"It's nothing—nothing. Theo has just dropped some glasses, I suppose."

"But—but—"

"He's a solitary drinker, Miss Seaton. That's the worst kind, you know."

"Oughtn't one of us to go to him?"

Miss Hammond shook her head.

"It does no good," she answered. "Tomorrow, perhaps, when he is feeling a little penitent, but not tonight."

"I suppose you are right," answered Polly.

She slept poorly that night, listening in terror for more sounds of Theodore Hammond's debauchery, but nothing happened until soon after midnight, when Polly, who had begun to doze, was awakened by a terrific crash on the stairs.

Sitting up in bed in terror she heard a man muttering under his breath as he picked himself up and took his uncertain way up again. Crash went the banisters as he careened into them. Bump, bump! resounded through the silent house as he stumbled again. But at last Mr. Hammond gained the passage outside, and just as Polly Seaton had begun to tug frantically at a chair with the idea of barricading her room, she heard Mr. Hammond gain his and bang the door shut.

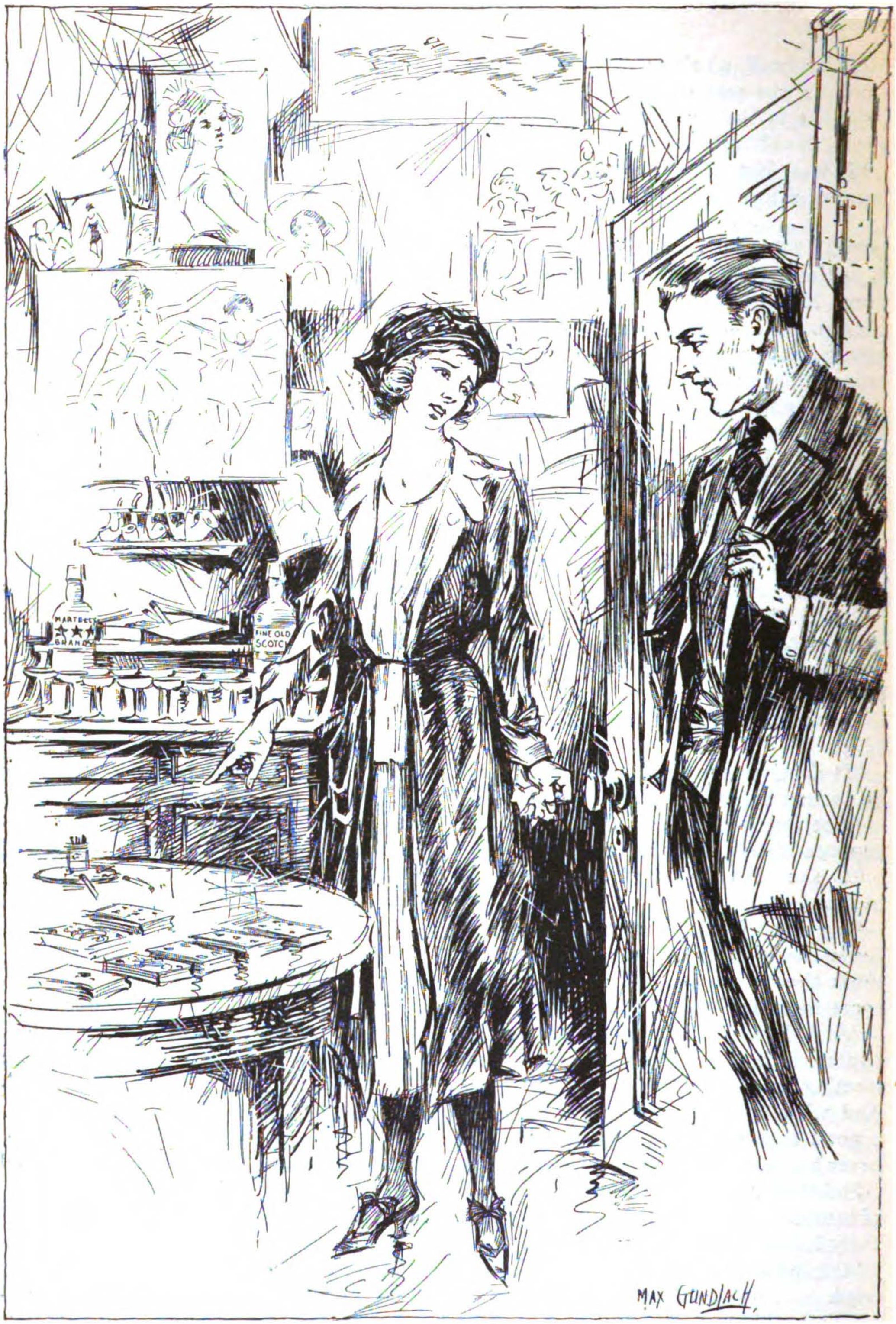
"I shall go home tomorrow," thought Polly.

But on the morrow Mr. Theodore Hammond did not show the smallest signs of dissipation. His eye was clear and bright, and there was even merriment in his tone and he wished her good-morning.

"I shall certainly speak to him," thought Polly, "if I do stay another day. He'll never do for my guardian—never!"

But she could not pluck up her courage before Mr. Hammond went off to his office, and she spent the whole day nerving herself for the conversation to come.

MISS HAMMOND retired to bed early, leaving her visitor and her brother together. They sat in the living-room, and Polly tried to lead the conversation gently toward character and its influence upon others, but Theodore Hammond only answered in vague generalities. He was manifestly becoming uneasy, and fidgeted with his hands and feet.



" 'You are a solitary poker player, Mr. Hammond. I know. And that is the worst form that the vice of card-playing takes.' "

"Miss Seaton," he blurted out presently, "you ought to know that I am not so good a man as I may seem."

"No man who realizes his faults is altogether bad, Mr. Hammond," answered the girl, gravely.

"Miss Seaton, there are depths of iniquity which good women can't even understand. If they could understand them they would never forgive."

"A good woman can forgive everything, Mr. Hammond," said Polly, frightfully interested. And how her heart was beating!

"Miss Seaton, would you like to see my den?" asked Theodore Hammond.

"I should be de—very glad, indeed," said Polly, suppressing an involuntary shudder. Somehow the word "den" seemed absolutely appropriate.

Without another word Theodore led the way along the hall to his room at the end, and switched on the electric light. He flung the door open. Polly hesitated just an instant, as a little spasm of fear took hold of her. Then she entered boldly, to find her worst fears confirmed.

The walls were covered with perfectly dreadful pictures of girls with bold faces, wearing low gowns and abbreviated skirts. They were, in fact, the cheap color facsimilies that she had often seen displayed in low stationery and picture shops. At the end of the room was a small buffet, with a row of tumblers set forth upon it. Flanking the tumblers were two squadrons of small glasses with long stems, such as the Colonel had had, and these were used, as Polly knew, for wine. Behind the small glasses, at each end of the buffet, was a bottle. One was labeled "Martell's Three Star Brandy," and the other "Fine Old Scotch." At the back of the buffet was an open box of cigarettes, half empty. Upon a table was a pack of cards, set out in a row of seven little heaps, with their faces all down, except the top card, which had its face upward.

Theodore Hammond turned toward Polly with a sort of hopeless gesture, as much as to say, "Now you know the worst. What are you going to do about it?" And, walking to the buffet, he took a cigarette from the box and thrust it between his lips. Then, without immediately proceeding to light it, he raised the bottle marked "Fine Old Scotch" and poured out a quantity into the bottom of a tumbler. He lifted the glass to his lips, apparently forgetting for the moment that he had a cigarette there.

But the cigarette was there no longer, for Polly deliberately plucked it from his mouth. And Theodore Hammond's uplifted arm was intercepted by Polly's clutch.

"No," said the girl firmly.

"Miss Seaton, I—"

"You are not going to drink that liquor."

She took the tumbler from his hand. Theodore Hammond shuddered, and sank down in the chair at the card table. Mechanically he began to shuffle the cards together. Polly's hand fell upon his wrist again.

"Don't touch those things," said Polly.

"Miss Seaton, I—"

"You have played your last game of poker," said Polly, in an inexorable voice.

"Its Can—" began Hammond, drearily.

"You are a solitary poker player, Mr. Hammond. I know. And that is the worst form that the vice of card-playing takes.

"And you come in here to drink and smoke and indulge in these vices because —because you have never had the influence of a good woman to lead you to higher ideals. Mr. Hammond, indeed you are capable of higher things than these."

Theodore Hammond smiled wearily and leaned back in his chair. A cynical look overspread his features.

"There are no good women," he muttered.

"What!" exclaimed Polly blankly.

"I have ceased to believe in women. There is not one of them cares what happens to a man."

"Indeed, Mr. Hammond, you are mis-

taken," said Polly earnestly. "Some care —care very much."

She stopped short at the extraordinary look on Theodore Hammond's face. He sprang to his feet and caught her hands in his and drew her toward him. Fascinated, in spite of her terror, Polly saw Mr. Hammond's face grow larger and larger as it neared her own. She felt his arm glide round her. Then, just in time, she managed to free herself.

"How dare you?" she cried angrily.

"You care. I believe you care! Miss Seaton, ever since I saw your photograph I have dared to dream that you might care—"

"O no, no, no!" cried Polly backing toward the opposite wall. "What can you have thought of me? I care—I care for your uplifting, Mr. Hammond. I want you to rise to finer and more spiritual things. What can you think of women if you can dare to treat them like that?"

Theodore Hammond looked awfully abashed.

"Forgive me," he stammered. "I—I—have never met a woman like you before."

"You have never looked," said Polly. "Do you dare to tell me that you—that you think you can—can do that sort of thing to any woman you meet?"

And in spite of her anger, Polly knew very well, though she would not admit it to herself, that the question was prompted by more than indignation. Yes, she wanted to know. She was crazy to know if that was Theodore Hammond's way—his successful way.

"Pretty nearly all of them," said Theodore Hammond.

"Oh!" exclaimed Polly, overcome by the revelation.

"That's why I could never respect women till—till this moment," he continued.

She raised her eyes hopefully. "Then you—you respect me?" she asked.

"It is a revelation to me. What must you think of me? I want to sink into the ground," said Theodore Hammond.

"We won't think or say any more about it," answered Polly. "Now from this very moment you are going to amend your life. And here we begin."

WITH firm steps she made her way toward the nearest picture. It was one of the most awful of all, though all were awful. It represented a girl in a black mask, standing face to face with a man in a clown's cap and parti-colored overalls. Her arms were bare and were not even gloved, her skirt was much shorter even than the extremity of the present fashion permits, and she was wearing no gaiters at all; but worst of all was the abominable immodesty of her attitude, for her lips were deliberately pursed in a way that unmistakably suggested the idea of—well, you know what!

"What are you going to do?" demanded Theodore Hammond.

Polly made no reply, but quietly took the picture down from its nail, turned it over, and placed it upon a stand. Then she went from nail to nail, removing the other pictures, until a large heap had accumulated, all face downward.

This done, the girl went to the card table, gathered up the cards and put them on top of the top pictures. On top of the cards she placed the box of cigarettes. On either side of the heap, label side toward the wall, she placed the bottles. She turned and faced Theodore.

"Now," she said, drawing in a deep breath, "your new life begins. Promise me!"

"I can't," cried Theodore Hammond, running his fingers through his hair. "It's easy for you to say that. But how can I conquer the habits of years? There's only one thing that can help me!"

"Don't ask him what," said Polly's conscience.

"What is it?" asked Polly.

"The sympathy and help of a good woman—yours," said Theodore Hammond.

Polly put out her hand. "You shall have it in full measure," she answered, letting it lie for a moment in Theodore's.

THEODORE claimed it. During the next two or three days Polly's life was filled with the most tumultuous emotions she had ever experienced. And mixed in with them was a good deal of perplexity.

How far ought sympathy to go, and why was it so difficult to draw the dividing line?

For Theodore Hammond was unmistakably falling in love with her. And Polly, who had high ideals of love, trod a sort of intellectual and emotional tight rope.

For she did not love Theodore Hammond, and knew that she did not, could not love him. And yet, if she let him know that his dream was hopeless, he would go back to his brandy and fine old Scotch, to the cigarettes and the pictures, and the solitary poker playing.

When they said good-night that evening she told him that on the next morning they must have a bonfire in the garden. Theodore assented. But on the morrow, when he came home from the office to find everything heaped up, ready for the torch, he shrank from the final act.

"I can't—I just can't, Miss Seaton," he moaned.

But it will put you beyond temptation," urged the girl. "Miss Prudence Tibbetts, my schoolmistress, used to say that many people think they have escaped from sin, and yet, so long as they have the least pleasure in remembering it they have an idol in their hearts. There are your idols, Mr. Hammond!"

And hastily she turned the dreadful picture on its face; for it had been, it will be remembered, at the bottom of the pile, and Polly, in carrying the pile out, had unintentionally reversed it.

"Not until I feel strong enough to stand alone," said Hammond. "I want them in that room, Miss Seaton, so that I can go in of an evening and fight it out face to face with my enemy. I want to wait until not an idol remains."

So the pile was carried back. And terrible evenings followed, when, for an hour or so, Theodore Hammond would sit in his room alone, wrestling with his idols. Sometimes, when he emerged at last, he looked so overcome that Polly simply had to let him hold her hand for a while, to strengthen him. And Miss Hammond gave no help at all. She did not seem interested, and of course Polly could not tell her about the hand-holding. And when she came in, and they dropped hands hastily, poor Polly felt like a criminal.

"If only Dick Cresswell had been different all this would never have happened," thought the girl resentfully.

And yet Theodore Hammond was fascinating; there was no question of that. It was positively thrilling to feel that she was weaning a bad man from his sins. They cast a halo about him—perhaps a dusky halo, but a halo of some sort, undoubtedly.

THE little suitcase that Polly had brought with her had become exhausted. It was time to go home. Polly broached the subject timidly to Mr. Hammond.

"I want to tell you that I think you have done splendidly," she said. "I must leave the day after tomorrow, and I want you to promise that you will be strong and resist temptation when I am gone. And—you may write and tell me if you have resisted."

Her words seemed to distress Theodore Hammond more than the girl could have imagined.

"You are going home?" he faltered.

"I must," said Polly. "But—but if you are strong I think—I think I may choose you as my guardian. Of course I must see the others first, but—"

"I don't want to be your guardian!" cried Theodore. "Polly, Polly Seaton, don't you see I have done this because I love you?"

Polly sank back in her chair. So it was out at last! And in spite of the fear she had felt that just such a situation would arise Polly was conscious, ridiculously conscious of a thrill of delight at her first

proposal. Because of course Dick hadn't meant it when he had said He had something to tell her, and if he had—

She drove Dick out of her mind. And she tried desperately to recall the formula that Aunt Jane had taught her for use when she took her proper station in society. It came back into her mind piecemeal.

"Mr. Hammond," she panted, "I, er, I feel deeply and overwhelmingly honored by the wholly unexpected sentiments of—of affection of which you have made me—have made me the recipient, yet, overcome as any—any woman must be at so high a compliment, and honoring you—honoring you—Oh, I can't."

Theodore Hammond rose up, white and trembling.

"Do you mean to say that you can never learn to love me, Miss Seaton?" he demanded.

And so icy was his demeanor that Polly stared at him, unable to determine whether it was resentment or despair.

"But I don't love you. I am never going to get married," she cried tearfully.

And the denouement was utterly unexpected. For, instead of tearing his hair or dropping upon one knee, or burying his head in his hands, Theodore Hammond simply turned his back on her and marched out of the room.

Long, long Polly sat there, in utter despair. She was aroused by the sound of the door opening. Miss Hammond stood before her in a wrapper, with her hair in curl papers.

"My brother has told me of what has happened," she said, "and I think you have treated him shamefully."

"But I don't care for him!" cried Polly, aghast at this new onslaught.

Miss Hammond shook her finger at her.

"You are a flirt," she said indignantly. "You have broken Theodore's heart. You led him to suppose you cared for him, and he gave up the habits of years for your sake, and now, having played with him, you have rejected him!"

"But I only came here to see if I wanted him to be my guardian," wailed the girl.

Miss Hammond only sniffed and walked toward the door. She put her hand on the handle, stopped, and looked back.

"I suppose you know what this means to both of you?" she asked.

"Miss Hammond, I don't—I didn't—"

"If you care nothing for your reputation, that is your own affair. If you wish to be branded as a flirt by all—"

"How can you say such things?" cried Polly, writhing with shame at the awful thought.

"He will go back to his drinking and his cigarettes," continued Miss Hammond relentlessly.

"But it isn't fair. It isn't!" cried Polly desperately.

"If he had the least hope that some day you might grow to care for him—"

"I don't love him. I've only known him a week. How can you get to care for a man in a week? Love is the slow development of matured affection, inspired by a true appreciation of character."

Miss Hammond turned and came swiftly back. She kneeled down at the girl's side.

"Forgive me. I have been unjust to you," she said. "No one appreciates more than I what your coming here has meant to us. But my brother is everything to me. If only there was a chance that you might grow fond of him some day, I am sure he could conquer his vices. Isn't there a chance?"

"Perhaps there is!" cried Polly wildly.

Miss Hammond kissed her and withdrew, leaving Polly in the depths of despair.

THE girl hardly closed her eyes that night. When she came down to breakfast Theodore had already left for his office.

"Can't you stay just one day more, so as to say goodby to my brother, and leave him with a little hope, if only the smallest grain?" asked Miss Hammond.

Polly consented. That afternoon she welcomed her hostess' suggestion that

they go downtown shopping, as a diversion. And then the unexpected happened. She met Dick Cresswell.

The girl was just coming out of the store, in which Miss Hammond still lingered, and she and Dick came face to face. Somehow Polly could not avoid the impression that Dick had seen her go in, and had waited for her.

He raised his hat, and Polly noticed how pale and set his face was. Even then, embarrassed as she was, she felt a little thrill of joy to think that perhaps he was pining for her.

"How do you do, Mr. Cresswell," she said, with a cold intonation that gave no inkling of that painful fluttering inside.

"Miss Seaton! P-P-Polly, won't you let me speak to you? I know you are staying with the Hammonds. You are going to choose Theodore Hammond for your guardian, and everybody says that you are engaged to him. Is it true? Oh, Pol—Miss Seaton, you make me so miserable!"

Polly might have said the same, but Dick's words, combined with the memory of that unforgettable evening, whipped her like a lash.

"How dare you ask me such a question as that? What right have you?" she demanded in a low voice. "As for your feelings, I can only say that I'm surprised to hear about them, when you find it so easy to derive consolation from that—from other sources!"

"O, Polly"—Dick got it out straight that time—"you little obstinate thing, I don't know whether I want to laugh or cry. That woman you thought you saw is—"

"Oh, please spare me the details, Mr. Cresswell," answered the girl. "And please don't say I thought I saw her. I have fairly good eyesight, and I did see her, and I saw her laughing with you inside the theatre, and behaving shamelessly. She doesn't deserve to be called a woman at all."

"Polly—Polly, dear, she doesn't, because she—"

"Mr. Cresswell, I will not hear you make insinuations against her! If you can talk against her to me you are capable of anything. Even the most degraded men have some sense of loyalty to—to—"

Dick turned away hopelessly. "All right," he muttered in a savage voice. "I won't try again. Only, if you drive me to doing things which you imagine, which aren't so, don't blame me for it, that's all!"

Polly stared at him in consternation. "Do—do you mean drink and—poker, Dick?" she faltered.

She was overcome by the dreadful threat. Was Dick in earnest? Did he really mean that he was going to—going to become even more vicious than—than he had been? Was she going to have two of them on her hands?

And with a sense of reluctant justice she acknowledged that Mr. Hammond had been far, far worse than Dick had ever been.

"Dick!" she cried in a choking voice. "Come back! I'll listen to what you want to tell me."

But she was too late. Dick had not even heard her. He had disappeared in the crowd, and Polly, half blinded by tears, made her way back to find Miss Hammond.

But she could not find her. There were two entrances to the store; Polly had gone out by the side, and Miss Hammond must be looking for her in front.

POLLY felt that it was impossible to face Miss Hammond just then. Deliberately avoiding the front entrance, she made her way by a detour along a side street and set off homeward on foot, trying to compose herself. It was too awful, and, worst of all, she knew that she loved Dick Cresswell, who was bound by every instinct of honor, if he possessed any, to that miserable creature whom she had seen inside the theatre.

"I shall watch over him from afar," she said to herself. "He will never know the protective thoughts that will go out to

him, but he shall feel them. His sorrows shall be my sorrows, and—"

"What's this I hear about sorrows?" asked a voice in her ear.

Polly started and looked up. She had been day-dreaming, and unconsciously had left the town behind her. She was nearing Newton Street, and confronting her was a smiling, elderly gentleman whom she knew very well. He was, in fact, the Reverend Josiah Snaith, the minister of one of the local churches.

"How do you do, Miss Seaton!" said Mr. Snaith. "Surely I did not overhear the word 'sorrow'? That would sound oddly out of place upon the lips of one as happy as you must be."

"Why must I be happy?" demanded Polly defiantly.

The old minister patted her shoulder indulgently.

"My dear, young people think the old are as blind as bats, and as deaf as adders," he said. "But good news travels on wings. A tiny, tiny bird just whispered good news to me."

"What good news?" cried Polly; and she was conscious of a frightful, and hitherto unknown desire to scratch the gentle old man's face. Yes, she was keyed up to that, utterly reckless and utterly desperate.

"Your engagement to my dear friend, Mr. Hammond," said the minister. "And," he continued, assuming a benignant seriousness of manner, which he felt vaguely to be the correct demeanor, "you have chosen rightly and well. Mr. Hammond is one man in a thousand. So many of our young men lead fast, dissipated lives. They drink, they smoke, they gamble, they play—let me see! I think the phrase is 'playing the races.' My dear Miss Seaton, your pure young life has hitherto been preserved from the knowledge of things like these. They are but names to you. Therefore, I say, the little winged creature that has come to me and whispered the good news in my ear was a harbinger of delight to me."

And he beamed upon her in so kindly a manner that Polly was struck dumb with dismay, and could only stare at him.

"I have known Theodore Hammond all his life," the minister continued, "and I know that liquor has never passed his lips. He is a non-smoker. He loathes the lighter side of life. Not that I am opposed to a little harmless frivolity upon occasion. But Mr. Hammond is a very serious-minded young man. As secretary of our local branch of the Young Men's Christian Association he has done yeoman work. As vice-president of our League Against Drink, Drama, and Destitution, he—"

"O, stop!" cried Polly.

It was a very much astounded minister who stood looking after the flying figure until it disappeared round the bend of the road.

"Ah, well!" mused Mr. Snaith, as he resumed his way. "A young girl's shyness is the noblest work of the Creator." He flicked a fleck of mud from his sleeve, cast up by the flying heels. "So timid!" he murmured benignantly. "Her great happiness has been her cherished secret, and I unthinkingly revealed my knowledge of it and startled her."

POLLY ran till she stopped, out of breath, at the entrance to the Hammonds' garden. It was already dusk. The square house stood gaunt and bare before her. She had always hated the Hammonds' house. It looked like a prison. Now the thought of occupying it terrified her. Not for a single night could she stay there any longer.

But there was Theodore to see, and his sister to whom to apologize for her desertion in the store.

Polly trembled like a guilty thing. Oh, for the warm shoulder and hospitable arms of Nan Draper!

She could hardly screw up her courage to enter the grounds, and, when she did so, she trod the very edge of the walk, slinking behind the shrubs and bushes until she reached the drawing-room window.

From here the walk around to the side

entrance, and Polly was pulling herself together with a supreme effort, when the voice of Theodore Hammond at the window halted her in affright.

"I tell you I'm through with it!" she heard him say; and his sister made some rejoinder which escaped Polly's ears.

"I'm through with it," repeated Theodore.

"It was all your doing, Sister. I knew it would never work out. It was based upon deception and guile from the beginning."

"Guile!" sniffed Miss Hammond. "If a girl who is absolutely ignorant of life and has a cool quarter of a million dollars invested in trust is looking for a guardian, and her stepfather thought enough of you to include you among the list of possibilities—"

"The old chap hated me. It's just one of his disgusting practical jokes."

"Among the possibilities, I don't see that there's much guile in trying to put your best foot forward."

"My best foot!" echoed Theodore with a hollow laugh. "I suppose you call that my best foot, do you? It was a false move from the beginning, trying to play upon her nature by interesting her in my vices.

"The sight of those bottles of liquor nearly made me sick, and those awful pictures you got for my room made me feel as if I'd got into some cheap dive. And if she hadn't taken that cigarette out of my mouth I'd have had to smoke it, and I'd have been ill for a week."

Polly did not mean to listen, and yet she was rooted to the spot by these terrific revelations. She could not stir; she could only continue listening in shame and humiliation, and dumb agony.

"Theo, you're a fool," said his sister bluntly. "You could have married her if you'd played your cards right. And it's my belief that you can marry her yet."

The words galvanized Polly into life. She ran to the window. "He can't!" she cried. "He can't! Never, never, never! And never could, because I hate him, and you too, you wicked impostor!"

The brother and sister sat as motionless as if frozen, their staring, stony faces turned in horror toward Polly's animated one.

"You are a wicked wretch, Mr. Hammond!" cried Polly furiously. "I thought —I thought you were sunk in sin, and I wanted to help you upward, and redeem you, and all the while you were a good respectable man. You've made me a laughing-stock. I hate you. And as for you"—she turned upon the woman—"you wanted my money, did you? You can have it, then. You can have it all. I'll tell Mr. Brose to send you every penny of it tomorrow, and I'll go out into the world and earn my living."

She turned and ran. She could not draw her breath freely until she reached the street. Then she crouched against the fence and cried her heart out.

"I scorned you because of your vices, Dick," she wept, "and I wanted to make that odious wretch my guardian because he was worse than you, and now I hate him because he's good, just as I hated Clarence Strutt. I don't know what's gone wrong with my head and heart. O, Nan Draper, I'm coming to you, and I'll never speak to any man on earth again!"

(The adventures of Miss Polly in search of a guardian will be concluded in the next issue of "Wayside Tales and Cartoons Magazine.")

From Die Muskete, Vienna

"At the last running match I beat the second man in by a nose!"
"Allow me to congratulate you upon a remarkable win!"

From Kasper, Stockholm

THE MODERN ELOPEMENT

"We can rest now, Charles; they will never follow us over here!"

He Loved and---Lied

By Frank Dorrance Hopley

Of course it wasn't a lie at all, the way things turned out. But it caused Artie Thompson as much worry as a regular fib would have done. Which shows how even in love it pays to be, to be—well anyhow it pays to be something, especially if you win the girl!

"Of course, Arthur," said Miss Lettie Fisher, gazing dreamily at Mr. Thompson, who was seated on a piano-stool, "your lessons in New York have improved your voice wonderfully—but—"

"But I'm not as good as Tristam. Is that the idea?"

"Y-e-s. Whenever I hear anyone sing 'I Hear You Calling Me,' I always think of that talking machine record of his. Wouldn't it be just splendid if you did sing as well as Tristam and became the great American tenor? Wouldn't it be great? Wouldn't—"

Mr. Thompson smiled at the girl's enthusiasm.

"Yes, Lettie, it certainly would," he answered.

"I wish," continued Lettie, clasping her hands over her knees, "that you knew some great singer who would say just what he thought of your voice. You might be wasting your time, Arthur, after all. Now, there's Ted Lewis. He sang before a big teacher in Chicago who told Ted his voice was just grand. Said he would give him lessons for ten dollars an hour, which is half his usual price, just to help Ted along. There's a boy who's going to be a great singer."

Miss Fisher lapsed into dreamy silence, and Thompson flushed. The mention of Ted Lewis displeased him. Both were rivals for Miss Fisher's hand, and somehow, lately, Ted seemed to be getting the best of it. He hesitated a moment, then a look of grim determination came over his face.

"I heard Tristam when I was in New York," he said, "and—was introduced to him at a club. He asked me to sing for him and I did. He said my voice had great possibilities, and—"

Miss Fisher sprang to her feet.

"I don't believe it, Arthur Thompson," she exclaimed. "If you had you'd 've written me all about it."

Thompson gulped and his face grew solemn.

"Honest, Lettie," he said. "I didn't write about it because I wanted to tell you when I got back. I gave him my address and he said he'd write me once in a while—but," he added, "I haven't heard from him yet."

Lettie looked at the young man rapturously.

"Arthur," she said, "if John Tristam said your voice was good it must be so. I'm proud of you. I do believe you'll beat Ted Lewis yet, and—"

"And when I do, Lettie, I'm going to ask you a question. You know what it is, dear—"

Miss Fisher blushed prettily.

"There's the two-ten train," she said. "It's nearly an hour late. I wonder what happened to it."

Arthur Thompson walked down the street with a very much disturbed mind.

He had lied to Miss Fisher, and it troubled him. He had never seen Tristam in his life, but when Miss Fisher mentioned Ted Lewis' success, he determined to go him one better. He was sorry now he had done it, but he would have to see it through. Thompson sighed deeply, only to have the sigh broken off in the middle by a vigorous slap on the back.

"Well, well," said the owner of the punch. "If there isn't little Artie boy, all togged up in his Sunday clothes. Just starting out to look for you! Put her there, old pal!"

Thompson turned suddenly.

"Johnny Mack!" he exclaimed in delight. "What's the big idea—in this burg?"

"Couldn't help it. Engine got a Charley horse down the line and was just able to limp it along until we got here. Remembered you lived in Pleasantdale, so I thought I'd light out and see if I couldn't find you. So this is the place, eh? Different from little old New York! Remember the times we had there? Wish I could stay and see the natives, but we leave—"

"You'll do nothing of the kind," interrupted Thompson. "You're going to stop off here with me for a while. I'll take you up to the house and introduce you to some of mother's chicken pie. And tomorrow morning! What do you say to buckwheat cakes with real maple syrup?"

Johnny rolled his eyes delightedly.

"I hear you calling me!" he exclaimed.

Thompson suddenly grew serious. The familiar line made him think again of what Lettie had said. He hesitated. Then the appearance of Ted Lewis in the offing decided him.

"Say, Johnny, I've got an idea."

"Good! But don't blame me."

"I do though. It was you who put it into my head. Say, Johnny Mack, do you want to do me a favor?"

"Sure, anything!"

"Well, you see it's this way. There's a girl who—"

"Oh, that's it, is it? Want to get her off your hands; put her over on the poor boob from New York, eh? Well—"

"No, Johnny. Listen! Her name's Lettie Fisher, and I'm—well, rather gone! There's another fellow, too, the same way, Ted Lewis. Now this morning, Johnny, I lied to her, see? I told her I met Tristam while I was in New York, and that he liked my voice and said he was going to write to me. You know—"

Mr. Mack whistled softly.

"Whew—! Some story to hand to the unsuspecting Lettie. But what have I got to do with all that?"

"I'll tell you—I want you to let me introduce you as John Tristam; stopped over here on purpose to see me. I—"

"Well, well! I didn't think Artie boy had it in him. I guess he learned a few things in New York besides singing, eh? But I'm with you, boy, only post me what to do. Anything to get some of those buckwheat cakes inside my face."

"We'll have to fix it up like this," said Thompson. "You don't want anyone to know you're Tristam, otherwise people would make a great fuss over you, see? We'll only tell mother and Lettie. They'll ask you to sing, of course, but you can get away with that all right, can't you? No one in this town has ever seen or heard Tristam. Only got his records."

"Oh, I can sing, all right, all right. Wait until they hear me. Lead on, McDuff, the famous American tenor is at your service."

"We'll have to say," continued Thompson, now thoroughly imbued with the plan, "that you're on for a rest, and traveling—in—in casserole."

The yell that went up from his friend made Thompson jump.

"Say," he cried, holding on to his shaking sides, "what do you think I am, a piece of cheese? You've got it wrong, my boy, it's 'in-cog-ni-to' you mean."

"All right, have it your way," laughed Thompson. "Never was good on Greek. Come on, Johnny, and don't forget who you are!"

LETTIE, pink and pretty, in a creation of the same shade as her cheeks, stopped suddenly on her way down the street, at sight of a familiar figure that had just turned the corner, in company with a person whose face was unknown to Lettie, at whom she looked inquiringly.

As the two approached, Lettie noticed that the face of the blond young man was flushed, and that he appeared excited.

"There she is!" he exclaimed as Lettie hove into view. "Look, Johnny! The girl in pink!"

Johnny looked, and a smile wreathed his fat, pudgy face.

"Some chicken, Artie! Lead the way!"

"Lettie," said Thompson, impressively, as they came up, "he—is—here."

"Who?" she asked in bewilderment.

"John Tristam. Stopped off to see me on his way West. Mr. Tristam, Miss Fisher!"

"Put her there!" ejaculated "Mr. Tristam," holding out his hand. "Glad to meet a friend of Artie Thompson's."

Lettie gasped.

"Are you really John Tristam, the great American tenor?" she asked doubtingly. "And did you stop off here especially to see Arthur?"

Mack looked aggrieved.

"That's me," he said, "and I'm here to see Artie. Heard him sing in New York and I said to myself, 'That boy's got a voice worth cultivating, and I'll keep track of him. When I found the train was going through Pleasantdale, nothing would do but I must stop off and see him."

"Oh, Arthur!" exclaimed Miss Fisher, her eyes shining. "Won't everybody be pleased?"

"But you musn't tell a soul," protested Thompson anxiously. "You see, Mr. Tristam is away for his health. He's traveling in—in—"

"Incognito!" interpolated his friend.

"Yes, incognito, because if people knew who he was they would make a fuss over him, and he wouldn't get a chance to rest. I'm going to take him home and get some supper, and this evening, Lettie, I'll bring him up to your house, and he'll sing for us."

"You'll sing, 'I Hear You Calling Me,' won't you, Mr. Tristam?" interrupted Lettie, eagerly.

"Sure. That song's a humdinger. Ta-ta, Miss Lettie. See you later. Now for the eats!" Taking his friend's arm, Mack walked majestically away.

AT THE home of Miss Fisher that evening, a surprise awaited Thompson and "Tristam." The parlor was filled with members of the feminine sex to the number of seventeen. As they entered there was a gurgle of excitement, and seventeen pairs of hands applauded loudly. Miss Fisher, resplendent in a pale blue silk, which showed to advantage the plumpness of her neck and arms, endeavored to account for the unexpected audience.

"I only told Eleanor Wood and Peggy Marshall," she explained, "and they said they wouldn't say a word to another soul. But I guess they did and then—it got all around that he was here. But I know he'll forgive me—won't you, Mr. Tristam?"

"I'll forgive you anything, Miss Lettie," he replied, gallantly. "Anything to please the ladies, that's my motto. Now introduce me and then we'll start the show."

TRISTAM'S utter lack of conventionality was somewhat of a shock to the company which had gathered to greet him. They expected to find a man of refinement, radiating music from his finger-tips. Instead, they found a stocky, pudgy-faced man, with laughing eyes, attired in a checkered brown suit, who looked more like a traveling salesman than a world-renowned singer.

After "Mr. Tristam" had rendered several selections and had been greeted at the end of each with a chorus of "ah's" and much clapping of hands, he announced his favorite song, "I Hear You

Calling Me." This, to do him justice, he sang remarkably well, and received the congratulations of the delighted ladies with becoming modesty.

"Won't you sing Mavis?" pleaded a little girl, radiantly gowned in a lemon-colored silk. "Please do."

"Who?"

"'Mavis'."

"Don't know the lady, introduce me!"

"I've got a record called 'Mavis,' as sung by Mr. John Tristam. It's beau-ti-ful!"

Mack grinned, knowingly.

"Yes, yes! Of course!" he said. "One of those records. Made thousands of them. Every time I go into the shop of the company they always say, 'Here's a beautiful little thing, John, just sing it.' But I never remember the names. Read at sight, you know, so I don't have to."

The girl in yellow jumped up and started for the door.

"I live just around the corner," she said, "and I've got that piece. I'll go and get it so you can sing it. It won't be a minute."

Mack appeared worried.

"Say," he whispered, drawing Thompson to one side. "Flag that dame in yellow before she gets away. Wants me to sing a piece she calls Morris, and is going to get it. I can't read music a little bit. Takes me a year to learn to sing a piece. Stop her quick, or the beans will be spilled."

The girl had already left the room when Thompson darted after her.

"We mustn't ask Mr. Tristam to sing any more," he said firmly, as he caught her in the hall. "He's sung a lot now and I don't want him imposed upon."

The girl pouted.

"Well," she said, reluctantly turning back, "perhaps you're right, but Mavis is just too sweet for anything."

When Mr. Thompson returned to the room he found a crowd of girls surrounding his friend, who seemed to be in further trouble.

"We've all brought our autograph albums and want you to write in them," explained one, waving a plush-covered book. "Get a pen, Lettie."

Again he appeared discomfited and appealed to Thompson for aid.

"Say," he said determinedly, "this thing has got to stop. It may be all right to play up that I'm that guy Tristam, but when it comes to signing his name, I object. Why, if I did that they'd arrest me for larceny or bigamy or something. I know what I'll do! I'll tell 'em I can't write!"

"But you can't do that," protested Thompson. "They'd all know it wasn't so. Think of a great singer who couldn't write his name. That's absurd. Sorry, Johnny, but you've got to see it through. Write anything they want you to, no one will ever know the difference. I'm sorry we started it but we've got to go on now to the end. Buck up, old man!"

"But—"

"No 'buts' about it . . . Coming, Lettie! Now, Mr. Tristam, sit right down at this table and do as the ladies want you to."

"And please write something besides your name," ventured Lettie, handing him a pen. "Something to remember you by. The name of your favorite song, for instance."

"All right"—doggedly. "Line forms this side girls!" And dipping the pen in the ink, he wrote: "I Hear You Calling Me—John Tristam."

When the last book had been inscribed and returned to its delighted owner, Mack leaned weakly back in his chair. Just then a whistle blew.

"What's that?" he asked, hopefully. "A fire?"

"No, it's the nine-fifty train," answered Miss Fisher. "I'm so glad it's on time. My dearest friend, Marion Blake is on it. She's been to New York for a month. I left a note at her house telling her to come right up and meet you. You see, she's heard you sing several times and is just crazy about you. She wrote me she had studied you at each concert. My, won't she be surprised to find you here?"

At this announcement, Thompson

wilted. He caught Mack's eye and, a look of grim determination in his face, he rose.

"Sorry, ladies," he said, "but we must be going. The night air when it gets late, is very bad for Mr. Tristam's voice. Has to get in before the dew falls very much!"

There was a chorus of disappointed voices, chief among them, Lettie's.

"But I wanted Mr. Tristam to meet Marion," she said. "She'll feel dreadfully. I'll tell you! Come to luncheon tomorrow, and I'll have her here. Just you and Mr. Tristam, and Marion and myself." She turned to Mack:

"Will you?"

"Sure thing," answered that young man, edging toward the door. "I thank you, Miss Fisher and ladies, for a very pleasant evening. And I'll be on hand tomorrow.

"Now, ta, ta, ladies. Come, Artie!" and he disappeared, followed by Thompson.

Once out of the house, Mack breathed more easily. "Artie Thompson," he said, as they hurried down the street, "I wouldn't have gone through all that for anybody in the world but you. I'll have to have an extra helping of buckwheat cakes in the morning to square up. But, say—some stunt! Seventeen times I wrote, 'I hear you calling me, John Tristam.'

"Say, if those dames ever find out, you'll hear them calling you, all right. And that luncheon with the girl who knows every line of my dear face. It can't be did. That means I'll have to get out of town early in the morn."

"Holy cauliflower!"

"Mr. Tristam" suddenly stopped and grasped his friend's arm excitedly.

"Look! Look there!" he demanded.

"What?" said Artie Thompson in bewilderment. "I don't see anything but old Jed Peters posting some bills. He's been the billposter here ever since I can remember."

"But look! Look what he's posting!"

As the billposter moved away, Thompson spied on the side of a barn the announcement:

COMING!
October 15th
AMERICA'S FAMOUS TENOR
JOHN TRISTAM
In a Concert at Memorial Hall

Johnny Mack sighed wearily as he looked at Thompson out of the corner of his eye. "It's all up. I've got to get away before they see those posters, or they'll mob me. When's the first train in the morning?"

"Not until nine-thirty."

"None tonight?"

"The express goes through a quarter after twelve. They'll flag it if anyone wants to get on. But Johnny, you must stay and—"

"Me for the twelve-fifteen," announced Johnny, firmly. "And here's where I don't even get a taste of those buckwheats. Sorry, Artie, but in ten minutes I'll be dangling my legs on the station platform waiting for a sign of the choo-choo. And say, Artie, boy, what they won't do to you when John Tristam shows up for that concert!"

PLEASANTDALE, plastered with posters from the National House at one end of Main Street to the Congregational Church at the other, awoke the next morning with a new air of importance. For years, the little city had aspired to become the musical center of the county in which it was located. Heretofore, however, the prize had gone to Westboro, which, through the generosity of one of its wealthy residents, boasted an opera house.

The coming of the famous singer was therefore heralded gleefully by the morning paper. The piece of luck was due, the editor stated, to the public-spiritedness of a certain influential citizen of the place, who modestly declined to have his name appear. The concert would occur on the citizen's sixtieth birthday, and all

"For half an hour Mr. Tristam held an impromptu reception."

expenses had been guaranteed by him. People on their way to work scanned the posters curiously, and commented on the great event. As the news spread, the townfolk appeared in numbers to gossip, and congratulate one another on the treat in store.

Try as they might, the seventeen young ladies found it impossible to keep their secret. It was soon noised around that the great Tristam had actually been in their midst the night before, and Miss Fisher and Mr. Thompson were overwhelmed with congratulations.

As the evening for the concert drew on, everybody in Pleasantdale was on the tiptoe of expectation. That is, everyone with the exception of Thompson. "Artie" realized that his deception would be discovered the moment that John Tristam stepped on the stage. There would be a terrible scene by the seventeen young ladies who had been so completely taken in, and Lettie—Lettie would be lost to him forever. That young lady had insisted upon seats in the third row, and he shuddered when he thought of what would happen. He wanted to run away, but there was no place to run to, so he doggedly made up his mind to face the music when the time came, as best he could.

"Maybe the hall will burn down," he muttered as he stood looking gloomily at the three-story, red brick building, a few days before the concert was scheduled to occur. But such a wished-for calamity did not happen, and on the fateful evening, Miss Lettie Fisher and Thompson, marched down the aisle and seated themselves in C1 and 3.

The hour had come: Thompson stiffened in his seat and made ready for the worst. As the curtain began to rise he put his hand over his face. He heard the applause and knew that the singer had appeared. Then Lettie clutched his arm.

"Don't he look just grand in evening clothes?" she whispered. "So much nicer than in his checkered suit."

Thompson suddenly opened his eyes. As he looked at the man on the stage he gasped. They were surely the eyes of Johnny Mack which looked at him from over the footlights. Then, as the man began to sing, Thompson doubted again. The tones were much sweeter and clearer than had been the voice of Mr. Mack on that memorable evening.

As the concert proceeded, Thompson was torn by conflicting emotions. At times, he was sure it was Johnny Mack; at others he fancied it was only a remarkable resemblance. It was not until the singer was forced to make a speech after his song, "I Hear You Calling Me," that Thompson was convinced of the truth. There was no mistaking that speaking voice, even though the words uttered were dignified in the extreme and the English faultless. It *was* Mack's voice!

As the curtain fell after the last encore and the audience rose to go, Mr. Thompson pushed his way quickly through the crowd until he reached the dressing room, which he entered abruptly.

"Tell me," he exclaimed as the singer turned and came forward with a smile, "are you John Tristam or Johnny Mack—or have I gone crazy?"

"Sure, that's me," responded the singer. Then, as he looked at the still bewildered face of Thompson, he broke into a laugh.

"I guess you've had about all you can stand, for a time," he said, as he lit a cigarette. "It's up to me to explain. Yes, I'm John Tristam, whom the music-loving public have been good enough to designate as the great American tenor. I'm a good deal of a plebian, though, in my tastes, and I get mighty fed up on this dress-suit society stuff. So when I'm in New York I just put on my little checkered suit, and go down to the club with the boys, where I'm known as Johnny Mack, and no one knows the difference. Whenever you see in the papers that John Tristam is spending a few days at his camp in the Adirondacks, you may be sure that Johnny Mack is shooting pool at the club.

"I heard you sing there, Artie, and I liked your voice. When planning my trip I found I was going through Pleasantdale, and determined to stop off and see you, and tell you who I really was. But you beat me to it, Artie, boy! Say, you thought you were mighty smart, didn't you? But I made up my mind I'd see it out, for I knew I was coming here to sing later and we could fix things up.

"Played my part well, too, didn't I? Stalled on singing; couldn't read music, surprised at my posters, and all the rest. Always thought I'd ought to have been an actor. But sh—we'll never tell a soul about it. I'm John Tristam here, and Johnny Mack is on vacation until I get to New York again. Now, I hear the people of Pleasantdale clamoring at the door to give me a little jolly, so I suppose I'll have to see them. Stay around, Arthur, I want to see you later."

FOR HALF AN HOUR Mr. Tristam held an impromptu reception. When everyone had gone with the exception of Miss Fisher and Artie Thompson, Tristam went over to where they were standing and put his hand on the young man's shoulder.

"Arthur Thompson," he said, "I've a proposition to make to you. I believe in your voice. All it needs is proper training to make it a wonder. Travel with me for a year and I'll give you lessons, and help you in every way I can. Yes, and I'll give you spending money, too, if you'll act as my secretary. I need one to answer mash notes I get all the time from women who imagine they're in love with me. Will you—"

"Oh, Arthur!" broke in Miss Fisher, her eyes shining. "To study a year with the great Tristam. Isn't it just wonderful?"

Thompson started to speak, but his voice failed him.

"Will you come, Artie?" asked Tristam again, smiling.

"Artie looked first at Miss Fisher and then at the singer. Then he, too, smiled joyously.

"I hear you calling me," he said, as he grasped John Tristam's outstretched hand.

□ □ □

From Punch, ©, London

Small student of natural history: I say, Mabel, do hedgehogs lay eggs, or do they have kittens, like rabbits?

Carr in New York World

Copyright, 1921, by Press Publishing Co.

Doctor: Well, what'll you have—pills or Pilsener?

Frank Hart in The Sketch, London

UNACADEMIC!
"The bath of Venus"

Jealousy and Hate, after they had stricken the soul of Zoltan de Harvath, planted in his brain a fiendish plot for the destruction of his friend and rival that all but succeeded, all but for—

The Waxen Witness

By Hamilton Craigie

On a Sunday morning of late June a man sat hunched forward over a desk beside which was an elaborate instrument, a super-phonograph, a finely made, delicate mechanism capable of recording tonal impressions shading from hammer strokes almost to the ticking of a watch.

Through the open window the man's gaze traveled outward to the sunlit plaza, and the worshippers on their way to Sunday service at the stone church on the corner—the cathedral of St. Paul's. The hour was just short of eleven, but the man's thoughts were not attuned to the spirit of the morning: there was a sardonic flicker in the gray-green eyes that watched through the window—a gleam like the sun on water, as if the thing that was his soul had arisen to peer outward for a moment in malevolent appraisal at the world roundabout.

Now he bent his head, touched a knob, and a voice—his own—issued from the instrument: crystal-clear, soaring to silver heights of melody, a rich tenor like a silver trumpet against the background of the morning.

For a moment Zoltan de Horvath smiled, with his lips; then, with a bitter, brooding grimace he twitched the knob—the song ceased as if at the closing of a portal. That record had been made at the high tide of his fame; before the slow failure of that golden voice had turned his thoughts to wormwood—his heart to hate. Replacing the record with another, he sat for an instant in a stony calm; then, inclining his head, he spoke for an interval into the great horn, a quick, passionate utterance, his eyes filming with the thoughts behind.

For the time, blind, deaf, dumb to all but thought, he sat, a motionless Buddha, his face a graven mask of passionless repose.

IN HIS WARPED and twisted brain Zoltan de Horvath had planned the murder of his friend and associate, Sangrada, because, as he continually reminded himself, the world was not big enough for the two of them..

Celebrities both, de Horvath—and who will soon forget the magic of his soaring tenor—Sangrada, impresario extraordinary, upon whom had fallen the mantle, the aegis rather, of the world-famous Tomasso Aldobrandini: these two had been—friends.

And de Horvath, with the vagaries of a mind diseased, would have it that his friend had become jealous of the place that was his; somehow he connected the slow failure of his golden voice, which in a way had been responsible for his mental condition, with Sangrada, his friend.

And with the cunning of a mind dis-

eased he had plotted his revenge: a noble one, he told himself—a double stroke, a coup worthy of the genius of himself, Zoltan de Horvath.

Now in the vaulted chamber which served him as workshop and studio, on this bright morning of late June, he sat, his huge head bent forward on his hands, eyes, with a still, pale fire in their depths, fixed on the great doors, about and around him the silence, save for the deep and distant murmur of the city's pulse, dim waves upon a far shore of sound.

He raised his head, and the long, spatulate fingers hooked inward with the thought behind his eyes.

The trap was set; it remained only for the coming of Sangrada to perfect it.

But would Sangrada come? It seemed to de Horvath—he could not remember it very clearly—that there had been a time when he had loved Sangrada like a brother. But that had been in a day long past, perhaps in another incarnation.

Now—it seemed that he had always hated him: his presence, his manner, the way he walked and talked; but with the twisted cunning of his sick mind he had dissembled . . . oh, yes, he had been clever, taking his inspiration from the Thing which crouched, slavering, at the very center of his being—the Dweller on the Threshold. . . .

But—would Sangrada come? But two days past, at the burning brightness which he had felt like a suffusion in his eyes, he had veiled them with lowered lids at the responsive, swift questions in the other's.

But It had reassured him.

De Horvath spread his long fingers, stretching them as a cat unsheathes its talons. His eyes turned inward in a fearful squint, his lips drawn backward from the clenched teeth—

"He will come—Sangrada!"

The words hissed abruptly like a leaping flame in the dimness; he saw them as a thin thread of scarlet against the background of a whirling mist which, of a sudden, appeared to gather form and substance even as he looked. The heavy, brocaded curtains at the window bellied inward suddenly as if on the wings of a wind unfelt by man.

The voice—he did not recognize it as his own—continued in a harsh whisper:

"He will come . . . and he will go forth. . . ."

De Horvath had put his house in order, as a man about to embark upon a journey. The Voice, the inner Voice which guided him—he could not remember when he had ceased to combat it—but, curiously, as his own incomparable voice had faded, that inward Mentor had waxed stronger, more insistent. Until it had spoken with his living tongue!

The huge head with its face, pallid like a fungus, the pinched nostrils, the batrachian lips, the eyes dwelling inward upon what secrets the Master might alone reveal—the thing which had been de Horvath crouched, waiting, in his chair. Well . . . he could afford to wait!

A great wall clock intoned the minutes with a steady, booming beat which seemed in the silence to fill that dim chamber as with a rushing pulse of sound . . . a mighty river flowing, from silence unto silence.

Now he put forth a thin, delicate hand, white with the paleness of old ivory; selected a cigar from a humidor on the desk; lighted it; began to smoke it with a Sybaritic enjoyment. He smoked it lingeringly, almost in the manner of a rite. So might a man, a devotee of the weed, smoke in the shadow of the gallows, the chair. And it was significant that it was the only thing that de Horvath's physician had forbidden; his sole chance for the recovery of that fading voice would be, the specialist had pronounced, a rigid and absolute avoidance of tobacco in any form.

And to lose that voice de Horvath would as soon have lost his life; if it were to die, he would perish with it.

A wind had arisen—high, piping, prelude of storm. Of a sudden the casement shook as if in the grasp of a determined, angry hand. It was now past twelve o'clock, but the gloom deepened there in

"Sangrada . . . made one forward, groping, desperate stride, fingers extended. De Horvath's voice came, as through a whirling mist. 'Where I am going . . . thou shalt follow.'"

that still chamber to a paley glimmer; the long wail of the wind at the casement furnished a diminishing obligato . . . then, all at once, fell silent, breathless, as if in anticipation. . . .

He opened a drawer in the desk, glanced within it at the flat, black shape of the automatic, gleaming dully in the semi-gloom; a sound that was half a chuckle arose from the depths of that which was his soul . . . a bell thrilled twice, a long, sharp, shattering summons, as of doom!

De Horvath raised his head, his eyes, falcon-bright, fixed in an unwinking, lidless stare upon the great leaves of the bronze double doors.

IT WAS precisely twelve thirty-five by the huge dial of the cathedral clock as Sangrada, a red rose in the buttonhole of his immacultae frock coat, went up the steps of the great house on the corner. Short, blocky, thewed like a Farnese Hercules, with his spade beard and his military mustachios, he was a conspicuous figure seen and afterward identified by as many as half a dozen witnesses: the traffic policeman on the beat; the druggist on the corner; the news-stand proprietor just across the way; the manicure in the barber shop whose seat commanded an unobstructed vista of the square itself; the traffic man was able, even, to swear as to the exact moment that the impresario had halted to press the bell-push. . . .

Sangrada, with outstretched hands, came forward across the thick pile of the Kermanshah rug.

"Ah, Zoltan, you sent for me?" he inquired; then, at the expression in those gray-green eyes, he halted abruptly in mid-speech.

"What is it?" he continued sharply, the words slurring together in the old, half-forgotten dialect of the Basque. He made one forward step, and then recoiled, his face gray with a sort of hideous strain.

Abruptly, as an adder strikes, de Horvath's hand, holding the gun, had flashed upward from the table.

"What is it, muy amigo?" he mocked, his eyes bright, steady, searching, holding Sangrada's own as steadily as the unwavering muzzle of the pistol. Hate, naked and unconcealed, was in those eyes: the bitter, brooding intensity of an implacable purpose, unswerving, ruthless. Now his speech dripped venom, like an exhalation:

"I will tell you what it is, my Ignacio . . . nay, do not fear—I do not harm thee now; there is no need—" he laughed, with a chill mirth—"the trap is set . . . thou hast walked into it, fat one. Presently."

He ceased, his gaze fixed upon Sangrada with a gloating certitude.

"My vengeance, the vengeance of Zoltan de Horvath . . . the voice . . ."

His tone rose, died, gathered strength, as a candle flares at the last with a brief spark of life. Sangrada spoke between loose lips:

"But—what have I done—Zoltan—I do not understand . . ."

De Horvath's eyes grew filmy, like a vulture's; his voice rose, almost to a singing pitch, like a swift fire:

"Thou—knowest . . . it is written . . ." again the laugh . . . "thy nostrums, thy advice—the ruin of my voice thou hast accomplished . . . look thou to it . . .!"

His voice rose to a shriek. Sangrada, dumb, staring, looked, then looked again, his eyes widening with terror and realization—too late!

He made one forward, groping, desperate stride, fingers extended. De Horvath's voice came, as through a whirling mist.

"Where I am going ... I have seen to it . . . that thou shalt follow . . ."

There came the flat crack of the pistol; De Horvath's eyes went suddenly blank; his head sagged; the weapon clattered to the table-top even as Sangrada, like a blind man, had rushed outward from that chamber of death.

SANGRADA'S arrest for the murder of his friend and associate, de Horvath, preceded the inquest by a scant two hours of time, and the case against the impre-

sario was not lightened by the decision of the coroner—that the appearance of suicide might have been a plant.

Sangrada, a powerful man, Burgess contended, could easily have overpowered the singer, holding the gun close enough to his forehead to make it appear that the killing had been self-inflicted. Burgess rather prided himself on his originality; and the theory, as it chanced, was plausible enough to have fitted the facts, despite the manifest absence of apparent motive.

De Horvath was last seen alive by his old serving-man, his sole attendant, at precisely twelve thirty-five, the time—and this also was a fact established—of Sangrada's entry. At twelve forty-two the impresario had been seen to leave the house, De Horvath's body having been discovered by his servant at about the same moment.

The servant had heard nothing, it appeared; the fact that it was the hour for the serving of his master's chocolate being responsible for his appearance and the discovery of the body, even as Sangrada had raced down the steps.

The impresario, a powerful man, was notorious for his fits of temper; in one such, it was remembered, he had manhandled Possuoli, the Cosmopolitan basso—he was known as a man of violent and unreasoning passions—the absence of apparent motive might not serve as an extenuating circumstance.

SANGRADA, pacing the narrow limits of his cell like a confused and harried bear, received his lawyer, Ripley Higginson, with a Latin intensity. Higginson had been the friend of de Horvath as well as of the impresario; he was a youngish man, with a peering, nearsighted gaze, and a trick of apparent dreaminess which had, more than once, deceived and put to rout, a too-confident opposition. He had come on the instant of Sangrada's message. Now he listened a moment in silence to the impresario's impassioned farrago of furious speech; broken words, clipped phrases:

"They will keel me . . . of that I care not so much . . . it is that my friend, the friend of my life, should at the last—"

His voice broke on the word; he turned to the lawyer with a dramatic gesture of abandonment, his voice falling to a thick whisper:

"And—these hands—they would not have touched one hair of his head, por Dios, no . . ."

Higginson cut in crisply, with intention:

"Well, now, tell me—try to remember—what occurred between you . . . it may help . . . anything he did—said—can you remember?"

Sangrada's heavy brows drew together in a frown of concentration.

"No," he declared, presently, "I do not think that there was much—"

His eyes lightened suddenly, his big fingers clenching and unclenching.

"But yes," he continued, "he said . . . he said: 'the trap is set . . .' Truly do I remember—and then the words: 'Where I am going I have seen to it that thou shalt follow.' But—he was—insane—my poor friend! It was—what you call—an obsession—a malaise of the mind . . . the picture—I can not bear it!"

He covered his face with his hands, his voice falling to a blurring monotone of patois the lawyer could not understand.

In his day, Sangrada had been an actor, and a good one. But Higginson could not but believe that this was genuine; there was conviction in it . . . conviction! If—

"Umm," he remarked, thoughtfully. "From what you say I think—that there was a method in his madness . . . now, if he had only left some record—"

He ceased abruptly on the word, his eyes shining as if at a sudden, inward thought. "Well—it's worth a trial, at any rate—" he laughed in a sudden excitement—"you'll hear if I can make it within the hour!"

A quick, warm handclasp and he was gone. Time pressed. What he would be about must be accomplished before the

inquest. As Sangrada's lawyer, after some little difficulty with the pompous Coroner, he was granted permission to examine the chamber in which, even then, De Horvath lay in state.

TO REACH the desk the lawyer was compelled to pass the catafalque. Although it was mid-morning the room was deep in shadow: sombre, with a still gloom, freighted somehow with a dim tide of threat, soulless, sinister. One might have owned to a Presence brooding there: a voiceless Something that, in a moment, might give tongue to speech unthinkable.

Higginson was dimly aware of this; he felt it as an aura, an emanation; as if the spirit of the dead man lingered there in a malevolent manifestation of wordless menace.

Reaching the desk of a sudden he stood rigid, the whispering shadows at his back alive, as it seemed, with motion; for a moment, so strong is the power of suggestion, he had a curious fancy that if he turned his head he would see . . . he would see . . .

Then, in the semi-gloom he stumbled, put forth a groping hand . . .

Out of the shadows at his elbow there came a voice, harsh, strained, unlovely, like the voice of a man buried deep in some dusty vault: the voice of the dead—the living tongue of the clay there in that sombre catalfalque—the voice of Zoltan de Horvath!

The listener crouched, rigid, in the darkness; then, as the voice went on, pattering in the dimness to a mumbling shriek, his fingers, reaching, had found the light switch; then, almost with the same motion, had silenced the phonograph which in the darkness he had set in motion. Again he turned the knob, and the voice awoke, rasping.

And at what he heard the lawyer's face paled suddenly to a dusky grayness, for the sentence to which he listened was . . . a sentence of death: the legacy of hate, which, reaching beyond the barrier of an eternal silence, had pronounced, as if Sangrada stood there in that very chamber: "Thou art the man!"

The voice ran on, ceased to a thin whisper, a choked gurgle. Higginson swore softly under his breath; then of a sudden he straightened, his eyes shone with a renewal of almost incredulous hope. For, pat upon the final syllables of that voice had come—the miracle!

The instrument whirred on—stopped. Higginson, pausing only long enough to dispatch a brief cheering message to his client at the jail, visited the railroad station, where he spent a crowded five minutes in a careful study of train schedules. A brief conversation with the ticket agent was followed by a call at an ivy-covered cottage, where an individual in rusty black who might have been an undertaker furnished him with additional information at which the lawyer, with a brisk word of thanks, stood not upon the order of his going.

The thing was unbelievable, and yet, amazing as it had proved, it was not more so than the inexorable fact.

But time pressed. The thing that he must do must be uncovered at the inquest—after that . . .

THE CORONER cleared his throat. Under his heavy brows he glanced twice around the silent room—then, his hand upon the phonograph by the desk, he spoke solemnly:

"This instrument—a Recordograph, as I understand . . . it has been called to my attention that the deceased was in the habit of making records for—ah—reproduction . . . it may very well be, gentlemen, that we shall find his last words embalmed in the wax—an evidence that we must not disregard . . ."

He paused, his thick finger tracing an uneven, jagged line scored plainly across the surface of the silent disc.

"You will see that the—ah—record ends abruptly, in itself an evidence that the maker of it was interrupted . . . that, I should say, is quite apparent . . ."

He lifted his hand, palm outward. "Now ..." he said.

For an interval there was a thick silence. Then, impinging upon the dead air like the blows of a hammer there came the voice:

"June twenty-sixth, Sunday, nineteen twenty-one ..."

There followed the opening bars of a song, low, vibrant, unaccompanied. De Horvath, it was known, had been in the habit of testing the records on the Recordograph in this manner for quality, without accompaniment. But the voice was clear and unmistakable. And, of course, toward the last he had been testing that golden voice, seeking and yet fearing to discover the little rift within the lute ...

The voice went on, seeming to gain in power as it progressed, in a rising stair of melody; then, all at once, there came a startling break: the song ceased on an upward note; a voice spoke—De Horvath's voice, the words thick and hurried, with an undertone of panic terror:

"You . . . Sangrada . . . why have you come . . .? Keep off, I tell you! You've come . . . to murder me . . . the gun . . . por Dios—the gun . . . don't . . . shoot . . . would you . . . murder me . . . your friend . . .? Villain . . . ladrone . . . unspeakable . . . you've killed me . . . ah! . . ."

The words ended in a gasp. The coroner, his loose lips quivering, arose in his seat.

"The proof!" he cried, his face working.

"A voice from the dead—"

But Higginson, his face grim and set, interposed a stabbing finger.

"Silence!" he rasped, so fiercely that the coroner desisted. For perhaps three ticks of the watch the instrument whirred on; then, all at once, there crashed one deep, sonorous note; another; the heavy, booming vibrations of the church bells of St. Paul's.

There was no possibility of doubt. The mellow thunder of the chimes went on, vibrated into silence; then, high and clear, there followed a long, wailing note, sustained and clamorous: the long-drawn hoot of the engine as it whistled for the draw beyond the town. The cylinder hummed on to silence; its work was done.

Higginson's voice came clear:

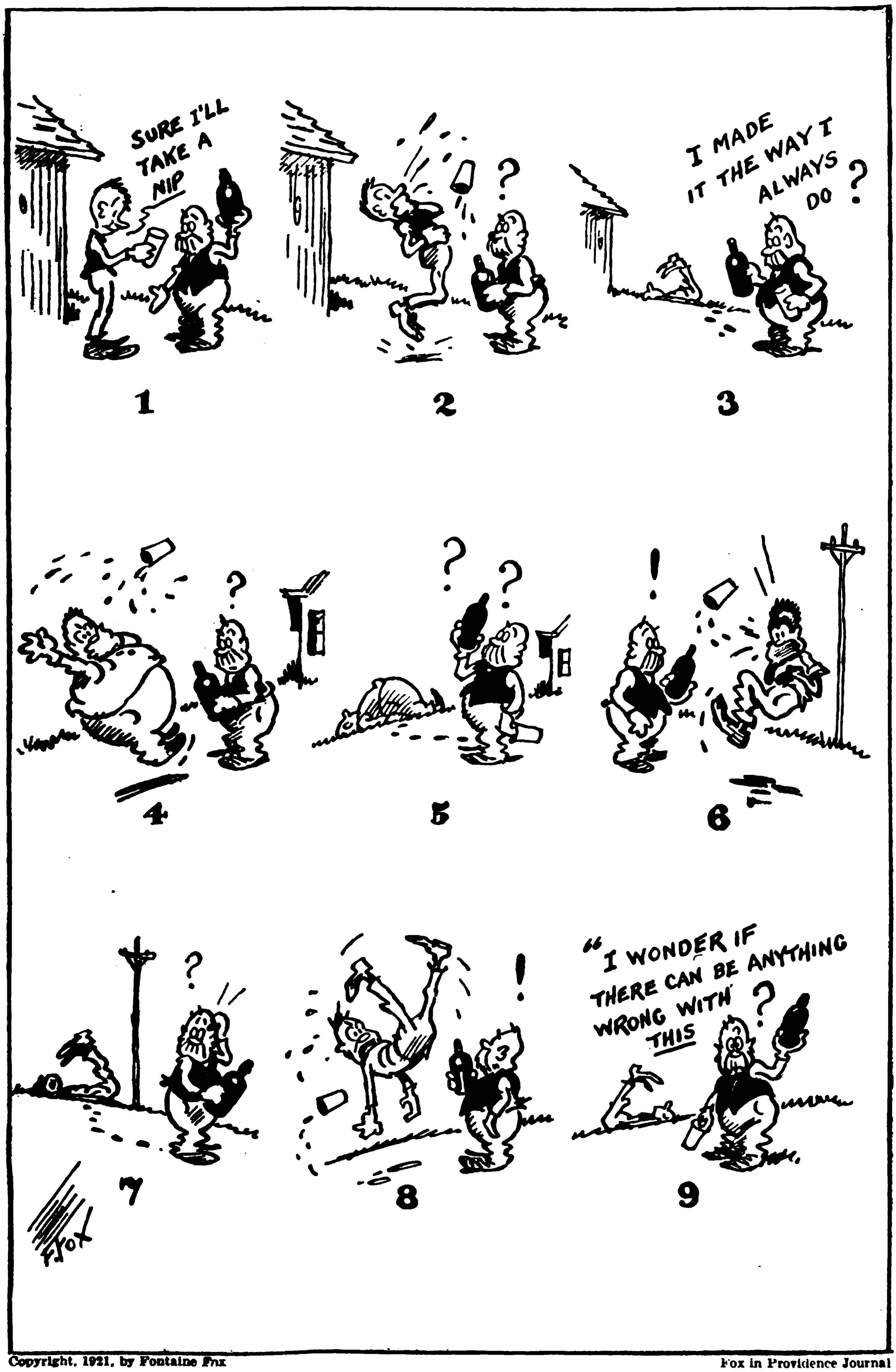
"Gentlemen—the proof is plain: it is—written in the record! De Sangrada's arrival was precisely at twelve thirty-five—that has been definitely established. And the time of his departure has been fixed at twelve forty-two—seven minutes altogether. None of us will doubt the authenticity of this witness, I'm certain ... The bells—they chime only at eleven every Sunday morning and at no other time—I verified this, but it is common knowledge—"

He paused, his gaze fixed on the heavy face of Burgess, the mouth slack, the eyes staring. He resumed briskly:

"The railway whistle—I verified that—and here's the necessary corroboration—" he produced the timetable—"it was the ten fifty-nine—the only train until the two twenty . . . De Horvath was careful, with the cunning of a mind deceased—he even dated the record, as you'll observe—but he overlooked one thing—two, as a matter of fact—or, rather, in the intensity of his purpose, he failed to hear them: the whistle and the bells. He set the trap—beforehand—and then waited for the victim. Then—he shot himself. The mark on the record—that was to draw attention to it, of course . . ."

THE twisted vengeance, reaching from the tomb, had overreached. The very instrument of his devising had betrayed the madman—

The waxen witness!



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Fox in Providence Journal

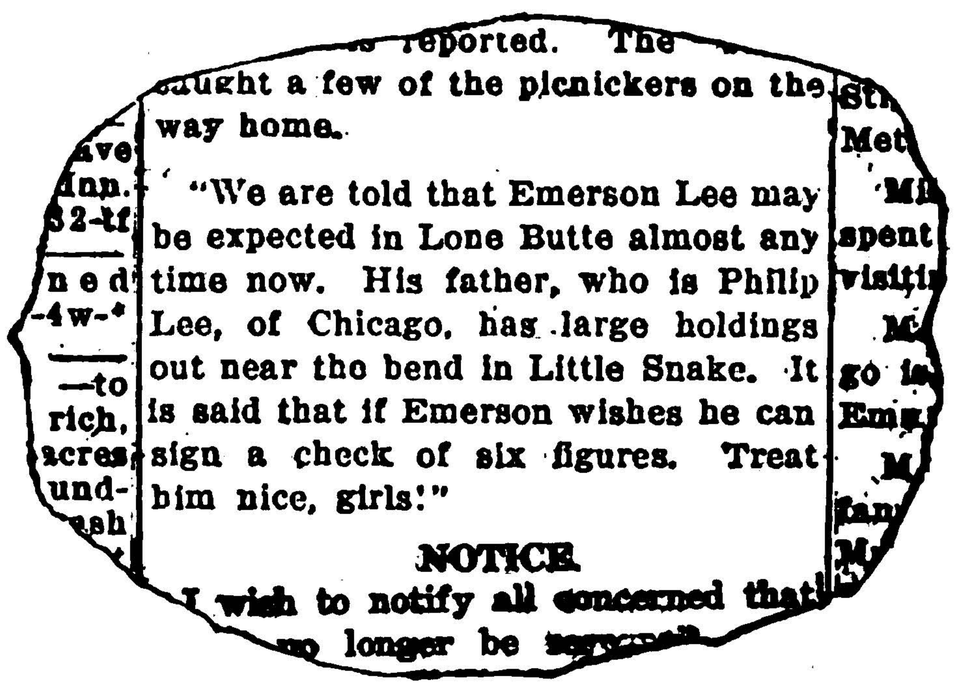
It is very hard to convince a hooch brewer——!

Not as Advertised

By Bernerd L. Wells

A western detective story about a girl, a man, another man, and an ad. If you like plots that don't stop till the handcuffs click, you will get a thrill out of this story.

The following short personal item was published in the Lone Butte, New Mexico, Weekly Clarion, under date of June twenty-sixth, 1920:


reported. The
caught a few of the picnickers on the way home.

"We are told that Emerson Lee may be expected in Lone Butte almost any time now. His father, who is Philip Lee, of Chicago, has large holdings out near the bend in Little Snake. It is said that if Emerson wishes he can sign a check of six figures. Treat him nice, girls!"

NOTICE.
I wish to notify all concerned that
no longer be

It was not until he had walked over to the ticket window, read the small sign which said, "Back at 9:30," yawned generously, turned around and lighted a cigarette, that "Emerson Lee" was aware that someone had followed him into the little box-like station house. So it seemed, at least, although he did not appear particularly surprised to find himself looking into a pair of beautiful violet eyes—eyes which returned his gaze out of what Emerson decided was the prettiest face he had even seen. And he had seen many of them.

Now, however, he was not afforded the opportunity of long scrutiny, for the young lady owner of all this beauty turned and walked slowly to the bench at the opposite wall. Presently her eyes filled with tears and she began to dab at them with a negligible lace handkerchief, stealing glances at Emerson between dabs.

It was a peculiar picture. In the first place, neither of these people fitted in with the surrounding scenery at all. Creased linen trousers and coat are not the New Mexican small-town style, even in 110-degree weather, any more than are organdie dresses and picture hats. Yet, here they were, strangers together in a rough hewn, sun blistered, ill kept, stained railroad station, fifty miles from a real town. And they were perfect strangers —though that was very soon remedied!

Emerson was one of those college-type chaps who will pass anywhere for eighteen, no matter how old they are. To say that he was clean shaven would be wrong. He seemed never to have been shaved in his whole life. He had a peaches-and-cream complexion, cherubic smile, and the dapper air of a clothes model.

He leaned on the shelf in front of the ticket window for a moment or two, smoking and watching the weeping young woman from the corner of his eye. It was, of course, a purely disinterested desire to help which soon prompted him to drop his cigarette, and stride over to where she sat.

"I beg pardon. I—er— Can I—er—be of any assistance?" he asked.

"No . . . Oh, yes . . . That is . . . I don't know," she sobbed.

"Isn't there something I can do?"

"When is the next train for Denver? Is it soon? Oh, it won't be long, will it?"

The young man consulted a time table

which he found, then looked at his watch. "Your train is due at eleven-five. It is now three minutes of nine. You have a two-hour wait."

"Oh—h—!" She seemed very much disappointed and again commenced to sob bitterly.

"I might be able to assist you if I knew what it was all about. My name is Emerson Lee. My father is Philip Lee, of Chicago. I am out here looking after his interests, and I also expect to go to Denver on the eleven-five." (This last was a quick decision. He had stepped in for a time-table.) He pulled out a well filled wallet. "Here is my card," he concluded simply.

"Oh, Mr. Lee, I'm in trouble and I'm afraid that train will get here too late to save me. I'm from the East, too, from Omaha. I came out here about six weeks ago to visit my cousins, the Wilsons, on their ranch about twenty-two miles from here—west. The next ranch belongs to a sort of, of Mexican—greasers, I think they call them. He—he—! Oh, I can trust you, can't I, Mr. Lee?" She faced him, suddenly.

Their faces were very close together. Once more the young man found himself gazing into those beautiful, magnetic, violet eyes. Somehow, for the moment, he forgot all about time, and place, and weather, and even about his mission in this part of the country. He didn't even breathe.

"Yes, I am certain of it," she said, and then turned away. "Well," she continued, "this Mexican came over one day to borrow a cook wagon for some of his men. When we met, I think, with him, it was —was love at first sight, and I confess that there was something about his romantic way and costume that attracted me. Attracted me in a sort of way. I had no idea at any time of anything serious coming of our acquaintance."

She looked quickly into Emerson's eyes for signs of doubt. There were none.

As she continued, he cast sharp glances about him, first through the door along the road paralleling the tracks, then over his shoulder onto the platform.

"The next evening," she was saying, "Antone—his name was Antone Satevo—came over again and we chatted a little while. He was a most interesting talker and when he left we were quite good friends. He was better educated than one might think. He continued coming over and before long I grew to expect him every evening. We became very friendly, in a good fellow, Platonic sort of way. Though I can see now that I was indiscreet in allowing our friendship to grow, I should not have led him on.

"Yesterday, my cousins both went to a friend's funeral several miles north, to attend a funeral. The funeral was not until today but they went ahead of time and expected to be gone about three days. I'm sure they would not have gone if they had known. Last night, he called, as usual, and when he was about to leave he grasped my hand in both of his and kissed it. And then—then—" The girl shuddered and began to weep afresh.

Almost involuntarily, Emerson's arm was around her waist and her head was on his shoulder. It did not seem to occur to either of them that their acquaintanceship was a matter of mere moments, or if it did, it did not matter. Presently, she was calm again and continued.

"Then—then he knelt and asked me to marry him. I could not help laughing and he grew very angry. He said I must marry him. I told him it was ridiculous, to put it out of his mind and never see me aagin. Then he said if I had not decided to consent by the following evening —that's tonight—he would drag me before a priest by the hair of my head. The very words he used." Unconsciously she drew herself closer to Emerson, who was not so unconscious, but willing.

"He did not know I was alone or I do not know what might have happened, for as he left I could see that he fully intended to carry out the awful threat. I was afraid. I got to thinking that perhaps he might hear of my cousins' ab-