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"Brutes"
By Courtney
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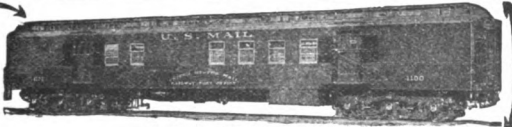
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Volume 21

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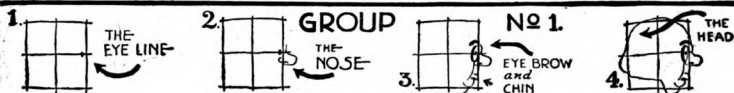
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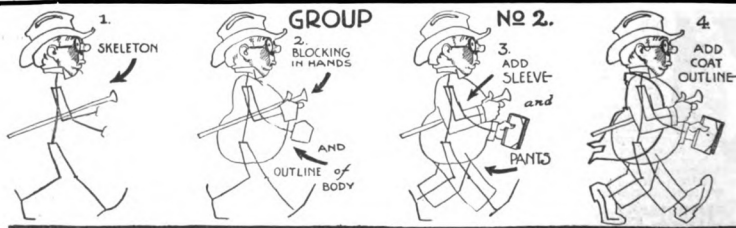
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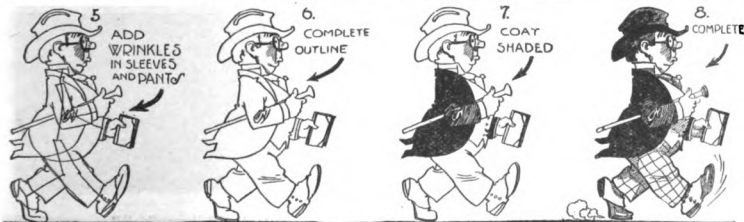
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Volume 21

MARCH, 1922

Number 3

BRUTES

*A Story of the Sea and
Its Derelicts*

By Courtney Ryley Cooper

Illustrations by Raymond Sisley

THE after hold of the schooner Kenilcove was dim and damp and smelling of bilge; a shadowy place of high-piled ship's stores, lighted only by a single, swaying ship's lantern, which sent its flickering gleam, in rhythmic fashion, upon boxes and bales, upon a rude, ill-fitted pallet squeezed between two piles of provisions, upon old ship's fittings and ropes and oakum . . . and upon a prison—and its prisoners.

For far at one end, where the shadows were deepest, two sinuous things moved behind the wooden bars of a shifting den, and when the light swayed in that direction, two pairs of eyes sent back flashing reflexes of gleaming green, the eyes of a tiger and her cub.

Brutes they were, within a cage, while without stood a brute who was free. A great shouldered, long armed, lanky man was he, with heavy, matted hair that straggled about his ears and neck in un-

kempt, unbarbered fashion, with features half hidden by the growth of a frowzy brownish beard, and with deep-set eyes which met the gaze of the feline beasts with something of understanding, something of a nature akin. His gaunt hands clutched the wooden bars of the den, nor did he seem to fear the claws and teeth of the mother inmate. His voice, hoarse, unnatural, gave forth a jargon-like mixture of words and clucking noises, which the tiger answered in a rumbling purr—the communion of one brute with another.

Above, the small crew of the ancient Kenilcove sprawled about the colorless deck, watching the fading roofs and spires of Pensacola, as the old schooner, jibs and topsails full, swung out into the deeper stretches of water, and struck the rolling, pitching stride of her long journey toward Bordeaux. Their work of loading the cypress and pine which

formed her cargo was over, their outlook of the deeper seas one of lethargic days of balmy winds, or of rushing hours in squall and storm before they should see the coast of a mainland again; yet content withal, for the wooden ship which carries its lumber by the devious, slow method of sails, means far more loafing during a voyage than work, while the southern route to Europe often brings a greater amount of sunshine than storm. So there above, all was peace and ease, and anticipation directed toward the crooked streets, the *rum chaud* and music and *mademoiselles* of Bordeaux. Below—

A quick, almost animal like movement, and the shaggy man turned at the sound of a step on the ladder leading from the ship's cabin. His eyes glinted peculiarly, seeming to sink even deeper in their sockets. The long arms swung restlessly.

"Well," came in a snarl, "what do you want?"

The intruder halted on the ladder, then bending, peered with thinking eyes into the hold.

"Who's there?"

"Any of your business?"

"Plenty. I'm the mate."

"Then go to hell!"

The shaggy being said it gruffly and turned to his pets. The mate cleared the ladder with a leap and hurried forward.

"Look here—"

But he said no more. The gaunt yet muscular hands, their blue veins standing suddenly forth, had clutched him by the shoulders and thrown him back. The mouth, half hidden behind the straggly beard, was working viciously, and the eyes had in them something of the green gleam of the tiger, as, raging, the human occupant of the hold towered over the ship's officer for a moment, threatening, waiting, swaying with pent-up power for the next assault. Then suddenly, almost weakly, he drew back, and brushed a hand over his eyes.

"You're new on this ship?"

"Yes!"

The mate said it more in surprise than in answer to the question.

"I—"

"Then get out of here! And stay out! You're not supposed to come down here. This is mine—understand? The skipper said so. Get out—hear me? Get out!"

Rage was creeping into the voice again.

"I don't want you here—I don't want anybody here! Get out!"

Mutely the mate obeyed, while peering eyes followed him up the ladder. A moment later the shaggy head turned upward. Voices were coming faintly from the cabin, into which the mate had climbed.

"Who's that down in the hold?"

"Jim Barton. Let him alone."

"I will!"

A laugh accompanied the words.

"Didn't know he was down there, and I was in trouble before I knew it. Acts crazy."

"Yes—in a way. Let him alone!"

"But what about it when I have to go into the hold?"

"Get Pete, the cook, to take you in. Pete worked for him, when he had a ship of his own. He takes him his food—and the meat for that tiger of his."

Below, the shaggy man turned toward the wooden den of the striped beast.

"Meat!" he said, blankly. "They're talking about you up there."

Then he cocked his head once more. The voice, evidently that of the captain, had resumed, in answer to a question:

"He's my brother-in-law. Married my sister, but he doesn't know it now. Got a girl, nearly grown, but hasn't recognized her since she was a baby. We spend most of our time ashore trying to make him remember. . . . No use. . . . Looks upon me as sort of detached thing, and pays no attention to the girl. The only thing he seems to have anything in common with is that tiger."

Again, below, there came a mumbling word:

"Tiger!"

THAT was all. The shaggy, gaunt man had heard only so many words; no more. They meant nothing to him, brought him no memories, awakened in him no interest, bore for him no pictures or visions of the past. He merely listened, like some beast would listen, as they went on above:

"Pitiful, eh?"

"Worse. It's tragic. Especially to a fellow who knew him in other days. Jim and I had sister ships. His was the *Martinique*, and we plied the lumber trade together. Both of us felt we were a little different from the usual run of skippers; we'd a bit of education and we were both working for the time when we could cut loose and live ashore. As I say, he married my sister, and they were very happy. He was a mild mannered sort of fellow, good to his wife and proud of her—"

"He—mild?"

"Gentle as a girl! Worried about his wife every minute he was afloat. The result was that after the baby was born he told her he couldn't stand to be away from them both for four or five months at a stretch, and fixed up the cabin of the *Martinique* so he could take her along.

"For a couple of voyages, everything went fine. Then one time, on the return voyage from Bordeaux, in ballast, they hit a storm. That was the end."

"You mean—?"

"They picked the three of them up in an open boat, off the coast of Portugal; how they'd ever got that far out of their course, no one knows. My sister was dead—there was blood in the bottom of the boat, and three cartridges missing from Jim's revolver. He'd probably had to kill the oarsmen, fighting over the water."

"Oh! I thought you were going to say—"

"He'd killed her? . . . Oh, no! She was dead from exposure and thirst. The water was gone. When they found them, she was in one end of the boat and he in the other, with Alice—that's his girl—in

his arms. His eyes were set on his wife, but he was unconscious. Evidently they'd both sacrificed for the baby—she was in pretty good shape."

"Gave it the water that they should have had themselves."

"Probably! Anyway, the City of London picked them up, and took them on board. Had a doctor there and he worked over Jim for hours before he got any result.

"Then all of a sudden, just before Barton got fully conscious, he began to sing—it must have been uncanny! Nursery rhymes, and old cradle songs—like he must have sung to that youngster, out there in the middle of the ocean, with his heart breaking and his wife dead and stark in the other end of the boat!"

IN THE AFTER HOLD, standing before the tiger den, the bearded man with the deepset eyes licked his lips and looked about him in a troubled, half-frightened manner. Something was stirring within him; there was an ache at his heart, which had come and gone for years, non-understandable, non-definable. Why were they always talking like this? Why did they always ask him questions? Above:

"But when he really awoke he was another man. Surly, ugly, and hateful. They tried to find out what had happened—but he couldn't tell. They showed him his baby, but he didn't recognize her. In his pockets were a few old letters, and they identified him in that way, and brought him home to me. That is all—he's never been any different, never remembered, never known his daughter, although she's been beside him now for nearly eighteen years. With the exception, of course—of these trips of his."

"With this tiger?"

"Yes. He wanders away—we seldom know where he's gone. A show went broke down South a couple of years ago, and he bought a tiger and her mate. They seemed to be just what he'd been looking for; I guess it was the brute in

them that attracted him. The female, Beauty, cottoned to him right away—he's made a regular pet of her—but the male always hated him. On the last trip we heard a noise down in the hold one night and found the male tiger dead. He'd killed it."

"How?"

"I don't know. It had got out of its cage—and he killed it. That was all the explanation he'd give. Crushed its head with an iron bar, while it tore at his throat. On the trip back, the cub was born to Beauty."

In the dim light of the swaying ship's lantern, the human brute in the hold below opened and clenched his gaunt, yet strong, hands, and stared at the wooden walls, where yet a blood stain or two remained from the encounter.

"They're talking about me!" came with sudden interest. "They—"

Then he listened more attentively than ever. The mate had asked a question:

"But why the tiger at all? What does he do with it? Where does he go? Where—"

"He must give shows with it; in fact, I know he does. Sometimes he merely makes the trip across and back; then again he leaves the ship with his beast and disappears. On the next voyage, Pete goes out and hunts him up—he travels about the little fairs in France, or at the market places, exhibiting the tiger and charging a few sous for a look at it. Pete seems to have some sort of second sense about him; he can always locate him."

The mate laughed nervously.

"I guess I'll be sure to have Pete around whenever I go below," he announced.

Then a door closed, and the conversation was over. In the hold, the shaggy Jim Barton went again to the cage, and, apparently forgetful of what had gone on above, opened the door, to release the giant beast and her cub. Then, for a long time he played about the hold with the young feline, dangling a piece of

rope before it while it scratched and scrambled like some overgrown house-cat, while the mother looked on from her crouched position in one corner, purring and content.

It was the daily routine of the three prisoners of the bilgy, dim, shadowy prison, a communion of the brute instinct, as plainly defined in the human as in the beasts! At last, a scraping sound of steps, and the man, with furtive haste, shunted the animals into their den. Pete appeared on the ladderway.

"Comin' down!" he signalled.

"Come on!"

The voice was gruff, toneless. Pete descended, the mate following.

"It's Mr. Leminway," announced the cook. "He's the mate here. He's a good friend. He has to come down here every once in a while, and I want you to be good to him."

"Yes," Barton agreed.

But two days later, as the mate descended the ladder, it was to find a raging, glaring eyed beast awaiting him, hands clutched, the cords of his neck bulging, his mouth contorted under the frowzy beard.

"Don't sing that!" came the shouted command—a shout with a hint of hysteria in it.

The mate stared.

"Why, it's only a little song I sing at home. I've got a baby, you know and—"

"I don't care! I don't like it! Don't sing it—I hate it!"

"Why?"

"I—I—don't know," was the childish answer, and the man, apparently forgetful of the mate, turned lazily back to the den of the tiger. After that, the officer went silently into the hold, when duty called him there, accomplished his purposes and left again as silently. The strange vagaries of the deep-eyed, bearded Jim Barton were not to be trifled with; the bestial instinct was ever too near the surface; the blood stains of a dead tiger which had sought to kill a human brute still showed blackly on the walls.

A WEEK passed, and two after that, as the plodding old wind-jammer, sails bellied, wore steadily on into the deeper seas, and toward the ocean mile-post of the Azores. The journey had been smooth; the rocking of the old ship's lantern in the dingy hold barely had varied. And night and day, for the occupants of the ill-smelling prison, life had been the same, hours of stolid indifference to everything, in which the tiger slept with her cub between her great, outstretched forepaws, and in which the man sat upon a pile of rope, his gaunt hands hanging loosely beside him, his mouth half open, his eyes staring vacuously at nothing; hours in which there was more life, when the den door would open, to permit the mother and her child to come forth, that the man might dangle the bit of rope before the scrambling little ball of fur—hours in which a slight hint of humanity seemed to invade the dank place, in which the mother became less of a feline than in her caged periods, and in which the man sometimes smiled, and sometimes held the baby beast with something of tenderness, as he pressed his bearded face against the soft fur of its breast. Once in a while, as he stood thus, the great tears would gather in his eyes, at last to brim over, and to roll, one following the other, into the matted bushiness of the frowzled beard. Nor did he brush them away, or know why they came. He simply cried as he held the cub—that was all.

Above, the watch took his place in the crow's nest, and the man at the wheel held the helm straight to the course—for sooner or later there would come the sight of land, a joyful interlude in the midst of a rolling world of water.

Again, the chanteys sounded as the crew gathered to pull at the ropes, or to raise sail where it had been lowered away, the old chanteys long forgotten except upon the sailing ships, where still they linger as a part of the romance of the sea.

Night came and an accordeon squeaked

atop the forecastle, while lips framed old songs, echoing across the waist of the ship to the cabin, there to be re-echoed by the mate, happy in the knowledge of the proximity of land, and the chance to mail a letter home as the ancient old craft put in at the Azores for fresh supplies before continuing its journey to the mainland. And so he sang, lustily, heartily, while below—

THE form of shaggy, ill-kept Jim Barton rose from the coil of rope where he had been sitting for hours. The lean hands stretched and clutched. The cords stood forth on his neck; the eyes rolled angrily in their deep sockets.

"Stop that song!" he muttered, dazedly. "Stop that song!"

But still it continued above, the roaring, happy lilt of a man about to send a letter home:

*"Rock-a-bye baby, in the tree-top,
When the wind blows, the cradle will
rock—"*

But there was no happiness in the face of the man below. Racking torment was in his eyes as he paced the narrow space which formed his little world; strange throbbings pounded through his heart. And he did not know the reason—all he could tell, all he could understand, was that the mate above was singing, and that he hated it; that it hurt him, for no apparent reason—that his every nerve rebelled against it. But still it came:

*"When the bough breaks, the cradle will
fall,
And down will come tree-top, baby
and—"*

"Stop that!"

There was a moan in the voice now.

"Stop it—I tell you! I don't like it—I don't like it—I!"

But again it came, more lustily than ever:

"Rock-a-bye baby, in the tree-top—"

Blindly, dizzily, the man fretted about the hold. Strange echoes were in his

ears, echoes he could neither classify nor describe. At the tiger's cage he stopped and raged—then, with a sudden instinct, he opened the door and brought forth the cub, to hold it close to him for an instant, then thrust it within again.

From far away a shout had come, and the lustiness of the song above had dimmed into silence. But Jim Barton did not know. Still he heard it, still the words followed him, even as the shadows of the flickering lantern followed him, as he strode about, jabbering meaningless words, clawing at a bit of rope only to throw it from him.

Then suddenly, desperately, he made a leap for the ladder. But as he thrust open the door and strode into the cabin, no frightened mate faced him, no booming song burst upon him. The place was empty—while, without, bawling orders were issuing and men scampered about the deck in obedience to them. Jim Barton paid no heed. A moment he stood staring, vacuously, then like a haunted man, he turned hastily for the ladder and descended into the hold, there to huddle upon his coil of rope, a limp, wondering, broken thing.

Only to start. The lamp had taken on a new swing; a tremor had gone through the old craft; its course was changing, rapidly—desperately, it seemed. Then a crash, as the lantern seemed to twist upon its hangings, as ship stores shifted and a box slid from its position at the top of the pile and clattered upon the deck.

Barton straightened. His eyes set. His legs spread, the better to hold to the careening lurch of the vessel. Then came his voice, bawling, sonorous, and with a new strength:

"Put down that helm there—and hold her! Hold her in the teeth of it! Into the wind there—into the wind!"

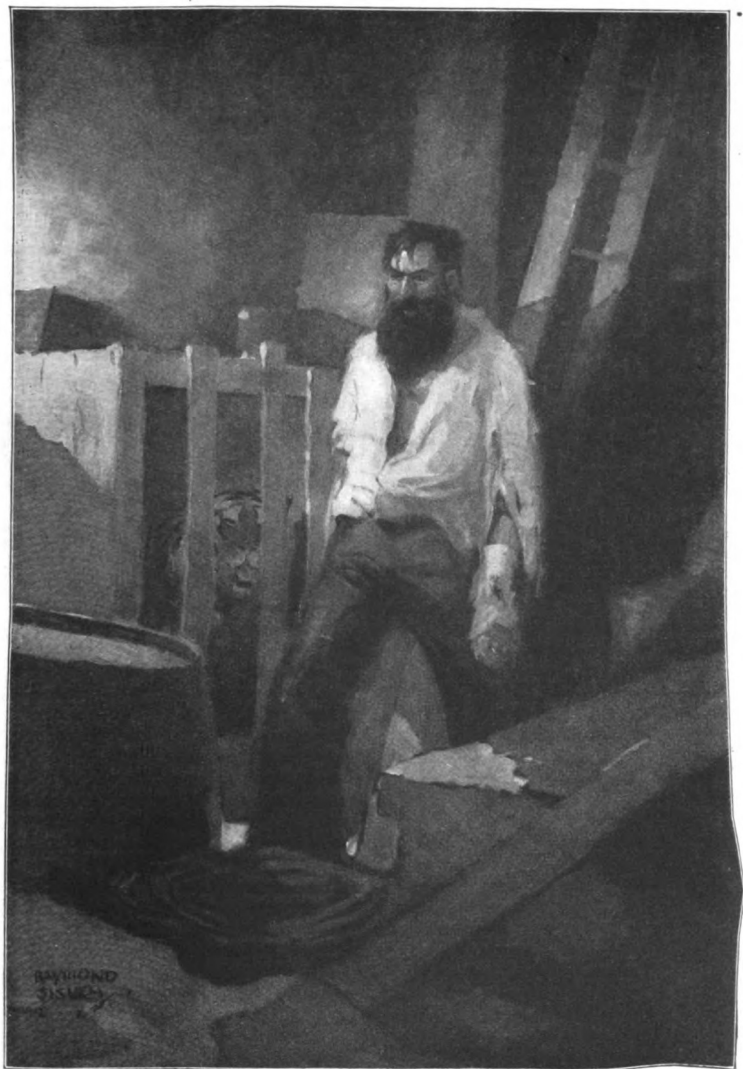
But only the tiger and her cub, shifting uneasily about their wooden prison, could hear. Only the clicking of the ship's lantern as it swung and spluttered, answered his half-crazed commands. Again a crashing sweep, as the craft went

high with the waves, then settled on her beam ends. Sprawling and scrambling, the man strove to hold his feet, while boxes settled about him, and the coil of rope, up-ended, rolled here and there in wobbling circles. Strange, screeching sounds echoed from far away—the shriek of the wind in the rigging. And still the man-brute bawled his orders, a dazed, maddened thing, standing there in the shadows of a bilgy hold, shouting, even screaming, to an imaginary crew:

"Bring her up to the wind, I tell you! There, at the sheets—take in—take in! What's the matter with you—can't you take in when I— Stand by the halyards, fore, main and mizzen! Brewster—where's Brewster? Damn you, Brewster—what's the matter with that flying jib and stays! Look to those tops'ls! Harris—aloft and tie up those tops'ls! Hear me—aloft there! We've got to head her into the wind and luff through!"

A SWEEPING boom came from above, and the eerie cries of men, weakened by the contrast of shrilling wind, and of battering, thunderous sounds as a tremendous pounding echoed upon the deck. In her cage the tiger, crouched and hissing, drew her yowling cub closer between her forepaws, instinctively protecting it against an unseen, unknown danger. The lantern swung in wider circles than ever—but still the human brute continued to shout, directing the visionary crew of a visionary ship—just as, without, the real captain was directing his real crew against the ravages of the sudden, tempestuous squall.

By some sort of second nature, Barton seemed to have sensed what had happened—the eagerness of the captain to remain upon his course as long as possible, in spite of the approaching squall; then the long, ninety-degree turn, to bring the ship against the wind that it might luff through—a turn that had come too late! Within the damp hold the fight was being re-echoed, by a man who shouted in a voice aching with despera-



"In the after hold, standing before the tiger den, the bearded man with the deepset eyes
licked his lips and looked about him in a troubled, half-frightened manner."

tion, a man whose eyes were wild, whose figure was strained, whose arms pounded at his sides as he lashed about in the brief space which the tumbling boxes and crates had left him, and who screamed at last:

"We can't make it! We'll have to run for it—but we're gone! She'll broach to in the first trough! Get to the pumps. But men"—and there was a new steadiness in the voice—"don't lose your heads! A ship never sank with a cargo of lumber! Hold steady there—hold steady!"

Hours passed. Water made its appearance on the deck of the hold, foaming, creeping salt water. Imagination had become the truth. Seemingly the wind had lessened; the boat rolled soggily, but with less of the sickening plunge which had characterized it a few moments before. From above came the sucking creak of pumps—then a fresh outburst of shouts. In the hold the deep-eyed Barton stopped for a moment to stare about him. Already a few of the lighter crates had begun to float, and the water had raised to his knees. Then with a new frenzy, he sloshed about, shouting his commands, cursing and screaming, turning toward the tiger's den and raging impotently at it, while the creeping flood rose higher, crept toward his hips—then passed them. Suddenly a cry from above, then steps on the ladder.

"Below there!"

"Aye! Below!"

The frenzied Barton accepted it only as a cry in answer to his own shouts.

"Below there! What's the damage? Speak up—how fast is she filling? Can we make it? What chance is there—?"

He stopped, staring blankly into the face of Pete Carson, the cook, bending on the ladder, and peering at him, a bedraggled figure in the foamy, dirty flood.

"Barton! What's the matter with you? Why don't you come above?"

The man stopped weakly, then stared about him in the amazement of one just coming to his senses. He furrowed a hand in the water and watched it drip

from his fingers. He blinked at the floating boxes and crates and barrels, then turned to the man above.

"I—I don't know," came at last. "What's happened?"

"We're in trouble. A squall hit us and we couldn't get into the wind quick enough. It laid the ship on her beam ends and sprung her seams. Then we tried to run for it—and broached to. The water's coming in like a mill-race. They're manning the boats to shove off! Come on—the captain sent me for you."

But Barton sank back.

"How—how about Beauty?"

"Come on! You've got to think about yourself, now. There's no chance for that cat—there's no place; besides, the men would be afraid."

But Barton still moved away, toward the den of the tiger and her cub. The water was waist deep now. Slowly one gaunt hand raised toward the hasp of the door. Then a scream came from above, and a scurrying form hurried up the ladder. The cage had been opened. The tiger was coming forth!

THE rolling had nearly ceased, bringing more clearly the swish of the waves, and the churning of the water as it rushed through the holds and compartments. The flood was nearly to Barton's armpits now. But he did not seem to notice. His attention was upon the tiger, hissing and spitting as it fought at the water, now just above the floor of the cage, starting forth, then drawing back, halting and turning in the beginning of a frenzy of fear. At last came the voice of the man, strangely steady:

"Easy Beauty! Steady there, girl! You've got to swim for it—I'll take the cub. Easy now—easy—"

But the great cat, with instinctive knowledge of the danger to her young, had grasped the cub gently in her teeth. Then a plunge, a moment more, and side by side the man and the tiger were struggling toward the ladder, the yowling.

hissing cub barely held above water by the arched head of the beast. A scramble, as great claws tore at the old, wooden ladder; a plunge which sent the hissing, frightened feline back into the water; another attempt, and still another after that. The man was beside her, his strong hands clenched in the loose hide along her ribs, pulling and hauling at her, shouting and encouraging her, nor desisting when the great sweeps of her sabre-like claws cut deep into his flesh. A third sally, then a fourth—they made the cabin, and, the man in the lead, hurried forth.

The waist of the ship was already deep in water, as the surge of the great sea rolled over it; the forecastle deck barely above it. The after deck was higher, and there in the dimness of the black night was gathered the crew, making ready two of the three boats for a passage in the open sea toward the faraway land of the Azores. A hazy figure came forward.

"That you, Barton?"

"Yes."

"Come on! We're waiting for you. We're ready to shove off."

But a cry intervened.

"Look out there, Captain! Stand back—he's got that tiger with him!"

"Barton—!"

"I don't go without her!"

The man said it dully, coldly, an accepted fact that needed no explanation. A boat splashed in the water. Oars began to creak. The dim figure of the captain hesitated.

"You can't take that tiger, Barton! Don't you understand? It's impossible—"

"I don't go without her," came the toneless answer. "She's alive, just the same as I am. I'll stay with her."

The voices from the second boat were chorusing now in frightened admonition.

"He's crazy—you can't do anything with him! You can't—"

"Barton!"

The captain still lingered.

"Won't you use some sense in this

thing? The ship's waterlogged and the masts are gone. There isn't a foot of sail left. We can take you in the boat, but not that—"

"I'll stay here, then. And if you try to take me, you've got to pass Beauty first!"

"But—"

Then the captain ceased his entreaties as a new chorus of protestations came from the waiting boat.

"Maybe you're right, Jim. There's a breaker of water and a boat box in that other boat. If you want to, you can try it by yourself. . . . But come along now, won't you?"

"She's alive, too—and her cub!"

It was useless. A wait, another entreaty—then:

"Maybe it's for the best, Jim!"

"Maybe so."

But the tall, bearded man did not know why he said it. A moment more and the oars of the second boat began to slap the water. At the waist of the ship, the ocean rolled ceaselessly over decks that never would show again. Slowly, soggily, the derelict dipped her nose into the lashing waves, losing to view all of the craft save the mast-stumps and the after deck, where stood three figures, a tiger, her cub, and a man—a man who stared blankly out at sea, where the vague forms of two ship's boats were losing themselves in the blackness of night.

Sunrise found him still standing where he had stood when the boats pulled away. his hands knitted, his eyes looking out with wondering, almost childish, interest upon the blankness of the world about him—a hopeless, helpless figure, alone in a world of mockery.

For the sun glinted now upon light, dancing waves which seemed to caress the old hulk instead of dash against it, waves which tinkled and sang with strange melodies, which swept in rhythmic motion all about the drifting derelict, and covered the sodden, inundated waist and forecastle with a soft shroud of greenish-blue, that the wreckage of the night might

be forgotten, and the scars of the storm be hidden. The bulk had sunk no lower; the buoyancy of its lumber cargo saving it from complete immersion.

Huddled nearby lay the tiger, asleep, her cub curled against her breast. The man moved uneasily. Again the tears brimmed in his eyes and lost themselves in his beard. But he did not brush them away. He did not know why they were there.

Then something grated at the gangway and Barton turned, to see a protruding end of the wooden cage, which, in some manner had floated up from the hold and through the cabin. He hurried to the edge of the deck, and leaning there, caught the den by one end to hold it, until he could secure it with a nearby length of rigging rope. At last, deliberately, he edged it forth from where it had lodged and dragged it to safety on the deck.

Then he turned.

"Beauty!" he called, and the tiger rose. "Home!"

The tiger sniffed at the cage and strode about it, while the cub yawned and stretched in the background. Barton moved toward the remaining boat, there to stand long in contemplation. But at last he shook his head.

"We're safer here!" came at last.

Then, as though to free himself from temptation, he crawled within, and, one by one, cast the oars away, watching each as the lap of the waves carried it farther and farther into the distances of the sea. A long time afterward, he lugged forth the breaker of water and the boat box, to open the latter and paw among its contents: the fishing lines, the few cans of meat and tin of hardtack, the sewing materials, and knives and matches and candles and flint and steel—sorting them into little piles, and counting them; the jealous possessions of a man who might never possess more.

At last, half angrily, he cut the cords from the fishing hooks and threw the prongs into the sea. There might be fish

to be caught—but there was nothing to form the lure. Then he rose and, carrying the breaker of water to the tiger's den, unfastened the drinking pen which had lodged between the bars, wiped it dry of salt water with a sleeve and, pouring it full, set it before the tiger. This done he upturned the barrel, to drink deep, to sink to the deck, and—stare at nothing.

AND so a week began—a week of flashing sunlight, of porpoises which played in the distance, their graceful, sleek bodies cutting in smooth circles above the water, their swift, darting course gleaming in the sun; of nights that were fair and calm, when the phosphorescence of the waves sparkled and glowed in the faint light of a knife-edged moon; a week in which the man, cursing himself for the weakness that was his, dipped again and again into the box of stores until sustenance was gone—in which he fought himself away from the breaker of decreasing water; in which he paced the deck of the sloshing old wreck, muttering to himself—a week in which the tiger waited more and more fretfully for the food that did not come.

The cub was nursing at her breast; but for the mother there were no longer the lean strips of horse-meat, the great, heavy-knocked bones to lick and crunch; only a man who talked to her, who watched her with constantly vigilant eyes, and who, at last, when she slept within her cage, crawled stealthily close and cramped tight the hasp upon the door—although he knew that one lunge would break it open, one crashing blow of an angry paw splinter the wooden bars which surrounded her. But the cub still played in freedom.

Two days . . . two nights! At last the tiger licked at her water pan in vain, and the cub yelped fitfully as it clambered between the bars to push and tug at breasts which gave but grudgingly. And the man was sitting, staring eyed, his hands clutched across his knees.

Twenty-four hours more! He fingered the knives, felt their keen edge, and looked toward the tiger. Then, with a sudden frenzy, he leaped to his feet, threw the knives overboard, and stood trembling.

"She's alive, too!" came from thick lips. "She's got a right to live—she's got a right to live!"

For a long moment he reeled about the deck, and, seizing the breaker, upended it in a vain, desperate hope. But the last drop was gone, long ago. More, the tiger had looked upon a full water pan a whole day after the human brute had ceased to swallow. She was a mother, he only a derelict. Thin nervous hands sought the boat-box—but those same hands had searched before.

And so he sank to the deck again, and, sprawling there, watched the porpoises as they flashed at play, they who lived while he—was dying!

Night . . . morning! The sunlight played upon him with its warmth, calling back to life the form in which the night winds had chilled the slow-moving blood. Jim Barton stirred. His head rolled on the wide shoulders. The fingers twisted. Glazed eyes opened and closed again. Within her cage, hissing and clawing at the water-pan, the tiger twisted and turned, her heavy shoulders weaving, the tail lashing slowly.

Starvation she had met, in comparative peace.

It was instinct. But thirst . . . !

A GAIN the man stirred—then, as though mechanically, the black lips moved and croaking words came from his throat—words which freed themselves rather than being forced, words that were strange and weird and out of place there upon the sunswept deck of the old derelict, where a tiger paced in a cage she could break with one dash for freedom; where a cub yowled and spit and clawed at its mother's breast as she turned from it, and where a man sang in mechanical, unknowing fashion:

*"Rock-a-bye baby, in the tree top,
When the wind blows, the cradle will—"*

The voice broke. The glazed eyes opened and stared. The head turned with the fierceness of dementia.

"Who's singing!" the croaking voice demanded. "Who's singing? Stop it! I hate that song—hear me? I hate it!"

But no one answered; only the laughing lap of the waves, the splashing of the porpoises, the soft murmur of the light, dancing wind.

He sank back again—only to galvanize with attention. For the eyes of the tiger had centered!

"She's got me!" He said it without fear, without emotion. "She can't stand it any more—she's got me."

The beast had begun to pad nervously, raising first one forefoot, then the other. The cub yowled and spat as usual, and clawed at her breasts; she turned hastily to lick it and grumble over it in animal mother fashion; then, more stealthily than ever, she resumed her weaving position at the den-gate, her eyes fiercer, her nervous fretfulness increased. The man turned his head slowly, toward the stump of the main mast.

"It's higher than she could leap," he mused mechanically, and started to force himself to his feet, only to halt half-raised. The cub had left the cage now and, with wobbling steps, was coming in his direction. The thick tongue licked at black lips. The eyes became more and more animallike.

The trembling hands outstretched and waited.

"She'd get me!"

It was as though he were appeasing a conscience.

"She'd get me—I've got a right—"

The cub tumbled closer, whining weakly. The clawing hands waited—then clutched at a furry neck. They raised the tiny beast, while the black lips went grim, while the breath pulled hard into distended nostrils.

"She'd get me! I've got a right to live—I've—"

The grip tightened about the tiny throat, cutting off the gurgling cry of pain. The little legs twisted and clawed; the form writhed, until it almost seemed to rest upon his arms. The glaring, deep-set eyes of the human brute flashed with something akin to revulsion—then suddenly widened. For the excuse was gone! He had seen the eyes of the tiger, and the gleam within them had faded. They were luminous now as they watched him, with trust, with the faith of long days and weeks in which he had cared for her and for her young, the faith that one sees in the eyes of a dog when you raise her puppy, the faith and light that is in the eyes of a human mother when you fondle her baby!

Instinctively the grip of the fingers loosened. The paw dropped. A moaning half-cry came over the man's discolored lips. Then, with a sudden, spasmodic effort, he grasped the cub tight and rocked there—sobbing!

STRANGE WORDS clicked over his dry lips—admonitions, directions. He cursed, in racking, desperate fashion. He struggled to his feet, then sank again, dazedly, fearfully; his features contorted, his arms still remained tight-clutched about the cub. Then he settled again in bare consciousness, and once more the croaking song came, as a tiger cub cuddled to sleep in his embrace, a song in which the gentleness was apparent even in spite of the harshness of the dry throat and mouth, the song which once he had railed at, but which now came unbidden, to be repeated, and re-repeated, while from her cage a mother tiger watched, watched a man who was all but dead, but a man who was safe from claws and rending-teeth—because he held her cub.

A half hour and he was silent, to stir uneasily, to look about him, to raise the cub as though to thrust it from him; only to sink back again, jealous of even that effort. But the eyes remained open, eyes that seemed to be looking at things which flitted in vacancy, eyes which suffered,

eyes which no longer carried the animal glare, but which, somehow, seemed metamorphosed into the eyes of a gentle man.

A WAY off to the right, a smudge of smoke appeared, and came closer. The man did not see. His eyes were on the sunswept deck and the pictures which no one but he could see. An hour and he stirred weakly at a shout from the sea. Then, the tiger cub scrambling from his grasp, he staggered to his feet.

"Water!" he called croakingly. "Water first—before you come aboard. I've got a tiger here that I've—I've got to save. But she's got to have water—before you get near her. You've—you've got water?"

They passed him the keg. Then squeamish sailors grudgingly shoved the cage and its scrambling occupant into the gig. A staggering man slumped to a seat, still staring, the tears still coming from sad, suffering eyes, the thin hands kneading, the lips, in quavering fashion, forming the words of an old, old song:

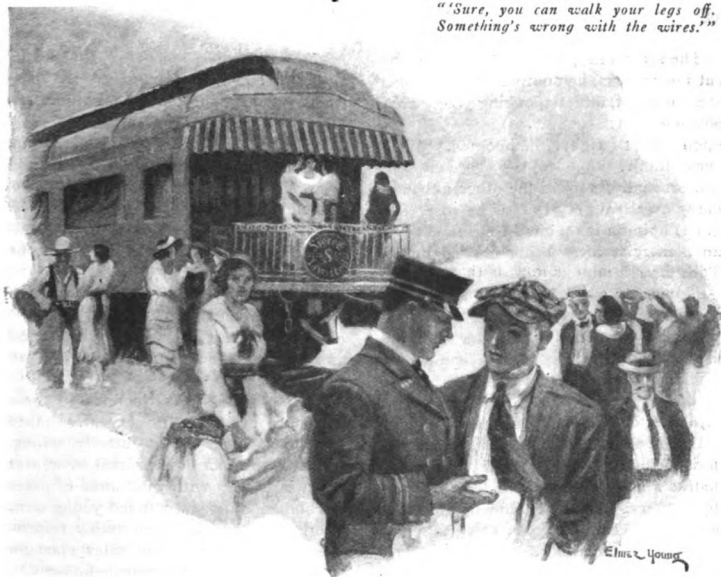
*"Rock-a-bye baby, in the tree top,
When the wind blows the cradle will—"*

A ship's side. A block and tackle which raised a cage containing a tiger and her cub, and lowered them into a hold. A weak, staggering man who shuffled along the deck, leaning upon the shoulders of two sailors—but suddenly breaking away and sagging forward.

A young woman was passing along deck, a child in her arms. Suddenly she stopped, bewildered, as a black-lipped, weaving being faced her. Half frightened she saw a gaunt hand go forth and touch, ever so tenderly, the cheek of the child. Then the strength that had been his vanished. The knees sagged; the strange, bearded figure crumpled to the deck, to lie motionless, lifeless, except for the slight twitching of gaunt fingers, except for the sobbing, weak voice which told of hope and joy and dreams in spite of suffering, and the words of a heart which spoke after years of dumbness:

"I want to go home—I want to go home—to my—my baby!"

*"Sure, you can walk your legs off.
Something's wrong with the wires."*



WHILE THE TRAIN WAITED

By Harold de Polo

Illustrations by Elmer Young

A COMPARATIVELY insignificant little six-foot trestle, washed out from the storm of the previous night, was holding up the mighty Sierra Limited. The passengers were doing their usual stunt of grumbling and pestering the conductors, and speculating as to when they would proceed. One of them—a fat man with the indelible stamp of the traveling salesman—was deriving a certain amount of pleasure from the situation. It gave him an excellent chance to ride his pet hobby:

"Bah," he was saying, to any and all who

would listen, "just look at it—it makes me sick. This is the West—the great and glorious West that they yap about. Look at it, nothing but a bunch of prairie, with that mountain off there to the right the only thing you can see, except grass, with even a telescope. It's all in the movies and the plays and the magazines, that's all. No, sir, this wild and woolly West stuff is all the bunk. Oughtn't I to know? Ain't I been traveling it for more than fifteen years. Bah! It makes me sick!"

One man took exception, three immediately sided with the fat person, but he

directed his fire at another. Stretching out a short arm, he pointed a pudgy finger at a clean-cut, athletic looking young chap opposite him:

"Say, ain't I right?" he boomed. "What d'you think?"

"Personally," replied the other, a twinkle in his quizzical gray eyes as he rose, "I'm of the opinion it's a good time to get in a little exercise after being cooped up for three days!"

Slipping on a cap, he walked to the platform, sprang lightly to the ground, and got hold of the conductor. His smile was likable, and the cigar that he handed the official was a choice Havana:

"I know you're about bothered to death with a lot of fool questions," he said pleasantly, "but I'm honestly not asking out of idle curiosity. Will I have time for a decent hike?"

"Say," grinned the trainman, "don't tell 'em, will you? Sure, you can walk your legs off. Something's wrong with the wires, and before the wrecking crew gets here and we're all fixed it'll be six or seven hours!"

"Thanks," nodded his questioner. "I'm off on a tramp!" . . .

TO ANY healthy and normal human being, a chance to get out into the open after having been shut up for several days is a great boon; but to Barry Kendall, in his middle-twenties, and with the love of life and adventure running strong in him, it was positively a blessing from above.

Barry cut off, at first, straight across the prairie, away from the train, to lessen the probability of anyone joining him. The fat man, of dogmatic ideas, was pretty much of a bore; for that matter, so were most of the passengers on the present trip. The majority were of the complaining type, and Barry told himself that he would certainly relish a few hours alone with his own thoughts. Apparently, after he had gone perhaps a quarter of a mile, he told himself that he was going to get his wish.

None followed.

Although distances are deceptive, particularly out on the plains and where the air is rarified, Barry was a fairly shrewd judge, and he decided that the mountain, ahead of him, was between seven and eight miles off. He increased his pace, concluding to make that his objective. As he walked, his head up and his shoulders squared and his eyes sparkling, he enjoyed every stride.

Barry wondered, though, about the words of the fat man:

"It's all in the movies and the plays and the magazines—this wild and woolly stuff is all bunk!"

Kendall, frankly, was inclined to agree with him, although he fervently hoped they both were wrong—utterly wrong. He was a product of the Great War, was Barry, in a class with thousands of other able bodied and clean minded young men. Before it, he had held a passably responsible position as assistant sales manager for a big New York mercantile house. On his return, after eighteen months in the fighting zone, and with the privilege of wearing a decoration if he cared to, he had tried to take up where he had left off. From the first, the thing was hopeless—and it had grown still more hopeless as each day went by. His work seemed humdrum, completely lacking in interest, after his experiences on the battlefields of France.

He had stood it for nearly two years; then, all of a sudden, he made his decision. Having no dependents, he resigned his position, and, having a comfortable bank balance, set out for the West of which he had heard so much. He was going, first, to the coast, and intended working backward until he found some calling, some situation, that would satisfy his desire for adventure or excitement.

"And hanged if I'm not going to find it," he now informed himself. "Jove, but this old ozone out here makes a chap feel better already. They certainly don't exaggerate *that* in the movies and the plays and the magazines!" . . .

BARRY was a quick walker; coupled with this, he was in the best of spirits; and, in a trifle more than an hour and a half, he found himself at the foot of the mountain. Steeply and abruptly, it rose from the undulating plains, heavily timbered. Looking back, he saw the stalled string of cars. It would still be some four or five hours, at the very least, before the engine would again start, and he did not feel like going back to the stuffiness and chatter of the train. A winding path, some fifty feet to his right, caught his eye. Determinedly, he strode over to it and began the ascent:

"Always tackle a new road, Barry," he said to himself with an airy chuckle. "You never can tell where it'll lead!"

In a trifle more than another hour, to be precise, the truth of this remark was decidedly proven. As he turned a sharp bend in the trail, his merry whistling was suddenly halted as a report crashed forth and a bullet thudded against a tree trunk not six inches from his left side.

"Don't come any further," someone cried. "I just sent that as a warning. I don't want to have to kill, but I certainly will if you move forward a step. Please don't make me, for I *can* shoot straight!"

"I honestly believe it, too!"

Barry spoke sincerely, for he noticed that the bullet was on a direct line with his heart. Being a fairly sensible person, his hands had simultaneously gone above his head:

"My dear madam—or miss," he continued, "you've honestly made a mistake. I don't know who I'm expected to be—or what I'm expected to do—but I happen to be a passenger on that Sierra Limited. It's stalled there, due to a washed-out trestle. As it wasn't to be fixed for some six or seven hours, I took a walk in order to stretch my legs and possibly find adventure—and it looks as if I've run across the latter. My name's Kendall—Barry Kendall—just at present of no particular place in this wide U. S. A. Furthermore, I haven't the slightest idea who you are, although I'd like to find out.

There, I've told everything I know, and now may I walk ahead if I keep my hands in the air until you definitely learn I'm quite harmless?"

He was using his infective grin, and glancing pleasantly at a girl who stood in the opened doorway of a small cabin, possibly a hundred feet above him, with a rifle in her hands. He noticed that the sun, filtering through the heavy foliage, set off the gold in her auburn hair; he noticed, also, that her large eyes looked strangely tired and anxious, and that her face was very white. She seemed undecided, and was silent:

"On my word of honor I told you the truth," he said, his voice and his face turning serious. "You seem to be in some sort of trouble, and maybe I can help. Anyway, let me come up, and you can find out that I haven't even got a weapon on me!"

Her eyes grew wider, and she bit at her under lip, thoughtfully. Soon she nodded, and he was sure that he detected a sigh of relief escape her.

"I think I have made a mistake," she said, "and perhaps you *can* help. You can come up, and you needn't bother to keep your hands above you. Of course—they wouldn't be dressed as you are, or speak as you do!"

Barry Kendall moved with alacrity, but in order to further assure her he kept his arms raised:

"And who are *they*?" he asked.

"Come in, first," was her answer, "and please close and bolt the door!"

KENDALL looked hastily about the cabin. The big room, with its stove and fireplace, was apparently the living and cooking and eating quarters, and he saw that it was kept in scrupulous neatness. Off it were too smaller enclosures, undoubtedly sleeping places. To bear this out, from one of them came heavy and restless breathing.

"Father," the girl explained. "He's been very ill—fever, delirious—for the past few nights!"

She closed her eyes, quite tightly, and her shoulders seemed to sag as she spoke. He saw, then, how thoroughly worn she was:

"Lord," he said, pity surging over him. "You're all in, poor kid. I'll bet you haven't been doing a darn thing for yourself, have you? Here, tell me what's troubling you—what that *they* means—and go and take a nap. I'll take care of anything!"

Barry was on his feet, his train forgotten, the instinct that had always been in him to help anyone who needed it coming to the front.

But the girl shook her head, and the wanness of her smile stabbed him. She surely was played out:

"It was stupid of me to fire as you came up the trail. It wasted a bullet, and that's the main trouble—for we've only two left. I should have realized, immediately, that you couldn't be one of the famous Murdock gang, but I suppose I was a little nervous. You see, I *do* trust you now. Father and I have been up here in the mountains for nearly two years, looking for the always elusive gold. Father has hunted it all his life, but he went broke several years ago. There's no use going into details about that; anyway, after we'd almost given up hope of this section, we found it some five weeks ago. It's—it's frankly a very rich strike, and we already have close to twenty thousand. Someway—somehow—even though I haven't the slightest idea—the secret must have leaked out, and the Murdock crowd got news of it!"

She paused, as if the mere mention of Murdock would convey a great deal to him:

"Yes," he said. "What else?"

"I forgot that you're an utter stranger here," she smiled. "Butch Murdock, as he is called, is the leader of about the worst crowd of outlaws the region has ever known. The sheriff, as well as every decent citizen, has been trying to run them down for years. Occasionally they get one of his followers, but they've never

been able to capture or kill the leader himself. If they could, they say that it would break up the band, or at least scatter it so that the rest would be practically harmless. I expect them at any moment, and when they come there's going to be trouble. The gold is here, but, even if I hide it, I'm—I'm afraid of what they might do to dad, to get him to disclose its whereabouts. You see, they can't be held off very long with only two bullets, and the sheriff can't possibly get here before they do, and—and I've heard of the things they do to make people talk. I—"

"Just a minute, if you don't mind," put in Barry. "How did you get this information they were coming, and what about the sheriff?"

HE WAS on his feet now, closer to her, and the light of battle was in his eyes. Adventure and excitement seemed to be here at last:

"I do tell it badly, don't I?" she said, with a little laugh. "Well, our nearest neighbors—the Lathams—live about six miles off, on the other ridge. They have a boy, Fred, who does a lot of hunting; he's only a youngster, about thirteen or fourteen. He was out this morning, since dawn, on the trail of a big buck. A few miles from here, he came upon three men about a campfire, and he recognized Murdock. He's a cool boy for his age, and he knows the woods as—as I know my hand, as the saying has it. He crept up and listened, and heard them talking about coming here and getting our gold. He didn't wait to hear how they found out, or anything else; he ran at the best speed he could. As things had happened so quickly, I forgot to ask him to leave his rifle. I gave him our horse, and he started for Cactus Creek and the sheriff. The trouble is, though, it's a good ten mile ride, and he only started a few minutes before you came. That's all. I expect Murdock any minute, and whether he just had two of his men with him, or more were scattered about, Fred didn't

know. One thing is sure, they'll get here before the sheriff and a posse does—and we only have two bullets!"

"And I left an army revolver and a whole box of lead in one of my bags on the train," mused Barry ruefully. "Oh, well, cheer up. I pulled through that little fracas in France, all right, and I guess we'll find a way to—"

"Hullo, there, up above. Goin' t' sample that spring in back they tell is so cold an' thirst-quenchin'!"

Genially, and with the most exaggerated good-will, the words floated up to them in the middle of Barry's sentence. The girl's face whitened, crimsoned, and then set in firm lines.

"It's the Murdock gang," she said tensely, her voice low. "They have the reputation of not killing unless they absolutely have to, and I suppose, thinking that we don't expect them, they're counting on making friendly advances and taking us by surprise!"

The Easterner deftly got hold of the rifle, and, standing in the shadows at the side of the window, yet with a perfect sight of the trail, turned to the girl:

"It's my guess that I'd better start out right now. Send one through his arm, anyway, and show 'em we mean business. But you're the doctor. What say?"

"I think you can understand," she replied earnestly, "when I say that I don't want blood on our hands if I can help it. I—I've seen too much of it, unnecessarily, since I've been out here. I'd prefer to have you warn them, and say that if they come nearer, you *will* shoot!"

"Just as you say," said Barry, with a shrug.

"Look here, Murdock," he then called out. "We know you, and we know what you're here for. One thing you didn't know, though, and that's that there happen to be a couple of us here with rifles and ammunition, and we're shooting to kill at the first man to come any nearer. My advice, fellow citizens, is to beat it while your shoes are good!"

There was an extremely terse answer

to Kendall's breezy words. A revolver crashed, and a bullet tinkled through the window pane and spattered against the rough rock of the fireplace.

SIMULTANEOUSLY Barry took a gambler's chance. As the man who had suddenly drawn and fired from the hip leaped for the safety of a tree, the ex-soldier gave evidence that he was a master with a rifle. Raising it, he sent a bullet through the right shoulder of the bandit:

"That's just a sample," he cried out lustily, "and the next one who steps into the picture gets it in the heart!"

"I had to do it," he explained to the girl.

"It was the only move. If I'm not a bad guesser, that'll hold 'em off for some time!"

"I suppose you did right," she said gravely; then, with that wan smile on her face—"and it leaves us just one bullet!"

"It only takes one, sometimes," he replied cheerfully, "to—"

A cry came from the other room—a shrill cry of a man in the throes of horrible delirium.

"Better attend to your father while I watch," advised Barry.

As she nodded and went through the small door, he took up his position by the window, his eyes narrowed. The blood was surging happily through him, for here was the adventure he had sought—and adventure with a touch of romance. He berated his luck, however, in not having more than one cartridge left. With a dozen, say, he would have been content to hold them off for hours. Whatever happened, he had made up his mind that he was going to save the gold for this calm and brave girl who was so staunchly protecting her sick father.

He glanced down the trail, over the tree-tops, across the prairie—and a smile, followed by a chuckle, came to his lips. Like a thin ribbon of black against the brownish-green of the plains, the Sierra Limited still stood out there helpless.

The words of the fat man were certainly being belied, for if this wasn't equal to movie and play and magazine stuff he'd like to be told what was. It was further proven in another minute or two, for several shots rang out, now, from the rear of the building.

"Bolt the window," he cried, quickly springing to the door of the room where the girl's father lay.

"I've already done it," she called back, "and now I'm pushing a bureau against it. Anyway, even if any lead should come through, it can't possibly touch him."

"Murdock," yelled Barry, putting his lips to a chink in the logs as he cupped his hands, "I'm telling you, once more, that we don't want to hurt any of you out there, but you're sort of getting on a chap's nerves. As I told you before, take my advice and chase along, for the next time we're going to start in shooting to kill!"

"Yeah? Is that so?" came a mocking voice with a grating laugh. "Well, stranger, commence right now. We're here to grab that gold, an' we ain't touchy a-tall about how long we got to wait for it. If any *advice* oughta be took, yuh better listen t' mine—and that's to hand over the dust before we make up our minds to set the shack on fire!"

"See if you can get close enough," replied Barry challengingly.

"What do you think?" he asked the girl abruptly. "Will they?"

"The chances are that they won't," she told him. "As I told you, Murdock is a brute, but he has always done his utmost to draw the line at killing. He's shrewd enough to know that it would go so much the worse with him if he was ever caught. The trouble is, they'll find out pretty soon that we haven't ammunition. In fact, I believe that they suspect something now. We haven't done the shooting that people in our position would if they had cartridges!"

"What's your opinion on the sheriff getting here?"

"Probably an hour at most; with great luck, half an hour!"

"Then I'm hoping for good luck!"

FOR A MOMENT OR TWO, as another rain of bullets spattered against the rear walls, Barry was silent, his brow furrowed. He had forgotten the train; he had forgotten his journey to the coast; he had forgotten everything except that he was going to save the gold for this girl who stood with him, shoulder to shoulder, as coolly as had his buddy in France:

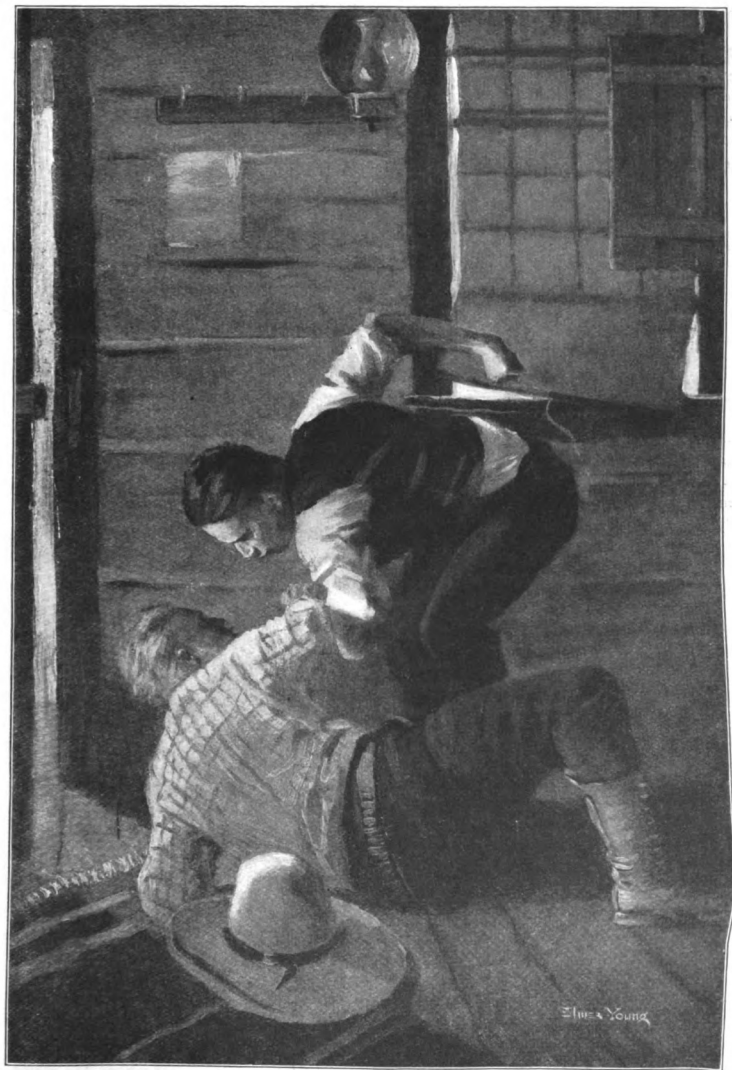
"Any empty bags—size you keep the dust in?" he asked hastily.

"Yes; but what has that—"

"Get two—work fast—fill 'em with—oh, with ashes, or anything as close to the same weight as gold!"

Without a word, without another question, she obeyed him. She worked, too, quickly and without nervousness. In a couple of minutes, at the most, a pair of bags were filled and tied and placed on the table:

"We've got to work snappily, now," he said, "so listen. I'm going to try to gain that time. I've found out, for certain, that there're two men in the rear and one in front. I'm going to take a bag under each arm, and open the door, and act as if I'm going to make a run for it. There's a fellow down there behind that old oak, about fifty feet off. When he sees me, he's going to jump out and try to stop me, for he'll be sure we're out of lead. When he does, let him have it. No, you don't have to hurt him badly if you don't want—just nick him in the arm. I know you can, for I saw you could shoot straight. When you hit him, I'll make a dash for it. Before they can get me, or stop me, I'll be a fair way off. The chances are that they won't look inside the bags right away, but come back here to get the other chap before starting off. Get ready—it's the best chance. It will gain time, and when we get back I can parley for more time, and by then the



"He hurled his body straight for that of the bandit chief."

sheriff will probably arrive. Anyway, I'm going to save that gold!"

Gratefully, admiringly, she gazed at him. Then a deep flush came to her cheeks:

"But you shouldn't—you can't. I—my father and I haven't the right. You're a stranger; you don't even know our—"

"I'm starting now," he cut it. "Get ready with the rifle!"

Before she could say another word, he had gripped the two bags, one under each arm, and gone for the door. Unhesitatingly, he turned the key and swung back the heavy wooden bolt. Assuming cautiousness, he stepped lightly out, but being careful to snap a twig as he set his foot on the ground.

He had read the cards to perfection. From behind the oak, one of the Murdock gang stepped forth, a revolver leveled:

"Raise up them hands, stranger, an' stop where yuh are!"

The girl, behind Barry, responded. Her rifle cracked, the desperado on the trail dropped his own weapon with a cry of pain, and Kendall went racing madly along at almost superhuman speed:

"Hey, Murdock—hey, Jim," yelled the wounded man. "There he goes—down the mountain—with the dust!"

SHOTS and questioning cries sounded behind him, but Barry Kendall ran without turning his head. For a good hundred yards, he traveled along the trail, and then branched off into the woods. A bullet came close to him—another still closer—but still he went ahead. There was someone behind him, he ruefully realized, who was even a trifle fleetier than he himself was. In addition, this personage was equipped with a weapon, and knew how to handle it. Even so, he was able to cover another generous quarter of a mile:

"Better stop, young 'un," came the voice, and a bullet crashed against a tree at his left. "I ain't wantin' tu maim yuh, but I shore am bein' forced tu doin' it!"

Still the Easterner continued his re-

treat; but, as the next report sounded, he felt hot lead sear along the flesh of his calf:

"That's jest a sample," came the voice. "Onless yuh stop now, so help me, the next one goes plumb through yuh!"

Barry Kendall was as game as they make them, but he was nevertheless no fool.

The man meant what he said, and had the power to carry out his threat. Anyway, precious time had been gained—and there was even more to be won provided he played his cards properly. He stopped, turned about, and waited for the approach of his enemy with a grin on his face:

"Yo're game, kid," admitted the bearded bandit, who reared into the air a good six-foot-three. "Murdock himself says so. Lug them two bags up to the cabin, sonny. Guess I didn't get yuh bad enough to hurt yore walk, eh? Anyway," he chuckled, "not as bad's yuh got my men, eh?"

These two, now, began to make certain remarks about evening up the score, but the outlaw chief showed under what exquisite control he had them. He spoke just two words:

"Stow it!"

At the cabin, Barry searched the girl's eyes for news, and nodded that she was to keep watch for the sheriff. As for Murdock, he was now in high good humor. His two men were covering Barry and the girl, and he himself was feeling almost lovingly of the bags:

"Well," he said, "I guess it was wuth my boys gettin' nicked, eh? Mighty nigh ontu twenty thousan' here, I reckon. Sorry t' leave so sudden, folks, but I'm thinkin' maybe our hawses is gettin' restless!"

KENDALL again searched the girl's eyes, for she had a full view of the trail and the woods from where she stood. No hopeful sign was in them, and he knew that in a minute the storm would break loose. Murdock, now, was starting

to untie one of the bags, and Barry decided to beat him to it:

"Murdock," he said lightly, "I guess you've got to admit it's one on you, even though those ashes *do* feel like dust!"

The outlaw, for a moment, stayed his fingers. Shrewdly, he looked at the young Easterner:

"If they be—" he said, and suggestively left his sentence unfinished.

"Open one and find out," retorted the ex-soldier, airily.

At the same time, his heart bounded high. Into the eyes of the girl, at last, relief and gladness had come. It told him that the sheriff and his posse were near, and probably were sensibly approaching, from tree to tree, noiselessly.

Berry Kendall tautened. He kept his eyes on the girl, as well as on Murdock. He saw, simultaneously, an expression cross her face that told that the sheriff was very close—and he saw black rage come to the features of the outlaw as the bag was opened. With a shout, he took the big chance. He hurled his body straight for that of the bandit chief, his arms circled the bulky body, and together they crashed to the floor:

"Come along, sheriff," he yelled, "I've got Murdock and there are only two more here!"

For an instant things were kaleidoscopic. He heard several shots and was thankful that none touched him—as he rolled over and over in grips with the giant Murdock. Then, presently, countless hands and arms were fastened to the form of his adversary, and the latter was dragged off. After that, he was standing, a trifle dazed, it is true, and listening to the praise of the sheriff and the posse for the girl and himself:

"An' there's five thousan' reward out for him, too!" ended the sheriff.

Then, suddenly, he happened to glance at the ribbon of black on the brownish-green prairie that meant the Sierra Limited. Coming toward it, from the opposite direction, he saw a shorter and stubbier object—the wrecking crew:

"Where are your horses?" he gasped at the sheriff.

"Down—down hill a ways," answered the man with the star, looking wonderingly at the other. "Don't worry, son, it's all right. Reckon yuh might be a bit fussed after all this excitement an'—"

"Going to borrow one—she'll explain—see you later!"

With these words he had bounded through the astounded sheriff and posse and was off down the mountain. . . .

NOT FIVE MINUTES before the Sierra Limited was about to resume her interrupted journey, Barry Kendall dashed up, flung himself from the sweating horse, and rushed into his section of the train. Stuffing a fair-sized bill into the hands of the friendly conductor, he bade him see that his trunk was thrown off. After that, he gathered his stray belongings, packed them into his two bags, and started out. He was met, on the platform, by the fat man:

"Back again, heh?" sardonically sneered that worthy. "Well, what did I tell you, anyway? You've been gone maybe four or five hours, and I'll bet you ain't seen a thing but a lot of grass. Bah, this wild and woolly West stuff makes me sick. It's all in the movies and the plays and the magazines—it's all bunk, no more."

"Well," grinned Barry, "it kind of did affect my heart, at that. To tell you the truth, it got me so badly I'm stopping off to find a remedy!"

The fat man looked at the bags in his hand, and, at the same time, the conductor came along and informed the young man that his trunk had been attended to. The disparager of the West saw that the other was in earnest, and a shrewdly satirical light came to his eyes:

"Yeah?" he drawled. "And who is she?"

"That's where the joke is on me," confessed Barry, as he swung off to the ground. "I don't even know her name—but I'm certainly going to find out as soon as that cayuse can get me up that mountain!"



"When I pulled my revolver from my pocket and fired

UGLY MAX OF THE FORCE

The Story by C. G. Milham

THEY CALLED HIM "Ugly Max." As far as appearances went, he certainly deserved the title. He was tall and excessively thin, with stooped shoulders that looked like nothing so much as a sharply bent hinge. The rest of him was all angles, too. His legs were long and lean, and his body narrow in all dimensions. His complexion made you think of curry powder. It was quite in keeping with his features. There was a perpetually evil sneer at one corner of the mouth; a scar on one cheek that compelled attention in spite of, or because of, its hideousness; a nose that reminded you of the way that fancy had painted Caesar Borgia for you—an aspect altogether that made you think of a

grouchy dyspeptic. Except the eyes. The eyes had rather a gentle twinkle in their cool depths of blue, but it was seldom that anyone noticed them on account of the difficulty in seeing past the rest of him. Too, one rather overlooked the timid droop of his sandy mustache.

It was the newspaper men stationed at Headquarters who christened him. Not, however, because of his looks—although, after it had been given, it seemed fitting enough on that score. Neither was it because he possessed a voice that combined the growl of an ill-tempered dog and the snarl of an East Side gangster. It was because these suggested the obvious the first day the newspaper men found him filling the post of guardian of the outer



at him, I had to choose quickly; it was to be him or me.'"

A TALE OF THE "FINEST"

Illustrations by Garrett Price

office of the First Deputy Police Commissioner, that made them believe him to be as much of a curmudgeon as looks and voice implied. And after the name had been once given it clung the way such things usually do.

Up to this time he had been just Max Schwartz, first-grade patrolman. Virtually all of his days since the age of twenty-two had been spent in the occupation that the city's "finest" know as pounding the pavement. He was now slightly more than forty, and the place as a sort of outer-Cerberus for the First Deputy Commissioner was the first sinecure he had known in all his years on the force. If you've ever had occasion to visit Headquarters, you probably remember very

well the barriers that intervene between the various commissioners and would-be visitors. For the First Deputy, there was something in the nature of a foyer just off the main corridor; opening from the foyer was the office of the secretary to the First Deputy; and opening from that office in turn was the holy place of the Great Man himself. Max's post was in the foyer of the suite.

There he occupied a desk immediately alongside a brass railing that separated the outer barrier into two nearly equal divisions. From approximately eight in the morning until approximately six at night, with two hours of rest in the middle of the day, while the First Deputy was at lunch, he was called upon to see

that none got past the railing save the elect.

For some of these he would raise himself rather painfully from his seat that he might personally escort them within the sacred precincts; but for most he merely leaned forward in his seat and opened the gate in the railing.

On the day when he came to the place—which was also the day that the McCloud administration came into being in the city—the Headquarters reporters had a rush assignment to interview the First Deputy. His appointment had come much as a surprise. One of the group reached confidently for the mechanism that unlocked the gate in the brass barrier and the correspondents surged forward in the confident manner that acquaintanceship with the recent administration and the special privileges of their class had accustomed them to. Patrolman Schwartz hastily interposed his form between the reporters and the green baize door that sheltered the sacred mysteries of the inner offices. The on-rushing group stopped in surprise.

"What's biting you?" demanded Jerry MacGowan in the truculent voice that had produced many stories because of the way it had won him entrance into many situations where he had no right. "Who do you think you are, anyway?"

"I'm Patrolman Max Schwartz, and I'm in charge of this office with certain orders to carry out, and you gentlemen will kindly state your business on the other side of the rail," came the answer promptly, and even belligerently.

"Oh, that's all right," assured Jerry bluffly. "We're the newspaper men; we'll go right along in."

"You'll do nothing of the kind," returned Schwartz, his tone emphasizing the growl and snarl that was his voice. "I made sure you were newspaper men from the way you spoke—but you'll have to get back where you belong just the same."

"An ugly beast, aren't you?" countered Jerry impudently. "But never mind that now. Suppose you run along and tell the

Deputy the newspaper men would like to see him."

The voice was honeyed insult.

"Suppose you lead the way back where you and your crowd belong—on the other side of that railing," Schwartz insisted, for all that the honeyed voice held a threat, and a newspaper man stationed at Headquarters may often bring trouble to an ordinary patrolman who has been "nasty." "I'll take your message then—if you have one—into the Commissioner's office."

"Obliging, aren't you?" Jerry commented. "My, but I'll bet it hurts! Patrolman Max Schwartz did you say you were? Well, Ugly Max, we'll get on the other side of the railing if you insist, and then you can chase along with the message. Move along snappy, Ugly Max!"

He accepted the epithet without any sign of perturbation, and stood waiting while the members of the group ranged themselves beyond the barrier. Then he handed over one of those printed slips that requires a caller to state his life's history if he is to penetrate into the office of a busy executive.

"You'll have to state your business on this," he said blandly.

"What are you doing—kidding me?"

Jerry's voice was poison.

"Say, boy, you're on the wrong track!"

But he recognized readily enough that he had lost in the joust and he filled out the slip without further comment. The others of the group had no word to say, for Jerry had taken the lead, and it is the unwritten law of the profession that there must never be more than one spokesman, regardless of conflicting opinions.

When presently the newspaper men had been ushered into the First Deputy's office and had concluded the business that brought them there, Jerry found it worth while to turn attention to Patrolman Schwartz.

"Who's this Ugly Max you've got out in the front office, Commissioner? He certainly is a nasty customer."

"Ugly Max?" repeated the Deputy. "Oh, you mean Schwartz. Humph! Ugly

Max *does* fit him rather well. But don't any of you boys know him?"

No one did.

"Why, he's that chap who killed Tim Dorson eight years ago," the Commissioner explained. "That cut on his cheek is one of Tim's mementoes. He got pretty badly used up by Tim. Don't you remember?"

"So that's the chap!" burst from George Rask, who had been covering Headquarters for more than a decade. "Why, of course! I should have known him—I saw him that time when they found him and Tim. But he's changed a lot. I don't wonder, though; we thought he'd never get back to duty again."

"He wouldn't have, if he hadn't—but there," the Deputy broke off, "I nearly told you what I'm not supposed to."

The group let it pass without question; the Deputy was speaking personally now and not for publication.

"What surprises me, however," he continued, "is that he's been so completely forgotten. That battle of his I've always felt was one of the most wonderful things in the history of the Department. Schwartz tackled Tim and his gang single-handed. I could never see the newspaper viewpoint on it."

"But he didn't tackle Tim and the gang!" protested Rask. "It was just a personal fight."

"That probably explains why he's so down on you newspaper men—that and the rest of the stories printed at the time. I've often heard he felt he didn't get a square deal."

The Deputy had been a member of the uniformed force before his present appointment and knew much of the inside stories.

"He's only thinking about one thing now and that's the getting of his full pension. I'm doing what I can to help him. That's why he's here."

"I guess he belongs, all right," was Jerry MacGowan's comment. "He's got a right to be an Ugly Max, too."

"Come to think of it, I don't know but

the name's as much of an anomaly as the rest of him," said the Commissioner, thoughtfully. "Every thought I've ever had about Max has turned out wrong; and I'm betting you'll find you're wrong about him, too."

"You mean about that old matter—with Dorson?"

It was George Rask who questioned.

"No-o-o, I wasn't thinking of that; it was the view of him as 'Ugly Max.'"

WITH THIS the First Deputy turned to some papers on his desk and we took the hint. Also there was the story to be telephoned in, the story about his appointment that had taken us to the First Deputy's office. After that, Ugly Max was in a fair way to be forgotten; for to the others of the Headquarters contingent what Rask and the Deputy had said had served sufficiently to identify the doorman.

But still, for me the Headquarters assignment was yet new and strange, and what the Deputy had commented concerning Ugly Max intrigued me. I asked Rask about it.

"Oh, I don't know," he said vaguely. "It was some of that Cherry Hill gang stuff. This fellow Dorson was leader of a gang down there and Schwartz—this 'Ugly Max' fellow—shot him. Dorson was supposed to be pretty much of a bad egg—tough as they make 'em; but there were a lot of people who liked him—he had a way with him—and at the time that Schwartz got him, he'd been quiet for quite a time.

"Anyway, the row with Dorson didn't have anything to do with the gang troubles. There was a woman mixed up in it somewhere."

His casual dismissal of the subject didn't satisfy me. For one thing, I hadn't yet fallen into the routine of the Headquarters assignment. Mainly, however, my curiosity was whipped by the eyes I had seen back of Schwartz's ugly face and by the Deputy's suddenly broken-off confidence regarding the man. He had

almost told us something he wasn't supposed to. What was it?

THE DORSON CLIPPINGS filed away in our "morgue" failed to disclose anything of moment. The story they had to tell was drab enough. Essentially, they chronicled a tale of long-standing warfare between one Patrolman Max Schwartz and the Nyo Gang—so the clippings capitalized it—led by Tim Dorson. There were several clippings touching on Schwartz's activity against the gang and his endeavors to break it up. Then came a story that Dorson had quit his gangsters and had got a court attendant's job. Some six months after this, in the chronology of the clippings, was the fight that ended in Dorson's death.

Schwartz had gone to Dorson's home on a Sunday; neighbors said the two had been alone; that they had heard the sound of a bitter fight but had been too frightened to investigate; that presently, when the tumult had ceased, someone more venturesome had opened the door of Dorson's rooms on the third floor of the tenement and had discovered the erstwhile gang leader lying dead and the patrolman near death, with deep knife-cuts in a dozen places. One, in his abdomen, was expected to cause his death. No one had heard the sound of the pistol shot.

That was virtually all of it, except that the clipping, in reciting Dorson's history, mentioned that he had been all alone in the world save for a six-year-old daughter, who had been at Coney Island with neighbors on the day of the shooting. There were no other relatives, it was stated. I wondered idly what had become of the youngster. Too, I wondered how Rask had gotten his idea that a woman had been mixed up in it somewhere. There was nothing in the clippings that hinted at anything of this sort. I put it down to the passing speculation of the reporters who had worked on the case at the time. . . .

THE WHOLE BUSINESS might have gone out of my mind had it not been for a chance visit I paid to the First Deputy's office several days later. There was no real occasion for the visit. A First Deputy isn't of especial importance in a police administration and, when the Commissioner is rather much of a stormy petrel as was the one of this time, the First Deputy and those about him are tolerably certain to be overlooked. But I was still somewhat curious regarding Max Schwartz, and I trumped up an excuse for a call.

It was during the noon hour. When I opened the door from the main corridor into the First Deputy's suite, my first glimpse discovered Ugly Max hunched up over his desk with a mass of newspapers spread out in front of him. He started to gather all the papers hurriedly together at the sound of the opening door, but as he saw who it was he stopped and went on with his reading. Walking over to the railing, I could see that the papers were opened to pages that were headed "Past Performances." Ugly Max's attention was concentrated on them—the racing charts that gave, from day to day, a virtual life history of every horse entered for the races at the tracks near New York.

It came as more or less of a surprise to me to see Max studying the racing records. Although his personality had intrigued me, the idea that had been building up of him in my mind had been that of a grouchy, disappointed, lonely man, who had retired into a shell from which he looked out on only one thing—retirement from the force after the year or so more that would enable him to get a full pension. The idea was utterly at variance with this new view of him.

"I wouldn't ever have guessed that you played the races, Schwartz," I gave voice to my mild surprise.

"Your guess would have been wrong; I don't play the races," he responded, looking up for a moment before he proceeded to write something in a small

memorandum book for which he reached under the heap of papers.

"It looks like it!" was my ironic rejoinder.

He looked up again, and although his face gleamed as ugly as ever, there was, unmistakably, a smile in his eyes.

"This is my recreation," he explained. His voice was a rasp, but I found more in it than the first time I had heard it. There was—let's see—yes, there was a human quality in it. It was evidenced more strongly as he went on. "If I were going to be quite elegant, I suppose I'd tell you it was my hobby. I don't know as I'm wealthy enough or professional enough to afford a hobby, but the doctors told me, at any rate, some years ago, that I'd have to find a hobby—and this is it."

"The doctors? You mean that time that you—were hurt?"

"Yes. You see, they didn't expect me to get well and then when I fooled 'em"—he was actually chuckling—"they told me I ought to find something to keep my mind busy; said I must have it."

I could hardly believe that it was Ugly Max speaking. The ideas I had been forming of him were knocked all awry. He was as different from what I expected of him as a man's second thought of a woman is from his first thought.

"You must excuse me, though; I forgot to ask if there was anything you wanted. Were you looking for the Deputy?"

The semi-apologetic tone, and the thought that he should stop to ask, added to my bewildered state of mind regarding him.

"No; I—I came to have a chat with you," I said, stammeringly.

It wasn't what I had intended to say, but the surprising humanness of him somehow or other forced it from me.

He looked sharply at me. There was a pleased reflection in his eyes, and his mouth drew into what might have been a smile if it hadn't been for the sneer that it could not erase.

"Thanks," he said, simply, after that

moment's glance. His tone was as repellant as ever, but there was in it something—different.

"It isn't often that people stop to talk with me."

There could be no doubt of it—he was lonely.

"I'd like to stop in very often and talk with you, if you'd like to have me," I said, impulsively.

"I wish you would," he returned.

AND SO IT WAS that whenever opportunity offered—two or three times a week and, occasionally, every day—I made my way to the ante-room of the First Deputy Commissioner for a talk with Ugly Max. My calls were generally timed for the noon hour, when I could be most sure of finding him alone, and on each occasion I would find him poring over the charts of "Past Performances." He had a way of studying the records with an astonishingly close concentration for a few minutes, of pausing then to write in the memorandum book I had noticed at the time of my first call, and of then chatting with me for a few minutes before returning once more to go through the same routine.

Those fragmentary talks were filled with a cheerfulness of spirit that I kept marvelling at continually. I would look at Ugly Max's face and see its drawn lines, his sneering mouth, the ugly scar on his cheek, and his cruel nose, and then I would close my eyes or look away from him and just listen. It developed into a weirdly fascinating game to try to reconcile his appearance and his harsh, croaking voice with the sprightly good cheer of his talk.

You yourselves can see readily enough, I imagine, why it was that the business of Ugly Max—the why of him and the why of what the Deputy Commissioner had said—had no chance of getting out of my mind.

Indeed, my curiosity, speculation, interest, call it what you will, freshened and ripened the more I saw of him.

ONCE it seemed that my curiosity was destined to be satisfied. It was on a day that I discovered him white with pain, his curry-like color changed into a pallor that was terrifying, and his lips mumbly a soft, long-drawn "O-o-h! O-o-h!" that was agonizing because it was so akin to a groan and was held from being actually a groan only by a powerful effort of will.

"Max! What's wrong? What can I do for you?"

My words rushed out to him while I hurried to his side

"It's the old wound—where Dorson knifed me," he answered, faintly. "Don't mind it; I'll be all right in a minute. I get it—every once in a while. I'm used to it by now; I'll get over it in a minute. Just—wait!"

It must have been torture for him to speak; every word seemed wrung from him by sheer will power. While I stood impotent, wondering what to do, he spoke again.

"I've got to stick it out, you know—got to get my pension. It'll only be a year and a half more—then—then—I won't mind."

"Max! You musn't try to talk," I ordered.

It had taken fully a minute for him to say that last brief word; the pain of it hurt me.

A thought came to me suddenly.

"You ought to retire now, Max. You've been twenty-three years on the force, and you'd been entitled to a pretty fair pension, even now! You're really sick, you know, and it comes from that old injury—in the line of duty."

He straightened up quickly; the drawn lines were, somehow, pulled from his face.

"I could have done that eight years ago," he growled. "I wouldn't let them do it. I've got to get my full pension. I've stuck it out this long, and, by the Eternal, I'm going to stick to it! It's only a year and a half more. I must do it! I must! I want my full pension, I tell you, and I'm going to get it!"

THE LAST SENTENCE was fairly shouted at me. I hardly knew what to make of it. Then his insistent repetition that he must have his full pension came home to me. I began to see a light. In spite of the short time of my assignment at Headquarters, it had already been long enough to make me feel that the city's pension system for its policemen was about as iniquitous and unfair a thing as could possibly be devised. Under it, a man could join the force at the age of twenty-one, serve for twenty-five years, develop some minor hurt or find a com-pleasant surgeon, and retire on half-pay for the rest of his life—eleven hundred and eighty dollars a year as long as he lived, if he were only a first-grade patrolman at the time of retirement; more if he were of higher rank. On the other hand, if, before he had served twenty-five years, he should be terribly injured in the performance of his duty, so injured that he would be compelled to retire, perhaps so crippled that he could do nothing whatever to support himself, he would not be entitled to half-pay but only to a portion of that, based on the number of years he had served. And there had been instances of patrolmen who had been on the force only two or three years, who had been crippled for life in doing their duty against great odds, who could never hope to do anything that would aid in supporting themselves, and the pension given them under the law could be only a pittance! And yet these others, who might not have done a single worth-while thing in twenty-five years, could retire, sure of eleven hundred and eighty dollars a year, and find other jobs that would enable them, with the pension, to live in luxury!

SO THAT was it! Max had, in some way, gotten himself so patched together eight years ago that he had been able to pass the board of police surgeons when they would have retired him, and he had held on to get his full pension!

"Does it mean so much to you, Max?"

My question voiced the thought that

was in me. It had all the effect of a heart stimulant. He turned suddenly to stare at me, and his face flushed vividly.

"Forget it; there's nothing to it," he assured. "See! I'm all right, now. Let me see—did I ever show you the record I've been keeping in these eight years of my hobby?"

MAX'S abrupt shifting of the subject showed clearly that he wished no questions along the line that his pain and weakness had made him reveal to a degree. Even had I thought of questioning, he gave no chance for it; for he opened the memorandum book that had become associated in my mind with his study of "Past Performances" and spread the book in front of me.

"Just see here how I've been improving!" he said, his tone all pride.

His fingers shifted rapidly from page to page of the book, pausing here and there to point out and dwell on a series of entries that were marked either "W" or "L." The handwriting was very small, almost microscopic. I had to look closely to make out that each page bore a record of four or five days, the section devoted to each day having, as I saw, the names of three horses in each of six races.

It was quite plain that Ugly Max had been endeavoring, in the years of his hobby, to select the horses in one, two, three order of finish in the racing meets he had studied. In the early pages, "L" was sprinkled opposite his selections with fair regularity. As the pages continued, "W" found place oftener; and, finally, for a number of pages, "L" was written not more than six or seven times to a page, with but few exceptions.

"Max!"

My voice reflected astonished surprise.

"Does the 'W' mean 'Won' and the 'L,' 'Lost'?"

"That's the answer.

"His speech was a gratified pride.

"For a year or two now I've been hitting 'em almost on the head."

"And you don't bet!"

"Not a bit. You see, that's the trouble with the racing. If it weren't for the betting, I could come pretty close to getting them all right every single day by this time."

"Good Lord, man, you're close enough! Why, you could make a fortune in no time!"

"No."

He shook his head.

"Just as sure as I'd bet, just so sure would my judgment be wrong. I'll tell you why. Most races are honest, you know, but there are many that aren't. And those that aren't, the betting is responsible for. When you bet—there's money. And when people are thinking of money they—a good many of 'em—do a lot of things that are pretty crooked. I don't mean the people who own the horses think about the money; but there are so many people between them and the horses who do. It's such an easy way to make money, you see. Of course, in a few cases you can't depend on the horses; but in most cases you can't depend on the people. I think if it wasn't for that, I could come pretty near a hundred per cent in my selections."

"Still, I can't see—" my voice all protest—"I can't see why you don't bet, just once in a while."

"I don't believe in it," he answered simply. "But don't say anything more about it. I think I've been preaching enough. Besides, you forget that it's just a hobby."

IT WASN'T till I left him that the strangeness of it all came fully to me. When it did, I found myself wondering on the one hand about the mystery I fancied lurked somewhere in Max's insistence on being able to retire on full half-pay pension, and on the other about the oddity of his hobby and his well-nigh Puritanical protest against profiting by it. The whole thing seemed a jumble of contradictions, out of which, however, my initial thought regarding him became more strongly developed than ever.

There was no apparent opportunity to go further into it after that one day. I saw Ugly Max often, but there could be no mistaking his air of reserve when I sought to introduce the general subject of pensions and from which the talk might have been led by easy stages to his own particular case. For about two months matters continued this way. Then, one noon-time, I found Max missing from his post. Another patrolman was substituting at the railing in the First Deputy's office.

"Where's Ugly Max?" I asked; the pseudonym had long since travelled through the entire department.

"Sick."

An idea came to me instantly with the monosyllabic answer.

"Know where he lives?"

"No, but I guess the Deputy, or his secretary, can tell you."

I waited until the Deputy Commissioner returned from lunch and then asked him to give me Ugly Max's address. When he hesitated, I told him of the friendship we had been building up in the outer office for several months.

LATE that afternoon, I went up to Ugly Max's place. His home was on the second floor of a comfortable-looking oldtime apartment house. A girl about thirteen or fourteen years old—a dark-haired, dark-eyed, sober-faced, fascinatingly pretty little miss—came to the door in answer to my ring and answered my inquiry for Patrolman Schwartz.

"Daddy Max? Yes, he's ill. I'm sure he'll be glad to know someone's inquiring for him. Won't you come in?"

I hadn't known Max was married; hadn't thought of it, in fact, but this was obviously a daughter. I followed the youngster on in, thinking the while that it was good to find my preconceived fancies mistaken—Ugly Max wasn't alone in the world as I had always, for some reason or other, imagined him; he had a family, a wife, to care for him. But when the girl had led me to the room where

Max lay in bed, I found that he was alone. He was groaning softly.

"Max, can I do anything for you?"

My voice aroused him as if it had been an alarm clock.

"You! What are you doing here?"

His voice, pain-racked, sounded more than ordinarily sharp.

"They told me at Headquarters that you were sick."

"But I'm not supposed to be sick—I'm not officially sick; the Deputy said he wouldn't report it. If he has, they'll come and examine me, and I'll have to retire—and I'm not sick—I'm not sick, I tell you."

He spoke gruffly, feverishly, almost deliriously.

"Of course not, Max," I soothed. "It was only that I missed you and asked the Deputy about you—told him what friends we'd become. He gave me your address."

I did not mention speaking to the substitute in the outer office.

"I thought there might be something I could do. I'd always thought that you were alone. As long as your family's here—your wife and the youngster—I guess you don't need me. I'm sorry to have bothered you."

He smiled in that twisted way his sneering mouth compelled. The pain he had been suffering when I came in was quite evidently gone or forgotten.

"My wife?" he echoed, chuckingly. "No; I haven't one. I suppose it was Elizabeth here made you think that. We're all alone, aren't we, Elizabeth?"

The girl came to him, without replying, and placed a hand tenderly on his shoulder—the gesture indicating a perfect love and faith for the ugly-looking man who lay there that I hope some day I may be worthy of. He reached with one hand to grasp hers, but a spasm of pain seized him and the hand fell back. I could see him grit his teeth and could see his form toss beneath the covers.

"Oh, Daddy! Daddy Max!" the girl said to him gently, her voice an infinity of compassion. "Can't I do something to help?"



"The girl came to him, without replying, and placed a hand tenderly on his shoulder—the gesture indicating a perfect love and faith for the ugly-looking man who lay there."

"You'd better let me get you a doctor, Max," I said, more practically. "You must need something—you ought to have something to ease that pain, or know, anyway, what it's all about."

"No!" he answered me stormily. "No doctor! I know all about it; it's the old wound. I've been fighting it for years; I've got to fight it still. It's for Elizabeth. I've got to do it. And the doctors would find out, and they'd retire me. No! No doctor! I won't have one!"

While the youngster caressed him gently, I hastened to do what I could, too, to quiet him.

"No; of course not, Max. We won't think about it. I was only thinking that you needed some attention. You've got someone else in temporarily, I suppose, to help you? It might be too much for Elizabeth."

"There's a woman, one of the neighbors, who comes in every day. She helps out in the housekeeping. But I'm all right—I'll be back on the job tomorrow. I'll be expecting you to run across the street to see me."

But Ugly Max was not to be seen when I crossed from the reporters' quarters, opposite Headquarters, to pay him my usual noontide call on the morrow. I was mentally resolving to see him again at his home that afternoon, after I had discovered that the substitute was still holding forth for him, when the Deputy, leaving his office much later than was his wont, came out. He stopped on seeing me, with word that he had been about to go over for me. Patrolman Schwartz had telephoned a request that I call at his home as soon as I could.

"You're his friend, aren't you?" the Deputy adding a question after delivering the message.

"We've been rather friendly, Commissioner, and I like him," I answered.

"Do what you can, then, to make him see reason. I've been trying to long enough, and he won't listen to me. Do what you can."

The Deputy, quite plainly taking it for

granted that I knew a great deal more about Ugly Max than I did, hurried on before I could ask some of the questions in my mind.

WHEN I found myself as soon as possible again at the door of the apartment, the girl, Elizabeth, once more came to the door, this time with the marks of tears on her cheeks and with her fingers to her lips in cautionary signal.

"Daddy Max is very sick, I'm afraid," she told me. "The First Deputy Police Commissioner was here this morning, with a doctor, and they told Daddy Max that he must have an operation. He wouldn't listen to them. Please speak to him about it—as nice as you can, won't you?"

Max was lying very quietly in bed when I got to his side, and I would have gone, fancying him asleep, but he aroused himself at the slight noise I made and greeted me with a labored attempt at cheerfulness. He thanked me, too, for coming and then spoke to the girl who had gone to stand by his side.

"Elizabeth, dear, will you leave us alone for a little while? Just go outside until I call you."

When she had gone, he raised himself on one elbow and looked over at me, his face all misery.

"I suppose they've told you?" he asked, his voice mournful, and yet, at the same time, defiant.

"You mean about your condition? No; they haven't really told me. I don't understand quite, except for just a word that they have advised an operation."

"Yes, that's it. The Deputy was here. He's been one of my best friends. He brought a doctor—he was worried about me."

Every word was slow and painful; there was a pause of a few seconds before he went on.

"The doctor found the old trouble in a bad way; he said that I'd have to have an operation right away. And I won't have it. I can't quit the force yet. I

know I'd have to quit if they went ahead. And that's why I wanted you to come. I wanted to ask you to go to the Deputy and tell him—I'll be all right—in a day or so. I've been holding it off—all these years—and the time's so short now. You'll go to the Deputy, won't you—and tell him?"

His glance at me as he said this was so intense that I could see nothing of his face except the pleading light in his eyes. I groped uncertainly in my mind for words.

"Why—er—Max, the Deputy," I began lamely, "the Deputy told me—before I came up—that I must make you listen to reason."

"This isn't a time for reason!" he burst out at me. "I tell you I've got to do this! I've got Elizabeth—"

"Yes, that's what you've got to think of, Max," I interrupted. "You must think of your daughter. Maybe if you won't listen to what they say, you'll be worse off, and your youngster—"

"But she isn't my daughter! She isn't mine! She's Tim Dorson's child!"

The three brief phrases cut short my carefully measured speech as if a whip-lash had suddenly cracked beside my ears. My jaw fell as I stared at him stupidly, hardly comprehending.

"If she were mine, it might be different," he hurried on, ignoring my bewilderment. His tone was strong with excitement. "It's because she's Dorson's girl that I've got to think of it this way. It's a duty—a sacred duty. Don't you see?"

No power of description could portray his earnestness as he poured this out, his head still supported on propped elbow. It exhausted him so that he fell back on his pillow.

"I see that you've been doing a very wonderful thing, Max," I said to him as soon as I could get myself together and speaking with all the comforting tone that I could muster. "And yet, I don't see that it should make things any different now. From what you tell me, this order of the doctor's must be imperative; and

what could Elizabeth have to do with it, whether she's your daughter or Dorson's?"

HE TRIED TO RAISE HIMSELF once more on his elbow, but gave it up after a brief effort.

"I suppose I've got to tell you, then," he spoke from where he lay. "I guess I've got to tell someone."

"It's an oath I swore that day I killed Dorson."

"Yes, I killed him, you know—her father—I killed him—shot him. . . . When I pulled my revolver from my pocket and fired it at him, I had to choose quickly; it was to be him or me. And I knew about Elizabeth; I knew that he and she were alone in the world. I had played with her—on the street. I knew if I killed him, there'd have to be someone to care for her. And I swore then that I'd come through—all right—that she would never know want."

"And after I got back to duty again—there was a break developed in the abdominal wall—where he had cut me—and I . . . my doctor told me I might last it out until I'd served my full time, if I could stand some pain now and then. . . . I saved as much as I could, every year, and I figured it all out that if I could stay on the force until I could get my full pension then there'd be enough left over from half-pay, after a few years, for her. . . . I'd never saved a penny before I was hurt. I was all alone—nobody to care for. I couldn't give in, until I could get half-pay. . . . I had to have all of that, if my plans were to come out all right. And that . . . that's why I've got to stick it out now. . . . I've had these attacks—but not so bad—for years. . . . I know I'll be all right in a day or two. . . . You've got to make the Deputy see—"

His gasping voice was suddenly stilled. I bent over him in alarm.

"Max!"

"Oh, I'm all right," he assured, weakly. "Only I've been fighting for eight years—"

and you wouldn't have me lose all that, would you?"

I imagined that I commenced to see it: the thing was an obsession with him. It had so filled his thoughts for eight years that his viewpoint on it now must necessarily be warped.

"If she were your daughter, Max, you'd have the operation and be willing to retire?" I asked him, feeling my way slowly. An affirmative nod of his head answering me, I went on:

"And of course you look on Elizabeth as if she were your very own? You love her as your own daughter?"

With a preternatural shrewdness, occasioned no doubt by the super-activity of his mind just then, he sensed whither I was leading him.

He sat up in bed, raising himself with a sharp jerk.

"Yes—I do," he answered me slowly. "But it's different—different—for she—she trusted me—and I—I killed her father."

THE BESEECHING GAZE he bent on me was like a prayer. The thought that this idea which filled him was virtually a monomania came to me. And he was so pitiable a figure!

"I'll—I'll see the Deputy, Max," I promised him.

As I went on back to Headquarters, I tried to piece together what he had told me with the few facts I had gleaned from the old clippings, and with what Rask had told me. There seemed to be much still to be accounted for. There had been no mention of a woman in what Max had told me. And the old clippings, and Rask's comment that it had been a personal fight with Dorson, had placed the blame on Max. I couldn't believe it, in view of the wonderful thing that he had disclosed to me.

The First Deputy had me come in as soon as I had sent in my name.

"Well?" was his question.

"I hardly know what to say," I answered him. "But Max has asked me to

tell you that he'll be all right tomorrow—"

"He'll be dead tomorrow, if he isn't operated on tonight," the Deputy broke in gruffly. "The man's a fool!"

"I wouldn't call him that," I protested mildly.

"No, I suppose not," he returned wearily. "Has he told you? Do you know the story?"

I told him as much as Max had related, and asked him, "I daresay there's more? There was some woman—?"

"No; it was even stranger than that; it was just that this little youngster smiled at him two or three times and used to speak to him. I've never told any one before, but you've become one of Max's friends—"

He stopped for a moment to smile, then continued.

"Not that there's much more to tell. I was captain down there, you know—it was the Oak Street station—when Max was there. Except that Tim Dorson's added that scar on his cheek, he was the same ugly face then that he is now. And he was sensitive about it. He liked children—and they used to run from him. This girl of Dorson's, though—she took to him the first time she saw him. She smiled at him, and went to him. She was only five or six years old then. They were great friends.

"Max went to Dorson; it didn't do any good. He commenced to get after the Nyo's—and if you know anything about the gangs in those days, you know he was taking his life in his hands. Max was talking to Dorson, too, all the while, and pretty soon it did some good. Dorson got a job as attendant in one of the city magistrate's courts. It was a fake reformation, though. Max knew it, and one Sunday, when he heard that the kiddie was to go down to the beach for the day, he fancied it was because some devilment was up, and he went there. He found Tim and three or four others. They fought all over the place. The rest of 'em ran—got away by the fire escape—when

Max shot Dorson. And they found only the two."

"But I've looked up the clippings," I objected, "and Rask told me it was just the two—"

"That's just another one of Max's notions," said the Deputy scornfully—scornfully, and yet, was I mistaken in believing I heard a distinct note of admiration, too? "He had a crazy idea that if it all came out, the newspapers would make such a fuss over it that the story wouldn't be forgotten easily and this girl might grow up and be pointed out as Dorson's daughter—the girl whose father was killed in that great fight with Patrolman Schwartz, you know—something of that sort. And so he said there'd been just the two of 'em.

"And I remember—I was one of the first there; it was right near the house—after the reporters got there, he said something about, 'She trusted me, and I killed him.' That must have been where they got the idea there was a woman mixed up in it, eh? I went to see him next day at the hospital, and it was me he asked to get the girl and keep her until he got well. But he wouldn't let me tell anybody—"

The Deputy stopped in a way that showed he was seeing it all again. I coughed a couple of times; it was such a damp day.

"What's to be done about it?" I asked, briskly.

"To be done about it?" he echoed, startled from his reverie. "Oh—yes; yes. What's to be done?"

"Have you told him that he'll die if he doesn't have the operation, and that then there'll be no pension at all?" I asked.

"Why, no," said the Commissioner. "I hadn't thought of that."

"And you called Max a fool!" I remarked scathingly.

"I couldn't bear to hurt him," he excused himself.

I THOUGHT about it for a minute or two. I didn't want to hurt him, either; I wanted him to win his fight—wanted Ugly Max to win the victory he had been battling for through eight long years. But what else was there to do? I had a wild idea of going to my city editor with the story and having my paper launch the "Ugly Max and Elizabeth Fund." I could see the dollars just rolling in if the story were told and played up right, but—that would defeat one of the things Max had fought against for eight years. Another wild idea came to me—to cash in, in a big way, on Max's hobby; it was almost a sure thing, but—Max, I knew, would not permit.

"I guess there's only one thing," I said at length.

"We've got to tell him."

SO WE WENT on up together, and we told him, told it as gently as we could.

Max heard us through quietly.

"Why didn't you say so before?" he asked the Deputy simply when he had finished:

"I didn't know that. . . . And you ought to know that I've got to do this—to do this for her."

"Then it's all right?" the Deputy asked of him.

"Why, of course," Max agreed as heartily as his weakness would let him. "It won't make so much difference. Only—only I've got to live longer, after I get around again. . . ."

And they called him Ugly Max!

THE GIFT OF THE DESERT

*The Second Installment of a Novel of Adventure
and Romance in the Southwest*

By Randall Parrish

Illustrations by T. Wyatt Nelson

[The story thus far: Deborah Meredith, after a distinguished overseas service as a Red Cross nurse, is prevailed upon by old Tom Meager to leave Chicago for his Arizona ranch, to care for his wife through a protracted illness. In making the rounds of his ranch one day Meager falls from his horse and is killed. A few days later Bob Meager, a son of old Tom Meager's by his first wife, mysteriously appears. He is a desperado of the most depraved type, known all along the border for deeds of the foulest kind. Bob Meager lays claim to the estate, meaning to drive out his stepmother, and announces his purpose to make Deborah his wife. To further his scheme he dismisses all the American help and brings in Mexicans and half-breeds of his own stripe upon whom he can rely. One night there arrives at the ranch one Judge Garrity, one of Bob's minions, brought from Nogales to perform the wedding. Before Bob comes to her room to carry her by force to the ceremony, Deborah slips into the bunk-house and secures a gun, which she hides in her dresser. When the "ceremony" has been concluded under protest, she flees to her room. After an hour of drunken debauch with his men, Bob Meager comes to her, and in a struggle Deborah kills him with the butt of the gun. She leaves the room silently, gathers food and water for a journey across the desert, and goes to the stables for a horse. She is making her way in the dark when she stumbles upon a sleeping form, who announces himself as "Daniel Kelleen," and who listens with a quick sympathy to Deborah's story. Installment two starts here:]

FOR a moment Kelleen did not move; then impulsively he groped for her hand in the darkness.

"You killed him? You did? Say, I like you," he exclaimed earnestly. "You are sure some girl, you are. But are you certain you killed him?"

"I—I think so—yes," she stammered, totally surprised by the way in which he greeted her news. "But I—I am not exactly sure."

"You are a nurse, you said."

"Yes, but—but somehow I couldn't touch the man. He was so repulsive to me—I couldn't. All I know is he is lying there on the floor of my room, and—and he never moved after he was struck."

"Struck? You did not shoot, then?"

"No; I had no chance. I got away from them, and ran to my own room,

where I meant to lock myself in, but someone had taken the key. I shut the door behind me and got the revolver out of a drawer, determined to defend myself. The men followed, but stopped outside in the hall. I could hear them laugh and talk; then they went back to the front room again. Bob was so sure I couldn't get away he wasn't afraid to leave me there. He planned to get drunk first, and then come back."

"Sure; that would be his style! And you waited? You didn't try to get away?"

"Get away! Where could I go? Only out into the desert, and those men would have trailed me if I tried that. Yes, I waited in the dark, desperate, determined to kill him when he came. And he came finally, so drunk he could hardly stand, but ugly with the liquor. He had out-

drunk all the others and boasted of it, and—and then he came reeling to me.

"I—I don't seem to remember exactly what did happen; he laughed and jeered at me, and got hold of the weapon before I had courage to fire. Then we struggled, and the grip of his hands drove me mad. The revolver fell to the floor, but I got it, and struck at him with all my might. That was all; he just lay there, and never moved; I could see his face in the starlight—but I couldn't make myself touch him. I—I believed he was dead, that I had killed him."

"Never mind, little girl," interrupted Kelleen firmly, "maybe he was, but I doubt it; guys like that are not croaked so easy. Then, I take it, you ran away."

"Yes; I—I couldn't stay there, and I thought maybe there might be a chance if I could only find a horse somewhere. I knew the others were all drunk, and I would not be missed before morning. I had to try, and that was how I came to be here. You—you understand now?"

"Yes, I understand, and I am going to stay with you. But first let's get this straight. I am not bragging about myself, and, I reckon, ordinarily you wouldn't be pickin' me out for a companion, but right now it's any port in a storm. One thing sure, I don't belong to Bob Meager's outfit, and I like you. The main question is, are you ready to trust me as a white man?"

"Yes—I am."

"That means a lot more than you think right now," he went on, but evidently encouraged by her tone. "Because it ain't going to be so easy getting away. I know this country off the main trails. I don't take any stock in Bob's being dead; he's got a knockout, that's all, and when he comes to himself again, he's going to be raving. He'll have every rider on this ranch on our trail, and the best we can reckon on is maybe three hours' start. You got to stay with me, and do just what I say—and, girl, that sure means you must trust me plumb to the limit. Do you sabe that? This ain't goin' to be no

canter between here and Nogales; the only chance we've got is to hide out, first in the desert, an' then in the hills. I'm telling it to you rough; but you better know it now than later."

"You mean we shall have to be alone together for—for some time?"

"That's the stuff. This ain't goin' to be no easy gallop into town. You don't know me from Adam, and if you did I reckon you wouldn't go a mile with me. I ain't very highly thought of along this border, I'll say that; there ain't many would choose me for a partner, that's a fact. More, I ain't got nothin' to say to you except that I'm going to play square. If you trust me I'll bring you through safe enough in one way or another; but if you don't feel that you can go the limit, then the best thing for you to do, maybe, is to stay here, an' scrap it out with Bob Meager. My notion is this runnin' away with his wife ain't goin' to be no snap, even for me, and darned if I'm going to tackle the job except you're of a mind to go clear through with me."

"You think I am his wife, then? That he is really alive?"

"I haven't a doubt of it. At least I am going to proceed on that theory. Meager is the one we have got to escape from; if he gets over by daylight from that rap you gave him, he is going to lead us a merry chase. Every minute of a start we get, the better. But I want you to get it straight—will you go with me?"

There was an eager earnestness in his voice of which she was fully conscious, yet somehow this did not frighten her. The one vision of Bob Meager, drunk and grasping her in his arms, dominated all else, and left her careless of any lesser danger.

There was no hope in remaining where she was, alone, in the power of this outfit; any effort at escape, no matter how desperate, was infinitely better than a weak surrender to such a fate. Kelleen was white, an American, a border desperado, no doubt, yet he talked square, and had given her pledge of protection.

He offered her the only available chance; she must trust the man blindly, or else resign herself to fate. No other choice remained. Impulsively she thrust out her hand in silent promise.

"You mean yes?"

"I mean yes. I trust you fully, absolutely. I will do exactly as you say."

"It is bound to be some test, young lady," he returned gravely, releasing her hand, and rising to his feet, "but I reckon I won't let you regret it. Nobody ever trusted Dan Kelleen yet and found him a piker. We're pardners now; let's go."

KELLEEN picked up a saddle from the bed of hay on which he had been resting; found another hanging on a stake driven into a beam, and with both flung carelessly over his shoulder, emerged through the open door into the starlight. Deborah followed closely, a new feeling of lightness to her step. She was no longer alone, unguided; something about the words and actions of the man brought confidence. She had not even seen his face, yet his very presence inspired courage; she had found a friend, a companion. His movements added to her faith. The situation was plainly no novelty to him; he had been a fugitive before and had learned every trick in the hard school of experience.

A moment he paused motionless in the shadow of the stable, studying the dimly revealed scene. There was no movement visible anywhere, although a light burned in the bunkhouse, and the faint glimmer of another appeared through the window of the more distant ranchhouse. These meant nothing but as reminders of the night's orgy, convincing, indeed, that the revelers were still soundly asleep as a result of their debauch. Whatever had happened to Bob Meager, it was clearly evident the fellow had not yet recovered consciousness, and it was hardly likely his fellows would become aroused until he sounded the alarm. The way of escape still remained open, but no one could tell for how long. Success might hang upon

moments. Kelleen's keen eyes searched the shadows anxiously, but his lips smiled.

"It's all right," he whispered confidently. "The gang is still doped, I reckon. You don't see anyone moving, do you?"

"No."

"Then follow me."

He stopped suddenly.

"You ride, don't you?"

"Yes."

"Good! It struck me *maybe* you didn't, being a nurse from the East. Learn how out here?"

"Not entirely; I have always ridden, but old Tom Meager taught me a lot."

"Well, it's going to come handy now. My horse is all right, but I'll have to rope one for you, and I might pick a wild devil in the dark. Could you stay?"

"As long as he keeps his feet."

"Damn, but I like your style!" he said, enthusiastically, letting his hand rest an instant on her shoulder. "You and I are going to hit it off fine. Come on, now; keep back in the shadow."

SHE WAITED at the bars of the corral while Kelleen vanished in the darkness of the open, lightly swinging a coiled lariat in his hand. It was a wonderful night, the stars like lamps in the sky, the silence profound. The air blew cold against her cheek, but not so much as the rustle of a leaf broke the stillness. Both houses were from there hidden from view, and, now that her newly found companion had disappeared, Deborah felt entirely alone.

Had she done right to repose trust in him? Who was the man? In his presence, hearing his voice, mysteriously influenced by his careless personality, she felt strangely drawn toward him, but now, that he had vanished, doubts came surging back. Why was he at the ranch if he had no connection with Bob Meager? What would his presence there imply? The ranch was on no commonly used trail; visitors never came without a purpose. To reach there at all required miles

of desert travel, with no little hardship. There must always be an object in such a journey. What could it be in this case? Was the fellow a mere drifter, seeking a job? A fugitive from justice, hiding from the law—or actually in Meager's service?

Surely he must be one of the three; nothing else would account for his presence, under such circumstances—his hiding out in the stable, his secrecy, even the disparaging remarks he had made about himself.

Yet she liked, and trusted him; felt no fear of the man. So far as his relations with her were concerned not a doubt of his absolute squareness assailed her. She believed his promise. Outlaw, fugitive, border desperado, he had won her faith already. The reaction she experienced from being helplessly alone caused her now to rest all hope on this stranger who had so mysteriously come to her rescue; she cared not who he might be, or from whence he came. Enough that he was there, strong-armed, capable, fearless, willing to befriend her, to guide her safely. This very relief felt, left her helpless to question his motive; she was ready enough to follow him, to do whatever he desired.

It was in this spirit of almost blind confidence that the girl welcomed his return when he finally emerged from out the black shadows, leading two horses trailing quietly behind, through the corral gate. She could not even wholly refrain from showing her eagerness.

"Let me help now," she insisted. "I am not quite helpless; indeed I am not."

He laughed softly, his eyes searching the shadows, rather than seeking her.

"No, no; the quickest way will be for you to stand quietly, and hold the brutes; this animal seems a bit ugly. I'll try him out myself."

He saddled and bridled the two rapidly, evidently accustomed to working in the dark.

"Are you ready?"

"Yes."

"Put your foot in my hand. This is my

horse; he'll carry you fine. Now, up you go. This is your water bottle? I'll strap it to the pommel."

He swung into the saddle himself, restraining the half-broken animal with an iron hand.

"You know the way down the mesa?" he asked, "the Nogales trail?"

"Of course."

"Then ride ahead, and I'll follow. I may have trouble with this brute before he learns who is master. Just go straight on out into the desert. I'll not be far away."

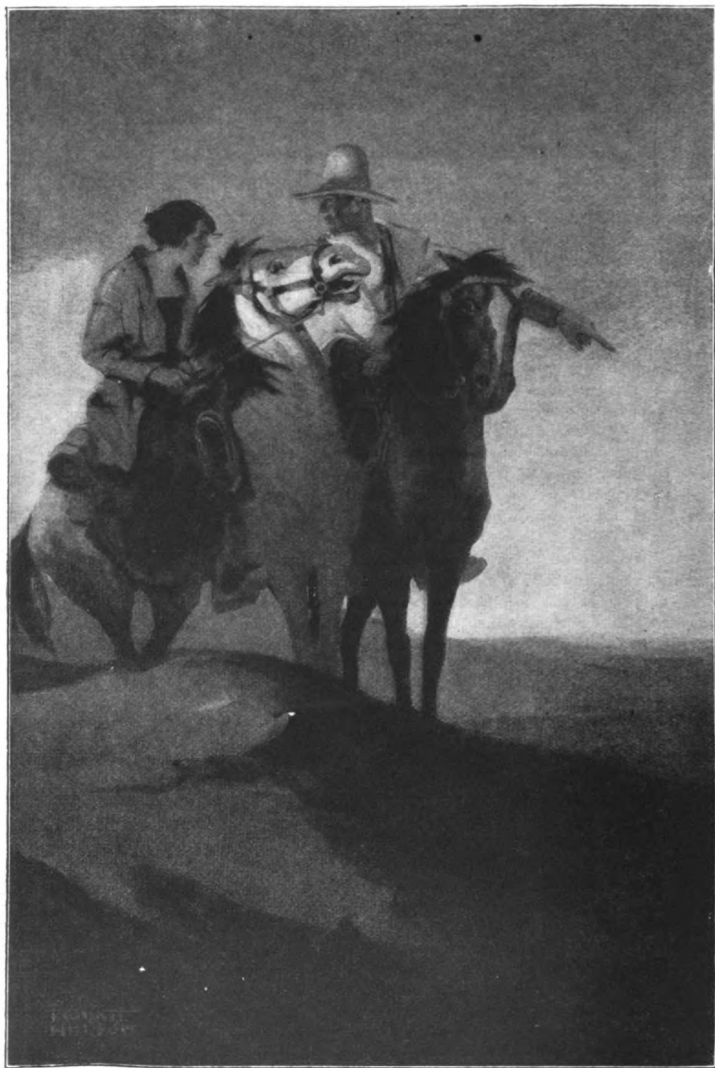
SHE RODE FORWARD, never questioning his right to command. It seemed the most natural thing in the world to obey. The horse under her moved steadily at a swift walk, alert but well trained, obedient to the slightest pressure of her fingers on the rein. The muffled sounds of a struggle reached her ears, and she turned in the saddle to look back, but darkness hid everything. The man would conquer, and keep his word, and she guided her mount into the narrow trail, scarcely discernible beneath the tree shadows. Her courage was high; she was no longer alone; the dread of the desert had left her.

CHAPTER IX

The Road to Silver Springs

DEBORAH found passage down the steep hillside, and had advanced some distance across the level, before Kelleen joined her. No words were exchanged between them as he reined in his horse beside her own. Evidently the man was satisfied with her knowledge of the trail, as well as of the progress made. He turned in the saddle, gazing searchingly back at the dim outline of the mesa, now barely visible through the gloom. His horse, completely conquered, had lost all restlessness, keeping even pace with the one ridden by the girl.

She glanced aside uneasily.



"'Do you see anything over yonder?' he asked. 'Just ahead there?'"

"There is something wrong?" she asked, troubled by his silence.

"No, nothing stirring. I circled the bunkhouse before leaving; the whole outfit are still asleep. I was just getting directions fixed in my mind. We are going a route I haven't traveled lately."

"But the Nogales trail is not difficult to follow."

"That is exactly what is wrong with it," he explained, his face now turned forward. "It is so easily followed that we could never get far enough ahead of pursuit to be safe. They will jump to the conclusion that you have gone this way, of course. I am hoping they will believe you have gone alone."

"Do they know you were at the ranch?"

"Yes, unfortunately; but my disappearance during the night will not necessarily make them conclude we have disappeared together."

He laughed.

"I haven't a reputation for remaining very long in any one place, so my going will create no particular suspicion. Then I've covered things the best I could. I came out through a ravine to the north, and circled back to this trail, and from here on not much trace will be left—the way that wind is blowing it would take an Apache to follow us after two hours. That is what I'm counting on now—to leave those fellows guessing. They'll be sure you've gone this way—because it's the only trail you knew anything about—but they won't have the devil of an idea what has become of me. That is exactly what I'm aiming to do—get the bunch riding this trail, thinking you're going it blind, and that all they've got to do in order to catch you is to ride hard enough. Then they won't stop to read 'Sign'—see?"

He chuckled at the picture, and rested one hand lightly on her saddle pommel.

"I've done a bit of hiding out before, and reckon I know the game."

"But I do not," she ventured, doubtfully. "It seems to me we are doing exactly what they expect."

"Sure; I'm counting on two hours and a half, or maybe three hours of darkness yet. An hour will bring us to Silver Springs. That doesn't mean a thing to you, does it?"

"No, only I think I remember the place."

"And it won't be to those guys, either, unless Bob Meager is able to be along with them. The gang he has is new to these parts; most of them come from over the border. Well, Silver Springs is where we take a side trip, the sort not many know about. Two hours' ride from there the whole United States couldn't find where you was hid away."

"How did you know?" she questioned suspiciously.

"Oh, it's part of my trade to learn the country I'm working in."

"Your trade?"

"Sure, you never supposed I was here for my health, did you? I've got a trade all right, and perhaps I'll tell you about it some time. It's enough now for me to say that it has taught me as much about this desert as any Indian ever knew. I've rode it alone, east, west, north, and south, and one of the strange places I stumbled into—by good luck, not more than two days ago—was this Devil's Gulch I'm heading for now. If we get there by daylight we'll have this game blocked."

"You believe no one else knows the place?"

"Sure, someone does, but not this outfit. I doubt if old Tom Meager ever knew of it, but I have some reason to believe Bob may. It has been used before by white men, and cattle have been herded there. I saw enough to find that out, but none of the 'Sign' was recent. It has been a thieves' den in its day, no doubt, if the story was known."

"A thieves' den."

"Likely—yes. You do not know this country very well, Miss Deborah, but it has been the headquarters for cattle rustlers and smugglers for years, centuries for all I know. In some respects it is as bad today as it ever was. Mexico is just

over yonder" (he made an expressive gesture with one hand), "and this desert stretches along both sides the line; on every side mountains and wild country. There's nothing here to civilize, and the only law is represented by a few scattered soldier patrols. The Meager ranch is the only oasis in a hundred miles. I don't know how the place was ever found, but I'll bet it was held by the rifle."

"It was," she said eagerly. "Old Tom told me the story. He came in here a young man, prospecting, and discovered these hundreds of acres, with water, grass, everything, even a considerable bunch of wild cattle. There was no one in the country then, and the cattle were not even worth stealing. He lived here alone for years, found gold somewhere, and got enough to develop this property."

"At first he did not know whether he was in Mexico or the United States, but at last secured title to the land, brought men in to help, and began to raise and ship stock. The Indians never troubled him much, but rustlers did, both Yank and Mexican. They had a regular trail through those hills to the east. It is used yet occasionally; I rode out there with Tom Meager once, and it is like a road—"

"Yes, I've seen it," Kelleen interrupted, "running through Glorietta Canyon. There's another trail also down Box Creek."

"Thousands upon thousands of stolen cattle were driven along there north and south, and oftentimes they tried to pick up some of the Meager stock in passing. For years they were fighting almost all the time. Then soldiers came and patroled the border, and broke the trade up very largely."

"But not altogether?"

"No; there is still some cattle stealing, of course, but most of those fellows find it more profitable now to run arms, ammunition, and supplies across into Mexico. There is a lot of that being done, I am told, but the men engaged do not bother the ranch much. Occasionally

they kill a steer for meat, but it doesn't pay to run them off."

"You have a pretty clear idea of the situation, young lady!" the man said quietly. "There is just as much deviltry here as there ever was, but it has taken a new form. And another change is impending, unless I misinterpret the signs. Tom Meager ran this ranch straight and fought for his rights like a man. Everybody along the border knew that, and respected the old man. But this cub of his is another proposition. The whole border brood contains nothing worse than Bob Meager. He is low-down mean, and has been a thief, and an associate of thieves, all his life. It don't make any difference how I know all this—I do know it."

THERE WAS A BITTERNESS to Kelleen's voice which startled the girl.

"You hate him?"

He laughed lightly.

"Oh, no; I cannot afford to do that, but you have got me started, and I might as well finish up. I reckon you know the fellow fairly well yourself. I get him from another angle. It is not clear in my mind yet exactly how he got possession of this property. Of course, I know he is old Tom's son, and the natural heir, but I met the father once or twice, and cannot believe he ever put the ranch unreservedly into Bob's hands, giving his widow nothing. I'd like to see that will, for I'll bet all I'm worth it's phony."

"He—he inherited by will, then? I never heard how he gained possession. He just came and took charge. Mrs. Meager was not even able to get away to consult a lawyer—if she had the courage."

"That is his claim. I heard about it in Nogales. Garrity drew the will, as I understand, and still holds it. The instrument is duly recorded, but the original remains safely in possession of the judge."

"Is that regular?"

"Perhaps so; not being a lawyer, I can only guess at the regularity. Of course it

will have to be produced in court for final settlement of the estate; but I don't think they anticipate any serious questioning as to the validity of the document."

DEBORAH stared aside at her companion through the darkness, suddenly surprised by the change in his language. The man quickly noticed her movement, and chuckled good-humorably.

"Forgot myself, didn't I?" he asked carelessly, "and dropped back into real English. Made you want to question a bit? All right, go ahead."

"It—it is no business of mine," she faltered doubtfully, "but I had to wonder. I had not expected anything like that."

"Of a mere desert tramp, you mean. Well, all sorts of driftwood come to these shores. I make no claim, except to a reasonably good education. Just now it is of small value, however pleasant to possess. But let that slide; we were discussing Bob Meager, and not myself. The will will be probated without trouble, I reckon, as I have heard of no contest."

"Could it be contested?"

"The widow could claim her dower rights."

"But Mrs. Meager would not dare. She is helpless, and cannot even leave the ranch."

"So I gathered from others. There are no friends, then, to take her part?"

"Absolutely none. I doubt if she knows a soul in this country; she is an invalid, and in deadly fear of her stepson."

"And you have heard of no other will?"

"Not a word. Mr. Meager's death was very sudden, an accident. His wife's sickness prevented his confiding business matters to her, but I am sure she was very dear to him, and he would never have left her to suffer. He was a splendid man."

"I thought so myself. He was found dead on the trail, I heard?"

"Yes, his horse came home without him. There was an inquest, the evidence going to show that his horse stumbled

and threw him; his head struck a rock, and was badly crushed."

"A skilled horseman, was he not?"

"Yes; but he might have been thrown, if the horse fell."

"Of course. May I ask if you saw the wound?"

"Yes; there was no doctor, so they made use of me. He was dead then; had been for some hours. The skull was crushed in, a jagged wound which might have been made by a sharp rock. I suspected nothing else at the time."

"Naturally not, and since then?"

"Nothing I can put in words," she confessed hesitatingly, "without a more careful examination."

"You testified at the inquest?"

"No; I was not called. A doctor was brought out from Nogales."

"Then probably you never saw the man who conducted that inquest."

"No; I remained with Mrs. Meager in her room. She was very much broken down. Who was he?"

"Judge Cornelius Garrity, who thus manages to become the central figure in the whole tragedy. This interested me from the first, and more than ever now that I have met you. You see, I know Garrity, and there is not a wicked old devil in Arizona. He never did a straight thing in his life."

"You—you mean there has been fraud? . . . A forged will?"

"I am prepared to suspect almost anything with Bob Meager and Garrity as bedmates," he asserted gravely. "They are capable. Bob is simply a brainless brute, but the other is another type, far more dangerous. Garrity has been a lawyer, a saloon-keeper, a gambler, and is now a justice of the peace. It is common talk that not a gun or cartridge crosses the border but what he gets something out of it."

"Why do you tell me all this?"

"'Tis odd, isn't it, the way I've got talking tonight," he admitted in surprise. "Usually I don't talk much, 'specially with strangers. The truth is, I suspect, I

rather like you, and then we've got to be together for awhile. Somehow it seems natural to tell you these things. My notion is this, that Garrity fixed this whole matter up for a purpose. Maybe circumstances helped it along, and maybe they didn't. I ain't so sure myself that old Tom Meager died a natural death. Anyhow, everything was ready—the only known will locked in Garrity's safe, and Bob close enough at hand to take possession almost before his father's body was cold. By the time the funeral was over he had discharged half the old men on the ranch, and brought in Mexicans to take their places. Since then all the old hands have gone—what does that mean?"

"I am sure I do not know."

"Well, I can guess, from my acquaintance with Bob and Garrity, and their associates. These fellows imported are no Mexican cowboys. That Juan Sanchez has a price on his head; the Indian, Pedro, is known as a cattle thief, and I doubt if there is a greaser in the bunch who hasn't a record somewhere below the line. I tell you, those birds have something up their sleeve besides cattle-raising; that's only a bluff. It is either gun-running, or whisky, or both. I heard whispers in Nogales—"

"That was what brought you up here?"

"Well, no; only incidentally. But, good Lord, I never talked so much in my life before. What is that ahead? A pile of stones? Then we are at Silver Springs and business is about to begin."

CHAPTER X

Covering the Trail

DEBORAH could perceive nothing, except the dimly visible heap of stones which Kelleen pointed out. All around stretched the black void of the desert, silent and full of mystery. The distant stars yielded a dim, spectral light, yet there was nothing the eye could rest upon amid the dead level of surrounding sand. The wind blew steadily, occasionally stinging her face with grit, and not

a sound reached her ears. The silent loneliness closed about them like the walls of a room. The girl had remained almost unconscious of this intense barrenness as they had talked together, but now suddenly awakened to a sense of the desolate surroundings. She was alone with this man, fleeing for her life into unknown danger. However this realization shocked her, their arrival at the spot sought for only served to arouse her male companion to more energetic action. Whatever spirit had animated him during that hour's pleasant ride was as quickly forgotten, and the instinct of the plainsman instantly became dominant. As the horses came to a stop, he turned in the saddle, peering back through the veil of darkness toward the Meager ranch.

"Everything seems all right so far," he said, quietly. "They are still drunk and asleep back there, I reckon. Now, we've got to throw them off the trail."

"You are sure they will follow us?"

"Sure; there is nothing else to be expected. If Bob is killed there will be no doubt in their minds as to who did it, for the body will be in your room. Garrity will have every reason to run you down. So will Meager if he still lives. They don't dare to let you escape."

"But surely those men cannot fear me?"

"Nevertheless they will. Those birds are up to crime of some kind, and will suspect you know something. They do not want a word to leak out as to what is going on here."

"They will miss you also; someone must have known you were there."

"Of course, but they will not suspect me of any connivance with your escape. I cannot explain now, but those fellows consider me all right. I come and go as I please, and my absence will mean nothing to them. Garrity will believe you became desperate enough to try and get away alone. That is why they will start on this trail first of all, but they will have to follow blind—at least I am aiming to leave very little for them to follow—beyond here."

KELLEEN grasped her bridle rein, the two horses moving forward at a walk, circling to the left of the stone marker. Even in that dim starlight Deborah felt convinced they were still following the Nogales trail, which was rutted with wheel tracks. A hundred feet beyond the faint sound of the horses' hoofs gave evidence that they passed along a narrow ridge of rock. Suddenly Kelleen came to a pause, leaning forward in the saddle to see more clearly.

"You have no memory of how things are here?" he asked.

"No; only that the springs are over to the left yonder."

"Then listen; there is an outer opening of rock which swerves here to the right, and runs almost directly east for two hundred yards. It is not wide, but I am sure you can trace it in the starlight—see; it runs there."

She looked eagerly where he pointed, and could dimly perceive the lighter surface outlined against the sand.

"Yes."

"Follow that alone carefully; go just as far as possible, and then wait there for me. Keep to the center so the horse will leave no imprint."

"And what are you going to do?"

"Ride straight ahead down the trail; then circle back through a gulley, and meet you out yonder. Don't be afraid; just wait. I'll come, although it may require half an hour or more for me to make the trip safely; I've got to cover every trace after I once strike out into the desert."

She watched him ride away, vanishing quickly into the gloom, his horse's hoofs making no sound in the soft sand. Instantly she began urging her own mount along the narrow rock ridge, experiencing no difficulty, however, as the intelligent animal picked his path carefully, very much as though he had traveled the same route before.

Growing confident, Deborah loosened her grip on the rein, permitting the horse cautiously to select his own way, watch-

ful only that he did not stray from the narrow path of rock. Where this very plainly ended she drew the animal to a halt, and sat upright in the saddle, staring wonderingly about into the silent desolation. There was nothing either to see or hear; darkness shut down all about her, but for the soft glow of those wonderful stars overhead, dimly outlining the arc of the sky. This was not a dense, impenetrable darkness, but rather as though one peered into heavy mist, through which near-by objects might be dimly perceived. But there were no objects visible—only a dead, motionless level of sand, across which the wind swept unchecked and noiseless, bearing with it the sand spray to lash her face as with so many sharp needles.

HOW UNUTTERABLY BARREN and desolate it all was; even the points of compass were blotted out; she was alone and lost, except for that rock ridge along which they had found passage. In the somber silence her mind traveled back over all that had happened that night. She had no time before for thought; she had been continuously forced onward by circumstances beyond control, driven blindly. But now everything which had occurred so swiftly during those past few hours swept over her in memory like a flood. She had enjoyed no time, no opportunity for any choice; had simply been compelled to accept whatever came. What had this led her into? What was the end now before her? It all seemed more a horrible dream than any reality of life. It was beyond belief, beyond experience; that such things were even possible seemed utterly beyond reason.

Yet memory would not die, or be deceived. The very loneliness in which she sat, bowing helplessly before the sand storm, waiting, drove the whole truth home to her consciousness. It was true—all of it was true. The death of old Tom Meager; the return of the renegade son; his brutal assumption of control; the

glow of lust in his eyes at their first meeting; and then—then the happenings of this last night. Had she done right? She dare not even attempt to answer the question. She did not know; yet even then saw no other course she might have chosen. Indeed, she had been given no choice; fate had relentlessly thrust everything upon her. From the first threat uttered by Bob Meager to this very moment she had been but a chip tossed helplessly on the stream of events. And now—now she was there waiting, amid all this desolation, for the return of a strange man, whose face she never had seen. The whole situation seemed impossible, yet she could not doubt its actual reality. She was not dreaming; she was wide awake.

Yet as she reviewed all the events leading up to this situation the girl could not perceive where she might have done otherwise. The impossibility of leaving the ranch unaided; the openly avowed purpose of Bob Meager; the forced marriage; the drunken assault; the blind effort at escape, believing she had killed the man in self-defense; and the unexpected meeting with Kelleen—all these had been utterly beyond her control. Even after that scarcely a choice had been left her. The man had to be accepted as a friend, or else left behind as an enemy. He was in position to either serve or betray her, as he chose, and there was that about his personality which had won her faith.

What it was she hardly knew, nor did she have the slightest conception still who the man actually was. His evident dislike of Meager and Garrity meant nothing, except perhaps as thus explaining his willingness to befriend her against them. Even thieves fall out, and she could not conceive this fellow as anything but an outlaw. His very presence at the ranch presupposed this, while his attempt at concealment made it even more probable. Kelleen knew altogether too much to be entirely innocent; indeed had confessed enough already to cause Deborah to be-

lieve him a border outlaw, involved in the same criminal scheme as these others with whom he evidently associated. He had never idly drifted to the Meager ranch, but had come there with definite purpose, seeking refuge, if nothing else.

However, in spite of this knowledge, the girl strangely felt a measure of confidence in the man. She had seen him as only a dark, ill-defined shape in the night. She had gained no glimpse of his features, but she liked his voice, the genial yet respectful way in which he addressed her, the cool assurance with which he had taken complete control; whatever the fellow's past might have been, she felt confidence in him, believed firmly that he was really endeavoring honestly to serve her in this emergency. What his secret purpose might be mattered little, although her impression was that it arose from a desire to revenge himself on Meager, rather than any deep interest he personally felt toward herself. Yet as she sat there waiting, her eyes anxiously searching the black shadows, she was aware of the rapid beating of her heart in eager desire for his return.

IT SEEMED a long while, so long as to almost frighten her, before she became aware of his approach. Indeed, he was actually beside her on foot before she recognized his presence, approaching silently from the opposite direction from that anticipated. Her startled gaze had scarcely distinguished his dim outline, when he spoke, his hand already grasping her horse's rein.

"There, that's over with," he said genially. "Now I'll lead you for the next five hundred yards. After that we'll do some real riding."

Where their course led she could not clearly determine from the saddle, but they moved forward slowly. Kelleen spoke soothingly to the horse, the animal following the man's guidance, seemingly along a very narrow ridge of outcropping rock, barely wide enough to permit his hoofs to cling to its exposed surface.

This passage led downward very gradually, until Deborah realized that they were slightly below the surface of the desert itself, with walls of sand rising on either side. After some hundred yards had been traversed, the path led upward once again, the horse's hoofs now sinking into deep sand. Then a horse whinnied just in front of them, and the next instant she could make out the darker shadow. Kelleen released his grip, with a little laugh of relief.

"Lonely, old fellow? Well, I won't leave you again. Now we've got a straightaway ride for it, Miss Meredith."

"You were hiding the trail?"

"Yes; one cannot be too careful. Those fellows will head on down Nogales way, while those rock ridges will leave no trace."

"Evidently you have used them before for a similar purpose?"

"I'll say I have," carelessly. "And, what is more, this is a secret which I prefer keeping to myself. Now I'll lead off, and you follow. You'll have to keep up pretty close to see me in the dark, and there will be no noise to guide you in this sand."

"But—but if I should lose you?" she asked, staring about half frightened by the thought.

"No danger; the horse you're on won't get lost. But if you miss me call out; there's no one to hear in this desert. Ready now?"

He swung into the saddle, and faced her waiting.

"Yes."

"Then we'll ride fast, and don't be afraid; it's level as a floor."

CHAPTER XII

Mutual Recognition

THE girl rode low in the saddle, her head bent forward to protect her eyes from the shower of grit hurled against her by the ceaseless wind. Confident of the sagacity of her horse she no longer endeavored to keep even the vague outline of Kelleen in view.

They had been riding hard for more than an hour, apparently, and, as near as she could determine from the stars, in a straight line across the dead level of the desert. The man evidently knew his course perfectly, and was heading direct for some refuge, pushing forward recklessly in an effort to reach the chosen spot before daybreak.

Deborah was conscious now of her extreme weariness; she could only cling grimly to her seat, aching in every muscle, blindly following his lead. She knew the horse under her was panting for breath, his sides wet with sweat, but Kelleen never once drew rein, or, to her knowledge, even glanced back to assure himself of her presence. From the little glimpses she occasionally gained of him, he apparently sat straight in the saddle, tireless and alert. There were moments when she felt she must actually cry out, her nerves failing her, but she crushed the desire back, and rode on, dulled with fatigue, becoming finally scarcely conscious of her surroundings.

Then Deborah became aware that the sky before them was growing lighter; she could see the man and horse more distinctly, and even distinguish a narrow vista of the encircling sand plain. The stars overhead began to pale, while a sickly gray overspread the horizon.

It was the coming of the dawn, and the girl straightened up in the saddle, aroused to a new interest, and forgetful of her intense weariness, as her heavy eyes endeavored to view the desert scene. The faint light rendered everything excessively lonely, with no outstanding landmark visible, only the changeless monotony of sand, lying almost level, except where the wind had swept it into low ridges, and stretching in every direction. It was all gray, both above and below, the sky and earth blending in one gloomy picture of desolation.

The only spot of relieving color appeared vaguely as she gazed about, far off there to the right, a shapeless purple haze, which she slowly comprehended must be

the distant mesa from which she had fled—the isolated Meager ranch. All else was barren, colorless, lifeless, a drear, and, apparently, endless desert, before which her heart quailed. Never before had it seemed to her so cruelly heartless.

Her eyes and thought centered on the figure of the man riding steadily in front. He never turned in the saddle, or glanced about, but was evidently searching that dull vista in their front, seeking some sign of guidance through the dim light. She could obtain no glimpse of his face, not even its contour—yet how straight he sat in the saddle, his shoulders thrown back, his left hand grasping the rein lightly. His seat was that of the trained, disciplined cavalryman, rather than the cowboy, and she could but mark how easily his body followed the slightest movement of the animal under him. He was tall, erect, strong, young, no doubt of that, the hair showing below his wide hat brim, a dark russet brown.

Suddenly, but without glancing back, he pointed into the grim, gray desert ahead.

"Do you see anything over yonder?" he asked. "Just ahead there—a hundred yards?"

She stared where he pointed, both halting their horses, but could perceive nothing except the same drear expanse of sand.

"No; what is it?"

"One of nature's marvels; the place I'm heading for. You can be within ten yards and never know it is there."

He turned and faced her smilingly.

"Made it straight through the night, too. Why, what's the matter?"

SHE was staring at him through the dim light, her lips parted, her eyes expressive of fear. For the moment she did not speak, and he asked again, anxiously:

"What is it? Are you afraid of me?"

"I—I know now who you are," she managed to say. "You—you are the 'Frisco Kid'!"

A moment his lips shut tight, a bit grimly; then he laughed.

"Oh, is that the trouble? How do you know I am 'Frisco'? And, if I am, what possible difference does it make?"

"But you are, are you not?"

"Sure, but how did you guess?"

"I didn't guess; I saw you before, and knew you as soon as you turned, with the light on your face."

"If you had recognized me last night, you'd never have been here, I reckon?"

"No—no; I couldn't have come—with you. Yet I ought to have suspected all the time. I saw you ride in last night with Judge Garrity. I had a good view of your face from my window, and heard Bob Meager call you by name."

"No doubt that's all true enough, but what of it? Outside of my riding in with Garrity what can you know about the 'Frisco Kid'? I never pretended to be an angel when you first took up with me, but I don't perceive any reason why that name should scare you half to death. Ever heard of me before?"

She hesitated, but only for an instant. It was her nature to speak truth.

"Yes, I have," she answered steadily, looking straight at him, yet in some mysterious way not the least afraid. "I have been led to believe you a most desperate character, an outlaw, a criminal, with a price on your head. I have been told many of your exploits—and, and—but why compel me to repeat all this?"

"Because it is extremely interesting, for one thing; quite flattering for even a better reason. If we are going to continue being friends—and I insist we are—we shall have to come to a mutual understanding. What am I in your estimation? A robber and thief, I suppose?"

"Yes, everything which goes with a border desperado."

"Even murder hinted at?"

"Yes."

"And who told you all this rot—Bob Meager?"

"Oh, no; I heard all about you before he ever came back. That was months



"You are quite a cross-examiner, Miss Meredith. Sometimes you know it becomes necessary to play a part in life."

ago; there were soldiers through here searching for you, a major and twenty cavalymen."

"What major?"

"His name was Reynolds."

Kelleen chuckled, and leaned suddenly forward, placing his hand squarely on hers where it rested on the saddle pommel. Somehow she made no effort to withdraw her fingers from the contact, and their eyes met.

"'Pop' Reynolds, hey!" he said lightly. "Then I am sure his story must have been a good one. So he told you I was a mighty bad man? Well, now, you've met me, do you believe it?"

"I—I don't know," she confessed doubtfully. "I—I would rather not think that."

"Which is a hopeful sign. Well, please try not to think so for the next half-hour, at least. Then maybe, I can tell you my side of the story. There is no time now, for we've simply got to get under cover. Do you see that blue ridge over yonder? You know what it is?"

"The Meager ranch, isn't it?"

"Yes, and in twenty minutes, as soon as the mist rises, they could pick us out from there with a good field glass. We'll have to find a safer place to talk in than this. How is it—gone plumb back on me?"

She managed to smile.

"No; somehow you won't let me do that."

"Good; then let's finish up this little job. Here, I'll lead the horses; it's only a step to the rim; then we'll both have to make the descent afoot."

They moved forward slowly, into what appeared to be the interminable desert, the man plowing his way through sand, the tired animals following with drooping heads. Deborah could perceive no difference in the drear landscape, although her heart beat fast in anticipation. The sudden identification of her companion had given a new, strange turn to the adventure, but she had gone so far already that any retreat now was manifestly impos-

sible. Her mind was confused, yet this much, at least, remained clear—she was in his power, and must trust his word. Oddly it was not hard to do; deep in her heart she liked the man.

SUDDENLY Kelleen stopped, gripping the reins tightly, and pointing with his other hand. Deborah needed no guidance, for her eyes were already riveted on the yawning gash in the surface of the desert, staring down with a startled feeling of awe into the apparently bottomless chasm not five yards away. A moment she gazed, hardly comprehending, too thoroughly dazed by this phenomenon of nature to completely grasp its significance. Then she felt Kelleen lift her bodily from the saddle, and lead her forward to the very edge.

Before her lay exposed in the gray of the dawn the full marvel—a deep gorge, as though scooped out by a giant spoon, cut directly across the barren sand plain, with no evidence anywhere above of its existence. To the eye it seemed some three hundred feet wide, but much deeper, the side walls rocky and irregular, the crevices and ravines choked with sand, while far below appeared the soft green of vegetation, and along the base of the opposite wall, much more precipitous than the side on which they stood, the silvery sparkle of a small stream. It was gloom still down there, a shadowy picture viewed through a mist, rendered even more wonderful by its alluring dimness. To their right the walls curved sharply, leaving in mystery what might lie beyond. Deborah drew a quick breath, glancing aside into the face of the man at her side.

"This is what you meant—the Devil's Gulch?"

"Yes; but the name is my own. Did you ever before see such a wonder?"

"Yes it is beautiful down there. How can anything like that be possible, here in the heart of all this sand waste? I—I cannot understand."

"Nor anyone else. Nature keeps her own secrets, although doubtless some hid-

den spring is the explanation in this case; ages of water flow have wrought the miracle. But what worries me most is, have others besides myself discovered the existence of this oasis? I found it purely by accident, almost fell into it in fact, while riding before a dust storm."

"You have been down there?"

"Yes; the descent is not particularly difficult along those ravines; the sand gives purchase; even the horses will pick their way."

He smiled at the consternation in her face.

"What is it?" he questioned, "fear of the passage, or of the 'Frisco Kid'?"

SHE looked straight at him beneath leveled brows, conscious of the sudden flush in her cheeks.

"Neither; I am not afraid."

"I did not believe you would be, for you are not that sort at all. The truth is, young lady, you really haven't so much on me in this matter of recognition. I happen to know quite a bit about you."

"About me? . . . You? . . . What, may I ask?"

"Just a bit, as I say, a mere picture not easily forgotten. I saw you once, before ever you came to Meager's ranch, and I have remembered it ever since. When daylight came that memory haunted me again, but now I've got it all figured out. You do not understand?"

"Certainly not; I have never seen you until last night."

"Very true, which was my misfortune. Do you remember a morning in August, 1918, when the Thirty-third Division went over the top, waded a river, and cleaned out the heights beyond? It was a sharp fight, and lots of the boys never came back. You remember, don't you?"

"Yes."

"Well, I was there, and I got mine about eight o'clock. Mine must have been plenty, for they hauled me back to the first-line hospital, and had some sort of surgical job done, before I ever woke up. Then I was lying there in the shade of a

crumpled wall, along with a lot of other fellows, waiting for the ambulance to pick us up. You remember that too, don't you?"

"Yes," the tears dimming her eyes. "They were so brave and still."

"Well, at first I didn't know very much. The man next to me died, and the nurse who was with him—she was heavily built with very light hair—"

"Jessie Seevers."

"I don't know, but she gave me a drink of water, and then they put another wounded guy into the place where the dead body had been. He was just a kid, not more than seventeen, I reckon, and was crying like a baby, his nerve all shot to pieces. You were his nurse, and I lay there and watched how you fixed him up. It's not likely you've forgot that."

"No! No!" she bent her head. "He was from my town; he—he died that night."

"I didn't know, for they took me away, but I lay there and watched you for another hour before the stretchers came. I never saw you again. I would have liked to mighty well, and I won't say I didn't try, but, you see, I didn't even know your name then—just a memory of your face."

He reached out his hand suddenly.

"I—I wish you'd shake hands with me," he said, almost hesitating at his boldness, "and sort of pretend to forget that 'Frisco Kid' business."

"I have forgotten it," she answered steadily, their eyes and hands meeting. "You were a soldier in my Division; I believe in you, and am your friend."

CHAPTER XIII

Story of the "Frisco Kid"

THIS strange recognition that their lives had previously met, brought to both immediately a greater degree of confidence and faith. To Deborah, Kelleen was no longer a bandit, a fleeing fugitive from justice, but a soldier who had been wounded in battle, who

had played the part of a man; while to him the girl was no longer a stray runaway in whom he felt little interest, but a nurse whose face had haunted his memory since he had first watched her in the glow of the French sun.

They stood there on the rim of that strange crater, the grim, gray desert circling them about, neither able to think of a word to say. Deborah's eyes fell, and she withdrew her hand, turning to stare into the depths below. The slight movement served to arouse Kelleen to the situation.

"Well, this will never do," he exclaimed, new cheerfulness in his tone. "They will have a glass trained on us over there before we get to cover. We'll send the horses down first; they'll find the best route and we can follow. Come, Sultan, over you go, old boy; oh, no, you're not afraid; we've done this little trick before. Go on, sir!"

He struck the animal with the flat of his hand, and, with a reproachful shake of the head, Sultan slowly and cautiously began the steep descent, seeking a path along the deeper layers of sand, and zig-zagging from gulch to gulch to better obtain foothold. The other horse followed, but not without a struggle, trembling with fear, and keeping close to the trail left by the leader. Kelleen touched the girl's arm.

"Come," he said briefly, a bit of command in the voice. "Really it is not so dangerous as it looks from here. Sultan has found the best trail, and we'll drill along after him."

He searched the horizon with keen eyes, then shrugged his shoulders rather contentedly.

"Ugly, isn't it? But for that tinge of red in the east, and that spot of blue yonder, just a barren gray waste. And yet, do you know, the thing somehow gets into your blood, and you learn to like it. I get sick to death of the desert, but I always drift back again; there is fascination about its very loneliness and silence."

"Yes, I know," she answered slowly.

"I—I hated it when I first came; thought I could not bear it for another hour. But now the dread has all gone away; it never seems quite the same any more, sometimes hard and cruel, and again soft and friendly—but always different from anything else in the world."

He laughed bitterly.

"The charm is that of a rattlesnake you will discover, as treacherous and destructive. I distrust its every mood. The horses are already at the bottom; let's go."

They made it slowly, picking their path along the trail left by the two animals, finding purchase in the sand, occasionally steadied by an out-cropping rock, or the exposed root of some clinging shrub. The drop was more extensive than Deborah previously had realized from above, and the sharp descent left her breathless. The enclosing walls towering high overhead, revealing merely a narrow strip of blue sky, and the increasing gloom, as they descended lower, brought to her a feeling of awe.

Kelleen led the way, occasionally turning about with word of encouragement, or pointing out a better course than the one he had just taken. Yet the passage was neither especially hard nor dangerous, merely requiring caution and a clear brain. Once she slipped, but he caught her instantly, laughing lightly at the mishap, and the girl felt no sense of fear.

THE SAND disappeared as they reached the lower levels, the walls becoming sheer rock, but slashed with gullies, and finally these were more or less choked with vegetable growth. At the bottom, where the two horses were contentedly munching the short grass, the valley had all the appearance of a new land, made fresh and verdant by the magic touch of water. There were small groves of trees scattered here and there, interspersed amid patches of greenest verdure, with the glimmer of a flowing stream winding crookedly in the midst. Coupled with those high, gray walls tow-

ering on every side, barren and desolate, and the memory of that wide, seemingly boundless stretch of gray desert above, the effect was weird, scarcely comprehensible. Deborah, at the foot of the long descent, clung to the projecting root of a tree, and stared about her with wide-open eyes, unable to restrain her amazement.

"Why, this is simply marvelous," she exclaimed. "I did not appreciate what it meant from up there. You have been down here before, you said?"

"Yes," he answered soberly. "Once, but with no opportunity to explore thoroughly. I intended to come back and explore, but had no thought I should have a companion."

"But is this all? Just this little narrow hole?"

"I am not sure, but think not. I believe there must be a sharp turn out yonder, and perhaps a natural slope, or entrance, at the farther end. I mean to explore a little later, after we eat breakfast, and you consent to rest awhile. We have the whole day before us, and will not venture forth again until night."

"You—you do not believe you are the only one who has made this discovery?"

"No; that is hardly probable. There were reasons why it was impossible for me to determine the truth when I was here before, yet I found evidences that others had been before me—the remains of a camp fire, an exploded cartridge shell, and even the imprint of cattle. I have no wish to frighten you, Miss Deborah, but my idea is that probably this place has been, and perhaps is still, a hiding place for thieves."

"Cattle stealers, you mean?"

"Yes, and munition runners. This whole border is honey-combed with that sort of thing, and this hole is certainly an ideal hide-out. It is not more than a hard night's ride from the border line, and so thoroughly hidden away that I never even suspected its existence until I accidentally rode straight into it; and I thought I knew every inch and secret of this des-

ert country. Come, let's sit down here, and eat what we have, for I am not going to risk a fire, and I'll tell you the theory I've worked out. I may be all wrong, but I'm keen to find out for sure."

"Please do."

THE BAG OF FOOD the girl had secured from the ranch kitchen was carefully strapped to the saddle of Sultan. Kelleen secured this and spread the contents on a strip of grass. They were both eating when he resumed speech.

"I am inclined to think," he said gravely, "that this has been a rendezvous for that sort of traffic for years. I don't believe many have known about it, or else some whispers would have reached me, but this particular section of the border has been a sore spot for years. More stuff has been slipped through along here than in all the rest of the distance between Texas and California. I happen to know that for a fact, and that the government has never yet been able to locate the leak. In my judgment it is right here."

"Here?"

Her eyes half frightened at his sober assertion, stared into the silence.

"Why, how could it be?"

"Very easily. Someone stumbled on this place just exactly as I have—perhaps several somebodies—but my present notion is that the discoverer was either Bob Meager or one of the disreputable gang he has with him. His determination to get control of the ranch at his father's death, the fellows he has brought here from across the line, and Garry's deep interest in the affair, all combine to make me suspicious. Do you see? The ranch and this hole, together, make an ideal outfit for running either cattle or munitions across the border, and some of those fellows over there have been at that job for years."

"Then how do you dare come here with me?"

"Because it alone promised security for this one day. Tonight we'll go on, but we

could not travel across the desert in daylight without being seen."

"Nor along a regular trail?"

"No; this was the only possible hiding place. I had every reason to believe we would find it unoccupied. It certainly was yesterday, with no fresh signs anywhere. In my judgment, those fellows have not begun their new work yet; they are merely getting ready," he laughed. "Besides, this is largely mere suspicion after all; perhaps I am altogether wrong."

Her eyes were on his face inquiringly.

"You dislike Bob Meager, then, very much?"

"I am actually afraid I do."

"Was that why you were so willing to help me?"

"Not altogether; it may have had weight, I confess. Now, however, that thought has gone entirely."

"And Judge Garrity?"

"He is utterly despicable."

"Yet you seemed very friendly with him only last night. On excellent terms."

He smiled, good-naturedly.

"You are quite a cross-examiner, Miss Meredith. Sometimes you know it becomes necessary to play a part in life. What is the cause for all this shrewd questioning?"

"I hardly know myself, but it is all so strange, and has happened so suddenly. I am just beginning to think clearly. Do you really mind if I ask you something more?"

"Not in the least. Now that I really know who you are, I am rather inclined to answer most questions frankly."

"I—I hope you will. How did you happen to serve in the Thirty-third Division—they were all Illinois troops?"

"So you even noticed that. I was transferred."

"From what command?"

"The regulars."

"Was that not very unusual? You—you were surely an enlisted man?"

"I did not say so," he smiled back, "and now that you drive me to a confession, I might as well make a full breast of it. I

was transferred to take command of a company."

"A captain?"

"Yes."

"Why!" she drew in her breath sharply, leaning forward with new eagerness. "Then surely you are not now what I have thought you to be—an outlaw, a renegade? You are not the—the 'Frisco Kid'?"

"Oh, yes, I am. At least I am all the 'Frisco Kid' there ever was to the best of my knowledge, although I fear I fail to line up entirely with the reputation so kindly given me by 'Pop' Reynolds. I rather regret this, for your sake, yet no one could possibly equal his imagination in real life. The best thing I can do is tell you the truth, isn't it? Very well, I am going to do just that—do you know why?"

"No—unless because you think I have guessed it already?"

"Hardly, for it would be easy still to cause you to believe otherwise. The real reason is because I like you, and desire to retain your faith. The 'Frisco Kid' is an entirely manufactured character, made for a practical purpose. Do you grasp the idea?"

SHE shook her head, but her eager eyes belied the action.

"You have a glimmer, nevertheless. I'll explain. This portion of the border has been a hotbed of outlawry for years. It has baffled every commanding officer assigned to this district. We had no information to work on; suspects were numerous, but proof lacking. Finally a plan of action was evolved, but to carry it out successfully, a desperado with an established reputation as a bad man was first of all most essential. With this end in view the 'Frisco Kid' was carefully put on the stage. Newspapers along the coast, and near the border, began to note his exploits; dispatches regarding him were sent east; rewards for his capture, dead or alive, were posted. It was intimated, finally, when his name had become suffi-

ciently familiar, that he had escaped into Mexico, and then that he had been seen again in this neighborhood. Troops were dispatched to run him down, and word to that effect scattered broadcast on both sides of the line." *

"Major Reynolds?"

"Yes, he had a squad out, and, evidently, from what you tell me, did a fine bit of advertising on his own account. You see the purpose of it all."

"But—but you run such a terrible risk?"

"Oh, there is some danger, of course. The lads will kill, no doubt, but there is no more peril than any soldier must expect to face. It was a duty."

"But who then *are* you?"

"Daniel Kelleen, just as I told you, a captain in the cavalry."

"You—you volunteered for this service?"

"Yes. You see, it was impossible for the department to use any officer who had been stationed lately along this border. Such a man might be immediately recognized, and the whole scheme ruined at once. At the same time, whoever was chosen to play the character must have intimate knowledge of the border. I met the requirements fully, as I had served here ten years ago as a mere boy, and knew the country fairly well. Later I had some experience in rough work farther north. The department commander selected me for the job, and—well, I didn't refuse the assignment, so here I am—the 'Frisco Kid.'"

Deborah held out her hand impulsively.

"I'm glad you told me," she said, in all frankness.

CHAPTER XIV

A New Viewpoint

SHE had been sleeping for nearly two hours, her head supported on a saddle, the steep wall of the canyon on one side of her and the valley itself shut completely off by a thick growth of shrub. Deborah had not supposed it possible to

lose consciousness when she first consented to lie down, at Kelleen's urgent request. She had not realized how tired she was, and, in fact, rested there some time in this nook he had found, staring with wide-open eyes up at the strip of blue sky, her mind still active.

There was almost no noise to disturb her, only the occasional sound of a moving horse grazing not far away, and, by lifting her head slightly, she knew that her companion had also stretched himself out on the grass, across a narrow ravine, and lay there motionless. The knowledge of who this man really was had brought her instant relief, and a new sense of safety in his presence. She no longer felt any personal fear of him, and his words had convinced her that the day promised no danger from without. He had even scaled the cliff once more to gain another view across the desert in the bright sunlight, and his confidence in their safety left her abundantly satisfied. So finally her heavy eyes closed, and she slept.

Something must have awakened the girl suddenly, for she sat bolt upright, with eyes wide open in fright. Yet nothing about her appeared wrong, or strange. Kelleen had disappeared, but beyond this no change of any kind was apparent. The sun, now almost directly overhead, was pouring its rays to the very bottom of the chasm, leaving a narrow ribbon of gold through the center, and one of the horses could be seen grazing in the midst of it. The second animal had vanished, but in all probability it had merely strayed farther away beyond the range of her direct vision. The entire scene was so calm and peaceful that Deborah's heart ceased its first violent throbbing, and she even smiled at her earlier fear, and arose expectantly to her feet.

She had been confused, but the movement brought back full consciousness. The memory of the night returned vividly, but more like a dream than any reality. The course of events appeared so unnatural, so fantastic, it was difficult for her to grasp the truth—that she was ac-

tually a fugitive, a wife fleeing from her husband, trusting everything, life, reputation, to the mercies of a stranger, and hiding here out in this strange desert excavation waiting only for the darkness of night.

No imagination, no dream of fiction, could seem so unreal, and she hid her face in her hands while she struggled to assimilate the truth. But when it finally came it brought no deep regret. Fate after all had been kind to her; the man she had been compelled to trust, the man whom she had believed an outlaw, a ruffian of the border, merely befriending her as a passing whim, had proven himself a soldier and a gentleman. With this discovery all her former doubt, her previous questioning, had vanished into a faith which brought with it new strength and courage. Whatever lay before could be faced confidently—she was no longer alone. . . .

WHAT had become of Kelleen? Through the tree branches, behind which she had been concealed, Deborah searched the full length of the chasm within reach of her vision, but discovered no trace of his presence. It was all completely deserted, and primitive, nowhere exhibiting evidence of ever before having known human occupancy. Yet the range of her observation was limited. She seemed absolutely surrounded, shut in by the precipitous walls rising high above on every side. It was more like a gigantic well, dug by some monster shovel in the desert sands, than the bed of a stream; she remembered dimly that he had spoken of a sharp curve in the side walls there to the right, and a portion he had not as yet explored.

No doubt he had gone there now, somewhere beyond the bend, and out of sight, endeavoring to learn its mystery, confident of her safety; believing she would continue asleep, he had taken advantage of the opportunity to learn all that was possible of their strange hiding place. Probably he had ridden one of the

horses, and was even then just beyond that jutting ridge of rock. She imagined she could even perceive the sharp curve in the sidewall into which he must have disappeared down the concealed canyon. It was not likely the man would be absent long. It must already be noon by the sun, and, actuated by a desire to do something, she finally began to arrange a meal for his return.

She had opened the bag of provisions, when suddenly her eyes caught sight of something moving far below, and to her right, objects at first hard to distinguish, and then as instantly discerned as two horsemen, emerging from the very cleft in the rocks where she had decided the canyon probably ran. They came, steadily on, growing more distinct each minute, yet still too far away for recognition.

She crouched lower behind her screen, and waited breathlessly. Two—what could that mean? It seemed highly improbable that Kelleen could have encountered a friend in this spot—a man in whom he had faith—that was returning with him. If this was, as he so evidently believed, a hidden lair of outlaws, a rendezvous for border crime, it was hardly possible he had met with any comrade here, if—if he was really what he had claimed to be. The thought of that "if" struck her like a blow. But . . . was he? She had nothing but the man's own word to rely upon; no proof, no evidence beyond his own assertion—and, everything seemingly against it. The truth of this came to her most forcibly, her eyes strained to watch every movement of those approaching horsemen.

She could perceive enough already to be certain that Kelleen was not one of the group; they were both Mexicans, or at least so attired, and their mounts were Mexican trappings. Little as the girl knew of the frontier, she at once realized the danger of being discovered by such men.

Yet what could she do to escape observation? Even if they were approaching with no intimation whatever of her pres-

ence, their eyes could not fail to detect the horse grazing in the valley below, and they would surely make some effort to discover how the strange animal chanced to be there. While the fellows might not have encountered Kelleen the presence of a strange bronco in that unusual place must certainly arouse suspicion. It would not be held an accident, especially as any close examination of the animal would quickly disclose evidences of the night's hard ride. Deborah was conscious of trembling in every limb, as she crouched there, behind the screen of leaves, instinctively grasping the only weapon in her possession. Then she suddenly recognized one of the riders as Juan Sanchez.

THEY had followed her then, and were seeking her now. There could be no possible doubt as to Sanchez's mission. How the fellow had reached there so quickly, and why it even had been suspected she had sought this remote spot of refuge, were unsolved questions, yet it was highly probable that searching parties had been dispatched in all directions, and the Mexican had been the one whom Fate had headed that way.

Anyhow she could not speculate as to how, or why. Whether by accident, or design, the two were here, and were unquestionably enemies to be avoided. Deborah could not even guess what had already occurred below, yet the two riders exhibited no outward signs of encounter; they were approaching, making no effort at concealment. In some way they must have failed then to meet Kelleen, yet the grazing horse could not escape attention; they would search for the missing rider, and she must find hiding place somewhere among the rocks.

Her eyes traced the rugged bluff hopelessly; to attempt scaling that would only bring her into full view, yet there was a fringe of thick bushes below into which she might plunge. This seemed the only hiding place available, and, before seeking concealment there herself, the girl had

sufficient presence of mind to hastily fling the various articles scattered about into the oblivion of the thicket. The next moment she crept through the thick fringe of brush into the shadow. The two horsemen came slowly, cautiously, up the slight slope, staring about them suspiciously, yet finding nothing at the summit but a bit of trampled grass to tell that the spot had been occupied previously.

DEBORAH, secure in a cleft of the rock, behind a five-foot screen of chaparral, crouched motionless, with ears strained to detect the slightest sound. The first words spoken were reassuring—the fellows were not seeking her, possessed, indeed, no suspicion of her presence. She was unable to see, but could hear plainly, and there was no difficulty in recognizing the voice of Sanchez.

"Whatever do you suppose has become of them, Jose?" he asked, complainingly. "They were to have come yesterday, you tell us, and yet they are not here."

"But someone is, señor—see, there has been camp made."

That was the guard; the ranch brand is on the pony grazing yonder; I took note as we rode by. I wonder where in hell the fellow has gone? But he has naught to do with Casebeer's outfit. The gulch is empty, except for the lad we met below."

"And what does he do in here, señor? Who was it you call him?"

Sanchez laughed mirthlessly.

"Hiding out, Jose; there is no reason to fear that guy. Besides he's Meager's friend; he was at the ranch last night, and how the devil he got here so quick bothers me. You don't know him?"

"No, señor."

"I'll bet you know of him just the same. I called him 'Frisco'; he's the 'Kid'!"

"The 'Frisco Kid'? *Saprista!* Sure, I hear of him. They say he held up the Los Colos stage.

Sanchez laughed.

"'Tis not all they say. He is the devil's own, if half the tales be true—a smooth-

spoken boy enough, but not the sort to make sport of. Meager knows him—aye!”

And he slapped his knee roughly at the happy thought.

“That is why the lad is here, no doubt. I have it now; Bob could not come himself, Jose, so he sent this fellow. You know what happened last night?”

“Happened? Where?”

“At the ranch. Why, of course, you don’t! You were on herd, and only joined me as I rode out. Why Meager got married to that pretty Americano nurse. Hell, it was no choice of hers if I know aught of a woman’s ways, but little enough Señor Bob cares for that. I’ve seen him do the same trick before. That fat judge came out from Nogales, and did the job, and ’twas scarce likely Meager would desert his blushing bride to come out here to meet Casebeer’s outfit. So he sent the ‘Kid.’ But why the hell didn’t he tell me, I wonder?”

“Who tell you?—the ‘Kid’?”

“Either one of ’em; I like to know what I’m bein’ stacked up against on a job like this. We’ve played safe enough so far, but some day a government man is going to stumble onto this hole, and there’ll sure be trouble a-plenty. Casebeer’s lucky, but his outfit this trip would be a mighty rich haul if he should happen to fall down.”

“Guns?”

“Ammunition, and booze! Some combination, that! It is to go over the border tonight, and a nice wad of money comes back. That will be the ‘Kid’s’ job, maybe, if Meager doesn’t show up by dark: we haven’t any orders beyond here.”

“You think Señor Bob maybe would send him to bring back the money?”

“Sure; it’s fifty-fifty with Casebeer, and ‘Frisco’ is all right. He’s square as they make ’em, I’ve always heard. Raises hell, of course, now an’ then, but he never double-crossed anybody. He ain’t that kind, an’ Bob knows it; they’ve run together down below. I got it figured out

that’s what the fellow is up here for—to help out on this deal. Ain’t that him roundin’ that bluff yonder? Sure it is—ridin’ this way. I’m goin’ to ask him straight when he gets here.”

CHAPTER XV

The Hand from the Rock

DEBORAH, frightened by what she heard, lifted herself slightly so as to see better up the narrow valley. The approaching horseman was in plain view, and, even at that distance, the girl had no doubt as to his identity. The straight, slender figure in the saddle was unmistakable to her eyes, and the wide brim of his hat, blown upward in the wind, even seemed to reveal the features of his face.

Her very heart seemed to cease beating as she knelt, anxiously watching his approach, the horse loping steadily, the man swaying gently to the movement of the animal. Who, indeed, was he—this Daniel Kelleen, this “Frisco Kid”? Was he what she had begun to dream through the long night, listening to his voice, his partial explanation—a real man in whom she could trust and believe, in whose honor she could confide?

Or was he what these ruffians so confidently proclaimed—an outlaw, a desperado of the frontier, an escaped felon, hiding from justice, and even now engaged in the committal of crime? Surely, they knew the man far better than she, and the very fact that he was the acknowledged friend of Bob Meager’s; that he had brought her here into this secret hiding place of outlaws, knowing what must be encountered, added to her doubt. Surely he did know; these fellows took it for granted that he was present on the same criminal mission as themselves; he had deliberately left her, and rode away seeking traces of Casebeer’s gang in the valley—seemingly there was no escape from the one conclusion, that he was part of the conspiracy. Her escape was but a dream; she was still a helpless prisoner.

Deborah grasped all this almost instantly, unable to perceive any possibility of escape from the net. Her limbs trembled, yet she could only kneel there in silence, watching the approach of the rider. There was nothing she could do, no place where she could go—the high cliff towered above unclimbable, the two Mexicans were below, the unsaddled horse beyond any possible reach.

A wild hope thrilled into her heart, that perhaps this man was not all bad; that whatever his real life might be, he may have meant to be square with her, and would yet protect her. Surely he never had revealed her presence to these others; perhaps that was why he had not returned with them, hoping she might see the strangers, and hide. He had no chance to give any other warning, and was compelled to trust her wit. This was a hope, a wild, reckless hope, which yielded the girl courage. She would stay there, and wait, until she learned the truth. His first words sent a thrill through her heart—he was playing a part for her protection.

KELLEN reined in his mount sharply, glancing keenly about, but with face expressionless, as his eyes finally encountered the two awaiting him.

"Whose horse is that?" he asked, inquiringly, indicating the grazing animal.

"No know, señor; 'tis Meager's brand."

"I can see that for myself, but it was not here when I came by. Was anyone besides you two sent in here on this business?"

"No, señor."

There was a touch of deference in Sanchez' voice most unusual, which Deborah was quick to note and appreciate:

"Only the two of us. Yet it might be, for we knew not even that you were to come also."

"That was an after-thought, and why I rode so hard and straight. I knew about you, didn't I?"

"Sí, señor; no doubt."

"But about this other fellow, Juan? You saw no one?"

"Not a sign, yet there has been camp made here; the signs are plain. 'Tis likely to be the guard."

"The guard? Meager's, you mean? Does he keep a guard in here?"

"At times, señor; not only here, but in each direction. He is wise, señor. No one approaches the ranch but first he have warning. 'Tis hard to catch him asleep."

"But who is this man?"

Sanchez shook his head, sitting on the ground, smoking calmly.

"I know not that, señor," he admitted indifferently. "One of the herders. It can make no difference; he has no orders but to bear word to the ranch if anything go wrong. If he wait here he be back some time."

Kelleen swung one leg carelessly over the pommel of his saddle, and deliberately rolled and lit a cigarette. His face expressed no emotion, no particular interest, yet Deborah was certain the keen, searching eyes had swept swiftly over her covert, and up the steep front of the over-towering cliff. He suspected where she was hidden, and was endeavoring to protect her from discovery; but who was he really playing fair with? Was he trying to deceive both, or merely playing a desperate game in which a single slip would mean disaster? Was he outlaw, or honest man? Nothing in the situation, or in the conversation thus far overheard, gave her certainty. She dare not move, scarcely venture to breathe, as she watched the three men below through the tangle of limbs and leaves. Kelleen sat motionless across his saddle, the blue cigarette smoke circling lazily above his head, evidently in perfect repose. It was some time before he even spoke.

"When is this Casebeer gang expected?" he questioned finally.

"Tonight, señor. It was to be earlier, but they not come. Now not until to-night; they never cross the desert by day."

"No, I reckon not; it would be too risky. Any trouble here lately?"

Sanchez smiled, showing his yellow teeth, and waved a hand in the air.

"*Non, non, señor*; not of late trouble. It was all fixed. The Señor Meager he know who best to see. They come—yes; last week a man come, an' question, but he ride away, an' know nothing. A troop come, soldiers from the fort, an' stay two, three day. I talk with officer; he drink with Bob; then they go back to Nogales. It be all right sure then—see? We know they not be back soon as this week. So we send word for Casebeer."

"Yes, I see; but it is not so sure after all. Perhaps they do come back."

The Mexican shook his head positively.

"No, señor, we know. We have watch always. Señor Meager very slick bird when not drunk. You at the ranch last night?"

"Certainly; you saw me there. Why?"

"You not there alone, señor. The judge came also from Nogales. You know the judge?"

"Not well, but sufficiently. Is he your man?"

"He brought the word. 'Twas for that he came, not to marry Meager. That all came later, by what you call luck. The woman was a fool, señor, to defy him—what could she do?"

"What did she do?"

"Pist! I mean before; after it was nothing. I left while they still drank, señor. There is no vixen he can't tame, for she is not the first of them. A damn pretty girl, señor."

Kelleen's eyes lifted to the chaparral above, but there was no change in his face.

"Not having seen her I am unable to say, Sanchez," he answered easily; then straightened suddenly in the saddle. "Where does this northern gang come from?"

"Out of Calabasis, señor, by way of the river."

"Then they will enter down below, through the gorge. This is no place for

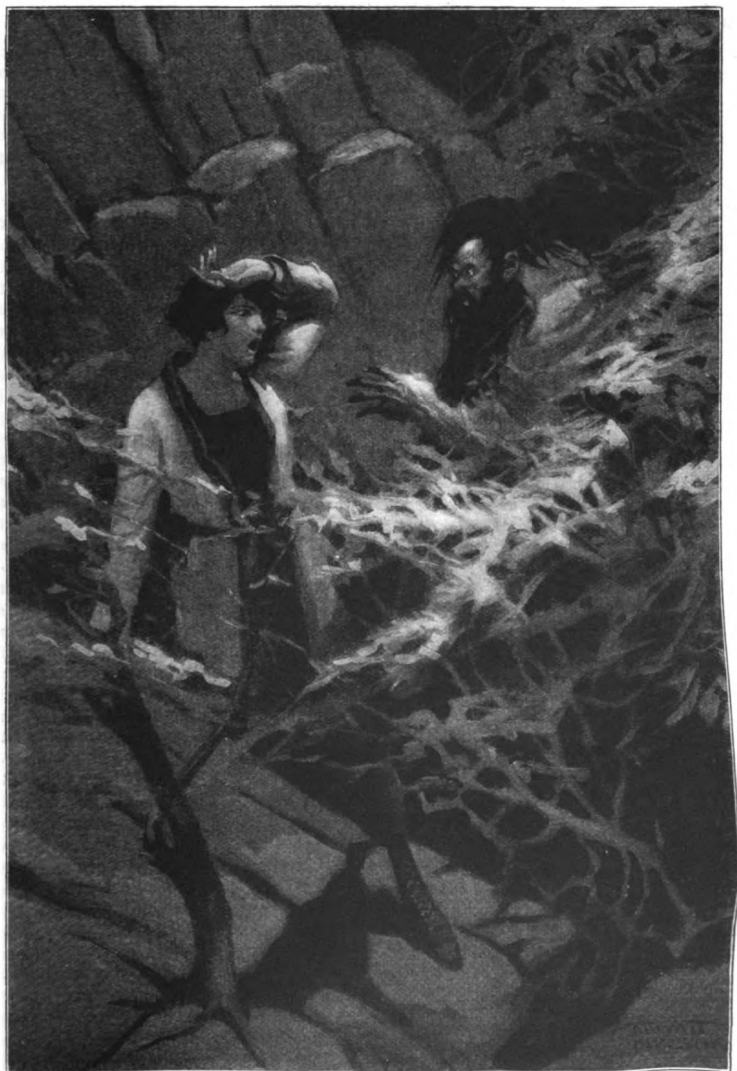
us. Suppose they were delayed last night, and took a chance to come on this morning by daylight—and why not? They'd be under rock cover all the last part of the way. It's beyond here that they'd have the open desert to cross. Let's ride down there, and wait."

"'Tis no hurry, señor," Sanchez protested easily. "I would see the herder first."

"For what?" A new ring of command had crept unconsciously into the American's voice. "He has nothing to do with this. Meager gave this job to me, and I'm going to see that it is done right. Saddle up, both of you; there is just as good camping ground down below. Come on, Jose, be lively about it."

THERE WAS A JUMBLE of Mexican oaths, but something in the Mex eyes of the "Frisco Kid," backed no doubt by his reputation, compelled obedience, and within five minutes the three were trotting soberly down the valley. No one of them glanced back, and Deborah, lifting her head higher and higher to peer after them through the brush screen, watched until they disappeared entirely about the sharp protuberance of rock which marked the end of the vista. Kelleen had done this purposely; his conversation with these men had been largely carried on for her benefit and guidance. He knew where she was; that she could easily overhear. Through these means he endeavored to convey to her, unsuspected, the complete situation in which he was involved, and then, this accomplished, he had inveigled the two unsuspecting Mexicans away, thus giving her opportunity to escape unseen. For some reason he was evidently avoiding a quarrel with the fellows; he preferred to deceive them, to permit their going on with their contemplated crime, in which they were convinced he was also implicated. But why?

Deborah was not yet wholly convinced of the man's innocence. In spite of his evident intention of shielding her from discovery, his intimate association with



"She stopped, paralyzed with fear, staring into two terrifying eyes. She could not move a limb, or scream in that first instant of horror."

Bob Meager, the understanding between him and Sanchez, was seemingly proof positive that he was an important link in this conspiracy. The man was endeavoring to make her think otherwise, but the doubt of him lingered in her mind. She would gladly have fled alone, had she known the way across those drear leagues of sand. In the night she had begun to trust, to believe; the fellow's very recklessness and good humor had been attractive; her vague suspicion seemed to vanish in his presence.

But now this doubt returned with redoubled vigor, and, for the moment, she actually feared him as much as the man she had tried to kill. More, perhaps, for Meager was only a rough, passionate brute, while the very nature of Kelleen rendered him a far more dangerous adversary. If he also was interested in her—and the girl felt that he was—she was in greater danger now than on the ranch from which she had fled. She shrank from the thought, yet it haunted her, and would not be driven away.

Where could she go? What could she do to escape the man's return? Suicidal, impossible as it appeared, she must find some means of leaving that fatal valley before he came back again alone seeking her. No horse could climb those rock walls down which they had plunged in entering. Yet surely there must be a way, a bridle path leading to the plain above—the only possible exit could not be at the other end. These outlaws would never dare hide here in a mere cul-de-sac, in a blind trap, having no hope of escape if discovered. At least she could seek for some secret passage; if she failed it would be better than hopelessly remaining where she was.

THE GIRL drew back slowly, with eyes searching the open valley, intent first of all on reaching the horse grazing below. The only possible way was the one she had taken in climbing there, along a ledge of stone close in against the rock wall. The whole face of the

cliff was a mass of trailing vines, clinging in some mysterious way to imperceptible crevices in the rock, completely veiling its front far up above her reach. It was like a hanging, green tapestry, with here and there a curious red flower flaming against the green background of leaves. Deborah pressed these back to gain passage, and had advanced a dozen steps or more, when she stopped, paralyzed with fear, staring into two terrifying eyes. She could not move a limb, or scream in that first instant of horror. Then a hand reached out, swept the concealing vines aside, and gripped her.

CHAPTER XVI

Within the Tunnel

DEBORAH struggled to break away, emitting one startled cry for help, before the fingers of her assailant closed viselike on her throat. She was in the grasp of a giant, merciless in the exercise of his power, and felt herself dragged helplessly through the tangle of vines into blackness beyond. It was a man; she knew that, although she had no glimpse of the face, and made desperate effort at release, given unusual strength by terror; but the grip on her throat tightened remorselessly and her power of resistance waned, until she suddenly lost consciousness and all sense of her surroundings.

Her body lay limp in the fellow's arms, and, with a growl of satisfaction, he bore the motionless, seemingly lifeless body, back through the deepening shadows and cast it down on the stone floor. The vines closed behind them, leaving scarcely a vestige of daylight showing through the thick veil of leaves. The man stood above the huddled figure of the girl, hardly defined, shapeless in the gloom, and laughed silently. He bent down and touched her, only to straighten up once more, convinced she was not dead. He seemed doubtful, hesitant, uncertain what to do next.

He could only stare at that helpless

form huddled at his feet, and mutter to himself, almost incoherently.

"Not dead—no; live maybe. One hour, two hour lie so; then remember. What I do then? Tonight, tomorrow I see. Now what else comes?"

His eyes, apparently accustomed to the dimness, enabled him to move about as though in a well-lighted room. A rifle leaned against the back wall, and he picked it up, tested its mechanism, and moved silently forward to the entrance, the weapon resting in the crook of his arm.

Cautiously he parted the leaves and looked out, searching the full length of the deserted valley. Nothing of consequence met his gaze, for he rested back on a convenient boulder, and continued his vigil, as motionless as the stone on which he sat. He must have remained in that position for an hour, occasionally shaking his head, and muttering incoherently to himself, now and then peering back into the darkness behind, but generally with a keen gaze directed to the sunlit valley without. He remained vigilantly on guard, with fingers fumbling the lock of his gun, his figure tense, for action.

And then, suddenly, and without warning, the fellow appeared to relax, his head sinking forward on the arm resting above the gun muzzle, and sank into a deep sleep.

Deborah stirred slightly in the black corner where she had been thrown, and slowly, painfully opened her eyes. At first she failed to realize what had occurred, and stared about, seeing nothing through the dim light. Her body, weakened by struggle, seemed helplessly inert, while at first her mind failed to function. No flash of memory recurred to aid her. Full consciousness came slowly, reawakening first to the bruised body, and the throat lacerated by those cruel hands. She could scarcely swallow, or move her limbs without pain. Then, her eyes accustomed themselves to the pervading gloom, the girl began dimly to perceive

objects about her, and thus grasp something of the situation.

Little by little the details came back—the rocky platform without; the departure of the three men down the valley; her determination to escape before Kelleen could return; the screen of clinging vines concealing the face of the precipice; the mad glow of those menacing eyes through the tangle of leaves; that outstretched, hairy arm, beastlike in its appearance; the clutch on her throat; the wild, hopeless struggle, ending so quickly in darkness. She could scarcely restrain a scream of terror, yet the very sense of her situation held her silent, her whole body trembling violently.

Where was she? Where had her assailant gone? Was the thing man, or beast? The questions were unanswerable; she could be assured of but one thing—she was still alive.

SLOWLY, silently the girl succeeded in lifting herself partially from off the hard rock on which she lay, using the rough outcroppings of the wall as support to the effort. Her bruised limbs ached, and her head throbbed with agony, as she changed her posture ever so slightly, yet the movement served to clear her mind, and bring back a measure of courage. She was not only alive still, but she could think, act, and perceive now something of her surroundings. She could not make out a great deal, however, as the only light was that which stole in through the intricacies of those shadowing leaves concealing the opening. These were so thick as to be almost impenetrable, a vagrant ray here and there alone visible. But these were sufficient dimly to reveal outlines, enabling her to guess.

She was either in a natural cave, or a tunnel excavated directly into the face of the cliff. The roughness of the side wall, which she could touch, and the apparent lowness of the roof above, led her to believe that this hole had either been dug entirely by men, or else decidedly enlarged from its original dimensions. She

almost felt assured the marks of tools could actually be distinguished by touch of the fingers along the surface. But for what purpose had it been done? Who were the men engaged on such a work in this hidden, barren country? Were they still there? What might be their object—concealment? Or a search after treasure?

This was a land of crime, of outlawed men, of desperate chances, and war against fate. She knew little of its hidden mysteries, only that nothing was too strange to occur in this vast desolation of the border. Here men lived continually in open defiance of the law, and counted murder as but part of the day's work. It was far more likely that this hole, chiseled out of the cliff, was the hidden rendezvous of some gang of criminals, than the honest effort of gold seekers to wrest treasure from the heart of the barren hill.

This conception also accorded more completely with the mysterious attack on her, the rudeness with which she had been assaulted, the leaving her lying there half dead. Surely no miner would be guilty of such an act of brutality; only intense fear of discovery, by someone half crazed by terror, could account for such violent action. She must be in the hands of criminals, outlaws, willing to commit any atrocity rather than risk possible betrayal. Their action had been dictated wholly by fear of discovery, and was proof positive they would hesitate at no crime to safeguard themselves.

NOR was there any help, outside herself, of escape. She had, perhaps, been left for dead; certainly believed so severely injured as to be safe for the present. Although she could perceive no guard, yet, it was highly probable that any movement on her part would be observed instantly. She must remain silent, cautious. Her thought swept back to Kelleen, and the memory of the man was no longer wholly fear of his presence. In spite of her doubts, her distrust, the recollection of their night's ride together

recurred now as almost a pleasant remembrance. Criminal, outlaw, he might be, but he was no brute, no beast of the jungle; rather he had shown himself a man, even a gentleman. Yet what help could she expect from him? If he was loyal, and worthy, how could he be of any aid?

Beyond all doubt the man would return in search of her. He had shrewdly guessed where she lay in concealment, and had led those others away for no other purpose but to leave her there securely hidden. As soon as he could rid himself from their observation he would surely be back once more. But even if he came had she left any trail he could follow? Plainsman as he undoubtedly was, how could he discover this hidden place in which she now found herself prisoner? She had gone; that was all, disappeared, vanished, leaving no mark of guidance behind. Interested as he might be, he could never solve the riddle, except by pure accident. Her passage back from the edge of the covert had been made over smooth rock, on which her feet could have left no slightest trace. If she had flown away into the air the final mystery of her disappearance could not have been greater. Suppose he even approached the front of the precipice, or stumbled blindly into the mouth of the tunnel behind the canopy of vines—what then? She could conceive but one inevitable result—his death.

She was surprised, shocked at how that new thought sickened and disheartened her. The very picture of the scene rising before her imagination left the girl faint and trembling with apprehension. She doubted him, had fled to escape him; shrank even now from being again alone in his power; yet some memory of that night, through which they had ridden together, could not be destroyed. In some way his personality had touched her strongly, and the tie refused to snap. Yet death certainly stood grimly between them now. If this guardian of the hidden tunnel could treat her as he had—actuated by terror, or whatever cause had led

to his action—he would surely prove no more merciful to him. If this man could assault, and hold her prisoner, he would never hesitate at murder to prevent discovery. He would be on watch, would mark Kelleen's approach, his every footstep. Skulking behind that screen of leaves, unseen, unsuspected, he could kill safely, and in that wild land the report of the death shot would bring no danger. And surely he was on watch; he must know she never had come into the sunken valley alone.

DEBORAH'S searching eyes, now able to distinguish objects with some clearness, scanned the rock walls to the obscured entrance. At first she could not be sure, but finally the vague outlines of the man seated on the rock became visible. He was huddled forward in such grotesque posture as to scarcely appear human, but gradually the girl realized what the uncouth shape must be, could even detect the long, scraggly beard, the great breadth of shoulders, and the rifle, on which he leaned.

With this discovery came the instant assurance also that the fellow slept soundly. But was he there alone? She lifted herself slowly, cautiously, to her knees, eagerly searching the surrounding darkness, but could see no sight of any other presence. A thrill of hope brought courage, and new strength to her limbs. Might it not be possible for her to steal forward silently, and then, with a sudden spring, clear the obstruction of vines, and gain the free day without, before the slumbering guard could even comprehend what had occurred? The horse was not a hundred yards away, and, even if she had to leap boldly from off the shelf of rock, she would willingly dare all for a chance at escape. Yet she had not advanced three steps until she realized the impossibility of the effort—the sleeping body utterly blocked the passage.

She could perceive the fellow now with some distinctness, a giant of a man, with

long, apelike arms, bare and hairy, an oddly formed head, almost pear-shaped, long hair shading the face, and a black beard sweeping to his knees. There was no suggestion of age, or weakness, in his appearance, and she drew back, cowering at remembrance of the mad grip of those hands about her throat; she dare not test such strength again. Slowly, silently, without actually knowing why, the girl drew back into the deeper darkness behind her, guiding herself with one hand against the rough wall. Into her mind had come the faint hope of another egress, somewhere, the very purity of the air suggesting such a possibility, she even imagining she felt a draught upon her cheek. Yet there was no glimmer of light.

Once her groping foot struck against fragments of rock left lying where they fell. She bent down to better assure herself of the obstruction, and her exploring fingers touched a pick. It was indeed a mine, then; this secret excavation had been man's work; Nature may have pointed the way, but this tunnel itself originated through lust of wealth. The guard, the intense fear of discovery, the hatred of intruders, arose from this same cause.

DEBORAH crept forward over the pile of debris, discovering that this fall of stone did not denote the ending of the passage. She was in intense darkness, no longer able to distinguish even the distant light of the entrance, or any outline of that slumbering figure perched motionless on the stone. Suddenly her groping hands revealed a sharp curvature in the tunnel, and she worked her way about the corner with utmost caution. Then she stopped, rooted to the spot, her heart almost ceasing to beat. Far above, up what appeared to be a sharply inclined chute through the solid rock, came streaming down a single ray of daylight, its faint reflection resting directly upon the upturned face of a dead man, stretched on the tunnel floor.

MIDNIGHT AT ST. JEAN'S

By Leslie
Gordon
Barnard

*"Her eyes blazing like a
witch's—her
teeth like
fangs."*



Illustrations by Dorothy Phelps Christy

UPON ALL the countryside lay the soft hush of night. But then, almost from ten o'clock, the good folk of St. Grenier go within, and the doors are shut, and in the street is quiet.

Once in a while, it is true, some belated reveler, too tipsy to be circumspect, awakens with his maudlin voice echoes without, and children—to cry with sudden

fright—within the humble village homes; or it may be the rattle of a rig driving in a sort of quiet haste tells of some sudden call for old Doctor Laberge, or M'sieu le Curé. One did not count an owl that hooted now and then with the regularity of a watchman calling the hours of night!

Nor yet the church bell chiming the hour. These were of the night. . . .

THE pale moonlight breaking through a jagged wrack of cloud now that the rain was done, poured upon all the landscape, and through whatever windows, free from shutters, gave it entrance—touching as softly as the pale cheek of the invalid and the ruddy face of health, the bloom of youth, or the wizened parchment of age, gleaming alike upon the rough blankets of the poor of the village, and the finespun coverlet of the affluent who must needs build themselves fine houses upon the hill, ornate places many, matching the pretensions of the temporary tenements of their owners' souls. On the far side of the village, where uncut grain was golden in its light, it gleamed upon the roofs of farmhouses; it lent its light to the work of mercy of the Doctor and M'sieu le Curé.

It peeped through the half-open shutter in the bedroom of Monsieur St. Jean de Riviere, who it is said, was blood relation to a Count across the water, but who slept none the better for it. The beam gleamed, coquettishly, in his eyes. At the same moment the church bell in the village below chimed its midnight message.

Monsieur St. Jean de Riviere struggled to a sitting posture. He was trembling, as a man does who awakes suddenly from a nightmare; though the night was warm enough he shivered violently; his night-cap, fallen askew upon his grizzled pate, gave him a grotesque appearance, at which children—in daylight—might laugh.

"Francois!"

His voice echoed through the lofty room; seemed to hit against the spare furnishings and be thrown back at him to mock him with its strangeness.

"Francois! Wake up, you lout!"

No answer. Tremblingly Monsieur's withered hand reached for a brass chain, and pulled. A shaded light flooded the room. Monsieur regained a fragment of his courage. It was not like him to play the baby in this fashion. Was it true, as he had heard it whispered, that dotage was upon him—that his day was over—that premature age had come upon him?

Once he had laughed when warning was given that he who calls the tune must pay the piper; laughed and declared roundly that it was a merry enough tune, and the bill would be met when it came. . . . And now . . .

"Francois!"

Irritation mingled with the fear that still touched a voice that in its time had spoken so many things lightly, carelessly, bravely, mockingly.

MONSIEUR got out of bed, his white-robed figure glad to find and throw about itself a dressing gown of warmth. He went to the door, and so into the smaller chamber in which, these last months, he had ordered Francois to sleep—Francois who had been with him so many years, growing from childhood to young manhood—Francois who had served him so well when none other would stay with him and bide his whims and tempers. Even now there were none in the great house but himself and Francois.

Another button, yielding to his touch, gave light to this lesser apartment. The bed upon which Francois usually lay was empty; evidently it had not been slept on since nine-thirty, when the old man, ennuied by a useless evening, had gone to bed with the young man's aid. Monsieur penetrated into the darkness of the hall, called once again, half cautiously, as though fearing those echoes from the great house.

"Francois!"

The echoes came trooping back, up the well about which the great staircase lay. Echoes—but no Francois.

"I shall speak to that lad in the morning. Mon Dieu, suppose I had taken ill. Suppose someone had broken in. . . ."

He shivered, hurrying back into his own apartment, closing the doors behind him, locking them too, as though the great emptiness of the house might follow him. He slammed the shutters; forbidding entrance to the ghostly moonlight. He took to bed with him a Rabe-

laisian volume that had companied him in many an hour. By and by sleep came, fitful at first, then sound. The light remained burning, extending its efforts to meet the coming of the morning.

DAWN! Creeping stealthily upon the wakening earth, so that its rosy flushing had turned to a golden flood by the time the first of the good village folk were astir, for all that they were early risers.

Outside the windows of the village general store the stout helper of M'sieu Tremont grumbled over his pail and mop and under the eye of Monsieur himself.

"Six o'clock!" protested the youth, his breathing heavy under stress of work. "What a time to wash windows! Sapré, the old man stands there smoking his pipe as cheerful as if it were noon. Ugh!"

He cast a black look at the storekeeper, who returned nothing but that amiable and exasperating smile of his.

The sound of plodding hoofs awoke the morning echoes.

"Look!" cried Monsieur Tremont. "One would think, Maurice, you were the only one awake to see you yawn and grumble. Here is M'sieu le Curé himself, although there is no early mass today to fetch him from his bed. Good morning, father!"

"Good morning, my son!"

"You are early abroad, father. An example to Maurice here, as I tell him, who is only just out of bed and grumbles. Here are you—"

"Just going to bed," said the Curé smiling.

"Oh? Ah! You keep bad hours, father?"

Said the priest, with that quiet humor of his that came and went in strange places, but seemed always fitting:

"The Reaper, my son, does his harvesting at no set hours."

THE FAT HELPER set down his mop, and stared agape. The thought of death worried him, ever since that sermon he had heard the father give on

the future life, and still more, perhaps, since he had listened to the strange tales of Granpère Drocourt, who was of all men most superstitious. . . .

"A merciful release," said the Curé, answering the unspoken questions. "Old Marie Choquette has passed on."

"Ah!" Monsieur Tremont fingered the slight beard he affected, and clucked a sympathetic tongue. "Much better she should go, though!"

"Much better!"

"A mind that is unhinged is the worst of all afflictions," declared the storekeeper, sucking at his pipe. "Poor woman, last time I visited the Bienville farmhouse to try and collect money owing me—and my faith, what bad pays those Bienvilles are!—I saw her scrubbing out the kitchen. I spoke to her, thinking to be kind, but, Mon Dieu, she nearly spat upon me, her eyes blazing like a witch's, her teeth like fangs. 'You should not speak to her,' Dame Bienville told me, 'she does not like men.' Terrible," declared Monsieur Tremont, shaking his head, "very terrible to look upon. I wonder, as does everybody, why they have kept her all these years."

Said Maurice, not without sense of importance:

"Granpère Drocourt says it is because old M'sieu St. Jean holds a mortgage over the heads of the Bienvilles, and that—"

"Silence!" commanded Monsieur Tremont, angrily. "That old fool babbles more than is good for him. He speaks of the devil as though he were his familiar and shook hands with him each day."

"He has seen," declared Maurice, with morbid delight, "the Loup Garou. He is said to have second sight. Now he says—"

"Hold your face!" cried the little storekeeper. "Must you speak ill of Monsieur St. Jean, as some do—Monsieur who always pays cash for his goods? Which reminds me you shall take those bottles to his house directly you have eaten. You see, father—"

But during the colloquy the Curé had

set the plodding animal in motion. Monsieur Tremont bustled within the store. The fat boy resumed his work with the mop, wearily. Presently he stopped, the mop suspended in mid air.

"Why?" he asked himself, puffing out his pudgy cheeks to an alarming extent. "Pouf! Why should he come down the hill from the west if he is returning from the farmhouse of Bienville?"

The mop went into action again, more briskly. A delicious sense of morbid discovery thrilled him.

"I shall make haste—and visit Grandpère Drocourt on the way," said Maurice.

TO THOSE to whom darkness has brought a nightmare of sleeplessness dawn brings a beneficent sense of security and peace. Old Monsieur St. Jean de Riviere, to whom sleep had, however, come more readily than this, woke once very early, saw the light of day already seeking entrance through the chinks in the shuttered window, and turned over comfortably for further sleep. He slept long and well.

He awoke about ten. Francois stood over him.

Monsieur drew a hand across his eyes, as though to banish sleep.

"Where were you, Francois—last night?"

"Last night?"

"I called you—you were not here."

Francois seemed surprised.

"M'sieu—at what time? I must have been sleeping."

"At midnight. And you were not sleeping." Monsieur St. Jean's sharp eyes looked out from under beetling brows. "Come—where were you? Do not fear to tell—I can forgive an occasional lapse—in another man as in—myself."

"Monsieur must be joking, surely. At nine-thirty I put Monsieur to bed, with his usual instructions not to leave the house; this morning am I not here ready for Monsieur again? During all these years have I disobeyed? Have I not been faithful?"

There were times when the master had suspected his man of having a diabolical vein of sarcasm, a sense of humor that was well enough in the employer but not fitting in the employee, and yet, as Monsieur remarked laughingly to one who referred to it, "like master like man"—association with him from a plastic adolescence had made this youth his shadow, ready to serve, having a strange attachment in which the old man took a keen delight, for no other servant would remain long with him. . . . But there was a queer note in Francois' voice now, a look in the eyes, too, that the sharp glance of Monsieur could not penetrate. "But I looked—" began the old man, rather peevishly.

"Monsieur must have been walking in his sleep. Nightmare without doubt. I warned Monsieur of those rich pies. Besides they say one is subject to—delusions—when age creeps on."

"Age!" Monsieur St. Jean de Riviere glanced over his shoulder involuntarily as though the spectre of old age stood there. "What makes you say that? I am not old!"

"No, Monsieur," agreed Francois, as one might humor a mental weakling. "Shall I assist Monsieur to dress?"

"Yes, and be quick! And, see here, Francois, we'll let this affair pass this time, but rest assured I am no fool. Another time—"

"There will be no other time!"

"My good Francois!" Monsieur was mollified; tonight then there would be no terrors. "You must try again to get kitchen help, and a housekeeper; it is too much that you should do it all."

"Also," said Francois imperturbably, "Monsieur had better seek a new attendant."

"Pardon!"

"Because, Monsieur, I am leaving your service today!"

"You—you joke, Francois!"

Francois went coolly on with his work. "Your tie, Monsieur. The blue one, or perhaps that black bow? . . . No,

Monsieur, I do not joke. Ah, Monsieur is not well—let me help you to the couch, so. A glass of water?"

"Brandy! Brandy, you fool!"

Monsieur was ghastly gray. Through the face reflected in the mirror on his chiffonier lonely old age seemed to look through, mockingly.

FOR THE SECOND TIME in two hours Maurice Lajeunesse forced his stout body on low gear up the hill, grumbling not a little and perspiring more. A hot, dusty walk, and M'sieu Tremont was a pig about the horse and rig.

"Walk," says M'sieu, "walk and get some of that fat off your bones, you lazy dog! And don't come back this time with a tale that you cannot get in. There is bound to be someone there."

To be sure, memory of Grapère Drocourt's oracular pronouncements made good company.

Francois let him in this time, taking the bottles from him, giving him strange news.

"Monsieur would see you."

"See me!" It was incredible.

"Yes, you. He wants you to attend his wants today and overnight, until he can secure help."

"But, you, Francois?"

"I shall be away!"

"I could not, Francois. I could not."

The lad was quite pale.

"Why not? He will not eat you, my friend."

"My master would not let me."

"Your master has already been phoned. He agrees readily. Monsieur is a good customer. Monsieur Tremont bids you do as he wishes."

"Mon Dieu!" groaned the pallid Maurice.

All the memories of Grapère's terrible words came in a phantom troop to terrify him. Stay in this house today? Tonight? By no means—not for a thousand dollars! Maurice, ordinarily a voluble soul, became more so; he poured his ghastly fears into Francois' ready ears.

"Very true!" agreed the latter, gravely. "But just the same you will stay. Come—Monsieur awaits you!"

There was something compelling about those eyes of Francois; something that made Maurice fear him as later he feared to face the terrible Monsieur, concerning whom Grapère said. . . .

There was something inscrutable in those eyes too, and in the half smile that followed Maurice as he stepped into the room where Monsieur St. Jean de Riviere sat, pressing his fingers nervously together.

"Francois will instruct you the most needful things," said Monsieur after the preliminaries. "But—Mon Dieu, the meals! I must eat, Francois."

"I shall not leave till seven, Monsieur, if you wish." His frigid politeness left Monsieur helpless: it was irreproachable, leaving no room for passion—besides the look in Monsieur's eyes was one of constant appeal, those eyes from which, so suddenly, all light seemed to have gone, which followed every movement of Francois helplessly, appealingly, but met no response. The young man's voice went on now:

"After that Maurice can easily tend you. I will leave a cold meal ready. Tomorrow you can secure a woman to keep house. Why not Madame Bienville?"

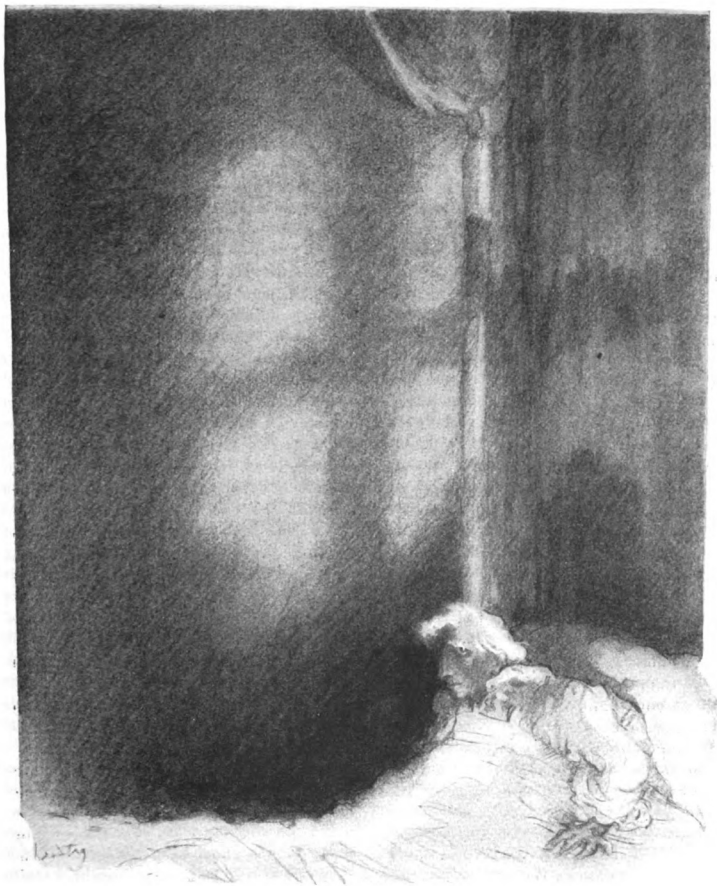
"Eh?" Monsieur stared suspiciously. Francois' back was to him. But before he could press the matter, Maurice sprang from his chair.

"I will not do it. My faith, no! Not for all the Tremonts in St. Grenier. I am going!"

"Stop!" Monsieur was up now; clearly there was something here that demanded investigation. "Why will you not stay? First Francois—now you!"

THE STOUT BOY was shaking visibly. Marvelous how so sensitive a nature could exist under so gross an exterior!

"Grapère Drocourt," he stuttered, and stopped.



*"Monsieur St. Jean de
Riviere struggled to a
sitting posture. He was
trembling, as a man does
who awakens suddenly
from a nightmare."*

"Well?"

"He says there'll be a curse on you now. That her spirit will haunt this place. That it must have been here—last night too!" The boy was pallid as a ghost himself.

"Her spirit? What tomfoolery is this? Speak, Francois, that idiot is dumb with fear. Ha, ha, he is quite ludicrous!" Monsieur's own attempt at mirth was a cackling horror. Some intuition gripped his own heart.

"You have not heard," said Francois coolly, "Grnpère Drocourt is always fabricating queer stories. As if old Marie Choquette could concern Monsieur!"

"Marie Choquette?"

The old man's lips were dry.

"The insane woman. She died last night, Monsieur!"

"Last night?"

"Last night—at midnight, so they say, Monsieur. It seems—"

Francois did not finish his sentence. Monsieur's gray lips were calling—calling harshly:

"Brandy—brandy, Francois. Just another faint spell. There, I'll be right in a moment. Your hands are cold, Francois. Those pies, Francois!"

"Monsieur," said the young man calmly, "Monsieur is growing old. Oh—Maurice!"

But Maurice's stout legs had somehow been galvanized into action. At the moment they were precipitating him pell-mell down the hill.

WHEN THE CLOCK in the church steeple chimed the hour of seven, it was still broad daylight, though the foliage of early May was casting lengthening shadows upon the ground. But about the old stone house of Monsieur St. Jean de Riviere a sort of half-gloom hung. The house stood back a stone's throw from the road, lost in a slight tree-clad depression that seemed to swallow it up. That had been a deciding factor when Monsieur had bought it many years back, and had made it a place of occa-

sional revels with familiar spirits from the outside world. Since then, of course, the trees had grown much, the foliage become heavier, the shrubbery and vines conspired to shut out as much light as possible. Even on the warmest evening—and tonight was quite oppressive for May—there was a lurking sense of cool, green darkness about the place.

Maurice Lajeunesse, much troubled in spirit, aided Francois to carry such luggage as was his below, and so to the light rig that was to convey him elsewhere. Francois was soberly encouraging.

"Think, Maurice," he urged. "Think how the lovely Mademoiselle Anna will hear the story of your courage. It would not do that she should hear you branded a coward. If you had not thought better and returned at my suggestion I could of course have secured the services of Camille Bourbeau, who at least is not a coward."

Maurice tried to swell with a sense of his own heroism, but despair was strong upon him, and only the thought of this girl and his rival held him—that and some compelling power in the eyes of Francois.

"It will soon be past—the night," said Francois, buckling a strap on his valise. "Five hours until midnight. If you get past that all will be well, eh?"—Francois laughed in a way that jarred on his hearer's susceptibilities.

Maurice wiped his brow; great drops of agonized moisture stood out.

"Of course, Maurice, Grnpère Drocourt is a silly old man. He has read too many foolish ghost tales. You will recall they always appear at midnight. Quite silly, isn't it?"

"Uh-huh!"

Maurice gurgled inarticulately, his eyes were popping out. He wished to all things this man Francois would be gone; such consolation was poor stuff.

"Good-bye, Maurice, my brave!"

"G-good-bye."

"Le bon Dieu look after you!"

Maurice watched the wheels glint in beams of sunlight, filtering through occa-

sional gaps in the foliage; heard the scrunch of gravel, later the sound of hoofs on the highroad, dying—dying—muffled into nothingness. Silence fell upon the decaying mansion of de Riviere.

UPSTAIRS, too, from a window commanding such parts of the driveway as were not hidden by foliage Monsieur St. Jean stood to watch the going of Francois. . . . He too heard the sound of wheels on gravel, the hoofbeats on the road, and the dying echoes; heard, and perhaps also felt the silence.

By and by he called down the great staircase.

"Boy!"

Maurice's heavy-jowled face of trouble appeared below.

"Sir?"

"Bring up the meal that Francois has left ready on the table. We will eat together."

"I—with you?"

"Of course. Make haste!"

But when Maurice's clumsy operations were completed and they sat down about a small table in the upper room where the westering sun still disputed with the shadows, Monsieur had little appetite for the cold collation made ready by his late servant. It might almost seem that the haste of which he spoke was not for the sake of food as much as for the company—even the company of such as the stout boy from the general store.

MONSIEUR watched him eat with pleasure tinged with envy. Here at least was something substantial, something *human*. . . .

"Tell me, boy," said Monsieur after a time, gathering together his fragments of courage and binding them with the threads of curiosity and interest, "tell me what that old fool Drocourt said of Marie Choquette—and me."

He listened characteristically while the stumbling tale was told, that old sardonic grin about his mouth, as though he defied all his calumniators. He said at last:

"You may tell any who speak of it that old Drocourt lies."

He went over and stood watching a sunset glowing redly in the west. To himself he said:

"He does lie, in one thing. The old fool has put two and two together nicely, when all the saner folk of the countryside suspected nothing in these years, and Bienville knew well enough which side his bread was buttered not to gable."

He stood long at the window. The years were giving up their memories. Marie Choquette—little Marie who had waited upon him in the city in his favorite restaurant—little Marie who was so simple in her affections, in her trusts—little Marie who was willing, for the love she bore him, to take him at his word, and run away with him, and stand before a justice of the peace, and go with him to be mistress of the great new house he had bought in the country. What a picture he had painted to her! How she had listened! He had meant it, too; was she not attractive in her humble way, and his desire toward her? There was the trip, too—that honeymoon which a cable from the old land had extended into a twelve-month affair.

Some intuition had made him leave her in England while he went on the continent, to look into this legacy his proud old father had left him. There were those affairs on the continent, too, where the continental spirit in its loosest form had taken him by storm. Six months he left her in England—alone—but uncomplaining; her very lack of spirit tried him, showed what humble *peasant* blood was hers. She trusted him, welcomed his occasional letters with a smother of kisses as the replies stated, and—awaited his coming. . . .

HE HAD TIRED of her—that was the plain truth. There was the legacy, too. Did it not state that the money could only be paid if Monsieur St. Jean remained single, or married into his own

class? Monsieur the elder held no delusions regarding this son of his—the matter to be at the discretion of the trustees. Monsieur St. Jean chose—quite coolly and with little compunction—to be single!

There was the child when he went to her again in England, and suffered coldly her effusive welcome. He took them home across the water. Took her indeed to the fine house in the country. There, on the first evening, he told her. He had not really married her. The ceremony was a sham—a mock marriage!

He remembered, now, shivering a little, the way she had stood there with the child at her side. She, who had trusted him enough to be married as he wished rather than by the church, could not believe this of him now.

"I shall make ample provision for you both. You may remain as a housekeeper. No one will know otherwise. My friends have not been acquainted with the affair. Naturally one would keep it quiet."

So he had spoken. Then it was she seemed to awaken. Something flared up in her eyes, and died out. Afterwards the thought persisted; it was her heart that had leaped up, and died. The light fading had left a terrible aftermath. She cursed him when he approached, she who had been so gentle, so submissive. Her mind was gone. . . .

"Monsieur!"

The stout Maurice was at his elbow.

"It was a lie," declared the old man, as though to ease a conscience long stilled and now tardily awakened, "I really married her. Eh? who's that? What's that? Sapré, boy, how you frightened me! I was thinking."

"May—may we have the lights, Monsieur? It grows dark."

"By all means. Press that button there. Light 'em all over the house! Yes, yes—we must have light!"

"Monsieur, it will not light!"

"Nonsense!"

But no, it would not yield to Monsieur, nor would any other light.

"Francois!"

"He is gone, Monsieur!"

"Of course, how stupid of me. Devil take him for leaving me—after—all these years!" Monsieur was almost senile. "Fetch candles, boy!"

"Where?"

"How should I know? Look, search, find 'em! Be quick—it's growing dark fast."

Tremblingly the stout legs were set in motion; some ends of candles found and lighted. Darkness enshrouded the house. A night wind sprang up to set the elms outside creaking. . . .

THE NIGHT was very close. In distant clouds, massed on the horizon, heat lightning danced. Through the open window the hot breeze flickered the guttering candles. Monsieur, finding neither the company nor his Rabelaisian fiction engrossing, had turned from both to the urge of memories. Maurice picked up the book and almost lost his fear, in such strange and terrible reading, his great mouth agape, his face and book close to the candlelight.

"Fetch more candles, boy!"

Maurice started; tried to obey; the darkness of the pit held the house below; the horrors of the future life for one who allowed himself to read such matters came to his simple mind.

"I am afraid to go below. Besides, I could find no more!"

"Fool!" snapped the old man. "Stay, I will go myself."

"And leave me here? No, no, I will go, too."

They went together. No further candles were to be found. Monsieur returned upstairs frowning.

"We will go to bed," he said. "And keep the ends of the candles. We might want light in the night. You will sleep in Francois' bed next to my room. If I should—call, come!"

"Yes, Monsieur."

The stout boy's teeth were chattering. "What ails you, boy? Are you—afraid?"



"Little Marie, who was so simple in her affections, in her trusts!"

"N-no, n-no, Monsieur! It is a family trouble—for the t-t-teeth to chatter."

"Humph! There, close the shutters before you go. That damnable moonlight played me tricks last night."

It would seem that something of this fearful ague had communicated itself to Monsieur.

"One shutter is gone, Monsieur."

"Strange! It was there, I swear, this morning. Well, good-night, boy."

"G-good-night!"

WITH ALL HIS CLOTHES ON, even to boots, Maurice Lajeunesse sought slumber that night. And sleep being Maurice's particular forte was kind in coming quickly to calm his troubled imagination, though the fear projected itself into dreams. He awoke with a start.

"Mon Dieu!"

It was a shriek of horror.

A terrible white figure stood in the doorway, with the moonlight upon it; white, and above it a gaunt, haggard face, corpse-like, on top of all a nightcap that made the whole appear not unlike a tipsy ghost.

"Huh, boy! It is only I." Monsieur's voice. "It seemed to me there was a noise in the house. You heard nothing? There—I am sorry if I frightened you. I should have remembered—once I nearly frightened the wits out of Francois by appearing so. Just my imagination, I guess, though I fancied. . . ."

Monsieur went grumbling to his room again. Maurice, still shaking with an ague of fear, gathered all his courage together, and fled from his room, downstairs through the unfamiliar ways, stumbling over furniture, blindly seeking, and finding at last the outside air. Not until a good half mile separated him from the house did Maurice's legs cease a pace never attained before or since.

Monsieur heard his going, called angrily but was not answered. Then the sound of those heavy footsteps on the gravel walk, dying . . . dying—to be muffled in the dust of the highway.

MONSIEUR was alone in the house. He fumbled his way back into his room, cursing Maurice, cursing Francois, cursing the poor Marie Choquette who had died last night—who had died last night at midnight. . . .

The church bell rang the hour. Monsieur, trembling, for all his forced bravado, listened, counting. Eleven o'clock; just eleven!

He had thought it might be twelve. What was it old Drocourt had told the boy? Spirits at midnight—bah, what folly!

"Ha!" laughed Monsieur, in defiant bravado. His voice echoed horribly through the lonely house. He did not laugh again.

There came again to him the feeling that someone—something was in the house. Candle in hand he searched the upstairs hall, losing courage and confidence at every step. In the end fear triumphed, and he fled back, tremblingly, to his own room, shutting and locking the doors—first the one into Francois' old apartment, then the one leading into the hallway. The moonlight entering through the shutterless window fell upon it, making it strangely white. Satisfied at these precautions, Monsieur blew out the candle-end, lest it should be needed further, and composed himself as best he might for slumber.

Sleep did not come fully—just a terrible doze worse than nightmare, with always the face of Marie Choquette before him: Marie in youth, plumply pretty, Marie in age—hideous, wrinkled, hag-like. . . .

MIDNIGHT! . . . No mistaking, this time, the count. Twelve times, the musical booming from the church tower.

Monsieur sat up shivering.

"Pah!" said Monsieur, weakly. "Such tomfoolery!"

The word somehow lost itself in a sudden hush. What was that? A knocking gently on wood—at the far door. Nonsense—imagination at its tricks again.

Popular legend had it that ghostly visitors always knocked. Just imagination, but—hark again! A little louder. Monsieur was sure this time. That far door—where the moonlight played fully upon the white woodwork. The wind perhaps? But the night breeze had died down. Maurice returned? Hardly.

There it was again.

Monsieur gathered all his old-time boldness together, and, springing from the bed, opened the door.

No one there. Tense silence in the hallway.

"Bah!" snorted Monsieur and went back to bed.

The knocking again. More clear, more insistent—a queer, muffled knocking!

"Old age—delusions!" Francois had said.

Monsieur pressed his hands to his temples. Was he going crazy now? He sprang from the bed again, and clutched at the handle of the door. He could not turn it; it was held as though in a vise!

Cold terror seized him.

"Jean!"

Surely he was crazy now. That voice—"Jean!"

"Who is there?" He croaked the words out somehow.

"Yourself"—said the voice—"your better self. The self that one time said, when you were tempted to forget your obligations to the one you lawfully married:

"'If there is anything of manhood in you you will not trick her—will not trick the little Marie who lavished all her love upon you—unworthy wretch that you are'—your better self, who comes now to condemn, to say that for this sin you, too, shall lose the feeble mental powers you still possess, you shall go insane, just as she did."

SOMEWHERE in the distance a train whistled, passing on its journey through the night. It brought a touch of sanity to the situation.

"Parbleu!" said Monsieur, bathed in a

perspiration of fear. "Imagination again! My mind is going, indeed! Or"—a sudden flash—"someone plays a trick!" He said aloud: "Who's there?"

No answer.

"See!" Monsieur reassured himself. "It was just a dream. Walking in my sleep, like Francois hinted. Why, even the door will open now!"

He turned the handle, but some fearful chill seized him again. A sense that something was behind the door. It passed in a moment.

"My better self," said Monsieur. "Ha, I should like to see it. . . ."

The door swung open, though he was not touching it. Monsieur stood swaying in the doorway. Over his shoulder, a flood of moonlight, finding its way through the shutterless window, poured upon a ghastly figure—a white, horrible apparition. Monsieur St. Jean's hands went up in horror—and the figure, as though in mockery or reproach, stretched up its terrible arms. Monsieur's eyes stared helplessly, his mouth gaped as the jaw drops in death. He fell forward, clenched fist outthrust as though to smite this "better self" of his.

There was the sound of breaking glass—then silence. Moonlight streaming through the shutterless window fell upon the still form of Monsieur St. Jean de Riviere.

The train whistled again. The clock in the church tower struck the quarter hour. . . .

DAWN came gently upon the village of St. Grenier. The first flush awakened Monsieur le Curé from a restless slumber.

"Strange!" said the priest. "All night I have been dreaming of old Monsieur St. Jean.

"I must see him this morning; perhaps now he will listen to things of the soul.

"Always I have suspected something queer about himself and Marie Choquette—perhaps because Grandpère Drocourt

hinted things; and my long search found the record of his marriage. And well worth while, too, that in those last hours when her mind cleared so singularly I should comfort her. His eyes troubled me," said the Curé after a space for reflection; his mind no longer on Monsieur St. Jean.

"I wonder—I wonder if I did right to tell him."

He rose and dressed slowly, for all that it was so early. It was almost as though some intuition told him he would be wanted.

It was Maurice Lajeunesse who rang so vigorously at the bell, causing even the neighbors to waken long before their accustomed time.

Maurice was bedraggled and ghastly. The terrible night had reduced him by pounds.

Between fear of the house of terror, and fear of Anna who might think him a coward, his state was pitiable.

The first streaks of dawn giving him courage, he had returned to the house of de Riviere.

"Father," he gasped now, "something terrible has happened. Monsieur St. Jean——"

"Yes—yes?"

"Is gone out of his head!"

"My son!"

"It is true, father. I found him—just now—on the floor in his upstairs hall—chuckling and gibbering to himself—all that, and not noticing how savagely he was bleeding."

"Bleeding?"

"How he could get it up I do not know," gasped Maurice, rather incoherently.

"It was leaning against a table just outside his door."

"He was chopping at it, and laughing—chopping with the key that had fallen from the door."

"Chopping what, my son?"

"Why, did I not tell you? The great pier glass that usually stands in the hallway below!"

THE FIVE-FIFTY TRAIN stops at St. Grenier only when flagged. This morning there was a solitary passenger. He boarded it mechanically.

"I did not know you were going away, Francois," said the station master. "At least you might choose a godly hour. But what will Monsieur St. Jean do?"

Francois' face held the look of a man who is ill.

"Monsieur," he said with a little shake in his voice, "Monsieur will have other attendants after this."

The conductor signaled, the brakes were released; the train gathered speed quickly.

Francois stood on the back platform, watching. Over the valley of St. Grenier, where so many years had been passed since Monsieur took him—a nameless boy—from the Institute, hung the golden light of dawn. Fields and all growing things were bathed in refreshing dew.

The peace of it all touched something hard in the lad's soul, and quickly melted it.

"Mon Dieu!" he cried, so that had the train not been squeaking up the grade his secret might have been known, "what have I done? What have I done? . . . But, then, she—was my mother!"

*"The professors did a great
many curious things."*



"OH, MY PROPHETIC SOUL!"

By Vincent Starrett

WHEN young Tagney went off to the war, temporarily giving up his position at Gelert's bank, old Gelert shed crocodile tears and initiated a service flag (for window display purposes) with Tagney's star. But when young Tagney came marching home again, smiling, un-mutilated and all serene, old Gelert's agony was painful to see, for—alas!—Tagney's job was no more; somehow it had passed away in his absence.

So young Tagney slapped old Gelert's face, got his name in the papers, and set about finding a new job which would enable him decently to live and, in a little while, decently to marry Anne Rogers. Tagney was not proud, and he took the first thing that offered, having no liking for complete idleness, although the short hours at his new place of employment were indubitably attractive. Sometimes he worked in the morning, and sometimes in the afternoon; and morning and afternoon his position rapidly became a

Illustrations by
J. H. Striebel

subject for jest among Tagney's friends. It had been procured through an advertisement calling for a healthy young man to act as an experimental subject in a psychological laboratory.

It will be evident from this that Tagney was an ordinary young man of his day; that is, a fellow of average intelligence and imagination, although not enough of either to interfere with his duties at the Redpath Laboratories. He, of course, believed the position one of supreme importance and his selection to have been a high tribute to his intellectual qualities; and he liked to tell Anne Rogers of the extraordinary experiments which—with the aid of a group of celebrated investigators—he was conducting.

The professors did a great many curious things with young Tagney, recording his reactions to innumerable strange tests, and they were delighted to find in him an excellent hypnotic subject. And Tagney, picking up odds and ends of in-

formation and a limited vocabulary of scientific words and phrases, began to give himself airs. He began to feel that he was a superior sort of person, and gave over a number of elaborate plans for revenge upon old Gelert.

Arriving at the laboratory rather early one day, Tagney was fascinated by an observation let fall by the celebrated Doctor Fladd—the fag end of a discussion which, apparently, had been raging prior to Tagney's entrance.

"The theory may be new," Fladd was saying, addressing a group of associates, "but the facts have been under observation for years, as you must know. For instance, an extremely old man quite clearly remembers the obscure and unimportant facts of his early childhood which, during his middle years, had been forgotten. What has happened to recall them to him? Obviously, there has been some cerebral development of a retroactive nature; a development, mind you, where one might naturally expect a decadence. Let us call it a 'backward memory' . . . !"

The professor talked for some time, and Tagney listened with both ears, for here was something he was able remotely to understand, to grasp and appreciate. Here, too, was an opportunity to add to the collection of curious lore with which he astonished and amused his friends.

A visiting savant smiled at Fladd's enthusiasm.

"My dear fellow," he said, "let us see. A backward memory in an elderly person might posit the converse, might it not? That is, a *forward* memory in a very young person! Thus, a schoolboy beginning to think for himself would remember things before they had happened. He would possess the gift of prophecy."

Undisturbed by this gentle irony, Fladd only laughed.

"Out of the mouths of babes and fools!" he said; and his two-edged quotation turned the laugh on the visiting savant.

All of which vastly interested young Tagney. It even excited him, for the pos-

sibilities of a forward memory crowded thick and fast into his understanding.

"Great Scott!" he thought, "I could pick a winner in every race! I could play the market and never get caught! I could locate buried treasure! I could—I could even take the weather man's job!"

He meant that he could do these things if he were possessed of what the visiting savant felicitously called a forward memory. And why not? He was young enough surely, although not a schoolboy. The idea raced in his mind, and by its distraction even retarded the doctors in their ordinarily easy task of hypnotizing him. But at length they got him to sleep, and he forgot about forward and backward memories for a time.

The amazing notion recurred to him presently, however, as he strolled homeward, although even then he might not have given it really serious thought had not a remarkable incident occurred to fix it in his mind.

It was a wet afternoon, and the pavement in the streets was slippery in a perilous degree. An automobile, closely hooded, swung around a corner and sped past him, and Tagney's eyes followed it in idle speculation. Without realizing the import of his thought, the young man said to himself:

"He'll try to turn the next corner, and will skid. That fellow's going to be hurt."

It was a sufficiently natural thought on such a day, and when it had crossed his mind Tagney forgot about it. A moment later he was running wildly toward the corner beyond, his eyes wide with horror; for just as he had predicted the car had essayed the slippery turn and had skidded. The man at the wheel had been hurled into the street and now lay silent on the wet pavement.

A crowd quickly gathered, and after a time an ambulance clanged to the scene and the injured chauffeur was removed to a hospital.

Hugely disturbed, Tagney hastened to his room, fitting his key into the outer door with hands that trembled. Even

then he was not prepared to believe the episode anything more than a startling coincidence; but he was vaguely alarmed and knew he would not feel at ease until he could sit down and think. As he fumbled with his key it occurred to him that Mrs. Gannett, who lived upstairs, was getting ready to go shopping and shortly would come downstairs with her basket. He paused uncertainly.

WHAT HAD PUT the ridiculous thought into his head? His agitation in the matter of the skidding auto was still fresh upon him, and silly as was this new idea it gave him a turn. Certainly he knew little enough about the habits of the middle-aged Mrs. Gannett. Could it be possible that . . . ?

There was only one way to be sure. He finished opening his door, then waited in the aperture. A moment later a door closed upstairs, and down the steps came Mrs. Gannett, a basket on her arm. She hummed gaily as she descended, and to Tagney's ears her low music came as a rumble of mocking laughter. Half fainting, he swung his door shut and fell into a chair.

For an hour he thought furiously; then with unsteady hands he lighted his pipe and thought some more. At length he faced what he knew at last to be the fact.

He was possessed of a forward memory! He had the gift of prophecy! Where would it lead him?

"Lucky for me," murmured Tagney, "that I wasn't born a hundred years ago! They'd have burned me at the stake."

At first, before he had known he possessed the astonishing gift, the idea of such a gift had tickled him immensely. What larks he might have! Now the awe of the situation held him silent and fearful. Black doubts crept over him. He saw again the huddled figure of the injured chauffeur in the wet street, and he shuddered. Who would be next? And suddenly he knew that at any moment he might become aware of Death waiting for himself upon the doorstep!

Tagney did not go out to supper. Instead, he went early to bed and tossed restlessly all night, while terrible dreams shook him as he slumbered.

In the morning, not much refreshed, he hurried into the streets determined quickly to reach the laboratory. As he walked, he resolutely kept his eyes away from the street. But when, in perfect safety, he arrived at the handsome building where he was employed, many of his fears had left him. After all, two occurrences such as he had witnessed proved nothing. The day was a magnificent one after the rain, and the fresh morning air had blown a number of fancies out of his brain.

It occurred to him that he had not breakfasted, and that he had forgotten to shave. The thought revived him. A fine memory he had, after all!

"I shall need whiskers, however, if I am to be a prophet," chuckled Tagney, in high spirits. "Prophets are not without whiskers, even in their own country."

HE TURNED AWAY from the laboratory to a small eating-house, nearby, where he often took his meals. Bacon and eggs and a cup of strong coffee further enlivened his spirits. Relieved, he rose from his stool and wended his way to the cashier's cage. A pretty young woman sat behind the wicket, and Tagney smiled at her as he had often smiled before.

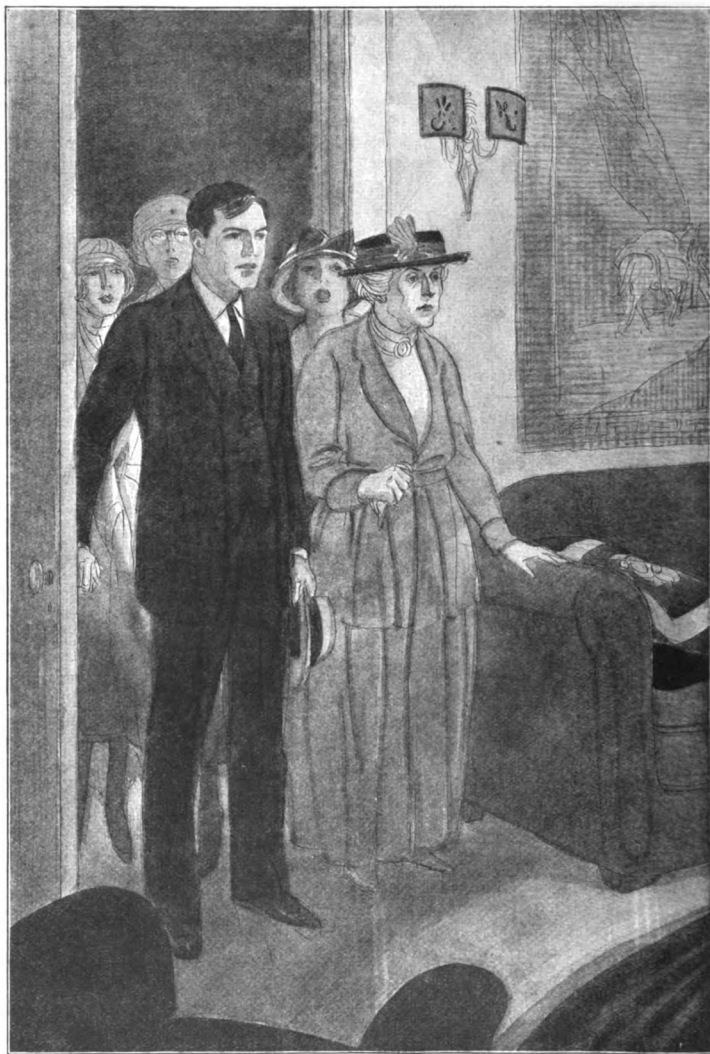
"Good morning, Miss Martin," he said. "How are things?"

The girl responded amiably; but it occurred to the observant Tagney that her eyes were troubled. A little thrill of apprehension passed through him. He hesitated. Then abruptly he asked:

"What's the matter?"

"Nothing much, I guess," she smiled. "Mr. Hanson hasn't come in yet, and we are wondering what has kept him. He is not often as late as this, and we thought something might have happened to him."

"Oh, he's probably all right," said Tagney, uneasily. "When is he due?"



"'Bless you all,' he whispered. 'Excuse me for



just a moment, please! I will be only a moment."

"He's an hour and a half overdue now," replied the cashier; and Tagney remembered that the proprietor—Mr. Hanson—was her uncle.

"Why don't you call his house?"

"We were just going to," she said.

Tagney's fears redoubled. He dared not think about the missing Hanson. He knew now, for a certainty, from a strange urge within him, that if he gave the case a moment's thought the situation would be made clear to him.

Yet—would it? If anything had happened to Hanson, it already had happened—and his own prophecies, so far as he could make sure, had to do only with matters yet to occur. Coupled with his anxiety was a desire to relieve the mind of this nice girl.

Suddenly he bent his brows and thought deeply. Then he smiled.

"I think it's all right," he said. "Probably there has been an accident on the Grove line, at Thornhill, and Mr. Hanson has been shaken up a bit; but there's nothing seriously wrong, I'm sure. I wouldn't be alarmed, if I were you."

But how did he know that Hanson lived out on the Grove line, beyond Thornhill? It was a piece of information he had not dreamed he possessed. This was a new angle to his curious "memory," and it troubled him.

"Good-bye," he said, and turned to the door.

Then, quickly, he turned back, for the telephone on the young woman's desk had just tinkled.

"There's Hanson now!" he cried.

The girl listened to the message with brightening face. Then she returned the receiver to its hook and turned to Tagney.

"That was Mr. Hanson," she smiled, "and—how curious!—there really was an accident at Thornhill, and everybody was shaken up. He's coming down now in another train. They've just cleared the track. But how did you guess?"

Tagney's head whirled. Although he had been sure of his facts, this confirmation of them, in such detail, rocked him.

"Just a lucky guess, I guess," he idiotically murmured, and her laugh followed him out of the shop.

ON THE SIDEWALK Tagney shook himself together. "This won't do!" he said, decidedly. "If this infernal gift is really mine, I can't allow it to upset me or I'll be ill. I may as well make the most of it. One thing I won't do, and that's go to the laboratory today. I'll call 'em up, by thunder, and tell 'em I can't get down."

And as he hastened away to a telephone, he suddenly knew that Doctor Fladd had been called out of town and would not be at the laboratory. It relieved him to know that his chief was away, and that he would not be missed, for he was a conscientious fellow; but in the circumstances he decided not to telephone. Another use had been found for his strange "memory," and it was a good one. He would simply wake up in the morning, "remember" what was going on at the laboratory, and then go or stay home as the situation dictated.

"By George!" said Tagney to himself, again in better spirits, "this isn't going to be so bad, after all. I'll just quit watching automobiles and horses and—horses!"

The word had given him a new idea. He knew a place where bets were taken on the races! A quiet place in the rear of a converted saloon, where a telephone and a chart were the only visible apparatus of the game, but where much money changed hands in a day. Why should he not avail himself of this new and precious gift? New! Was it new?—or had he possessed it all along without knowing it? No matter! He knew now, and he would work it for all it was worth.

He wheeled in his tracks and with rapid steps swung away northward. In twenty minutes he had crossed the river and found the place; he bent low over the chart.

He must be careful not to overdo it—the first day! If the bookmakers were to

become suspicious, all was over for him in that quarter. No, he would not bet on every race. Time enough for that sort of thing.

He scanned the sheet carefully. The first, third and fourth races at Woodbine would do. Three names, for him, stood out in letters of fire—Castor Oil in the first, Rainshine in the third, and Glow Worm in the fourth. And Rainshine was a twenty to one shot! La, la!

He slapped down a goodly sum on each horse and went away.

Tagney's spirits now rose with every passing moment. Where before a vague fear had incommoded him, a high elation now perched. His was a gift of the gods; to spurn it would be folly incredible. He whistled a few staves of a popular song, then, unable to control his feelings, burst into hoarse melody. A man passing by looked at him suspiciously, wondering where some people "got it" when he couldn't.

THE SQUARE opposite the Oldberry Library was inviting, and Tagney turned into it and occupied a bench in the sunlight. He began to speculate. Just how far ahead could he see? Was his gift good for a day, or a year, or a century? If the latter, it occurred to him that he might be a quite invaluable person to the State Department at Washington. With his knowledge, privately betrayed to the government, no enemy nation would ever wage successful war.

He purchased a paper from a newsboy at the corner and returned to his seat. The solution of the Russian problem! What a chance! Carefully he read all that the paper had to say about Russia, then concentrated his thought. But there was a hitch some place. He rapidly discovered that the following day a celebrated leader would be blown to atoms, in the streets of Moscow; but beyond that he was doubtful. There were glimmerings of light, but nothing tangible upon which to lay thought.

This seemed to answer his questions. His power was limited. Twenty-four hours ahead he might look, but the vision of centuries was denied him. He felt rather hurt about this, as if he had been defrauded; but in a moment he was smiling again. It was just as well as it was. The larger vision would have been a nuisance anyway, with the strenuous labors it would entail. Apparently the gift was for himself alone; vouchsafed him for his private use and gain.

Forgetting the unfortunate Russian—whom it would be too late to save, anyway, since cables are slow enough—he jumped to his feet and left the vicinity.

Throughout the late afternoon he tested his powers in many idle ways, and always with surprising results. Once as a man passed him in the street something stirred within him, and he looked after the fellow, becoming aware that he was gazing upon a notorious criminal who would that night commit a daring burglary in a downtown jewelry establishment. For a moment he thought of calling a policeman; then the futility of such an action came to him. He could prove nothing; the burglary as yet was uncommitted. The policeman would only laugh at him, and might possibly lock him up as a dangerous lunatic. Yes, the gift had its drawbacks—but it was a golden gift!

"Good Lord!" said the cashier in the little room behind the converted saloon, as he went to claim his winnings. "You copped on all three of 'em! Say, how do you do it? Give us a tip, will you? A few more days like this and we'll shut up shop!"

Tagney smiled seraphically.

"Easy, easy," he murmured. "It's easy if you know how! Well, many thanks! See you later."

He stowed his money away in several pockets and went into the street a reasonably wealthy man. He had only to invest his earnings now to turn them into millions.

And investment was easy and safe,

for he could work his "memory" until it screamed for mercy.

EVENING was approaching, and he remembered that he was to call upon Anne that night. He decided to taxi to her home. He was, indeed, upon the point of stepping into the machine when a thought halted him. Suppose it were to break upon him suddenly that the taxi was going to be wrecked! He would be ensconced inside, and possibly would have no chance to leap out. He carefully removed the foot he had placed inside the door and changed his mind about riding. The disappointed taxi driver went away breathing soft curses.

Well, he must walk. Fortunately it was not too far. He would have a bite to eat—curious that he was always forgetting about meals!—then stroll out to the Rogers place. Or he might take a street car and stand on the platform. He could jump, then, in case of trouble. By George, there were some features of this life that were a bore, at least!

As he strolled westward, after supper, he began to think about Anne and her parents. Nice people, all of them—but were they quite the folks for a young man destined to fame and wealth? Anne—well, of course, Anne was a charming girl, but she had her faults like the rest of them. He could have almost anybody now for the asking; or, if he couldn't, he would not ask. Ha, ha! It was too easy! An actress? There were some stunners!

"Hi-lee, hi-lo!" said Tagney, softly, as the possibilities of the situation began to rise before his vision.

Anne fussed a great deal, and was a bit of a prude. Too, she was inclined to be jealous of him. A mean emotion that—jealousy! If he so much as looked at another woman, he supposed—well, well! He must think it over. Of course, also, Anne was no great beauty. A nice girl, a rather pretty girl; perhaps a wee bit too plump . . . Hm-m! Her mentality was furiously domestic. Few thoughts beyond home and babies, he supposed.

Could she tread the path with him? It would be a gilded one, for he could afford anything he liked now. And he had often thought that by marrying Anne he would practically be marrying the family. Her father—oh Lord! Rogers would sit around and talk politics, with his coat off and his suspenders showing. And Mrs. Rogers—a rather nice old thing—would be having all her impossible friends in to tea, to show off her golden son-in-law. . . .

TAGNEY felt it due to himself, really, to postpone matters with Anne. Perhaps in time she herself would break off the engagement. It would be embarrassing, but a good thing for both of them in the end. He did not want to be mean about it. Possibly it would be better to be quite frank—frankness is always best. He would tell her, honestly, what he felt, and offer to release her. If she refused—if she insisted on things as they were—well, he would have to break it himself, even by means of a quarrel.

Feeling very guilty, Tagney boarded a street car and went to the home of his sweetheart. There was no accident to the car, but at the house, as he had expected, there was a scene.

Anne screamed and went into hysterics. Her father ordered Tagney from the house. That rabbit! Tagney had not dreamed that the old man possessed so much spunk. Mrs. Rogers only stared with the eyes of a tragedienne, then gathered her weeping daughter into her arms.

"I'm really very sorry," muttered Tagney, stumbling toward the door. "I thought it best to be—honest—you know. Anne," he said, and made as if he would place an arm about her waist. . . .

"You beast!" she shrieked. "Don't touch me!"

"Get out!" roared Rogers. "Get out, damn you, before I—"

Tagney didn't hear the end of the threat. No doubt if he had stopped to consider, his "memory" would have sup-

plied the context; but he didn't stop. He plunged down the steps and walked hastily away in the darkness.

Well, that was over! Lord, what a mess! He felt hurt—as if he had been insulted. He had done everything he could, said everything he could think of, to make it easy for everybody; this was the way he was treated! That rabbit! He paused and thought desperately for a moment, hoping he could foresee vast trouble and sorrow for Henry Rogers; but to his regret there was nothing of the sort in sight. He resolutely kept his mind from Anne's future, for he was truly sorry for Anne.

TAGNEY went home in ill humor, and on the way met a seedy individual not far from his room. The hour was late, and the seedy one thrust a revolver under Tagney's nose and requested him to elevate his hands.

But Tagney only laughed, for in an instant he had "remembered" that the revolver was unloaded.

He took it away from the man, without violence, and gently slapped the face of his assailant, laughing mockingly meanwhile. The highwayman burst into tears.

Tagney's mood softened. He gave the man a dollar, then said:

"If you want a job, Mr. Hanks, there's a good one open for a boss foreman, at Wheelwright & Towne's."

The footpad stared after him in affliction, for this stranger had called him by name and had known his line of work!

Laughing at the encounter, Tagney pushed up the steps and into his room, which, it occurred to him, he must soon change for a better one. He was now a man of considerable means, and shortly he would be worth a great deal more.

Inside of a week the papers were filled with Tagney's name. Banner heads shrieked at him as he passed the news-stands, and people pointed him out in the streets. By a series of phenomenal operations he had made himself a millionaire, had bought a seat on 'Change, and was

now threatening the wheat market with a corner. His affair with Anne, too, had come out, and there was almost as much in the journals to his discredit as to his credit.

Undisturbed, Tagney went on his way; but he had not changed his room and he was glad of it, for the obscure little house in which he hid himself away at night was about the only quiet retreat he had. He was besieged by cranks and charity workers, and lived a tumultuous existence during the day, although he scattered largesse with a liberal hand.

Then followed his purchase of the city's railway lines and his marriage to a notorious screen actress, who already had three husbands to her account. This was the final straw for Tagney's horrified relatives, who had kept themselves in the background until now.

A wire from his brother told Tagney that the family would descend upon him *en masse* the following day.

THE DAY opened badly, for the morning papers carried a sensational account of the suicide of Anne Rogers, and many fingers pointed accusing nails at Tagney, who, to do him justice, was deeply grieved by this final advertisement of Anne's devotion.

"Poor girl!" he murmured, as he sat in his rooms, which now were in a fashionable hotel, chosen by his wife. "Poor girl!" he said, looking out of the window. "It occurs to me that everything was happier as it was before I discovered this infernal forward memory. But what can I do now? In God's name, what can I do! Money? I have more money than I can ever spend! Fame? I'm notorious from one end of the earth to the other! Friends? I doubt if I have a friend in the world!"

"You have a wife, my dear!" purred the lovely creature from the silver screen, who had stolen unheard upon his reveries.

"Yes," mused Tagney. "You, I suppose are real. At any rate, you are not to blame for any of this. I wonder—I

wonder what I should discover if I were to look into our future!"

He shuddered.

"Are you a fortune teller?" asked his wife, with light irony.

"I dare not!" cried Tagney. "I dare not!"

And then he covered his face with his hands.

A trampling in the corridor outside caused him to spring to his feet. Then a knock fell upon his door panels, and the handle turned. In the aperture was framed the face and figure of his brother, and behind his brother he saw the grave faces of his sisters and his parents.

His wild gaze softened.

Suddenly a smile of happiness illumined his face.

"Bless you all!" he whispered. "Excuse me for just a moment, please! I will be only a moment."

He turned and hurried into a room on the other side, closing the door after him. It was the bathroom.

From a small cabinet he took a little bottle of pale liquid and held it to the light.

"I can't face them!" he said, quietly and to himself. "I've made a mess of it—and I'm a dangerous man to have about in this world!"

"Anne!" he murmured, placing the bottle to his lips.

"Poor little Anne!"

FEET sounded beyond the closed door, and voices were raised. Then the door opened and the group he had deserted pushed into the room until it was crowded.

Someone knocked the bottle from his hand. . . .

Gradually his head cleared, and he realized that his eyes were closed. He knew

that about him was a chatter of conversation.

He opened his eyes.

Professor Fladd was bending over him, and beyond Fladd were the faces of others, including that of the visiting savant; and beyond these were the walls and accessories of the Redpath Laboratories.

"All right," said Fladd, "come out of it—come on! Wake up! There, that's better! Jove, I never found you so difficult before, Tagney!"

"I think you kept him a bit too long, Fladd," observed the visiting savant, critically.

"He's tired. And Lord, what a bunch of rot you've been talking, Mr. Tagney!"

"Have I?" whispered Tagney.

He stared about him incredulously; then suddenly he smiled.

"My God!" he said. "It isn't true!"

"What isn't true?" laughed Fladd.

But Tagney blushed. "What did I say, Professor?" he asked.

"Oh, something in line with Gilchrist's little joke about my theory. About working your memory forward, and prophesying things. We can't do that yet, you know!"

"Better run along now."

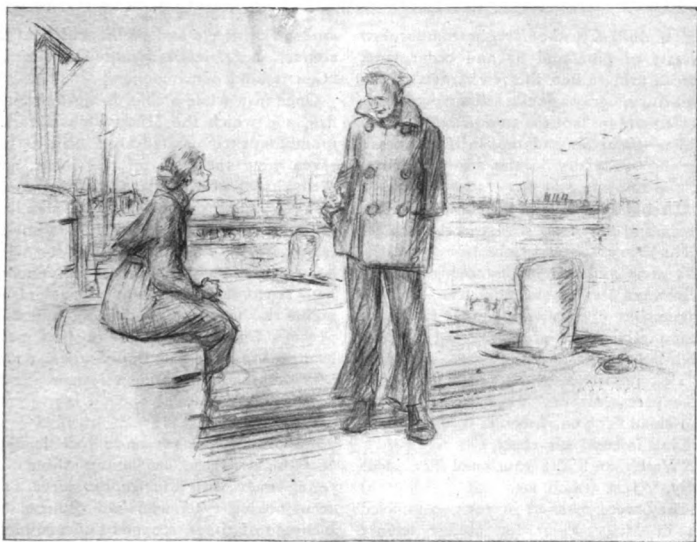
"Thanks," said Tagney. "I guess I will!"

FOR it had suddenly occurred to his somewhat backward memory that he was due at Anne's house that evening—pretty, tender little Anne, and her kindly parents.

"Say," he asked, as he climbed into his coat, "there isn't really such a thing as a *forward* memory, you say?"

"Lord, no!" smiled the professor. "You ought to be glad there isn't, too!"

"I am!" said Tagney, earnestly.



"He'll make a sailor, don't you think?" he said."

"ULTIMATE ISLANDS".

By Winona Godfrey

Illustrations by Alice Harvey

GENEVIEVE had not married Abraham Lincoln Robbins until she was nearly thirty. Until then she had waited. For what? She couldn't have told you—Link wasn't bad looking, and was a money maker.

Her mother had kept nagging.

"Why on earth don't you take Link?"

"Oh—I don't know."

Gen would let her sewing drop in her lap, and her gaze would drift out of the window with that half-expectance, as if

she might at that very moment behold some awaited one coming up the wet path.

"Can't understand," said her mother, tartly, "wherever you got that mooning streak of yours. Honest, Gen, sometimes I think you ain't *right*. D'you want to vegetate here all your life? Link's making money, and some day the Point'll get too small for him."

Gen did not reply. She continued to look out into the gray afternoon of the Washington winter, the Sound dull un-

der a dull sky, the far shore unbroken forests of pine and fir and cedar, and, spread around her, the few streets of the mill-town, gray docks, dingy weather-beaten frame houses and shacks, damp walks—everything damp in fact, never getting really dry in the scant clearings of the rainy season.

Often, as Gen's eyes beheld all this dull green-and-grayness, she scarcely saw it; there always grew before her gay cities of towers and colonnades and parks and driveways leading to mansions—details vague, but over all a glamour of "life," that mythical life of cities, all color and high-lights. . . .

That night she said to Link Robbins: "I expect some day Misty Point will get too small for you, Lincoln."

Link inflated his chest.

"Watch me!" he cautioned her jocularly. "Just watch me."

They were married in June—and lived on in Misty Point for almost twenty years. Link did pretty well, the townspeople said, although Misty Point did not become the metropolis its founders hoped. It grew a good deal, of course, with the developing country, but it remained just a dingy town, with a few rusty old ships swinging off its sagging docks.

The Robbins, childless, never moved from the six-room, brown-shingled house where Link had taken his bride. It was a very successful marriage. Gen was not a nagger, and Link was the man of the house. Probably not more than a dozen times in the twenty years did Gen make such tentative remarks as, "Is the Point growing fast enough for you, Link?" or, "Wonder how we'd like it in California?" or, "Do you think we'll likely stay on here?"

To which Link replied, "I'm satisfied," or, "Why won't we?" or their equivalents.

It never occurred to anybody that Mrs. Robbins was unhappy. As a matter of fact she was not unhappy and there was nothing about her that suggested any difference from her neighbors of church

and sewing-circle and the rest of it. "Of course," her friends admitted tolerantly, "Gen is kind of a mooner."

Once in a while a ship, flying a strange flag, and which the Misty Point Courier grandiloquently stated had sailed the seven seas, anchored off the docks, and then almost always Mrs. Robbins would "take a walk" down that way, standing for a long time to watch the gulls hovering over the ship and to wonder what ports had seen her, and what typhoons had swept her and into what sinister nights she had steered on strange quests—perhaps for tragic pearls—or perhaps a beautiful woman had leaned against that very rail on some significant journey from island to island. . . .

ONCE, as she sat on a bale leaning to all these beckoning things, a young man with an empty sleeve and deep looking eyes, who had chanced by a couple of times, stopped and smilingly showed her the tiny, downy head of a kitten peeping from his pocket.

"He'll make a sailor. don't you think?" he said in a pleasant, visity voice. "And his mother has a large family and ought to be relieved to have one less to support. Besides, instead of just this dock, he'll see the wide, wide world."

Gen smiled back.

"My, that'll be grand for him! I hear him purring about it."

"Who knows?" said the young man, whimsically. "Perhaps he'll eat pink fish and have an emerald hung around his neck some day! Maybe he'll sit in a temple at dusk and 'admire that romance of destiny which cast him on his ultimate island!'"

Gen Robbins stared with wide eyes at the young man as if he were a god who had let jewels fall from his lips.

"I like that," she half whispered—"what you just said."

"Oh, Stevenson said that."

He stroked the kitten's head with two yellow-stained fingers.

"Or something like it."

He observed her now with attention, almost with compassion. "One of those things that get you, isn't it? Are you fond of words?"

She was startled.

"I—never thought about it. Maybe I am!"

"A word, you know, is a wonderfully powerful thing."

He made a gesture, seemed to forget the words that were to accompany it, and looked out at the ship swinging around with the tide—his ship *Gen* was sure, although he had not said so. The kitten, cozy in the coat-pocket, its tiny chin resting on the edge, was getting sleepy, blue eyes half-closing. There was only the gurgle and lap-lap of little waves on the piles beneath them. That sense of unreality that sometimes veils familiar things was over it all to *Gen Robbins*.

"I'll tell you where I first heard that," the young man was saying dreamily. "A girl I knew—only a few years, too, out of a New Orleans convent—was stabbed in Singapore by . . . when I lifted her, she smiled and got out—this ultimate island' . . ."

GEN was frightened and fascinated, as children are by tales of ogres. She wished to hear more and more, for it almost seemed as if this strange young man had seen and knew things for which she groped, as a blind man reaches out into his darkness. She wished to question him, but she did not know about what! He talked on, she thought marvelously, watching her with amusement and compassion, until suddenly she noticed how low was the sun and pictured the amazement of Link if dinner should be late.

She rose hastily.

"I must go! Though I'd—I wish you could tell me about other things. And I hope the kitten likes to be a sailor! Good-bye!"

He lifted his cap with his one hand, and she hurried away over the rough planking, across the spur-track, and along

the two-board walk to the weatherbeaten house.

She wanted to tell the fat pies on the pantry shelf that she had had an *adventure*, for she knew that they would understand quite as well as any of her neighbors. Still she could not have explained to anyone what was so wonderful about seeing an idle young man on the docks with a kitten in his pocket, and hearing him talk for ten minutes some queerness about ultimate islands and the romance of destiny. It was not, either, that these words meant so much to her, but the *sound* of them was somehow music to her soul.

She did not speak of it to Link; she never spoke even of having taken a walk to the docks. He'd have said:

"What'd you want on them old fishy docks? You might get a nail in your foot."

What happened at table was Link's highest praise:

"Good pie!"

Gen took a sip of tea.

"Link—let's—can't we take a trip?"

"A trip?" He grunted. "What'd you mean—a trip?"

She plunged nervously.

"Link, I've never been anywhere but to Seattle three or four times, and—and you've been doing pretty well. Why can't we take a big steamer and go to Honolulu or down to Frisco, anyway? I'd like to go somewhere."

LINK looked across the table at her with a slight curiosity, more stupidity, and entire good nature.

"You're goin' to get a trip all right," he informed her. "We're going to move."

"We are!" She leaned forward eagerly. "Oh, Link, where?"

"Well, McGinnis kinda done me on that Skye mill, and I figure the only way I can get my money out is to go up there and run it for a year myself."

She regarded him steadily—with dulled eyes. Skye! A lumber mill and a dozen shacks in the Cascades, at which trains

stopped on signal. At least Misty Point, with its wet board-walks and rough docks, sat by the restless and mysterious water, and to Gen all color oddly dwelt by seas, and on seas, and across seas. She listened to Link's plans—laid in every detail. Everything was settled, no suggestion, much less protest, was expected from her. She had long ago given up any notion of offering either.

IN THE HEART of the Cascades, Skye sprawled upon a shelf between mountain and river, from whose opposite bank stretched the evergreen forest. The river rushed by, haste-churned into foam, and the great trees murmured like surf, and the saw-mill shrieked and buzzed and whanged. There was the river, then a single, straggling, unpaved street, on which fronted a few unpainted buildings. Above this street were the railroad tracks, overland tracks, and beyond, in a sort of cup, two or three lonely houses seemed to have crept off by themselves.

In one of these, Gen Robbins arranged the few pieces of furniture they had brought, set her blue dishes neatly in the kitchen cupboard, and began, without fret or rebellion, to live the eventless days of that old waiting for nothing in particular. She did not read, except to glance at the Seattle paper Link sometimes remembered to bring home, and she did not mope, but accepted this year calmly, as sensible travelers accept a day's delay.

Nor was she really busy with her thoughts—rather once in a while she saw vaguely, as a picture, the young man on the docks with the kitten in his pocket, and more vaguely still glimpsed those cities and shores of wonder, of "life," which he and his words in some way represented. She saw no possibilities nor picturesqueness in this setting of mountains and rushing waters, in this kingdom of trees, scarred here crudely by men.

There were a few women in the town, of course, and occasionally she went to sit with one of these of an afternoon, or one came with her mending to sit with

Gen. Oftener she was alone, and would stroll off into the woods, for an hour or so, along an old moss-grown skid-road. She usually made an objective of a tumble-down hut that someone long forgotten had built by a spring, and here she would rest or pick wild blackberries and black-caps and salmon-berries.

On this day as she neared the hut she noticed that berries had been recently picked, and she wondered—for heretofore this had been her preserve. Almost instantly she felt the presence of some person near, and she stopped, like a pointer, eyeing the hut—anyone from Skye would have hailed her. She was too used to these woods now to be fanciful. She walked to the doorless hut and peered in.

AGAINST the wall of the hut, with outspread hands pressing it, yet facing the light with head up, stood a woman—a girl rather. And such a girl as Gen Robbins had never seen in her life! Her ruddy chestnut hair was bobbed, making a coppery aureole for her white face in which her eyes, oddly matching her hair, though inclining to amber, were blue-circled with fatigue. She was slender, straight, rather tall, and her expensive and fashionable dress had been new but lately, though now it was crushed and torn and mud-splotted.

"Well, my land!" said Gen Robbins.

Examining this plain, kind-faced woman in a calico dress and battered sun-hat, the girl's tension relaxed and she made a gesture of appeal.

"Please!" she begged in a rich and modulated voice, "don't tell anyone!"

"Of course not," Gen returned heartily. "But what's the matter? What's happened?"

The girl came nearer. She bore unmistakable signs of a physical and emotional ordeal, but she retained almost a complete self-control. "I am in trouble. I am trying to get away from someone. Will you help me?"

"I surely will if you'll tell me how."



"Against the wall of the hut, with outspread hands pressing it, yet facing the light with head up, stood a woman—a girl rather."

"Is there any place you could hide me? For a few days?"

Gen considered, studying the questioner. There was a rough attic over their house, reached by a trap-door to which led a rough ladder in a closet. Link was at home only at night—if a person were a mind to keep quiet. . . . But what was this? No waif certainly, nor young truant.

The girl went on:

"I dropped off the train last night. It isn't supposed to stop here; but it slowed up for something, and I was watching my chance. As soon as it was light I found this trail. Of course, I can't stay here—"

Gen remembered hearing that long whistle in the night, an eerie wailing through the midnight mountains.

"If you'll help me," the girl repeated, and she looked very young and tired and forlorn, "I'll pay you and—I'll tell you after—I'm so tired now."

Gen glanced at the sun—it was yet early afternoon.

"Come home with me then, and I'll get you something to eat. You must be about dead."

At these practical words the girl turned back into the hut, where from a corner she picked up a long, earth-stained cape and a small over-night bag with a crushed end. Gen relieved her of this and they set off at once down the skid-road. The girl said, several times:

"You're very kind," and presently added, "I haven't done anything wrong."

Gen asked no questions save about her physical well-being. When they were safely home, she brought water, and while the stranger washed and brushed her bright hair, Gen quickly made coffee and fried bacon and eggs. Sitting opposite her guest at the kitchen-table, she urged her to eat and waited on her with an almost tender anxiety.

THEN, at first hesitantly and with evident reluctance, finally in crisp, tense sentences as she felt the growing sympathy of her hearer, came the story.

Its setting was so strange to any experience of Gen Robbins that she did not always understand its hazards, its pressures, its significance. Since she was sixteen, it seemed, this girl had wandered from city to city, from country to country, with her father, whose mode of life, apparently idle and luxurious, had in it something mysterious, dubious. Gen's impression was that he was doing something "shady." With them always was his familiar, Kilday—Frank Kilday—the name came slowly in the girl's rich and oddly mature voice.

Through the years, subtly, patiently, this man spread a snare for the girl as one smears twigs with birdlime. He thought himself at first wise and insinuating enough to win her. Failing in this he contrived more devious means. His hold on her father, Kilday's senior by a few years only, was profound, though exactly of what nature the daughter had not discovered. In this battle of wits, she fought with a skill at first instinctive, and finally with finesse of growing sophistication.

SOME WEEKS before, the three had arrived in San Francisco from Honolulu and had proceeded in leisurely fashion up the coast. There was nothing in the open, yet the tension was growing daily, and in Seattle the girl was virtually as much a prisoner as if she had been handcuffed between the two men. Still in his way her father loved her, and was, she knew, playing for time against Kilday's persistence. Then—the very next night after their arrival, a strange and tragic thing happened.

After dinner, in fact it was almost ten o'clock, Kilday complained of a headache and suggested, insisted, that they all take a ride. A car was called, and they were driven around for probably an hour and a half. Coming back into town, Kilday had the car stopped at a small drug-store and alighted, to get something, he said, for his headache. Next the druggist's was an empty shop on an alley. The car had

stopped in front of the empty shop. After a moment the father started to get out, saying he'd go in and get a cigar. There was a shot and he fell to the sidewalk, fatally wounded. Kilday and the druggist ran out of the store, but no one was to be seen. The girl thought the shot came from the alley.

The wounded man lived almost twenty-four hours, and by his death-bed the distracted girl, hardly knowing how it came about, was married to Frank Kilday. Perhaps the dying father thought she would be safer so.

The next days were a blur to her, in which appeared clearly only the grave of that father. Kilday was as always suave, considerate, and seemingly also grief-stricken. Then he spoke of business demands, change of scene, and yesterday they had taken the eastbound train that had, contrary to custom, slowed up at Skye.

The girl's mind had begun to clear, to realize herself at last completely in Kilday's power. She saw herself tricked, and she was not sure that it was not by one who, if not her father's murderer, might be responsible for that crime. As dusk fell, the necessity of immediate escape grew in her wild thoughts, and a vague and desperate plan formed.

About nine o'clock Kilday had gone into the smoking-car and she had locked the door of their compartment behind him. If he returned and found it she knew he would only smile. He had long been patient, and he was too near his goal now to be indiscreet. She raised the window, forced up the screen, and looked out into black forests and upon sheer rocky walls and deep ravines from which came the sound of swift waters. To drop from the train she knew would be simply suicide. . . .

Then suddenly, as she stared hopeless, the train whistled and began to slow down. She leaned far out. It was a black night and she sensed rather than saw that there was some sort of settlement here. Slower and slower the train

—it might be her only chance. She wrapped the bag in her cape and threw it out, thrust herself through the window and dropped, to roll scratched and stunned into the underbrush, while the train, as if it had delayed only for her exit, gathered speed and was swallowed by the darkness.

Gen listened with no thought of melodrama; she felt only a curious satisfaction in a tale of craft and desire and death and flight told by a strange and lovely girl in this incongruous shack in the Cascades.

"He'll come back!" the round tones had fallen to a whisper. "He'll come, looking and bribing and questioning, all along the line, but if I can hide until he's gone up and down and found nothing, maybe I can get away then. . . . I have money and some jewels." She touched her breast.

Gen's soft dark eyes held a new light. "Come, I'll hide you. A fox can crawl in lots of holes."

THE HOUSE was divided into two rooms by two rough partitions about three feet apart. This space provided a long closet and on the other side, the kitchen cupboard. Cleats were nailed across one end of this closet, by which access was gained to the attic formed by the steep roof—steep so that it might not be crushed by winter snows—and the flooring, which in turn formed the ceiling of the room below.

In this attic were some old lumber and some packing boxes. Gen, climbing up, lifted the trap-door and called the girl to follow her. They moved the boxes so that a portion of the attic was screened if anyone chanced to lift the trap and look about—which was unlikely. Some pine boughs made a mattress and Gen had some extra blankets. This, with a box to sit on, and what Gen called her "grip," furnished an odd retreat for a young lady used to the crystal and tile and velvet of the finest hotels in the world.

"Now," said Gen, "when your man comes inquiring nobody in this town has

seen you. I'm not going to tell Link. I don't know—he might not be willing."

The girl drew a long breath and her hands were clasped tightly together.

"I suppose all this seems absurd and unnecessary to you. But if you knew—And I'm so tired of fighting."

"I'm afraid it'll be lonesome nights," Gen observed anxiously. "I hope you can sleep."

"And now, my dear—"

"My name's Alma."

And half shyly she touched Gen's cheek with her soft young lips. Gen patted her shoulder and spoke soothingly, as she might have to a perplexed child.

LINK came home that night to a house about which he discerned nothing unusual. Supper disposed of, he smoked a pipe, nodded awhile over a soiled memorandum-book, then yawned to bed, and after the fashion of his kind was almost instantly asleep.

All the time Gen was conscious of the discomfort of the girl above, knew strangely all her cramped, cautious movements, the beating of her heart at a crackling timber, the suffocating pressure of black darkness, the tensing of will that bore this, that would continue to bear it, not so much after all for fear of Kilday as for a *purpose*, the freedom of her own body and soul. Something maternal in Gen yearned to stretch a comforting hand to one whose sole protector she had become. And so the little young figure with the tossed bright hair lay above the crude sinewy length of Link and the strong, slighter body of his quiet, dark-eyed wife.

Mornings, after Link had gone and all was clear, Alma descended to breakfast, and the two talked in low tones and looked at each other with deep thoughtful eyes. There was between them, it almost seemed, one of those curious affinities sometimes felt between those who have no common experience and who may not even speak the same tongue, that perhaps is based on something more remote than present incarnation.

Gen only knew that, as unexpected as if she had dropped from the sky, this Alma, known but a day or two, filled an emptiness that had forever ached in her. She did not tell herself that in Alma she saw the daughter she had never borne, did not recognize and discount as such the magnetism of what people call "personality," did not realize that Alma in her youth and loveliness and knowledge of the world, was a living symbol of that beauty and adventure and awareness toward which Gen Robbins had ever strained wistful eyes.

ON THE SECOND NIGHT Link had brought home a Seattle paper which Gen searched, to find a paragraph saying that Mrs. Frank Kilday, who as reported in yesterday's paper had disappeared from an overland train Monday night, had not been found. Her husband was continuing the search. It was feared that if she had fallen into some deep ravine or mountain stream, her fate might never be known.

Curiously, it was her father, Millard Castle, who had been shot only recently and for whose murderer the police were still looking.

With a time-table Gen and Alma mapped out, as Kilday would do, the range of that search, which would be bounded by the time he had left her until he discovered her absence. Kilday would know that she meant to escape, not to kill herself, so he would carefully check up the few train-stops of that night when she might have alighted unhurt. The fact that track-walkers had found no trace of her or any of her possessions would tell him that she was hiding, not dead. That she would not have been seen in the few settlements of the mountains where any stranger would be stared at—the striking Alma with her bizarre hair!—was preposterous. Besides she had made the blunder of going hatless. He would surmise that she was bribing someone to hide her until he should weary of the search.

The two women waited—carefully, watchfully, stubbornly.

It was Thursday night that Link brought an express package containing fifteen hundred dollars in currency to pay the men at the mill, sent up by mistake from Seattle two days sooner than the usual Saturday.

"Some boob's got his wire's crossed," was Link's comment. "Well, nobody knows it's here except Bill"—(the express agent). "That safe at the mill's about like a cracker-box, so I'll just stick her away somewhere."

He opened the closet-door and put a foot on the first cleat!

GEN, close behind him, felt her throat dry and her lips whiten. Link's discovery of Alma would mean endless explanations which Link would probably refuse to understand. Who was this girl, maybe a liar, and what did Gen want to mix in any such mess for?

He was going on up.

She held back her hands from seizing him and knew that any word might only betray her and confirm his purpose. Did Alma hear—understand? Could she conceal herself?

Link, raising the trap, deliberately set his package a little back from the opening on the attic-floor, letting the trap fall back above his head. He had not bothered to climb through himself! There was no reason why he should notice how tightly Gen's hands were wound in the apron which she wore.

He crossed to the bureau and took from a drawer the revolver he kept there. He examined it and noted its good condition.

Seeing that she was watching him he grinned at Gen's intent look.

"You might show this to any prowlers! Can't understand why women are so scared of a gun. I s'pose you'd let 'em carry off the house before you'd touch it."

"Expect I would," she admitted, and went back to her dishes.

FRIDAY, and the one-thirty train whistled its intention to stop at Skye. At that signal Alma retreated to her attic, and Gen seated herself, sewing-basket beside her, before her open door, an unsentinel-like figure—outwardly. Who alighted from that train she had no way of knowing, but some instinct warned her.

She waited an hour, two hours. He would be idling about the town, putting here and there a question. Then she saw him coming toward the house. She threaded a needle with steady hands, and rocked a little in her low chair, as she watched him and noted him—and hated him.

He was a man of medium height, slight and wiry, carefully dressed, with regular features, rather prominent light-blue eyes, and thinning close-cut hair. Women as a rule considered him handsome. Approaching the door, he smiled and lifted his hat.

"I am interested in timber," he began smoothly, "and inspecting the country whereabouts. Is Mr.—Robbins in?"

"No, he's at the mill."

He would have learned that in town.

"I see."

He was returning her steady gaze.

"May I sit down? Been walking quite a bit."

He had stepped inside.

She indicated a chair without rising.

Frank Kilday sat down, glancing about the room, noting two closed doors. He had had no reason at all, of course, for suspecting that this particular house held anything of interest to him. He was merely being thorough, yet, the moment he entered it, he *felt* that it did. His perceptions were keen, trained, and to such there is in the very atmosphere something significant and as definite as odor.

He began to talk in an easy friendly way about the country, the town, the weather. Gen answered briefly. As he talked he studied her—a plain, industrious little person, with nothing at all unusual about her, unless it was a sort of gleam in her dark eyes when she looked at him.



"There was a sudden, sharp report and his expression changed to one of surprise."

Did she find it lonely in Skye? Oh, no! Were visitors frequent? Not particularly! Probably she would know if there were strangers in town. She might and she might not. She amused him, and not on the surface but underneath, there was hostility in her. *She knew something—* more and more he believed it.

Gen found herself entirely calm. And she fancied that if she had known nothing of Kilday she would still have detested him. Then she saw him watching—listening. There had been no suspicious sound, she was sure she had betrayed nothing, but—it was *in the air*.

THERE WAS a long pause. Kilday was wondering if he should put his question, just how he should put it. Gen saw resolution shaping in him, and then—she saw his gaze suddenly fix and intensify, not at any part of the room, not at the ceiling, but upon her *sleeve*. She lifted her eyes from Link's sock to her own arm. There plain upon the black calico clung a *golden hair* from the head of Alma Castle.

"Have you by any chance, Mrs. Robbins, a guest in the house?"—in a drawl from lips that smiled hatefully ever so little.

She looked at him with a lifted eyebrow as if the question were an impertinence not to be answered. His eyes challenged hers. What a funny little woman!

"Will you tell my wife that I wish to speak to her?"

Alma could have told her that this tone was dangerous.

Gen bit a thread.

"You must be crazy. *Maybe you better go, Mr.—*"

She caught herself.

He waited just a second, then, quick as a cat, he sprang at the closet-door and flung it wide. Perhaps he had caught some sound, perhaps he thought Alma might be listening just behind it, perhaps he only wished to prod Gen into some betrayal.

She stooped to the sewing-basket.

For a second he thought he had blundered for here was no room at all, next he saw the cleats, the trap-door. He turned to flash at Gen a smile of contemptuous triumph—

There was a sudden, sharp report and his expression changed to one of surprise, then his knees gave way and he pitched forward on his face.

Gen Robbins had shot him through the heart. . . .

JUST A MOMENT she remained motionless, arm still extended, staring at the result of a crooked finger, then she laid the revolver on the bureau, and with steady fingers plucked the golden hair from her sleeve. A cautious scraping told her that Alma could stand no more and was lifting the trap.

She moved deliberately to the closet, her skirt brushing the shell that had held Frank Kilday, and spoke quietly to the lovely and distressed face that peered down at her.

"I've killed him. I put the gun in the basket under some socks. Just thought I wouldn't stand any nonsense."

Alma gasped.

"Oh! Oh, Mrs. Robbins!"

"It's all right," Gen soothed her. "And we'll keep you out of it, honey. No use mixing you in now. Just you keep quiet—just keep quiet."

She pressed her forehead with two fingers.

"He started in here and I thought he was after Link's money—see? So—I shot him. Now, you go back, and I'll get somebody."

She turned back to the bureau, moved to the outer door and fired two shots in the air.

Men came running. . . .

Yes, Gen told them, she'd killed him with that gun on the bureau there. He'd come in, kind of a slick-looking fellow, she thought, and talking queer, too. First thing she knew he'd made a break for the closet there where Link had some money. Must have found out somehow it was

there. She didn't hardly know she did it—but someway—she—got him.

The men eyed her respectfully. Who'd have thought she had that much nerve! He was a bold one, too, showing himself so free around town before.

Well—they'd take him down to Doc Turner's till the sheriff came. Probably be an inquest in Seattle. . . . But Mrs. Robbins needn't worry—never be blamed, of course.

LINK came on a run presently, and half a dozen voices volunteered explanation of the scene his round startled eyes beheld. Yes, fellow just walked in, thought he'd bluff Mrs. Robbins—she fooled him, though. Too bad if a man couldn't leave a little money in his own house without some robber getting right after it. Lucky she had a gun and nerve to use it.

Link went over to where Gen was sitting in the little rocker—there was mystification in his face, almost awe.

"You did right, Gen," he assured her awkwardly.

"He was a bad man," she said in a low, steady voice.

They took Frank Kilday away, and one of the men carefully wiped up a spot on the floor, while his wife made some hot tea for Mrs. Robbins. Insisted, too, that the Robbins's come over to their house for supper.

"It'll be better for you, Mis' Robbins, than sittin' around here all evening."

"What say, Gen?" asked Link mildly.

"Why, thank you, Mrs. Plummer, we will."

Gen looked at her thoughtfully.

"Don't think, though, I'm going to worry about this. I didn't just mean to, but—it's done."

"Expect we'll have to go down to Seattle tomorrow," Link remarked.

Half an hour later, they left the house. When they had gone a hundred yards or so, Gen suddenly stopped.

"Give me the key, Link, I want to go back a minute."

"Forgot something? I'll get it."

"No, it won't take me a minute. You wait here."

She took the key and hurried back, shut the house-door behind her and went directly to the closet, calling softly:

"Alma, Alma!"

Immediately the girl appeared above her.

"Listen, honey, now's the time for you to get away. Put on my old hat and a veil and get down to the station at eight. Number seven's due then and I think they'll flag her. Just get on. Nobody'll ask you anything. And write me general delivery in Seattle where to find you."

She delivered these instructions quickly and firmly and with a sort of authority.

Alma slipped through the trap and stood beside her. Her eyes were blue-circled in her white face and the hands with which she grasped Gen's were like ice, but her body was not trembling, and her whisper was steady.

"Yes, I understand. I will. I—what can I say? I—"

"I mustn't stay," Gen whispered back. "This way will save you a lot of questions. It'll be all right, honey. And I'll see you."

For a moment these two, brought together to free one and make the other a homicide, clung together. . . .

Then the elder woman for the second time shut her front door and walked briskly down the path to those who waited.

THE SUN had gone down behind the evergreen forest across the narrow river that rushed as ever away through brush-tangled ravines and under high trestles to the Sound. Lights began to yellow the windows of the rough houses. The quiet of mountain dusk hovered it all, yet Gen knew that wherever a light shone people were saying:

"Gen Robbins killed a man just awhile ago! Who'd thought it!"

They crossed the tracks, stretching resistless to the sea and to great cities, and upon which had come to this remote

spot, to a grim and unconscious rendezvous, her obscure self and a young girl pursued and—her pursuer.

Then in her neighbor's house, stared at by round-eyed children, eating food become tasteless, and growing aware with a queer humor of a subtle change in Link's attitude toward her. To these, however, she seemed much her usual self, rather astoundingly her usual self, in fact. She did give a little start when the whistle of Number Seven shrieked its coming—she visualized so plainly the slight, cloaked figure of Alma Castle, flying from that house, boarding the train that was to bear her out into the wide world again to a new life.

THE IDENTITY of Kilday was of course established, and the killing of Castle and the disappearance of his daughter aired afresh. Probably Mrs. Robbins had been mistaken in Kilday's object in entering her house, but certainly no motive for her action other than that she stated could be brought forward, imagined even, and she was duly exonerated.

"Well," the much relieved Link said that night, "guess we might as well get back."

"I don't care much about going back to Skye," Gen informed him quietly. "I'd like to take a trip somewhere, Link."

Link gave her an uneasy glance.

"'Fraid I can't get away just now."

He cleared his throat.

"Oh, you don't need to go. You better just put a couple thousand dollars in the bank where I can draw on it. I think I'll go to California, and then maybe East."

Link's jaw dropped. One week ago she would not have gone beyond the first six words; now, indeed, his old edicts were on his tongue, but—

She was sitting there so calm, something sort of *authoritative* about her! Who'd have thought Gen Robbins ever'd

kill a man! She must have popped him just as cool . . . And she such a meek, quiet one always! Sometimes they're the deep ones . . .

"Well, I—" he swallowed hard. "Well—all right, I will. I guess maybe a change'll do you good."

He lighted a cigar rather ostentatiously, observing his wife out of the corner of his eye. Funny! She used to be just a mite afraid of *him*.

"Thanks, Link." She gave no sign of being overwhelmed. "And I wouldn't stick very long in Skye if I were you."

"No, no," said Link earnestly. "I wouldn't consider doing that at all. How—about how long expect to be gone?"

"Oh—I don't know."

She looked out of the window with something, just a little, of that old dreaminess.

"I've always wanted to see things, and I'm pretty tired of Misty Point and this rain here. You better join me somewhere soon, Link. We might see some place we'd like better."

"Maybe I will," said Link huskily. "Sure, maybe we might, Gen."

IT WAS NOT until she was sitting on the deck of a ship steaming across the Pacific—Alma wanted to see about some affairs of her father's in Honolulu—that Gen thought again of the young man on the docks with the kitten in his pocket. So queer how things turn out! Since he had talked to her of ultimate islands, she had killed a man . . .

Always from the memory of Kilday's body in the bare room at Skye, she turned to the lovely face of Alma, from which was fading so fast all the shadow of past ugly days.

So queer how things turn out! Even from Misty Point ships sail, dim trails of destiny lead even to the remoteness of Skye, and here was Gen Robbins, at fifty outbound . . .



"On the beach Angela pulled helmet and goggles off and danced a pas seul
for joy of living."

ANGELA AIRCRAFT, LTD.

A Flyer in a Pair Future

By Faith Baldwin

Illustrations by Garrett Price

WHEN David Robinson reached the sixtieth celebration of his birth, he retired from active business, settled fifteen million dollars on each of his two children, Rollo and Angela, and proceeded—I quote Rollo—to make ducks and drakes of what was left over.

In his second year at Harvard, Rollo had taken to signing himself "R. Edward." His mother, a gentle, sentimental lady, had named him. She did not live to regret it. Rollo grew up, wide awake, like his immortal prototype, and at thirty-two possessed a brilliant education, including a year at Oxford, horn-rimmed glasses on a striking black ribbon, the position of General Manager in one of his father's automobile companies, two cars of an English make, and a blonde wife, recruited from a crack regiment in the Manhattan Social Army. He had several Georgian houses and no sense of humour.

Angela was different. She had red hair and dimples and was quite satisfied with fifteen millions. It seemed to her unformed mind—she was but twenty-three—quite a tidy little sum. She told Rollo so when, one pleasant spring evening, he came to see her in their father's cave-dwelling on upper Fifth.

"Really," said Angela, curled up on an enormous couch and contemplating several inches of slim ankle, fashionably exposed, "really, Rollo, I don't see why you should make such a fuss! Can't you and

Elsie get along on a mere pittance? Daddy worked for his money, didn't he? Isn't he entitled to spend a little of it as he pleases? Why should he slave for another ten or twenty years? I can't imagine how you get that way!"

Rollo lit a five-cent cigarette and snorted.

"At his age," he remarked, "buying hydroplanes! Who is this chap who persuaded him to, anyway?"

"You mean the pilot he has engaged for the summer? His name is Smith, Philip Smith. He has," said Angela, with malice, "nice eyes."

Rollo almost swallowed the cigarette.

"You are an idiot," said he with brotherly affection. "Smith! Who ever heard of a Smith?"

"Cough-drops," answered Angela promptly, "pistols, and Silent."

"Don't be absurd."

APPEARANCES notwithstanding, Angela was fond of her only brother. "Don't be cross," she said. "After all, Father has a right to do what he likes with the money. It's his, isn't it?"

"In trust," said Rollo sternly.

David Robinson, long, lean, with white hair mopped over keen black eyes, entered noiselessly at this juncture and made a remark.

"After I die," he said, very amiably, "there may be a little left. And there are the houses, my boy."

He seated himself beside Angela, flicked

her accurately in the lower left dimple, the one so perilously billeted at the corner of a full, red mouth, and continued:

"There's this house; and the Adiron-dack 'camp'; also the marble cottages at Newport and Bar Harbor, likewise that Moorish atrocity at Palm Beach which was completed two years ago, and some other little holdings. Don't worry, Rollo—they'll rent; and I've only saved out a little to play with."

Angela kissed him. Rollo, searching on the floor for the fallen remains of his expensive smoke, straightened up, rather red in the face.

"You misunderstood me, sir," he said, with formal dignity. "I was only regretting your latest venture. Aviation's too dangerous. And no one ever heard of this—this young man you have engaged to pilot your new machine."

"If," suggested his parent, "you hadn't been too useful in the factory to go to war, you might have heard of him."

Rollo's glasses crashed protestingly against a waistcoat button. This was old ground.

"I had a wife to care for," he said, with an accent of martyrdom.

"Just so."

DAVID smiled genially and lighted the cigar over which a company in Havana had labored feverishly in order to bring it to just the Robinson degree of mellow perfection.

"I've bought a motor-boat, too," he announced, "a peach. Goes fifty—maybe. And the nine holes at Hilltop are almost completed. I'll give you a stroke a hole in a couple of months."

Rollo, defeated, took his departure. And David laughed softly into the blue eyes of his daughter.

"Poor Rollo!" said David.

"Hilltop," situated somewhere between East Marion and Greenport, Long Island, was a very pleasant spot. Gardens and trees and an old white house, a much converted farmhouse of the lean-to type, a massive dock and a fleet of boats, pri-

vate links, tennis courts, stables, garage, and the recent edition of a grim, grey hangar, made up an *ensemble* which left nothing to be desired.

Of all their country places, Angela loved this one best, and David's determination to close up the other houses for the season and "rough it" at "Hilltop" was received by her with gurgles of delight. A long, lazy summer stretched before her. Aunt Alice, a maiden lady of uncertain years and more uncertain temper, ruled kitchen and pantry. Invisible keys clicked at her trim girdle. She was housekeeper and chaperon and as sweet and nourishing as home-made bread beneath a crusty exterior.

PHILIP SMITH flew the hydroplane down from the factory when it was delivered. Angela heard it first and ran out to see the great, grey bird, shining in the early afternoon sun, sail over the house, circle around the bay, and finally come to a safe landing on the blue water, rocking to the little waves, silent and at rest.

The two mechanics who had headquarters over the boat-house ran down to the beach, where David had thoughtfully built himself a cement runway.

Much later, the plane in its new residence, Philip strolled up to the house with David, a Biblical alliance for which there was no precedent. Angela, palpitating in French blue organdy, and flanked by two decorative Great Danes, met them.

"When do I go up?" she demanded.

Philip smiled and David sighed. They exchanged glances.

"Perhaps," said David, "I had better buy another. I bought this one to take me to and from Wall Street."

"But you're retired," said Angela, in some surprise.

"Retired but not asleep. I suffer from insomnia," answered her father, calmly. "However, on off days, Angela, I have no doubt that Mr. Smith will be delighted to serve you."

Angela had met Philip a number of times, and he had been in earnest conference with Mr. Robinson. She had never before seen him, however, with the helmet framing his face, the face of a young American crusader. She marked, too, how easily and gracefully long of limb he stood, and how the curious hazel golden eyes under the helmet had the "look of an eagle." She held out her hand.

"Welcome to Hilltop," she said, "and please take me up soon."

Philip bowed over the hand and murmured something conventional. Night-bombing had held no terrors for him, danger-fraught landings in raging seas had not disconcerted him, tail spins and nose dives were child's play, but he faced two friendly blue eyes with more trepidation than if they had been periscopes of enemy submarines.

"Philip, my lad," said he, to himself, "here's where you crash!"

"Intrepid" Smith, hero of many aerial encounters, had met his Waterloo. He felt, as many a pilot before him has, his nerve slipping.

David smiled.

"I've fixed up part of the boat-house for you, Phil," said he. "Watkins and Evans have rooms there too. I hope you'll be comfortable. Ring for tea, Angela," he added, over his shoulder, as the two men turned away, "we'll be along presently."

Mr. Robinson was an observant man. One does not lay up treasures on this earth, aggregating something over fifty millions of dollars, with one's eyes shut. He looked keenly into the grave, young face an inch or so above him, and smiled again.

The boat-house accommodations were breathtaking. Bedroom, sitting room, bath; a telephone for long distance and one connected with house, stables, hangar and garage; a small cellarette, well filled: books, cushions, desk, easy chairs: there was even a brick fireplace, filled with driftwood.

DAVID motioned to a chair and Philip, pulling off his helmet to reveal close-cropped dark hair with a subdued crinkle, sat down. David, back to the fireplace, stood and confronted him.

"I hope you'll like it here," he said, "and I want you to feel really at home. You'll take your meals with us, if you care to. I—" he stopped a minute, and then went on, "I never told you I knew your Dad. We were together once, before either of us married. A mining town out West—he was doctor there. When, out of a thousand more or less, you answered my ad, and I learned who you were, I was very grateful to a Providence which had sent me Doc Smith's boy. I lost track of him after a few years, and when you told me that your father had died in the first influenza epidemic, you brought me news of a personal loss."

He stopped abruptly.

Philip's eyes were shining, but the older man's were misted with memory and regret.

"I wish we had kept up," he said, a little abruptly, "but you know how the world whirls on—when you're as busy a man as I have been."

He turned and walked to the window, staring blindly at the blue sheet of water, the green hills and trees of Shelter Island blurring before his sight.

"I might have helped," he ended, and then came back to the other, who had risen and was silently regarding him.

"Your trunk is here," said David. "Wash up and come on up to the house. I'll spend evenings with you now and then, if I may. I don't suppose we'll have much time for talk with Angela around."

Philip laughed and inwardly agreed. Who would talk when a miracle was present?

A FEW DAYS LATER Angela had her first flight. Oddly enough, although for several years aeroplane taxis had been at her disposal, South in the winter and North in the summer, she had never availed herself of the opportunity.

She was "saving it" she said. And when she first saw Philip she knew why.

"The Day" dawned very clear and cloudless. Philip scanned the sky with a knowing air. It might be a bit bumpy, thought he, but the sight of Angela on the beach bereft him for the moment of weather-wise cogitations.

Strong men and brave women had fainted from fatigue while Angela had chosen her air-uniform at Abercrombie's. It was wholly unnecessary, of course. She might have flown in shirtwaist and skirt, with the mere addition of goggles and helmet. But from close-capped head to boots and leggings, she was a magazine cover incarnate. No skirts—had she read somewhere that such garments might become disastrously mingled with the propeller?

Who knows? Angela's costume was correct; it was professional; it was damnably becoming. Philip's heart did an Immelman turn and came out of it with an accelerated beat and an ominous knocking somewhere in its intricate, inner machinery.

The two mechanics, nice ex-navy boys, stared and swallowed hard.

"Will I do?" inquired Miss Robinson sweetly.

Philip nodded.

"Aren't the seats far apart?" remarked Angela in some surprise, or was it unmaidenly regret, as Philip buckled her in. "There's quite a space——?"

The pilot nodded again, laughed into her eyes, and took his place. . . .

There were confused shouts and noises as Angela settled herself and thought swiftly of all the things she had planned to say to Philip, now that they were to be absolutely alone. An incredible roaring gave her pause, the machine rocked and started over the water, gathering speed, the fastest, most exhilarating motorboat ride she could imagine. And then, suddenly, the water was below her, the wind was in her face, and the plane was sailing—it was sailing gently, higher, higher. . . .

ANGELA gave a little chuckle. The wind snatched it from her, and she felt her parted lips dry and uncomfortable. Her dimples were almost blown from their pink and white foundations, and she twisted a little to look at Philip. His eyes were straight ahead, his brown hands lay on the wheel, but he felt her turn and looked into her face for a minute, smiling.

"Like it?" he shouted.

"Wonderful!" she responded, almost wrenching her lungs from their moorings in an effort to make herself heard. Philip, no doubt, was a mind-and-lip reader; he smiled again, and the plane, responding to hands and feet, hummed up and up in the crystal-clear air.

Angela, peering cautiously over the cock-pit, beheld a part of Long Island spread like a school map beneath her. Suddenly, she gave a little gasp, as the plane dropped from under her, leaving the sensation that she was hanging in mid-air, held up only by the frail leather strap about her slender waist. She glanced nervously at Philip, who seemed impervious.

"Air-pocket," he screamed, reassuringly.

Greek to her. But she had enjoyed the scenic railways on stolen trips to Coney Island when Rollo had been younger and had not yet attended Harvard, so she nodded and settled to sheer, silent pleasure in the flight, with full confidence in the brown hands and the steady eyes beside her.

Over the Sound, back again, a circling over Shelter Island, a swift, wonderful return. And then the light, controlled falling toward the water, which rose up to meet them, blue and friendly, in the silence of cut-off motors, then the roar again, a rollicking, rocking ride, and a safe landing.

On the beach Angela pulled helmet and goggles off and danced a *pas seul* for joy of living.

"Every day!" she announced firmly, to her father who advanced to meet her. "Every day!"

David smiled resignedly.

"I knew I'd have to buy two," he said, calmly.

But he didn't. He flew to Wall Street, now and then, and when the time came for the plane to return, Angela was always on the beach, waiting, begging to "go next time." She didn't, but she had her other wish, almost, for every day on which Philip did not pilot his employer to town and back, he took Angela for her hop, never long enough, never high enough for her. To her reiterated requests for "just a little stunt—a little one, Philip?" he turned a deaf and adamant ear. Poor Philip. No Ulysses was ever more assailed.

He took Rollo up, just once. Rollo was sea-sick, and deplored the spirit of adventure that made him attempt the flight.

Is it just possible that Philip stunted with Rollo—just a "little"? David, who had given instructions, knew; Angela, watching, guessed.

But Philip never told, and Rollo, purged of pride and incredibly unhappy, never questioned.

Said Rollo, in early August, having motored over from Southampton, where he had taken a house for Elsie, his wife, and four very irritable Pekinese, his family—said Rollo, carressing the distinctive, square radiator of his maroon-colored car:

"But are you being quite wise? Angela is getting herself talked about—always flying around with this Smith chap!"

He said it to the wrong party. David Robinson hung up on him, so to speak.

"Suits me. Who's talking?"

"Everybody," answered Rollo, with calm.

David said something else—not so calm, a memento of his mining days perhaps. Rollo, whirling home to Elsie and the dogs behind an English chauffeur, trained in the factory of the car he was driving, reflected that his father was breaking up, if not already broke.

SAID David to his daughter, one night, "Like Philip, don't you?" . . . And Angela, a misty vision in white and silver, strolling on the dock, while her father chewed wildly at an extinct cigar, looked up toward the lighted windows of the boat-house and murmured,

"I'm going to ask him to marry me."

"Good girl!" David smote her gently between the shoulder-blades. "What if he refuses?"

"He won't," said Angela, serenely. "There's full moon next week. I'm going to get him to take me up for a little night-hop."

"Going to ask him in the air?" chuckled her reprehensible parent — "sign language?"

Angela, stirring phosphorescent gleams with a flung pebble, looked into the stars floating on the surface of the lapping water and preserved a wicked silence.

"Some kid!" said David, affectionately.

Angela laid her soft cheek to the sleeve of his youthful dinner coat and laughed softly. Up in the boathouse, Philip, with a drawing board before him, a pipe between his teeth and a frown between his brows, was making a cool million dollars in fancy, and laying them humbly before small, forty-five dollar slippers.

Two days later he piloted Angela to Southampton. There were a number of young men there and a good time was had by all, the occasion being a garden party at Rollo's. The young men were rich and careless; they had been beautifully turned out, and, be it mentioned, gently turned down by Miss Robinson—some of them, that is. But Philip didn't know it. He was gloomy. There were even ex-fliers among them, so he was not at all unique; there were also men of the infantry and machine guns, gentlemen sailors, and others, recovering from the scars of battling in Judge Advocate's office, Quartermaster's department, or getting their land-legs after hazardous trips on converted yachts. They exuded an atmosphere of relaxation and convalescence, they were full of small talk and

moved to the manor born among teacups and punch glasses.

Philip was in the doldrums. He flew home at last, with a stern brow and compressed lips. Angela, wrapped in a polo coat over her laces and fripperies, watched him with some amusement and much tenderness. Full moon was but a few days off.

PHILIP, skimming to rest on the water, let the plane remain as she was, the roar of the motor silenced, the little waves rocking her some distance from the landing place. He turned to Angela and pushed his goggles high up on his forehead.

"Your dad," said Philip, "knew my dad. Thought the world of him, a country doctor."

"I know," Angela hastened to answer, feeling with the aviatrix' sixth sense that they were approaching a cross current.

"Mother," said Philip, "taught school. She died when I was ten. I have one sister, did you know that? She's married and lives in Detroit, a nice girl, but a little like Rollo. . . ."

Angela giggled. There is no other word for it.

"You knew I went to Yale?" Philip continued. "Dad wanted Yale and then Johns Hopkins for me. I wanted Tech. Got my way; was in my first year there when war came along. I'd worked through Yale, mostly. Took summer jobs. Garage job once, and once I was lucky enough to land a handy-man berth in the Curtiss plant. Managed to get home now and then to see the old man. He was pretty blue when I told him I liked tinkering with engines better than with human interior workings. But he was game. I cost him a lot, one way or another.

"When I was abroad, just after he died, an old second cousin of his died, without leaving a will, and as there weren't many relatives, I got a slice . . . a few thousands. . . . There was a fellow in my company, wonderful boy . . .

he and his brother had started a factory in Ohio, before the war. He was an old pilot and had ideas. A plane factory. . . . The brother got married and I bought him out.

"There was just Bill and me left, and we used to sit in quarters and plan an aerial revolution. I mean a revolution in airplane building. One night we got funny and made wills, leaving our respective halves in the business to each other. I should mention that the business was dead—too much competition, and no money. After Bill crashed I was sole owner. I didn't think about it much, too darned blue . . . he was a peach, Angela, you would have liked Bill. When I got out of the service I went to look at my factory. Bunch of junk. I've got a man there, caretaking. It's a joke. . . . Angela, I'm nothing much but a glorified taxi driver, but if I ever get the capital and start things it will go big. . . . Could you . . .?"

He stopped, they were drifting dangerously.

Angela put a small, gauntleted hand on his.

"Philip," she said, "I have fifteen million dollars—less the income tax man—in my own right!"

Philip gasped.

"As bad as that?" he asked, regretfully.

"Isn't it enough?" said Angela, wide-eyed.

"For what?"

"The factory?"

Philip took the hand and reached for the other.

"It's not to be sneezed at," he replied, with gravity, "but, darling——"

THERE was an interim. The plane rested peacefully on the yielding water, but Philip and Angela learned that they could fly without its aid, to heights undreamed of by any altimeter. When they had glided down again and realized the solid fluid beneath them, Philip said, firmly:

"I couldn't."

"Partners, Philip?"

Philip threw back his head and his lean, brown throat vibrated with wholesome laughter.

"Angela Aircraft, Inc.!" said he, on a deep breath, then sobering quickly.

"Look here, when I took this job I wanted to interest your Dad in it—the factory, I mean. It's safe enough. I want to go in for big freight-carrying planes—that's the ticket nowadays, commercial aviation on an enormous scale. France is miles ahead of us there already. And he's been so perfectly bully to me. But at first, that's why I answered the ad. I even thought of Rollo, too; figured he had money to spare—I had no idea of you . . ." said Philip.

He stopped. Angela said absently:

"Oh, yes, it was even in the papers. But Rollo wouldn't have helped, anyway. He only plays very safe. If Home Brew were a firm, he'd invest in that — that would be safe all right. But in defunct aircraft factories—not in a hundred years! Daddy *would* help. But let's not. Let's do it together. I'll put up the money, you do the work, and we'll be partners, fifty-fifty."

"Seventy-five and twenty-five," said Philip, "with me representing the one-quarter. But you must consult your father."

"Won't," said Angela, with disappearing dimples. Philip kissed her. . . .

LATER they saw wild figures on the beach and a row-boat putting out, manned by a curious mechanic. Philip jumped and presently the plane followed his example. They taxied half-way down the bay, turned and made the correct landing, to the amazement of Watkins and Evans who, however, exchanged knowing winks with one another as Angela very demurely stepped to the beach, the imprint of a masculine coat button on her pink cheek. Up to the house she sped:

"Father," said she, "he has consented.

It's a secret. And I am half-owner in a dead-as-door-nails aircraft factory in Ohio. That's a secret, too. Philip and I are going to Mr. James tomorrow, by plane. You don't know it. It is a shopping trip. Remember that, and keep your nice, busy finger out of this particular pie. I am sorry we can't let you in on it; you might make a little more money, and that would hurt Rollo's feelings."

She perched herself on his knee and kissed him indiscriminately a vast number of times.

"Elucidate," said David, briefly.

She did.

"The young rascal! Why didn't he come to me? I could have helped him to get on his feet."

"Liked you too well to borrow money," explained Angela, "but that's all right—it's in the family. I'll give you stock for Christmas. Remember, you don't know anything about it."

David groaned.

"You're brought up all wrong," said he—"a splinter from the old block-head. Kiss your fifteen millions good-bye."

"I'll still have Philip," said Angela, radiant, "and I can cook!"

And that is how Angela Aircraft, Inc. came into being.

IT WAS ALL very business-like. Mr. James, the family lawyer, the youngest and most approachable of a firm which was like the Rock of Gibraltar, or the Old Lady of Threadneedle Street, for acumen, integrity and keenness, drew up the papers. Presently, for a large monetary consideration, Angela found herself half-owner of a moth-eaten factory in Ohio, lock, stock and barrel. And Philip, with extraordinary excuses, provided a safe and sane pilot for his employer, and sped, in any ordinary train, to Ohio, to set things humming.

Angela went to bed at night with her head a whirl of figures; Angela Common and Angela Preferred buzzed through her brain. She liked the sound of Preferred better. Philip, armed with a secre-

tary, sent her typewritten reports on progress and Angela scanned them as any love-lorn maid her lover's letters. There were letters, too, and paeans of joy at the discovery of how very good the plant really was fundamentally, and at the willingness of certain Cleveland gentry to invest in a project so solidly capitalized by an unknown potentate. New machinery was installed; offices rebuilt; a staff recruited at good salaries; the two mechanics at "Hilltop" disappeared mysteriously, but it was getting on to October anyway, and the plane was parked for the winter.

The Robinsons returned to town. And one morning Aunt Alice, who figures very little in this instructive tale, was dragged to Cleveland by a radiant niece, and motored some miles out to a drab-looking building and invited to smell dope to her heart's content, while the owners of the factory discussed ways and means, in a private office, behind locked doors and drawn shades.

ONE MORNING Philip woke to find himself threatened nearby. A rival had bought another defunct aircraft factory some twenty miles distant and started competition. Philip's hair bristled with energy. He wired Angela and started things moving.

He had a Cleveland-Duluth commercial and passenger line, and a number of passenger lines dotted about the Lakes. The factory was working day and night. Angela knew of a friend of a friend of a friend in Washington. The result was government orders. Things were looking up. The new aircraft concern, Hollins, Baker and Co., got a concession Philip was after. Rival passenger routes at lower rates were started. At the end of the first year the manager came to Philip.

The idea, said he, speaking for an unnamed owner, was a merger. It was no secret that this owner had unlimited means, the best men in his employ money could buy and, he asked Philip frankly, was he not turning out a better plane

than Angela Aircraft at that very moment?

"Faster," said Philip, "not better."

"I'll have to consult my partner," he added, after a pause.

Philip's answer to the manager of Hollins, Baker and Co. was regretfully voiced: "Nothing doing."

War, then, to the knife.

The following spring Philip appeared in New York. He closeted himself with David.

"We are doing very well," said he, "all stock privately subscribed. Everything on its feet, or rather, wings. I'm leaving the factory in the hands of my manager. I am going abroad, and Angela is going with me."

Mr. Robinson looked as surprised as if he hadn't known it.

"That so?" he asked mildly. "Honey-moon or business?"

"Both," answered his prospective son-in-law briefly. "When you consented last year to our engagement, you specified that we should not 'fly into matrimony.' Well, we've waited long enough. Are you on?"

"It would seem so," replied David meekly—"St. Thomas'?"

THE WEDDING was all it should be.

David gave his daughter a longer string of bigger pearls and humbly craved permission to furnish the house. Also, he saw them off at the dock and returned to chuckle over a cipher wire from Hollins, Baker and Co.

Philip, looking over the register of a South American hotel some weeks later, was startled to find a well-known name inscribed upon it.

"They're after the contract, too," said he to Angela who, curled up in a chair, was talking American to a Spanish parrot in a fountain ornamented patio.

"Competition is the life of trade," said she, and went on saying "Polly" coaxingly to a green and blue bird whose name, oft reiterated in an angry scream, was manifestly "Lora!"



"Angela pressed a slip of paper into the fat hand of her guest."

The governmental representative of the republic interested in American planes received Philip with courtesy. He admitted with a careless wave of his olive, long-fingered hands that another company was making bids for what would prove a large order. There was some doubt. . . .

Philip returned to Angela.

"Ask him to dinner," said the junior partner, serenely, "and ask his wife. Maybe it isn't Spanish manners? Do they lock the women up, and will she wear a mantilla? . . . But I have a scheme."

Señora Riverez-de-Something-Else-a-Mile-Long, was fat, forty, and completely plastered with a sediment which looked like cement. Out of a white and vast expanse of face two black eyes looked with a melancholy indescribable on the perfect thirty-two worn by Mrs. Philip Smith.

WHEN THEY PARTED, after an hour spent together in the patio, while the men lingered inside in business talk, Angela pressed a slip of paper into the fat hand of her guest, and whispered in her ear. Later—

"The Hollins' chap has a drag," said Philip. "His mother was Spanish."

"The contract is yours," retorted Mrs. Philip, with a magnificent gesture.

"How come?" asked Philip. He had had a sergeant from below the Mason and Dixon line at one time.

Angela smiled mysteriously.

"The Señora-Whatever-Her-Name-Is," said she, "is ambitious. Also, she has a rich mother of whom her husband stands somewhat in awe. Watch my smoke, and ask no questions."

Philip watched. Two days later he landed the contract, and Mr. Robinson, comparing his son-in-law's cable with that of his representative from the Hollins Company, laughed outright and opened a bottle of priceless port.

Rollo, calling on his father, watched him in horror as he irreverently downed a glass without stopping to sniff the aromatic bouquet.

"Father," said he, "remember your liver!"

"Son," replied his parent, "forget your gall!"

ON THE SHIP, returning, Philip said, in a daze: "What turned the trick? After all, the Hollins plane is faster."

"I gave the wife of your business acquaintance two addresses," the wife of his proud bosom dutifully replied—"one of a famous corsetier who makes a fifty-year old figure look fifteen, and one, the address of my dressmaker. And I breathed a word into her ear!"

"Same being?" he asked, watching the foam at the bow.

"Epsom salts!" she answered, and laughed into his eyes. "In hot baths it would melt a pyramid!"

Philip seized her, in full view of strolling passengers, and kissed her with enthusiasm. "What a partner!" he said with feeling.

"It's a question," said his wife, not struggling at all, "of figures."

At the end of a year Philip wired David:

"Report Philip Smith Junior and David Robinson Smith arrived this morning, forced landing. No one hurt. Angela sends love."

DAVID hurled himself to the phone. When he had procured his reservations, he turned to Rollo who, dropping in, was contemplating the telegram with the slightly jaundiced expression of a man who has four Pekinese and an obese Angora.

"Rollo," said he, "the two coming airplane builders of the United States are with us. I'm going back to business and make some more money."

Rollo gasped.

Thirty-six hours later David had a twin on each knee. Angela, radiant amid her pillows, smiled at him.

"Oh, granddaddy," she teased.

David frowned severely and handed the two bundles of flannel and fledglings

to a blue-uniformed goddess. When they had been borne off, he stretched his agile limbs and commented:

"Great work, Angie!"

Philip appearing, David offered him his chair and sat himself down on Angela's bed. Presently another blue uniform entered and waved both gentlemen out of the room. Forth they went, reluctant, and wandered through the house, which David liked better than any of his own, and upon the trim grounds.

"Boy, how's business?"

"All right," Philip answered, "but it's the devil and all. . . . This Hollins concern presses us hard. I have lowered freight and passenger rates. But it costs more per mile than what we take in, to keep up with them. They must own an interest in the mint.

A week later, Angela was able to talk business, the twins notwithstanding.

"Look here," said her father, he and Philip being together in her bedroom, Angela on a day-bed, arrayed in a negligée that was the last cry in frills and furbelows, her curly red head like an exotic flower on the white stem of her throat, "let's lay the cards on the table. . . ."

Angela shrugged amiably.

"Where's your capital coming from, Phil?" pursued David.

"Angela," responded Philip senior, calmly.

"Thought so. You couldn't put it over. Angela told me, when she proposed to you."

"Oh, she did, did she! What a nut you were to let her go ahead with it, Dad!"

"Spite! . . . Rollo was so annoyed when I finally told him!" answered David. "And now, to proceed further, the Hollins bunch wants you to merge?"

"How do you know?"

"A little bird told me. Will you consent?"

Philip frowned.

"It might be wise," he said. "But I hate to let go the reins and just be one of a number of directors in the concern."

"You'll be president!"

"Is that so?" Philip looked amused.

"With some old Croesus at the helm?"

"That's me," said David, with more pride than grammar. "I bought that darned thing right after you and Angela went into business."

Angela sat upright. "You old fraud!" she shrieked.

"The hell you say!" remarked Philip, his eyes popping.

David smiled sweetly.

"Competition is the life of trade," he observed. "I brought you a little to your own back door to make you jump. You had capital and Angela. I was afraid you'd get a swollen head and do a funny wing-slip or something. So I made things buzz a little to worry you. Cost me a little slice. But—merge, young man, and we'll make 'em all sit up!"

"By gosh!" said Philip, feebly, and then, "Great jumping cat fish!"

STANDING, the two men gravely shook hands. Angela, from her day-bed, watched them adoringly, mist in her eyes, a smile on her lips, every dimple in full play. From an inner room the twins simultaneously set up a howl.

"The younger generation," said David, quietly, "the future airmen! Philip, my boy, we'll build something for them that they'll carry on after us. Get me a drink before I blow up from pride!"

After the maid had answered the bell and brought the decanters and siphons, Philip, glass in hand, toasted soberly:

"To the Air Future of America!"

"To the American Future of the Heirs!" answered David, laughing, and ended with a hand at Angela's cheek:

"What shall we call the new firm?" he inquired.

She raised a slender hand and took Philip's glass, just touching the rim to her lips.

"To the Twin Aircraft Company! Long life, safe landings, and happiness!" said Angela Robinson Smith.



ONE CHANCE

By Henry Holt

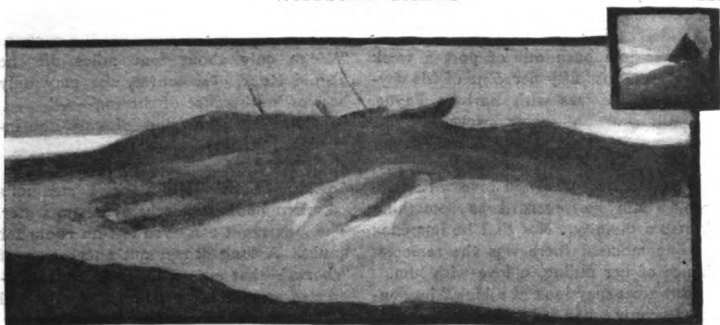
Illustrations by John S. Curry

YOU LIKED Bob Carew, or, not liking him, wondered why you didn't. He was the least talkative of men in most circumstances. And yet, one always noticed him. Bob was one inch short of six foot. His arms were a shade longer than most, his eyes were a reddish brown, and his mouth was a size too wide for perfection in a movie hero. Not that Bob Carew was either a hero or a movie man. In the first place he would have walked, or rather run, from here to Gehenna to avoid being filmed; and in the second place there was no reason why anybody might want to film Bob Carew.

Most of his days had been spent on the sea. He liked to go back once in a while to have a chat with a friend or two in his home town in Vermont, but always there was the call of the wide ocean that drew him like a magnet. He had been ship's boy, cook, super-cargo, A. B., and mate, and once he rose to the dignity of being skipper, but that glory was short-lived, because when he discovered that the ship's mate, acting on the owner's instructions, was bent on losing the vessel for the sake of insurance, he completely altered the mate's physiognomy

with his fist, and subsequently said such unforgettable things to the owner that the owner sought the services of a new skipper.

But there is a tide in the affairs of men which, if you know how to go with it, leads to fat cigars, ease, and a swelling bank balance. And Bob was now making his one best bid for an assured position. He was heading for the island of Santa Basse, in the West Indies, taking with him a weird and wonderful collection of merchandise such as delights the heart of colored gentlemen and colored ladies in that region. His two years as super-cargo on a West Indies trading ship had taught him the ropes of that game, and his own intelligence indicated that Santa Basse should rank as a lesser Paradise so far as his commercial purpose was concerned. So he had gone to New York and laid out every cent he could spare in "trade," shipped the lot in a freighter as far as San Juan, and then arranged with a little schooner to carry his goods and chattels to Santa Basse.



And the manner of his making that arrangement was odd. At San Juan he heard from a shipping agent that the schooner *Sea-lark* was going his way, so he went on board and promptly became tongue-tied. For instead of finding there some gnarled, weather-beaten old captain, rum-soaked and inept, he found Barbara Payne.

And Miss Payne, who, as it happened, was captain and owner of the *Sea-lark*, was both extremely efficient and excellent to look upon. At least, other men had considered her good to look upon, but Bob Carew's chief desire when he encountered her unexpectedly in the cabin was to glide out of the place, hasten ashore, and mop his brow. At all times women embarrassed him, but when one—and such a one—was sprung upon him in this fashion, his brain cells turned temporarily into pulp. Bob Carew, in spite of his five feet eleven, in spite of the fact that he passed out of his teens a dozen years ago, in spite of the fact that he had a sense of humour, was shy. He had no parlor tricks.

BESIDES Bob's impedimenta on board, there were a hundred or so crates belonging to an over-fed Dutch trader named Van Tromp, who was bound to an island a little further on than Santa Basse. After the trip had begun Van Tromp spent the greater part of his time eating, sleeping and grumbling. At first

he continually button-holed Bob Carew and whined about the food, the accommodation on board, and life in general, until he found that Bob paid no attention whatever: after that he apparently grumbled to the four winds of heaven, for nobody paid any attention to him.

More than once during the first three days out of San Juan Bob found himself idiotically tongue-tied when he chanced to be alone with the skipper. The first time was when she casually expressed the opinion that they were going to have light winds. Bob scanned the sky, realized that Barbara Payne was the prettiest creature he had ever seen, twiddled his favorite pipe in his fingers till he broke the stem, and then exclaimed "Damn!" quite naturally. He murmured an apology, and moved off, ostensibly to find another pipe.

The second time she addressed him he took his pipe out of his mouth and slowly polished the bowl.

"Don't break that one," she urged, tauntingly.

Bob looked up and saw merriment in her eyes. There were a hundred things he would have liked to say to the girl, but the words stuck in his throat.

THE THIRD TIME Bob was spontaneous for a moment, to the extent of two consecutive sentences; and Barbara, having by now grasped the secret of his quietness, provided for him one golden hour by leaning over the rail at

his side, saying little. And before the schooner had been out of port a week Bob Carew lost fifty per cent of his shyness when he was with Barbara Payne. He still had no parlor tricks, but he often expressed his thoughts with quaint naivete. Also by then he was hopelessly, finally, and irrevocably in love with Barbara, whom he regarded as something akin to a divinity. Not that he imagined for one moment there was the remotest chance of her falling in love with him.

"But a cat may look at a king," he pondered grimly when it became fully apparent that life without Barbara would be a howling blank, "and I suppose an ordinary sea-faring man like me can look at her. Looking doesn't do any harm, anyhow."

Then he fell to wondering how a fellow would go about asking a girl like Barbara to marry him, if he were something better than a sea-going chap whose only prospect was to take a chance as a trader; if, instead of laughing at him she had rather liked him; if he could talk to a girl for two minutes without feeling like a heifer at a tea party; if—oh, shucks, what was the use? All the same, *something* had to be done. Love, when you came to experience it, was quite different from the thing novelists wrote about. In the story books the affair was mutual and they glided into one another's arms. In real life it was distinctly possible to get more pain than pleasure out of love if you were such an all-fired ten thousand horse-power idiot as to fall in love with the wrong girl.

It was on the seventh day out of San Juan that a thin pall of fog settled over the ocean, and Barbara, who took the morning watch, raised her head suddenly and stood in a listening attitude. Half a gale was blowing, and the sea was making rapidly.

"Did you hear something then, or was it only my fancy?" she asked Bob.

"You heard it all right," replied the passenger. "Way on the starboard bow, I thought."

"That's queer," commented the captain. "We're only about four miles off the Taniki Rock. Of course, she may only be blowing because of the fog——"

"There she goes again—*listen*," Bob interrupted quickly.

THE DEEP NOTE of a steamer's siren boomed faintly over the water. The message it conveyed left no room for doubt. A long drawn out succession of "shorts"—that represents the ultimate degree of agony in a stricken steamer's call for assistance.

Without a word the girl altered the course of the Sea-lark. Again there came that staccato, brass-throated cry of distress.

"Aye, she's run on the Taniki Rock good and hard," said Bob, as he peered with set face into the swirling, drifting banks of fog. "We can't do much with this craft to help her off, I'm afraid." He was puzzling over the problem of what steamer could have fouled Taniki. To begin with, the Rock was well off the ordinary lane of shipping, and to go on with, ship-masters trading in those waters usually gave that reef a wide berth.

"No, we can't help her to re-float, but we can take the people off if necessary," replied Barbara Payne.

"I wonder!" observed Bob in a curious voice which caused the girl to glance at him oddly. But Bob Carew had closed his jaws like a steel trap, nor did he utter a single word again until, right ahead, there loomed the outline of the bellowing steamer Crossley. Steering with consummate skill, the girl brought the schooner up into the wind in deep water, right under the Crossley's lee. The steamer was a craft of about a thousand tons burden, which had run head-on to the outer ledge of the dreaded Taniki. But it was neither the vessel herself nor her position which held those on the little schooner spellbound.

Swarming over every part of the deck were dense masses of terrified humanity—ebony-hued natives of the West Indies.

At first they greeted the coming of the little Sea-lark with a chorus of delighted chattering and shouts; then lapsed into mute misery when the schooner drew near and they realized how small she was.

"Hell!" muttered Bob Carew under his breath. "What's the answer?"

HANDING the wheel over to Kenyon, her mate, Barbara crossed the poop to where Bob stood.

"There's a white man just going up the bridge ladder," she said. "Shout and ask him how many of them there are."

It never occurred to the girl-skipper to wonder why she turned to Bob Carew at this juncture. Kenyon was a perfectly good mate, with perfectly good lungs.

Bob roared the question up the wind.

"Seven hundred colored passengers, and we've got smallpox on board," came back the reply. "You'll have to take as many as you can and leave the rest."

Bob glanced along the length of the Sea-lark, measuring her with his eye. She was about eighty feet long and twenty in beam. Her entire deck would not accommodate all those niggers, even if they stood up and were packed like sardines in a can.

"Are you in touch with any ships by wireless?" Bob asked.

"Our wireless man is down with smallpox and can't do a thing," the steamer's captain shouted back. "We shan't keep afloat more than six or eight hours. She'll drift off at high water, and then she'll soon go down. It's no use lowering the small boats. Too much sea running. How many of these niggers can you take on board?"

During the last few moments Barbara Payne had been endeavoring to solve that very problem.

"It'll mean sacrificing our cargo," she said to Bob Carew. "Tell him we'll try to squeeze them all on the schooner somehow. It'll be a horrible jam, but there's nothing else for it. Mr. Kenyon," she added, turning to the mate, "rip the hatches off both holds and start heaving

the cargo over the side quick as you can."

"No, no, *no!*" shrilled Van Tromp, who had been standing near, listening anxiously. "You won't throw one single bale of my goods overboard."

"Most of it will have to go," said Miss Payne crisply. "Mr. Carew's things are stored on top in both holds, so his stuff will *all* have to be jettisoned."

Van Tromp danced on the swaying deck, half crazy with impotent rage.

"If you dare to throw a thing of mine over," he yelled, "I'll have the ship arrested and—and——"

The mate elbowed him aside and took a step forward to attend to the hatches, when Carew, who had been standing motionless, caught Kenyon roughly by the arm and dragged him back.

"*Leave those hatches alone!*" he rasped out. The mate, his mouth agape in sheer astonishment, looked up at Carew, who towered several inches above him. Carew could have picked the mate up without effort and dropped him into the sea.

"What are you going to do?" the girl demanded sharply.

"Call it mutiny if you like, or anything else," said Carew, "but it's my things you propose heaving overboard, and I'm going to have a say in this. The first man who goes near those hatch wedges has got me to reckon with."

"Quite right," Van Tromp assented, hysterically elated. "Nobody can throw our things away without our permission, can they, Mr. Carew?"

"I don't care what your views about cargo are," declared the girl-captain, cuttingly. "There are seven hundred blacks there we must save, somehow; or at least we've got to make a stab at saving them. If I could afford it, Mr. Carew," she added witheringly, "I'd buy you a fresh lot of cargo in place of this. It's funny how you can be mistaken in people. As for this over-fed specimen of misery"—she gestured scornfully toward Van Tromp—"one might have expected him to behave like a beast any time and every time, but I'd never have guessed that

when the pinch came you'd try to set a few bales of cargo against hundreds of lives, whether the men were white, yellow, or black. Now, Mr. Carew, if you have a scrap of decent feeling left in you, slip forward and help them to get that hold empty."

CAREW listened with a cold, determined face. Events of the last few minutes had made a strikingly changed creature of him. His personality now dominated the situation. Besides Kenyon, there were half a dozen colored deckhands on board—good enough sailors, but useless in a rough and tumble.

"You don't seem to realize just what you propose doing," said Carew, with a touch of deference in his voice. "God knows they're fairly packed on that steamer, but we're only about a third her size."

"If I were a man," said Barbara Payne biting, "I'd knock you overboard and leave you to drown. Kenyon, throw me a belaying pin and you get hold of another. There's only one way to deal with a situation like this."

"If Kenyon touches a belaying pin I'll brain him," declared Carew. "Miss Payne, I want you to let me handle this mess. I ask you, formally. If you don't agree it doesn't make any odds. I shall act just the same. And we're wasting time."

THE GIRL glanced at the surging black forms on the stranded steamer's deck and then at Carew. Was it the loss of cargo he was thinking about, or was it the danger of smallpox? That a mere passenger should usurp her authority on board was intolerable. The position was difficult, for Carew's sheer physical power was a factor which could not be ignored. And Kenyon, for some strange reason, was mightily subdued. Ordinarily, Barbara had always banked on him in any emergency. He had never failed her before. True, he was no match for Carew, and Carew had the corpulent Hollander on his side. Barbara bit her lip angrily.

"Just what *do* you propose?" she asked acidly.

"Something that you wouldn't agree to," Carew replied.

"Don't talk in parables. We've got a big job on here, and you're holding it up with your bullying tactics. Maybe to you seven hundred lives don't sound a lot to save, but they do to me."

And then, without the slightest self-consciousness, Bob Carew did the thing which he had regarded as the impossible; and he chose the most unsuitable opportunity in the world for doing it.

"I'm considering all those seven hundred lives, Miss Payne," he said. "But first of all, I'm considering you. It means more to me to save you than anything ever did mean to me since the year dot. When a man loves a girl, he has a right to protect her even against herself, by force if necessary. Now, don't get mad. You needn't trouble to tell me you think I'm crazy. I know you don't care a brass button about me. But I'm going to have my way this time, even if it makes you hate me."

"That story," the girl retorted, her eyes blazing, "won't save your paltry bits of cargo." Then, turning to the mate she added: "The hatches, please, Mr. Kenyon, and be sharp about it."

Kenyon moved forward to obey, whereupon Carew unhesitatingly landed his fist on the point of the mate's chin and Kenyon dropped, limp, to the deck.

BARBARA PAYNE was a fighter, who came of fighting stock, but a girl cannot with any hope of success fight a solid mass of muscle and brawn five feet eleven inches high. Her face flushed as her officer fell. Kenyon was a prince among mates.

"You brute!" she said, coldly appraising Carew. "Are you now going to serve me the same way?"

"I'll use force if necessary," Carew replied, none too calmly.

"Very well." The girl shrugged her shoulders. "You're prepared for the con-



"A thin pall of fog settled over the ocean, and Barbara, who took the morning watch, raised her head suddenly and stood in a listening attitude."

sequences, of course! As you have taken possession of my ship I'll leave you to it." She moved forward to the companion-way.

"No, you don't go near that cabin," said Carew. "Probably you have a revolver there." Watching her closely, he took the wheel from the colored deck-hand, who had been keeping the vessel up into the wind.

"We'll come back for you in a little while," Carew shouted to the skipper of the stranded steamer; and the Sea-lark headed due northwest. An hour later she lay hove-to under the shelter of a small island. Another island, somewhat larger, lay three hundred fathoms away.

"If you think you can delay saving those niggers long enough to get your stuff ashore here," said Barbara, who had watched his maneuver with smouldering anger, "you have another guess coming. It would take hours——"

"I'm sorry to trouble you, Miss Payne," said Carew, "but this is where you go ashore, please, and the quicker you are, the more chance there is for those fellows on the steamer." Kenyon, who had recovered somewhat, and was now sitting up scowling, glanced quickly at Carew and then at the girl-skipper. No dog ever adored its mistress more devoutly than Kenyon adored Barbara Payne, and some idea of Carew's intention began to dawn upon him.

"I absolutely refuse to leave the ship," said the girl.

"That much I anticipated," said Carew. "You're going all the same."

"Wait a minute, Miss," Kenyon put in, scrambling to his feet. "Say, Mr. Carew, are you going ashore here, too?"

"No, but you can if you like."

"Gee, mister, you've got nerve, but I'll say this: you done the right thing, even if you did paste me on the jaw."

"It had to be done, Kenyon. You'll come back with me, of course, won't you?"

"I get you. Sure I'll come. We'll leave all hands here, to make more room on the Sea-lark."

"What about Van Tromp?" asked Carew. "It'd teach him a lesson to keep him on board."

"No, no," wailed the Hollander. "They haf der smallpox."

"Well, hurry up over the side then, jelly-fish," Carew snapped.

PROVISIONS were lowered into the small boat and then Carew turned to Barbara.

"Now, Miss Payne, *please*," urged Carew.

"I have told you I shall not leave the schooner."

It was the crucial moment. They faced each other in silence for perhaps ten seconds. There was utter defiance in the girl's eyes. Not for an instant did she waver. Suddenly Bob Carew took a step forward, gathered her up in his arms as though she were a child, and gently lowered her into the waiting boat.

"It's for the best, Miss Payne," he said then. "I hope that . . . that afterward you'll not think too much about this part."

"Pig!" was her ultimate shot.

THE TIDE had risen perceptibly by the time the Sea-lark reached the stranded Crossley again. It was delicate work mooring the schooner, but two lines were eventually made fast between the vessels. Five minutes later the Sea-lark's hatches were off and a steady stream of bales was being dropped over the side, while an equally steady stream of the steamer's human freight was being passed along to the schooner.

"Is your ship badly holed?" Carew asked one of the Crossley's officers presently.

"She must have torn half her plates away under the water-line on the star-board bow," was the reply. "The moment her stern lifts high enough she'll float off and then—good night! Regular death trap she is, and smallpox too! Those niggers were dying like flies. Phew! Your little boat looked good to us, mister

man. It's going to be a tight squeeze, though. And I'll bet a banana some idiot'll soon be wishing that he'd insured this cargo we're slinging away. *Is it insured?*" He was tilting over the side a case which Carew happened to know contained close on to two hundred dollars' worth of merchandise. That was what he had paid for it out of his savings.

"I think not," replied Carew with a blank expression.

"It's funny what fools people are," declared the steamboat officer, seizing another case and rolling it to the rail. "Would you believe it, the Crossley doesn't carry one cent of insurance. Not satisfied with cutting down the crew until the men led a dog's life, the owners thought they could save a bit more by not taking out a policy. Just because we never had met with an accident on this run, they decided to take a chance. And now look at the damn thing!" But Carew was not listening. An idea had begun to obsess him. He dismissed it peremptorily, but it refused to be banished. It was a crazy notion. He *knew* it was a crazy notion. But it haunted him. Fumbling in a pocket he found a stub of pencil and a scrap of paper. Resting on the top of the cabin he wrote hastily:

"Dear Miss Payne—

"You're going to be hard hit if the Crossley becomes a total loss, because she isn't insured and her owners would go into bankruptcy if she sank. Your schooner won't be fit to use again for some time. But when the Crossley drifts off this rock she'll be a salvage job as long as she keeps afloat. And so long as I stay on her, representing you, you're entitled to salvage money. That's the fair way to put it, because really I had no right to turn you off your own ship, and you might have made a shot at salvaging the Crossley yourself if I'd let you. If ever I get ashore again anywhere, I'll put the matter in the hands of your agents at San Juan. If I don't get ashore again it'll be because I've made a big blunder, just as I blundered over another big thing. You know what I mean, though I won't say anything about it now except that I made you hate me instead of loving me.

"Yours sincerely,

"Bob Carew."

When the holds were sufficiently empty, the black passengers were passed down below, where they huddled mutely. The after-hold was reported packed. There were still a hundred men to transfer to the schooner. Presently the forward hold was full, the cabin was a seething mass of black humanity and there was barely room on the deck to work the ship. Then Carew elbowed his way to Kenyon's side.

"Listen, Kenyon," he said, speaking in a quick, jerky way. "This schooner mustn't go near the island where Miss Payne is, see? You must land these chaps on the larger island. You understand, Kenyon?"

"You bet your sweet life we ain't going to run any risk of her getting foul of smallpox," retorted the mate. "That's what I was scared of for her."

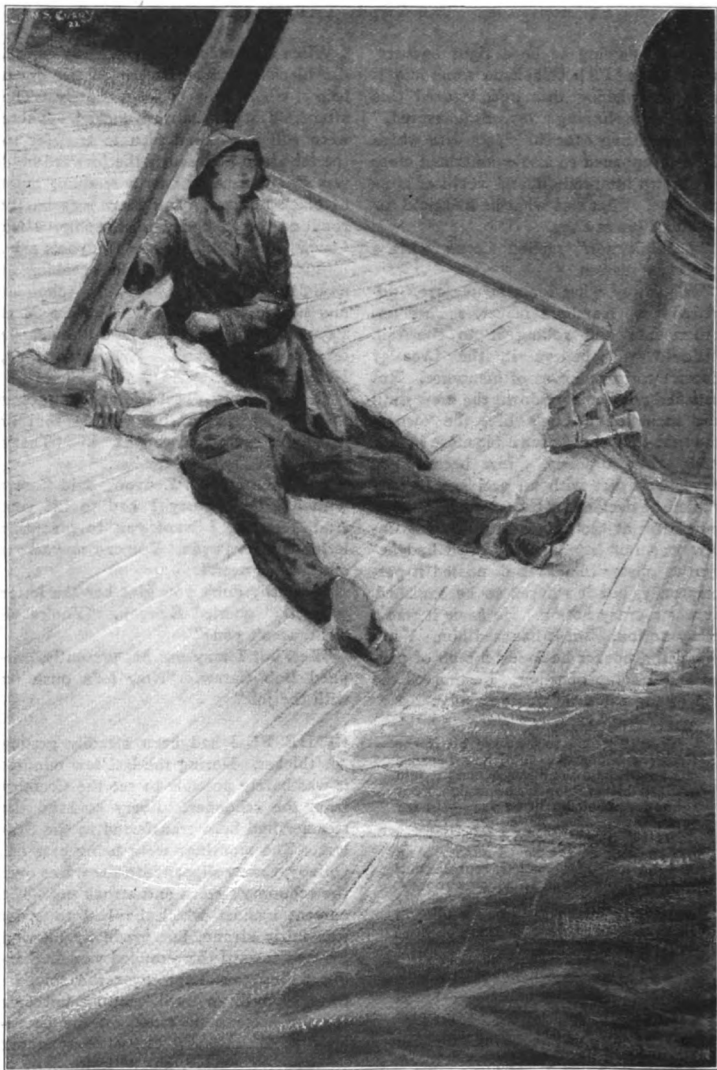
"You're a corker, Kenyon," said Carew with a grin. "Sorry I had to hit you. And, Kenyon, I want you to give this letter to Miss Payne. You can row across and pass it over."

"But why don't you give her the letter yourself?" queried Kenyon. "You're all right, aren't you?"

"Yes, but I may not be, presently," replied Bob Carew. "Now let's push on with the job."

THE FOG had been steadily getting thicker. During the last few minutes it was barely possible to see the Crossley from the schooner. Every soul on the steamer had been transferred to the Sealar. The moorings were being cast off. Quietly, Carew slipped into the water over the schooner's stern and struck out. The current against which he had to swim was fairly strong, but gradually he won his way toward the stranded vessel. Seizing a line that hung over the side, he drew himself up until, panting but safe for the present, he stood on the Crossley's deck. Already the little schooner was scudding away, out of sight.

"Well," Carew muttered, "it's a chance in ten hundred thousand, I suppose, but there's always the one odd chance."



"He gathered that eternity was very delightful because he could hear a voice calling him."

First he went below. His inspection there revealed little. The watertight door aft of the injury to the plates had been closed, but water was gushing about in the engine room. Exactly what that signified Carew could not be sure. It depended partly on whether the water got into the engine room before that door was shut, or after. Anyway, the position looked black. Moreover, the steamer's stern had by now risen considerably with the tide, and the vessel was rocking ominously. There was no doubt she would slide off her granite bed before long. What would happen soon after was obvious enough. It might happen within a few minutes. How much longer she would remain afloat was problematical.

The man made his way back to the deck and noticed with satisfaction that the fog bank was drifting away. There was still thick weather, but it was improving. He glanced anxiously at his watch. In another half hour the tide would be at its highest.

There came a grating vibration throughout the ship.

"She's going!" Carew muttered aloud.

A GAIN the grating, and then, having floated off the rock, the steamer began to roll sluggishly. Her bows were so low in the water that the well-deck forward was awash. Her stern, raised ten feet, left the propeller sticking up in the air. She slewed clear of the sheltering rock and then wallowed hoggishly in the trough of the sea. For a time that watertight door would help to keep her up. But for how long? When she did go it would be a clean drive, head forward. And Carew was powerless.

A white-capped comber, mountain high, raced down upon the Crossley. It seemed to pause for an instant fifty feet away, as though gloating over its victim, or gathering strength for the onslaught. Gripping a stanchion firmly, and with eyes narrowed to mere slits, Carew watched the mighty wave. There was a crash as the

solid wall of water hit the steel plates. The steamer heeled far over and was as smothered. For a full minute she lay like a wounded, beaten creature, and then slowly, painfully, thrust her bulk upward, the water cascading over her lee rail. Carew's arms had almost been torn from their sockets by the swirl. A few more like that would of necessity settle matters.

"Still," he grunted, wiping his eyes of the stinging salt, "there's always the millionth chance! . . ."

THE GALE had subsided. Out of the grey dawn chugged the tramp steamer Para Maid. The sea was leaden and unruffled, save for the long green ground swell which rolls eternally in those waters. On the bridge Captain Bowerman chewed the butt of a cigar and shook his head for the twentieth time. He was weary, but he didn't intend to turn in before this girl at his side ended her vigil. The silvery haired old skipper was proud of his own endurance. His eyes were heavy, but nothing in petticoats was going to beat him at his own game. Neither he nor Barbara Payne had moved from the bridge for forty consecutive hours.

"The sea's a big place, Miss," he said, scanning the vague horizon, "and from what you tell me the Crossley couldn't keep afloat long. And with three days' drifting—"

Barbara's form stiffened. Something dark, almost awash, on the starboard bow, had caught her eye. Laying a hand on old Bowerman's arm she pointed. Her lips moved but her words were inaudible. Bowerman gave a quick order to the man at the wheel, and bluff bows of the Para Maid slewed round.

"By heck," said Bowerman a few moments later, "but it's a ship, sure enough, or rather what remains of one."

And then they were both grimly silent as the tramp chugged and coughed her way nearer. It wasn't a pretty sight—a deserted steamer lying over almost on her side, nine tenths submerged, rolling drunkenly in the swell. Forward, the

green water gurgled over her. Half the bridge was beneath the surface.

Bowman maneuvered the Para Maid around the derelict and then stopped alongside.

"Everything swept clean away, Miss," said the old skipper. "She's had a grueling in that gale. Nobody aboard of *her*. She'll be slipping to the bottom any minute now." He pulled the siren lanyard as a matter of form, and the Para Maid's deep brass-throated cry echoed over the silent ship and the silent sea.

Barbara was standing with both hands tightly gripping the bridge rail. It was for her sake that Bob Carew had done this. She knew well enough, now, why he had forced her off the schooner, but she would never have gone unless compelled by physical force, even though it had meant being packed among seven hundred negroes, all more or less tainted with the germs of small-pox.

Bowman put his hand on the telegraph to ring for steam.

"Wait," said Barbara in a queer, sharp voice. "I want you to drop a boat, please, and let me go aboard there for a moment."

"Why—why, what's the use?" asked Bowman.

"None, perhaps, but drop a boat please."

"When she goes down she'll pull you under—oh, well, if you feel like that about it," he added as he caught the girl's appealing glance, "but remember, I've warned you. Jenkins, slip that boat over," he added, "and be smart about it."

Two seamen rowed Barbara over the intervening water. With tightly compressed lips the girl clambered on to the side of the Crossley's after wheel-house, and stood there a few moments, surveying the desolate ruin of the steamer. Presently, catching hold of a rope, she made her way along the steeply sloping deck as far as the deck house. The vessel was lurching heavily over to port. The starboard half of the deck house was well out of water. Barbara peered beyond a yawning doorway and then uttered a stifled

cry. The form of a man was lying in the further corner, flat on the deck. A moment later she was stooping over him.

BOB CAREW came slowly back from a land of vague shadows, and his first clear impression was that he had passed into eternity. Also, he gathered that eternity was very delightful because he could hear a voice calling him, and the owner of that voice had been dearer—much dearer—to him than life itself. There was a throbbing pain in his head, where he had struck it in falling, but that was a trifle.

"Bob! Bob!"

He was on the point of opening his eyes wonderingly when a marvellous thing happened. Two warm lips were pressed to his for a moment. And then he knew this was not eternity.

"Bob! Bob, dear!"

He opened his eyes and looked at her.

"Barbara! How did you get here?"

"I—we came to take you off. Can you get up? This ship will sink soon. There's a steamer lying alongside."

"You kissed me, Barbara. You know you did. I thought at first we'd each been fitted with a pair of wings. I couldn't belie—Barbara, you kissed me. Is there any reason why you shouldn't do it again!"

The girl flushed. It was not shame but joy which brought the color to her cheeks.

"Not now," she said hurriedly. "Try to get up. Be quick." He raised himself on his elbow. "Come along," the girl added. "We'll have you safe on the other steamer in a few minutes."

He climbed to the deck and surveyed the wallowing Crossley.

"Come along. Hurry!" Barbara urged.

Bob remained still, holding on to a stanchion.

"Wait a bit," he said. "I thought from what you said that she was just going under."

"She is. Look at her to'gallant fo'c'sle; it's awash, and so is her number one hatch on the main deck."

The man shook his head.

"This is Thursday morning, isn't it? She's been exactly like this since Tuesday night when a big one nearly made her turn turtle. Don't ask me what's keeping her up; bulk-heads holding up when they ought to have given away long ago, I suppose. How far is it to Lanea? That ought to be the nearest beach, as far as I can reckon."

"About two hundred miles off, I should think. Why? We could never tow her there."

"Couldn't we? I'd like to know why not. She'll sag like a fat hog, she won't steer a cent's worth, and she'll try to break our hearts on the job. But she's fair salvage as long as she floats, Barbara, and if I can only get her on a lee shore at high water, nothing else matters. Just wait till I've had a talk with the skipper of that steamer."

HALF an hour later, with a steel hawser made fast, the derelict Crossley was being slowly towed, stern first, in the direction of Lanea. Ordinarily, Captain Bowerman was far from being a profane man, but during the next eighty hours there were moments when the recording angel was either kept busy or turned a deaf ear. For the cranky burden in the Para Maid's wake was as an endless nightmare to the skipper. Apart from the fact that it was only by an apparent miracle that she kept afloat at all, she yawed and sagged and was inconceivably mulish.

Meanwhile Bob Carew remained in his bunk, for the injury to his head had been severe. It was at sunset on the third evening, just as the loom of Lanea appeared faintly on the horizon, that he came on deck again. He found Barbara leaning over the rail, and went to her.

"Penny for your thoughts," he said.

"I was just wondering how much you would make out of this salvage job," she said. "Bowerman's bargain with you was very fair. You ought to clear quite a lot—"

"I wouldn't touch a cent of it?" he replied. "It's yours. Didn't you get my note?"

"I got a note, yes. But I'm not a pirate. I didn't salvage the Crossley."

He moved closer toward her.

"Barbara," he said huskily, "tell me I wasn't dreaming. I can't believe now that it's true. You *did* kiss me, didn't you?"

"The—the boards were wet and I—I slipped forward," she said, with her face averted.

Again, now that a crisis was at hand, Bob lost all his shyness.

"Look," he said, glowing. "There's old Captain Bowerman staring at us, and that raw-boned Scots mate, and several of the deck hands are in full view. If you don't confess now that you kissed me I shall do what I've wanted to do every minute since I first set eyes on you. I shall take you right in my arms in front of everybody and kiss you a thousand times."

"Pig!" replied Barbara; but for a brief second she turned her scarlet cheeks toward him and Bob saw something in her eyes which sent him into the seventh heaven.

VERY GENTLY he placed his hand on hers and her fingers became entwined in his.

"But, Barbara," he said haltingly, "I can't understand it a bit, even now. I mean, for the life of me I can't see why you—well, darn it, you're a queen among women, and I'm just a great hulking—"

"From the very first," replied Barbara, smiling, "you never stood a ghost of a chance of escaping, until you flung me ashore and went off in my ship and tried to drown yourself on the Crossley. Penny for *your* thoughts, now."

"I was just thinking," said Bob, "that with this salvage money we shall be able to build a house somewhere to live in. Anywhere you like: I don't care. Say, Barbara, quick, there isn't a soul looking."

But from the bridge Captain Bowerman saw, and he wagged his silvery old head. The matter had his entire approval.

THE VENGEANCE TRAIL

By Russell Arden Bankson

Illustrations by Dom Lavin

IT WAS a hot, gruelling climb up the steep mountain grade to the little isolated sawmill, but Elias Sumpter plugged steadily onward. Now and then a gnarled hand went down to his side, as if to ease a pain there; again he brushed away the moisture which collected on his wrinkled and parched forehead.

An hour before he had passed the last habitation in the great wilderness, and the homesteader there, who had provided him with a drink of cold water, had told him that it was less than five miles to the mill.

"Reckon I been goin' fer ten miles a'ready," Elias grumbled, as he rounded another turn of the road and did not see the mill-site ahead.

Elias was past seventy, now, and his joints hadn't the flexibility which had marked them through forty years of tramping over the mountain waste of the western half of the continent. And, too,

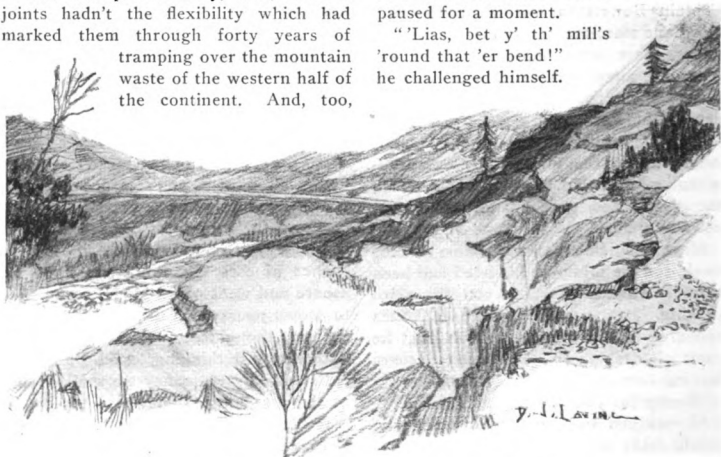
the kit strapped to his shoulder, which through those forty years had been his badge of trade, was gaining weight, it seemed, with each onward step. It wasn't his joints, or his load, though, which troubled Elias Sumpter. It was past two o'clock in the afternoon, and he hadn't eaten since the morning of the day before.

"Ain't no use cussin' erbout it, I reckon," he grumbled, cheerfully, to himself, as he headed for the next bend in the road. "I ain't never been in no pinch yit whar I ain't got out o' it. I still got my legs workin'."

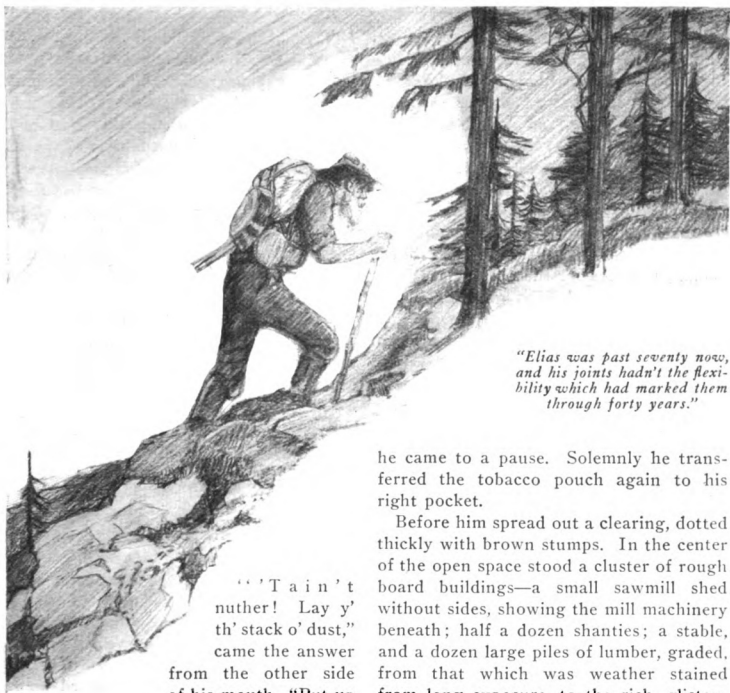
And Elias Sumpter shifted his load to the other shoulder and kept his eyes on the turn ahead.

Coming up to within a few rods of the next bend, he paused for a moment.

"'Lias, bet y' th' mill's 'round that 'er bend!" he challenged himself.



"It was a hot, gruelling climb up the steep mountain grade."



"Elias was past seventy now, and his joints hadn't the flexibility which had marked them through forty years."

" 'T a i n ' t
nuther! Lay y'
th' stack o' dust,"
came the answer
from the other side
of his mouth. "Put up
er shet up!"

From his right hand trousers' pocket Elias pulled a greasy tobacco pouch, which gave evidence of long usage. He hefted it in his fingers.

"Thar y' be," he announced, and shoved the pouch into his left trousers' pocket.

With something of childish eagerness he moved forward again, craning his angular neck forward until his scrawny tobacco stained beard came parallel with the ground, like a row of bristling grass. His watery old eyes, sunken deep in his flat face, glistened in anticipation. He came to the point of rock which shut off the view ahead, with two more long strides.

"Thar y' be. I win!" he exalted as

he came to a pause. Solemnly he transferred the tobacco pouch again to his right pocket.

Before him spread out a clearing, dotted thickly with brown stumps. In the center of the open space stood a cluster of rough board buildings—a small sawmill shed without sides, showing the mill machinery beneath; half a dozen shanties; a stable, and a dozen large piles of lumber, graded, from that which was weather stained from long exposure, to the rich, glistening white new boards.

Looking at the little center of activity, nestling at the foot of Lane Mountain, with the forest clad foothills dropping away to the east, to a point where a thin column of smoke rose into the sky, marking the village of Kaniksu and the head of the Colville Valley, Elias Sumpter tightened his thin, dry lips over gnarled black and brown snags which did him service as teeth.

"Reckon y'll be 'sprised t' see ol' 'Lias Sumpter, Bill," he whispered, hoarsely. "Figgered mebbe 'Lias 'ud fergit, did y', Bill Hartwell?"

It was another quarter of a mile down to the mill, but Elias seemed to have lost all the fatigue which had marked his

weary climb up into the hills. He swung forward in steady rhythm, scarcely noticing the load on his shoulder. As he came up to the outskirts of the clearing he moved his gun around from his hip to the front of his belt.

With unerring instinct Elias turned first to the cook shanty, where he deposited his kit outside the door and entered unannounced. The camp cook was sitting in the opening of the back door, peeling potatoes for the evening meal.

"Howdy, cook!" Elias greeted.

"'Lo, stranger!"

The fat faced human stoker turned to the old sourdough.

"You look weary. Move in and have a bite."

"Reckon that's kind o' y'."

Elias accepted the offer in the true Western spirit in which it was made.

"Allow I had a couple o' doughnuts fer breakfast yesterday mornin'. Fer dinner I had th' holes, an' fer supper I hitched up my belt. T'day I jest been takin' up more slack."

"Take your belt clean off, stranger," the cook invited, already at the stove, ladeling up a plate of mulligan, beans and mashed potatoes.

Elias wet his dry lips and slid into a chair at the rough pine table which ran the length of the door.

"Who be th' boss around here?" he queried casually, as he stuffed his mouth with all the beans his knife blade would hold. He did not look up.

"Bill Hartwell," the cook answered. He did not see the sudden gleam of satisfaction which came to the old prospector's eyes, as he shoved a cup of boiling coffee toward the ancient traveler.

"Where you from?"

"Over yonder," Elias nodded toward the east. "Doin' big bizness, be ye?"

"Ain't no market for lumber. Laid off two men last week. Been prospecting in the Coeur d'Alenes, eh?"

"Rite smart. Staked a couple o' likely prospects up above Wallace. Boss here now?"

"Yaw. Probably up to his office. Always had a hankering to try the prospecting game myself. Did you ever open up anything big?"

"Onct. Lost it agin. Boss kind of a old feller with one bum blinker?"

"Yaw. Know him?"

"Heard tell o' him."

"Ever pan out any gold?"

"Rite smart."

Elias drew the back of a grimy hand across his mouth and shoved his chair away from the table.

"Here's a nugget I washed out er spell back. Y' can hev it," he said, tossing a small object the size of a pea to the waiting hands of the cook. "'Bliged t' y' fer th' grub."

"Don't mention it. Thanks to you, too. Boss's dump's last one to your right as you go out."

"'Bliged!"

OUTSIDE the door Elias Sumpter loaded and lit his stub-stemmed pipe, shouldered his pack again, and moved down the uneven roadway toward the last shanty to the right.

The door to the shanty, which was more pretentious than the others in the camp, was open, and Elias moved up to it.

Inside the room, which had the appearance of being an office, an elderly man with black hair, rough working clothes, and a black, scowling face, leaned over a rough desk, a pile of papers before him.

"Howdy, stranger!" Elias greeted, meekly, his voice squeaky with age.

The burly mill operator started, sat up straight with a scowl deepening on his face, while his hand moved toward an open drawer at his side, where Elias caught the glint of a revolver.

"Ain't hirin' no one!" the big man snarled.

"Ain't lookin' fer no job," the sourdough answered, stepping into the room. "Jest movin' up into th' hills an' stopped in t' be neighbor-like."

"Busy now!" the other snapped, bringing his hand back without the gun.

Elias ignored the insinuation and dropped his pack to the floor.

"Used t' know er couple o' fellers named Bill Hartwell an' 'Lias Sumpter, over in th' Coeur d'Alenes," he said. "Hear tell yer name's Hartwell. Thought mebbe y' was th' same."

In the act of lifting a sheet of paper from the desk the mill man paused, every muscle in his body stiff and tense. Slowly his bushy eyebrows raised and his one good eye started at the nondescript hill-rat standing there before him.

"Who th' devil air y'?" he growled.

Again his right hand started a slow move toward the revolver in the drawer.

"Me? I reckon I was Bill Hartwell's pard, afore he turned skunk!"

Elias Sumpter spat out the words.

"Jest hold yer hands kinda high, Bill. I still got a purty good finger on th' trigger?"

"'Lias Sumpter!"

Bill Hartwell snarled the name, his face going white, then a mottled blue, as a terrific rage and fear mounted in him. His hands went into the air, though, for his one good eye was looking down the muzzle of the sourdough's gun—and the muzzle did not waver the fraction of a hair.

ELIAS was standing erect now, his old face grim, his shoulders squared. Carefully he advanced into the room until he towered over the shorter, heavier man. He reached an angular arm down and took charge of the gun in the open drawer, then he ordered Bill Hartwell to stand up.

"Got enny more shootin' arms, Bill?" he demanded, sharply.

"No!" sullenly.

"Set!"

Bill sat—a black, leering creature, trapped and helpless.

Elias backed over to the door, took a quick, cautious survey of the exterior, saw that no one was near the place, shut

the door and moved again into the center of the room, where he planted one foot on his pack.

"Bill Hartwell, yer a dirty skunk!" Elias hissed, his thin lips drawn back until the foul snags of his jaws showed. "Y' done me dirt, an' yer a goin' t' die now!"

Bill gave no sign that he heard, but he never took his canny eye from Elias' face.

"Fer thirty years now I swore y' was goin' t' die. I been trailin' y' all that time. Y' got jest five minutes more t' live, an' I'm goin' t' do some talkin' in them five minutes."

Elias lowered the gun, while the slow, malicious contentment of revenge about to be fulfilled, spread over his face. Bill Hartwell waited, with the drone of the circular saw in the mill shed drifting in to them on the hot, August air.

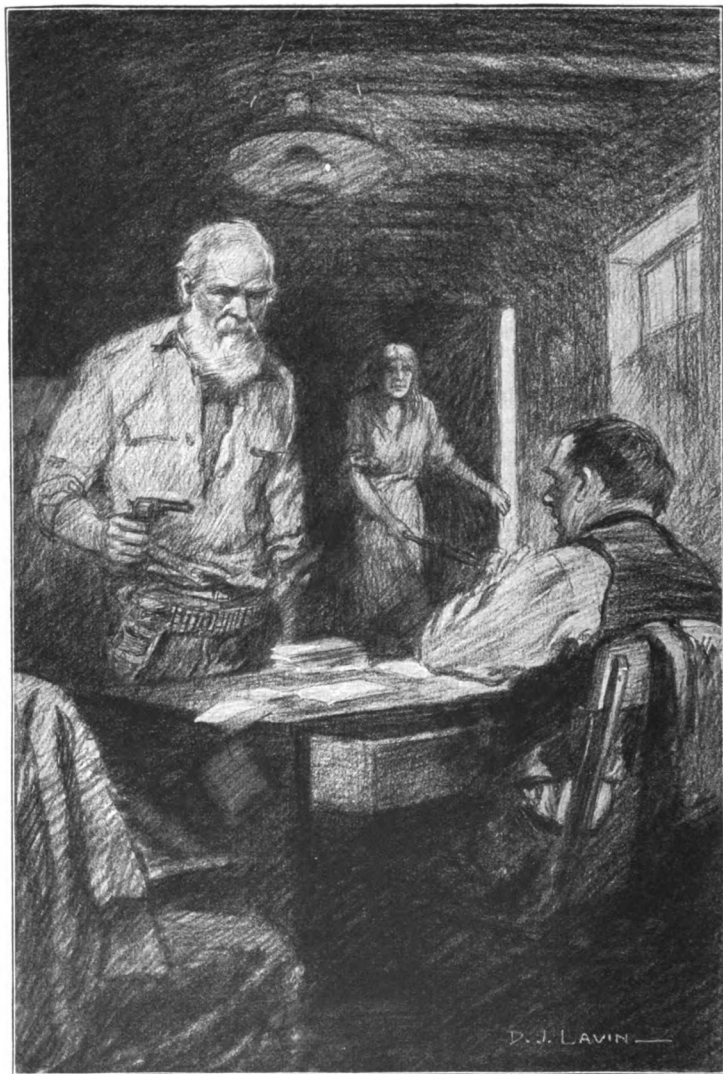
"Y' got things purty well fixed, with a fine little sawmill all t' yerself, Bill," the prospector spoke at last. "Things has been rite pleasant fer y'."

A GAIN SILENCE, while Elias' fingers caressed the revolver in his hand.

"Me an' you was pards, Bill," he began to talk again. "We was jest kids when we started in t'gether. We bucked up agin lots o' hard things, an' we went share an' share alike. Thar wan't never nothin' we wouldn't a done fer each other. Then y'—y' had t' turn yellin'!"

"We was doin' rite well in that er mine we had staked up above Wallace. We done fair work alike on her. Then Lizzie Hoffman came up thar t' teach school an' you an' me both give her our respects. Bill, y' played square while we was a-courtin' of her. Which ever one winned her t' other was t' 'bide by it. She give her likes t' me.

"Y' didn't do like we agreed, arter that. Come that stage robbery down by Burke. They was a-lookin' fer th' bandit. Y' sneaked over t' th' sheriff an' says it was me done it. Y' knowed ef they got me, Lizzie won't hev nothin' t' do with me, an' y' sees how y' can walk away with her.



" 'Y' got jest five minutes more t' live, an' I'm goin' t' do some talkin' in them five minutes. ' "

"They took me down t' Wallace an' tried me, an' y' give th' lie that sent me to th' pen. They sent me down thar fer ten years. Bill, I ain't holdin' it agin y', what y' said, an' erbout hevin' t' go down thar. I went down thar an' I served them ten years, when y' knowed I ain't never done what y' said. I stayed rite thar an' I worked fer th' State, but I ain't holdin' that agin' y', fer they give me good grub an' good treatment, an' I allus had a good bed t' sleep in. I ain't complainin' none erbout that, fer I might a done worse ef I was a-workin' fer myself.

"When I was out o' th' road, y' stole th' mine we was a-workin'. We allowed t' work that t'gether, an' share alike on't. Y' took it all when I couldn't raise no hand. But I ain't holdin' that agin y' none, Bill. Y' worked thar fer five or six years, an' th' vein we was a-workin' petered out, an' y' didn't git hardly nothin' fer yer work. No, Bill, I ain't a-holdin' that agin y' none. While I was a-livin' fine down t' th' State house, y' was a-workin' hard fer nothin' on that 'er mine."

AS ELIAS SUMPTER recited the grievances which had been heaped upon him by his faithless partner, his voice became more sorrowful and plaintive than vengeful. Bill Hartwell, though, continued to sit there, sullen and silent.

A hillman all his life, he knew hillmen. He knew that whatever of sorrow and self-pity entered into the emotions of Elias Sumpter, they would not deter his steady pull on the trigger, when he came to that point where vengeance must be satisfied. And he knew, too, that Elias Sumpter would collect that debt of injustice which he, Bill Hartwell, owed to him out of that shadowy past. Elias had given his word that he would collect in five minutes. He knew that as surely as he was sitting there, when the five minutes had ended Elias would raise that gun. There would be a spit of fire, a deafening report, a searing burn through his flesh, and death!

It was a gruesome picture which Bill Hartwell conjured, and he shuddered.

Elias took up the threads of his recital again.

"No, Bill, I ain't holdin' none o' them things agin y'. Them things don't seem t' count none, when I think how yaller y' turned.

"Lizzie didn't do like y' figgered. She done stood by me through that 'er trial. She knowed I was innercent. She come t' me an' says that she'll wait fer me t' git out. I was rite content, then, an' I fergive y' what y' had done.

"But y' kept on a-lyin' erbout me. Y' told her I was hitched t' another woman, some's. Y' filled her full o' that, an' I ain't been away only a few months when y' over-persuades her an' she up an' marries y'. Now, Bill, that's what I hold agin y'. Y' up an' stole my gal!

"When I hear that, down thar in th' pen, I took a solemn oath I was a-goin' t' kill y'. I kept track o' y' as best I could. I knowed when y' was married. I knowed how y' worked th' mine an' then throwed it up. I knowed when y' moved, an' how y' went into th' sawmill bizness. I knowed when I got out I had t' kill y', an' I kept a look-out whar y' was.

"When it come time fer me t' be turned out, though, y' got afear'd an' hides. I makes inquiry. I hear first y' air one place, then 'nother. That's been nigh twenty years, now, an' I been a-doggin' yer steps since that time. I been follerin' y' all over this here country. I hear y' gone t' Colerady. I goes down thar. Y' git word I'm comin', an' th' next I hear y' air in Arizony. I follers y' down thar, only y' has gone t' Montaney. Next y' is runnin' a loggin' outfit in Idaho, but y' air gone afore I git thar.

"'Bout er month ago I hear tell y' been up here in these mountains, clean back whar they ain't never no one comes. Bill, y' figgered I'd never be a-runnin' acrost yer trail in a place like this, an' so y' was feelin' easy like. Y' didn't reckon, though, that 'Lias Sumpter had give his word an' then would give up, did y'?"

BILL HARTWELL was leaning forward in his chair. Some of the grayness had left his face. A new hope seemed to have been born in his single eye.

"Y' ain't holdin' it agin me that I—I give it out y' was that stage robber?" he asked, the harshness washed from his voice, in his eagerness.

"No. Y' stole Lizzie from me an' yer goin' t' die fer that!"

"Ef—ef I give Lizzie back t' y'?" Bill Hartwell was frankly, eagerly pleading, now.

Elias stared at his one time partner.

"Bill, y' ain't even got no honor!" he said, coldly. "Y' got jest one more minnit, now."

Calmly, deliberately, without emotion or compassion, Elias Sumpter raised the gun again until the muzzle glared at the breast of the other man. For thirty years the old hill-rat had nursed his grievance. He had pictured a thousand times the scene when he should face his despoiler. He had pictured him cringing there as he was now cringing. He had visioned himself standing over him, his hand gripping the gun which would snuff out the life of the other. He had felt a thousand times the thrill of vengeance that had been fulfilled.

Into his wrinkled and weather-beaten face there came now the peace and the joy which had been his in those dreams, when he had lain beside his campfire beneath the whispering trees of some forest, feeling that the end of the long trail was near.

Often had he felt the blood racing warm in his old veins as the stars twinkled down at him and assured him that some day, somewhere—

Well, that day and that place had come. Elias Sumpter, the avenger, now stood over the man who had led him stealthily through the years; that had stolen from him his youth; that had bowed the shoulders which had once been square; that had wrinkled and toughened the skin which had once glowed with energy.

IN HIS REVERIE he had almost forgotten that other man sitting there. He brought himself back with a start.

"Th' time has come, Bill Hartwell!" he whispered, hoarsely. A gnarled finger began to press the sensitive trigger.

"My God, 'Lias! Y' can't stand thar an'—an' kill me!"

The cold sweat had broken out on the victim's face, and stood in little white beads.

The hammer of the gun clicked.

"Fer God's sake, 'Lias!"

THE door-knob rattled. The door was jerked open with a bang. Elias Sumpter half turned, and his hand released its tension on the trigger.

Into the room came a woman—a hag with wrinkled face, gray hair that straggled about her face and shoulders, a dirty waist, a filthy skirt that slopped about her bare feet.

She moved straight toward the cowering man in the chair. Her eyes, small and baleful, glared at him. Her right hand was upraised, and in it was clutched a stout stick. She did not even look at Elias Sumpter.

And if Bill Hartwell had shown fear and begged for mercy from his old partner, he now showed abject anguish. He cowered back in his chair; he raised his hands to protect his face; he moaned, and he seemed to shrink and shrivel and to grovel.

"Y' will sneak out on me, will y'?" the she-demon shrieked, and the club came down across Bill Hartwell's shoulder with a dull whack.

Bill squirmed and groaned.

"I told y' t' put out that washin' an' clean up th' dishes afore y' left th' house!"

"Fer God's sake, Lizzie! Fer God's—!"

"Don't y' be givin' me yer lip, y' lazy critter. Git out o' here an' be movin' fast!"

Again the club came down.

Bill Hartwell, his arms wrapped about his head, plunged from his chair, trying to make a break for the door. A bare

foot went out and he fell headlong on the floor. With a fiendish shriek she pounced upon the hapless victim of her rage, and while Elias Sumpter stood there, his mouth agape, the gun in his hand, forgotten, the woman administered to her spouse a sound beating, while he moaned and groaned and squirmed.

At last, satisfied with her corporal efforts, Lizzie Hartwell turned reddened eyes upon the stranger in their midst.

"An who y' be, a-standin' thar a-gawkin"? she demanded, taking a sinister step toward Elias.

Suddenly Elias realized that locomotion was necessary, and he began to back toward the door. She forestalled him, though, by stepping between him and his objective.

"Who y' be?" she demanded again, raising the club threateningly.

From the floor Bill Hartwell raised a bruised countenance.

"That's 'Lias Sumpter!" he announced, wickedly.

The assertion might have been a bomb thrown at the head of Lizzie Hartwell. Her mouth came open, her arms fell to her sides, and she stood staring at the old man with the gun in his hand.

"'Lias!" she whispered.

Elias made no answer, but took another step toward the door.

The demeanor of the woman changed. She followed the retreating figure.

"'Lias! Don't y' know me?" she asked, reaching out a bony hand appealingly.

WILD FEAR seized Elias. He backed rapidly and crashed against the wall, where he stood cornered, dazed, while the woman advanced upon him.

"I'm yer fiance!" the hag appealed again, her hot breath upon the old man's face.

"Go way!" Elias howled, finding his voice at last.

"I been a-waitin' fer y', 'Lias," she went on, ignoring his protests.

Bill Hartwell sat up, rubbing the back of his head.

"'Lias come fer y', Lizzie," he raised his voice. The tone nauseated Lizzie Hartwell. Like a female panther she turned upon the man who had underhandedly stolen her from Elias Sumpter.

"Y' keep yer mouth still. Ain't no one ask y' t' put in. Y' pack yer duds an' git out o' this here camp. My money paid fer this here outfit an' y' ain't got no claim on't. Git out afore I tell 'Lias t' drag y' out by yer ears. Me an' 'Lias is a-go'in' t' live here!"

Into the hardened face of Bill Hartwell there came a light that was joy and relief and peace at last. He came to his feet; he moved toward the door, in a wary detour about her who had mastered him these many years through the power of the club.

Already Elias felt the air of freedom in his lungs; already he heard the song of the trail in his ears!

"Git!" the woman snarled. "'Lias kick him out!"

She turned to where that sweetheart of her young womanhood had had his back to the wall. The wall was there, but Elias Sumpter was not.

Forgetting vengeance, forgetting his pack, forgetting everything, Elias Sumpter was going away down the uneven road-way of the camp, headed straight for the trail leading high up the side of Lane Mountain.

After a while he stopped. A tree squirrel chattered saucily above him. The trail was open ahead. No spectre leered out of the trail behind. A slow grin spread over the old sourdough's parched face.

A horny hand went into his right trousers' pocket and brought out a dirty tobacco pouch.

"'Lias, bet y' she don't never kotch me!" he made a sportive proposition.

"Lay y' th' stack she don't nuther!" came the answer from the other corner of his mouth.

"Ain't no bet thar, 'Lias," he answered, cheerfully, shoving the gleanings of dust back into his right-hand pocket. . . .



"Tonight the Major ran true to form."

THE LADY FROM ILOILO

By Gene Markey

Illustrations by Leon A. Beroth

THINGS had been a bit dull at the Infantry Post, but anticipation of Mrs. Winkle's arrival from the Philippines caused rather a stir of excitement. Several people in the regiment had met her, at different posts about the States, and in the Islands, and those who had not were anxious to, for Mrs. Winkle's charm was known wherever the flag flew—from Fort Ethan Allen to Manila. Indeed, that doughty old cavalryman, General Nickelby, who was supposed to have something of an eye for the ladies, maintained that she was the most dashing widow in the Army.

At Fort Sam Houston she was to be the guest of Captain and Mrs. Cavendish, but, oddly enough, had wired them

not to meet her at the station. And much to their surprise it was young Bramble who brought her out from San Antonio in a service car. Young Bramble was a likeable, pink-cheeked little fellow—of the last batch of second-lieutenants from West Point, and as Kitty Cavendish rushed down the walk, her first question was where on earth Fanny Winkle had met him.

Jerry Bramble, who was very, very young, seemed somewhat embarrassed at this, but Mrs. Winkle, with all the poise of a duchess, replied, as she alighted and kissed her friend, that they had met at West Point, one time when she visited there. So that was that. And after embracing each other once more the ladies

proceeded arm-in-arm up the walk, both talking at once, while Jerry followed with the luggage.

Mrs. Winkle was undeniably attractive. No one, of course, knew how many hours a day she spent with a masseuse, but Kitty Cavendish, whose hair was graying, and who no longer possessed a figure, was forced to admit that, even in the glare of the afternoon sun, Fanny didn't look a day over thirty. Army posts are not noted for any particular display of modish gowns and hats, and from the squat brick quarters that circled the bare parade-ground many a pair of feminine eyes peered out of windows to note the details of Mrs. Winkle's chic costume.

Now, Kitty Cavendish had planned a dinner-party for that evening, and had invited some of the people who had known Mrs. Winkle at Iloilo; but, naturally, had not included Lieutenant Bramble.

However, in view of this apparent intimacy she realized that it would be necessary to ask him.

"Mr. Bramble," she said, turning to him with a smile, "won't you come over for dinner tonight? We're having just a few of Fanny's old friends—and we *would* like to have you."

"Oh," young Bramble blushed. "I don't think I—"

"Do come, Jerry," said Mrs. Winkle, laying her gloved hand ever so gently on his arm.

A look that did not escape Mrs. Cavendish passed between them.

"Well," he said, after a slight hesitation, "I—I'd love to come. Thanks awf'ly, I'm sure."

There followed somewhat embarrassed adieux, whereupon he took himself off down the steps and crossed the dusty parade-ground to his own quarters.

"Hm!" smiled Mrs. Cavendish, turning to her friend, "up to your old tricks again, eh?"

Mrs. Winkle looked away.

"No," she said, drawing off her gloves slowly, "but Jerry is a dear boy."

BILLY," said Mrs. Cavendish an hour later, "as sure as you're a foot high, Fanny's carrying on a flirtation with young Bramble."

Captain Cavendish was a massive, good-natured man; florid of face, heavy-jowled and slightly bald. He had a hoarse, booming laugh and a penchant for telling barrack stories at the table; but he did serve champagne at his dinners, and everybody liked him.

"Who," he queried, "told you all this—about young Bramble?"

"I saw it with my own eyes. He brought her out from the station—that's why she wired us not to meet her—and the way they looked at each other!"

"That's a deuce of a note," muttered the Captain, frowning. "Hilda Wribbly's crazy about him, too."

Captain Cavendish, you see, was regimental adjutant, and one of the fine points of diplomacy that went with this high office was the necessity of inviting Coloney Wribbly and his daughter Hilda to all the Cavendish parties.

"Well," said his wife, "we'll *have* to put young Bramble next to Hilda. That's all there is to it. I don't care if Fanny is my guest. . . ."

"It'll be all right," grinned the Captain. "Put Fusby next to Mrs. Winkle."

"Now *there*," nodded his wife, "is an idea! Chris has been awfully anxious to meet her."

MAJOR CHRISTOPHER FUSBY was the beau of the regiment—and had been for a longer time than he cared to recall. He was a pompous, plethoric gentleman, of doubtful age and bristling mustachios, who had long since lost his waist-line, but was famed for his amorous propensities and his prowess at waltzing. And although his hair was thinning, his nose a trifle rubescent, and his mustachios dyed, the Major still prided himself on being a devil of a fellow with the ladies.

He was standing with the dinner guests on the Cavendish verandah (men in starchy

"whites"; ladies in summery dresses that had, most of them, seen several summers) when Mrs. Winkle appeared. She looked very lovely in a pale green evening gown that displayed to advantage the trimness of her figure and the white perfection of her throat and arms; and at sight of her Major Fusby puffed up like a pouter pigeon. Never, he assured himself, had he laid eyes on such a bewitching creature. When he was finally presented to her (after the Swishers and the Porchelbreefers had taken an annoyingly long time telling her how overjoyed they were at seeing her again, and asking about everybody in Iloilo) he flashed upon her one of his most killing glances, and the dear fellow bowed as low as his girth permitted.

"Mrs. Winkle," he declared eloquently, in spite of his asthma, "I've waited years to meet you!"

"Really!" smiled the most dashing widow in the Army.

"Poor woman," whispered Hilda Wribbley to young Bramble, as they filed in to dinner. "She's got the Major on her trail now! I can tell whenever he gets that look in his eye."

Young Bramble frowned.

IT WAS a very gay dinner. Billy Cavendish, at the head of the table, told his most amusing stories—always guffawing at them more loudly than anyone; and the Colonel, who was a swarthy old campaigner, with bushy black eyebrows and drooping white mustache, to whom everybody kow-towed as though he were a potentate, was in an exceptionally good humor.

His daughter Hilda was a pretty, blonde girl, whose blue eyes, when they looked upon Lieutenant Bramble, quite betrayed the state of her heart. Yet tonight that young gentleman seemed strangely preoccupied, and several times she caught him gazing across the table at the lady from Iloilo. Twice, indeed, Mrs. Winkle's eyes met his, and their expression vaguely disturbed Hilda. Major

Fusby, likewise, was upset by these glances, though for the greater part he managed to hold the lady's attention admirably. Having begun with his usual system of pursuing mutual Army acquaintances ("Of course you know old Frank Ross, of the Nineteenth," etc.) and having thus established a certain basis of dinner-table intimacy, the gallant officer proceeded to become more personal. After his fourth glass of champagne he said a number of pretty things that pleased Mrs. Winkle's vanity, and by the time coffee was served she appeared quite captivated.

Yet, as the party adjourned to the cool verandah she glanced over at young Bramble once more, and a curious something in that glance wrought consternation in the hearts of both Hilda Wribbley and the Major. Kitty Cavendish, too, had seen it, and found herself wondering whether to be worried or amused.

BEFORE RETREAT next afternoon everybody in the post was gossiping. Indeed, many of the ladies had not left their windows all day, lest they miss some of the goings-on. Behind the honeysuckle vines on the verandah of the Swishers' quarters a busy little group discussed the affair.

"My dear," Mrs. Swisher was saying, "wasn't Major Fusby wonderful in action?"

"That's all right," nodded Long Tom Swisher, "but don't lose sight of the ol' boy.

"He's a veteran, remember, an' it looks to me like he'd made quite an impression."

"I," said little Mrs. Porchelbreefer, "thought she seemed more interested in Jerry Bramble."

"So'd I," gruffed her husband. He was a thin, flat youth with a solemn face and a high, curly pompadour, who rarely spoke except to agree with his wife or to disagree with someone else.

"Well," said the plump, blonde Mrs. Swisher, "it looks like a good race, any-

way. This morning she rode with Jerry. (My dear, wasn't she stunning in that white linen habit?) And this afternoon the Major has taken her motoring."

"People don't go motoring in a hired car," corrected her husband. "It's just an automobile ride. And many a gal the Major's toted out around the Scenic Loop an' the Missions. I'll bet before they get back t'day he'll either have held the widow's hand—or got his face slapped!"

THAT NIGHT there was a "hop" in the post gymnasium, whereat the regimental band blared brassily, and all the regimental two-steppers stepped high. This, of course, was before the vogue of the fox-trot. Indeed, only the recent covey of second-lieutenants from West Point knew how to fox-trot; and though they had been trying for some weeks to teach the ladies of the post, there were but two fox-trot numbers on the band program.

However, Mrs. Winkle (who was really the belle of the ball, in spite of Hilda Wribblety's youth and beauty) preferred the waltz, and on this fine point young Bramble lost and Major Fusby scored. Jerry, being of a younger generation, was not so skilled in the graces of the waltz. But the Major—ah! you should have seen him—revolving blithely to the strains of "My Balkan Sweetheart," Mrs. Winkle in his arms, a beaming smile upon his face.

Certain it was that he had rather the best of it this evening, but though he danced with the dashing widow more times than did young Bramble, the latter was marvelously attentive, and managed to turn up every five minutes or so with a whispered word or a cup of punch. Indeed, so attentive was he that Major Fusby became agitated, and poor little Hilda Wribblety, very miserable.

Two hours before the band played "Home Sweet Home" she conjured up a headache and asked Jerry to take her home. Yet as they crossed the dim parade-ground under the round June moon

his manner was preoccupied, and when they were seated in the shadows of the Colonel's verandah, he fidgeted noticeably. Hilda, whose headache was entirely strategical, could not help seeing that he wanted to return to the hop, and bidding him an abrupt goodnight, rushed upstairs to her room, where she flung herself on the bed and wept bitterly. . . . While Taps sounded mellowly on a distant bugle!

THERE FOLLOWED a whirlwind week of activities centering around the fair guest at the Cavendish quarters, while speculation as to the outcome ran high. As a usual thing Army ladies are not prone to fancy sirens of Mrs. Winkle's type, but oddly enough, she had captivated them, just as she had captivated their husbands. There were, of course, some who maintained that it was an outrage for a woman of her age to encourage a mere boy like Jerry Bramble. . . . But most of the regiment was good natured about it, and seemed to enjoy sitting back and watching the contest.

It was quite obvious that Major Fusby had lost his heart. This was no ephemeral flirtation—for which he was famous. Each day he called, telephoned, and sent flowers, and his expression, when he looked at Mrs. Winkle, was distinctly silly. Moreover, he had taken up violent daily exercises in an effort to do something with his waist-line. (His rival being athletically slender.) But in spite of the Major's unceasing devotion, young Bramble seemed to enjoy certain privileges that were reserved for him alone. Each morning he and the widow rode together into the country that lay north of the post, and no one, of course, knew what they talked about as their horses followed that pleasant shady path along the Salado Creek.

"It's beyond me," said Kitty Cavendish to her husband, as they sat alone on their verandah one evening. "I don't know how it'll come out, I'm sure. When she's with Chris Fusby she seems extremely fond of



"With a distinctness that smote his heart came the unmistakable voice of Mrs. Winkle."

him. The other night I saw him kissing her hand."

"Gad," chuckled the Captain, "that's Fusby all right! He's been doing it for thirty years."

"But—sometimes she looks at young Bramble as if he were the only man in Texas. I swear, I don't understand it."

"Which one's she with tonight?"

"Oh, she and the Major are having a cozy little dinner down at the St. Anthony roof. They asked us—but I could see they wanted to be by themselves."

"Well, that looks like a point for Fusby."

"Perhaps," she admitted, "but I don't know. Young Bramble was here all afternoon, while I was upstairs taking a nap."

"You know, I'd like to see Fanny settle down and marry the Major. He'd be a good safe bet, and they say he has some money in the bank. I should think he'd make a good husband for her."

"He waltzes well," said her husband, slapping a mosquito in the darkness, "but I've got a hunch she likes this fox-trotting second lieutenant."

"It's beyond *me*," sighed Mrs. Cavendish.

AND SO the race ran on, while the regiment sat by and watched with amusement. That is, all save the Colonel's daughter. In truth, the coming of Mrs. Winkle had brought nothing but sorrow to Hilda Wribbley. With all her heart she wished that Mrs. Winkle had never left the Philippines. A week ago Jerry Bramble had been a most devoted suitor. . . . And they had taken long rides together, and sat in the evening, holding hands and listening to the band.

But since the advent of the lady from Iloilo all this had changed. These days he was riding with *her*; and the only evening he had come over to listen to the band, he hadn't so much as touched Hilda's little finger, but had sat so silent and preoccupied that Hilda was wretchedly unhappy. And each day as his neglect

became more noticeable her blue eyes grew more wistful, and the corners of her pretty mouth drooped pathetically.

On Saturday night the Major entertained at the Country Club. It was "regular dinner-dance night," and on the broad flat roof under the stars there were gay parties at all the tables. . . . Army people, with officers in white duck and ladies in evening dresses and Mandarin coats. . . . San Antonio civilians, with ladies in more expensive gowns and men in flannels—with an occasional dinner-coat which lent a distinctly urban touch.

Mrs. Winkle looked exceedingly lovely in a king blue gown (quite décolleté) and silver stockings and slippers. Her dark hair was attractively coiffed, and she wielded—with devastating effect—a blue ostrich plume fan. And when the Major looked at her the row of colored service ribbons and the sharp-shooter's medal on his chest flopped agitatedly.

There was an ancient tradition in the regiment, voiced by Colonel Wribbley not long after the Spanish War. "Fusby," the Colonel had declared, "isn't much in a campaign, but he's hell on a ball-room floor!"

And tonight the Major ran true to form: the orchestra played many dreamy waltzes, and most of them he danced with Mrs. Winkle.

KITTY CAVENDISH was just brushing her hair for the night when a knock sounded on her door. It was her guest, in a rose-colored peignoir and pink little pom-pommed slippers.

"May I come in for just a minute?" she asked, "I want to talk to you."

"Certainly, dear," replied Kitty wonderingly.

Mrs. Winkle seated herself on the edge of the bed.

"It's about Chris Fusby," she said, looking up at the pattern of faded bluebirds on the wall-paper. "He proposed to me tonight."

"Fanny!" Mrs. Cavendish dropped

her hair-brush with a clatter. "How lovely!" And jumping up she kissed her resoundingly. "I was just saying to Billy a day or two ago—"

"Wait," said Fanny gravely, "I haven't accepted yet."

"Oh!—"

There was a moment's silence.

"I don't know that I *can* accept him. I told him I'd give him his answer Monday. . . ."

"It's Jerry Bramble," accused her hostess quietly. "*That's* what's worrying you."

"Yes, it is—"

A tired, worried expression seemed to settle over Mrs. Winkle's comely features.

"I don't quite know what to do . . ."

"Do you," demanded Kitty, "*love* Jerry Bramble—or not?"

"Well—yes! That is, I—"

"I believe you *do*, Fanny!"

"Yes," faltered the lady from Iloilo, rising suddenly, "I do love him! But—oh, you wouldn't understand—"

And with a choking sob she fled from the room.

"Well, of all things!" mused the bewildered Kitty.

ON SUNDAY, Major Fusby, having spent a pleasant evening at cards in the Officers' Club, started homeward in excellent spirits an hour after Taps. It was a beautiful starry night, with a companionable moon over the barrack roofs, and as he walked along the Major unconsciously held his head high and slapped his whip against his boots.

He was very happy. On the morrow Mrs. Winkle would give him her answer; and he had every reason to believe it would be favorable.

Inside the gates he absently said good evening to the sentry, who presented arms, and as he turned the corner by Headquarters his glance strayed across to the dim outlines of the Cavendish quarters. There was a light in Mrs. Winkle's room on the second floor. Sigh-

ing sentimentally, the Major paused. He had not seen her all day. She had requested this interim to give herself time to "think it over," and as he gazed up at the drawn shade of her lighted window the man who hoped to pay her bills for the rest of his life felt very lonesome indeed. Standing there under the leafy trees he visioned how lovely she looked, sitting up there in her room, thinking about him. Ah, never was such a woman. . . .

Then, fearing that someone might happen by, he turned, and with another romantic sigh in the direction of her window, set off across the moonlit parade-ground to his own abode.

It so happened that the batchelor quarters, of which Lieutenants Bramble and Burr occupied the lower floor, were but two doors removed from Major Fusby's. Jack Burr was in the East on leave, and the place was in darkness. Young Bramble, ruminated the Major as he approached, must be in bed. Proper place for him! To think that he had had the presumption to set himself up as a rival for the affections of Mrs. Winkle! He'd see tomorrow where he stood, all right. Young whippersnapper! . . . And the Major smiled grimly to himself.

Then he stopped short abruptly. The door of young Bramble's quarters had opened, and in the moonlight stood revealed the white-gowned figure of a woman—in young Bramble's arms. And with a distinctness that smote the Major's heart came the unmistakable voice of Mrs. Winkle.

"Good night, dearest boy," she was saying. "You have made me very happy."

And then the voice of young Bramble: "I'll walk over with you."

"No," said the woman Major Fusby had asked to be his wife, "someone might see us. I'll just skip across—it's only a step."

They drew apart, and she came down the steps alone. Below in the shadows the Major stood, powerless to move. A second later Mrs. Winkle had discovered

him. With a sudden intake of breath she stepped back, then uttered a frightened cry:

"Chris!"

Only a faint gasp came from the Major's throat. He stood with open mouth and popping eyes—a pathetic figure of disillusionment.

"Chris!" she entreated again, and started forward with an appealing gesture.

But the Major backed away—looking ridiculously like a fat land crab.

"So!"

His voice was little more than a hoarse croak.

"So!"

It was charming melodrama.

"But Chris—let me explain——"

"No! No!"

And flinging up his hands in shocked distress, the Major wheeled and fled into the darkness.

"Oh!" wailed Mrs. Winkle. "What have I done!"

IT WAS something after ten the next morning when Private Papaloopas, who acted as striker around the Cavendish quarters, knocked at Major Fusby's door.

"Come," intoned a doleful voice within, and Private Papaloopas entered.

In a rickety Morris-chair sat the Major, clutching about him a soiled green dressing gown, and staring down at an empty gin bottle on the floor. He presented a melancholy picture, indeed—pale and haggard from a sleepless night, with tousled hair and drooping mustachios.

"Breeng a note for the Major, seh!" announced the neat little Greek, saluting. "From Mees Weenkle."

"Huh?" The Major looked up wanly. "Oh, . . . a note, eh? Well, give it here."

And he stretched forth a pudgy hand that trembled slightly.

Two minutes later he glanced up from the sheet of blue note paper, frowned and said gruffly:

"Tell Mrs. Winkle I'll be over in a little while."

"Yessh."

Private Papaloopas saluted and withdrew.

A SOMEWHAT different person was the Major as he mounted the Cavendish verandah and rang the bell. His rotund figure was attired in fresh-laundered khaki and polished tan boots; his face had been massaged pink, his mustachios touched up (from a little brown bottle he kept in his dresser drawer), and his Stetson canted smartly on one side. Yet despite his almost dapper appearance there was an expression of haunting misery in his eyes.

Violet, the negro maid, admitted him, and he strolled into the Cavendish "sitting room." No one was there. Nervously he paced back and forth across the Navajo rugs. Then, at length, a step sounded in the hall, and Mrs. Winkle stood in the doorway.

She looked extraordinarily pretty in a morning gown of pale blue China silk.

. . . And there was a suspicion of recent tears about her eyes. At sight of her the Major's heart was softened—yet he stood his ground firmly.

"I know," she began in a quiet voice, "what you have been thinking. And of course I can't blame you. The story I am going to tell you is strange—almost unbelievable. But you *must* believe it."

She paused, and there was a curious look in her eyes.

"Jerrold Bramble—is my son!"

"What?"

The Major started.

"Good gad! Your son?"

Mrs. Winkle had advanced a few steps, and stood confronting him with clenched fists and an expression that would have done credit to an actress of Greek tragedy.

"Yes," she nodded, "my son. I have kept it from the world all these years because I was—a foolish, vain woman. I—I dared not admit I had a son twenty-one years old."

"But—but——" stammered the astonished Major.

"I didn't expect you'd understand. I don't suppose a man *could* see it . . ."

A peculiar gleam was lighting the Major's eyes.

"Well!" he said, "Well, well! And Jerry Bramble is your son . . . Where is he now?"

"It seems," she replied, looking away, "it seems he's very fond of the Colonel's daughter. And she misunderstood about me, too."

"They quarreled, of course, but that's all straightened out. He's over at her quarters now."

THERE was a moment's silence, while the Major plucked nervously at his mustachios, and Mrs. Winkle stared out the window.

"I came here to be near Jerry," Mrs. Winkle went on in a tired, rather wistful voice.

"We hadn't seen each other for nearly

two years. And last night—I had gone over there to talk to him—about you——"

Her lower lip trembled.

"But no matter. I just wanted you to know . . ."

"Wait a minute, here," coughed the Major.

"This is the day you were going to say whether or not you'd marry me!"

The lady from Iloilo glanced up at him quickly—then looked away again, and a tear shone on her long eyelashes.

"This *was* the day," she said, slowly. "But everything's changed now. You don't want me——"

"Want you?"

With a great hoarse chuckle the Major extended his arms to her. "*Want* you! Don't make me laugh!"

SOME MOMENTS LATER Kitty Cavendish swept into the room—halted abruptly, muttered something like a giggling "Oh, pardon *me*!" and hastily retreated.

THE GUIDE'S REASON

By Henry Moreland

WHEN the party, which included two college professors, entered the hunting-camp in the Maine woods, their attention was attracted to the unusual position of the stove. It was set on posts about four feet high.

One of the professors began immediately to comment upon the knowledge woodsmen gain by observation.

"Now," said he, "this man has discovered that the heat radiating from the stove strikes the roof, and the circulation is so quickened that the camp is warmed in much less time than would be required if the stove were in its regular place on the floor."

The other professor was of the opinion that the stove was elevated to be above the window in order that cool and pure air could be had at night.

The host, being of a practical turn, thought that the stove was set high in order that a good supply of green wood could be placed beneath it to dry.

After considerable argument they called the guide and asked why the stove was in such a position.

"Well," said he, "when I brought the stove up the river I lost most of the stovepipe overboard, and we had to set the stove up there so as to have the pipe reach through the roof."

*"'I done ye all the harm I could,'
said Kelly. 'Good luck to ye, Mr.
Peter, dear!'"*



“PETER GREENSLEEVES”

By N. W. Jenkins

Illustrations by Raymond Sisley

IT WAS AFTERNOON and the snow was falling softly on Fifth Avenue when Peter came home with a present in his pocket for Douschka. Hawkins, the butler, let him in, with that beaming glance he reserved for occasions when he was quite alone with his young master. The understanding between them was merely that Peter knew that, while for good business reasons he passed as an Englishman named Hawkins, he was really Kelly—Kelly from the Emerald Isle.

Hawkins stated that Miss Douschka had not yet returned from skating on the lake with Mr. Jimsey. There was nothing strange about that, and Peter ran gaily up to the Purple Room, which had just been refurnished and decorated to suit

Douschka's taste and complexion. It was a large room, and lofty. There was a purple carpet in which your feet sank, and velvet draperies of the same deep shade—the purple of the wild grape, with the same dusty white bloom. In between the heavy curtains the windows were veiled with delicate lace like hoarfrost.

The fire burned merrily, throwing a rose colored glow on the white bear skin rug before it. On a little table the tea things were set out—sea-shell cups and a hissing samovar. A great silver bowl of Russian violets made the air heavy with perfume. There were no pictures—the walls were hung instead with oval mirrors, to give back Douschka's beauty in manifold. To this happy thought, which was hers, she had added another—

an alcove completely draped in, containing a couch with silken pillows—a sort of glorified cosey corner.

Into this came Peter the ease-loving, and threw himself down among the cushions. Hadji, the Persian cat, at once left his place by the fire, and leaped upon Peter's knee, to curl up contentedly.

The falling snow outside, the crackling of the fire, the softness of downy pillows, the hissing of the samovar, the purring of Hadji, formed an irresistible combination.

Peter fell asleep.

He began to dream of the Purple Room when it was the White and Gold Drawing Room, in the days of Godmother Sophie, Princess Petrovsky. Sophie sat again by the fire, and he, a little boy of seven, on a footstool at her knee. They rehearsed once more what had been an actual conversation between them. They were looking at a wonderful pearl necklace, in a case on which was engraved something that was Russian and meant, Sophie said, "To My Princess."

"I will leave it to you, Peter," she had said. "The Prince gave it to me after we were married."

"Thank you, Godmother. It's a beautiful necklace. It looks like moonshine, sea foam, fairies—all kinds of lovely things. But what must I do with it? When I am grown up, must I give it to—"

"To your princess."

"Must I go to Russia to find her, Godmother?"

"No. There are real princesses here in America. Only you must be sure she is really one."

"Won't she tell me, Godmother, whether she is or not?"

"Poor little boy! You always believe every word you are told. You'll have to get over that, Peter. Or you will be very unhappy some day."

"But I have to believe things, Godmother. Else there wouldn't be any fun. No fairies or anything."

"You may believe in the fairies, Peter

dear. They will not hurt you. It's only people who will do *that*, if you believe everything they tell you."

"Then how'll I know who to believe and who not to?"

"You must use your heart and your eyes, Peterkin. You'll be fooled of course. But some time, Life will teach you the truth."

Then Peter trailed off from his memory and slept as soundly as Hadji. In his pocket lay the Petrovsky pearls, newly polished by the jeweler. They were in a new case, inscribed in English, "To My Princess." The original one he had laid aside to remind him, every time he looked at it, of Sophie.

TWENTY-TWO YEARS earlier, Peter was born in that house. Losing his father and mother, he became the darling of his aunt, Godmother Sophie, the widow of Prince Petrovsky. She told him scores of folk tales and fairy legends, which he drank in eagerly. The world of romance began to be dearer to him than things he could see and touch. Fairies, gnomes, elves, genii, witches, dragons, even wolves and banshees, were better than nurses, governesses, servants, visitors—common folks. Better than any one except, possibly, Godmother Sophie.

He came at last to a certain conclusion. There were two worlds. In one he had to go to meals, to lessons, to church, to ride, and to play with other children. He was just Peter Van Duyne, a little New York boy. There was another in which he greeted himself as *Peter Greensleeves*, a fairy changling.

He smiled at the thought that no one, not even Sophie, knew he was Peter Greensleeves. Anything might happen to Peter Greensleeves. He might have the most marvellous adventures, meeting with fairies, Indians, pirates and robbers; he might do the most unheard of things, such as exploring the bottom of the ocean or flying through the air. Best of all he loved to think of that—flying through the air!

When he was ten years old, Sophie died. Then his uncle, the Judge, a nice enough man in his tiresome way, came to live in Peter's house so as to take care of him, and brought with him the little girl, Douschka, and her governess. The Judge had lost his wife. Lost her completely, thought Peter, for she seemed to have left no trace upon earth. Now to Sophie he talked very often, and was almost—not quite—sure that she answered.

But he knew she was often about the house.

Douschka was a few years younger than Peter, who for a long time failed to appreciate her. He thought her a greedy little pig who wanted everything for herself, and cried when she couldn't have her own way. She hated his pet animals. Again, she was afraid of things, which seemed to him ignoble.

In the course of time they were separated for educational purposes. He formed a friendship, with reservations, with Jimsey Vail. They went together to St. John's, Manlius. When the storm burst in Europe in 1914 they talked a good deal about the chances and adventures of war, and Peter was intrigued by the idea of running away to join the Canadian forces. To Jimsey such a course seemed altogether too wild. Such things were not done nowadays.

After losing much time in argument with Jimsey, Peter awoke one morning with the idea that he was again Peter Greensleeves, and at once escaped to Canada.

Because Peter was a tall boy, with a compelling gaze, his services were accepted. They were transferred to the American military establishment in time, and the end of the war found Peter a first lieutenant, aviation, with decorations. He then acquiesced in the Judge's suggestion that he extend his education, early interrupted, by a special course under a famous professor. Only he treasured the little silver wings he had worn in his flights and thought of those aerial adventures with delight.

RETURNING to his home Peter saw, with new eyes, a new Douschka. Her beauty took him by storm. She was sweet as a rose, soft as a dove, bright as a star, a fairy princess!

"Sophie," he whispered to the picture of his Godmother that he had hung at the foot of his bed, "is she the one? Are the pearls for her?"

Sophie failing to reply, Peter took silence for consent. For several weeks he made speechless, adoring love to this glorified Douschka; then he took the pearls to be polished up and given a new case, with inscription in English and a platinum clasp—because Douschka did not care for gold.

Jimsey Vail played around with Peter and his cousin steadily. It often occurred to Peter that Jimsey was irreverent in his attitude towards royalty (Douschka *was* royalty now), but this he set down to his friend's lack of fine perception. To the sordid Jimsey she probably seemed the same ordinary garden variety of girl she had been before her transfiguration. It was not for Peter to enlighten him. For himself he offered her a distant court and homage which she found excessively tiresome. The pearls, however, were different. Douschka had long delicately angled for them. That she was not to possess them she owed to Jimsey.

SIX O'CLOCK and a little silvery tongued clock struck. Peter awoke. Lazily he looked without lifting his head through the narrow parting of the portieres that shut in the alcove. He heard voices, soft laughter, persuasive whispers, a faint sound of skirmishing, from the fireside, where he could see Douschka and Jimsey standing. Douschka still wore her skating dress and her wonderful pure white fox furs, which Jimsey had bundled up like an Eskimo.

Hadji started up hastily. He disliked Jimsey, who had often compelled him to show off in amateur vaudeville. He started to run away, but Peter, to his astonishment, held him in an iron hand.

Staring through the parted curtains he saw Jimsey kiss Douschka—the Snow Maiden, whom it seemed sacrilege to touch. In another second Jimsey would have been fighting with Peter for his life, had not Douschka suddenly flung her arms around the boy's neck, and, standing on tip-toe, press her lips deeply on his and kiss him. Peter lay perfectly still, tightening his grip on the struggling and disillusioned Hadji.

It was not very long before Douschka, with silvery laughter, tripped away to take off her wraps, and Jimsey could be heard on his way to the street door. Then Hadji was released, to go scampering wildly away. Peter followed his enemy, as Jimsey had suddenly become; but he had to get his hat and coat, and that made him just in time to see a high-powered car disappear around the corner—Jimsey's car.

Peter's resolution was quickly taken. The house was his, but he would leave it that very hour. He called his servant and gave crisp orders for a bag to be packed and his car brought round to the door. He would go to his club for the immediate present. Afterwards he would travel—anywhere; probably his destination would be a long way off. For a moment he could think of no special place.

FATE, in the form of a masquerader, decided for him. At the club he was looked up by the pseudo Hawkins, now Kelly undisguised. Peter had merely known the butler was leaving service to embark upon some business venture of his own. Kelly now told him he was going to the island of Cuba, a land flowing with strong drink, whose sale and consumption were still unrestricted; a state of affairs which Kelly regarded as the most blessed possible to thwarted and abused humanity. To be more exact, he was going to Havana, there to set up a hotel and bar for homesick New Yorkers; something to suggest Broadway and its home comforts in a modest fashion. He lingered to gaze rather affectionately at

Peter, whom he had known from his petticoated days.

"You've always been a gentleman to me, Mr. Peter," he said. "There aren't many like you. I wish you all luck and happiness, sir, in telling you—in saying good-bye."

"Cut out the good-bye, Kelly," said Peter smiling wanly. "I guess I'll go to Cuba with you."

"Glory be!" exclaimed Kelly, casting the mantle of Hawkins from him forever. "It's a young emperor you'll be over there, Mr. Peter."

Peter shook his head in modest disclaimer. But he might as well go to Cuba.

Cuba was not as far away as Australia, nor as God-forsaken as the frozen North—but for a man with a broken heart, deceived by his nearest and dearest, it would serve—it would serve!

Twenty-four hours later Peter, with his servant Harrison and the ex-butler, sailed for Havana. He left no adieux or explanations for any one, and neither Douschka nor Jimsey suspected the real cause of his abrupt departure from among them.

Nursing a broken heart is a fairly absorbing occupation. Peter nursed his as he hung over the railing of the ship at night, under the friendly stars. His sadness gave an additional softness to the beauty of sky and sea, and a charm to the changing weather.

Arrived in Cuba, it was faintly exciting to watch Kelly taking over his hotel and making the sweeping changes deemed necessary to make the place, as he put it, a home for the homeless. And, as he added mentally, a fountain of joy giving draughts for the thirsty. He had been financed by New York acquaintances to whom his idea appealed, and besides had brought along the savings of half a life time spent in service in the Van Duyne mansion.

The hotel bloomed out and prospered, and the finest suite of rooms in the place was Peter's.

HAVANA was not dull; the races were in full swing, and there were amusements of every sort to keep the great crowd of American tourists, pleasure seekers, tired business men, adventurers and gold diggers entertained. Peter went in for high betting on the races, and for gambling games of every sort. It was his first experience of the kind, for it had been childhood in the nursery, boyhood in school, youth in the line of battle, under military discipline, and two years of study. Then this. He tried to drink and smoke a great deal, without any real enjoyment. He kept asking himself on waking, and again on falling feverishly to sleep—

"What is it for? What is the meaning of it all?"

And he was Peter Van Duyne the disillusioned, not by any chance Peter Green-sleeves any more. For the first time in his life he spent a great deal of money, and wasted a great deal more. But money meant little to Peter. He knew he was very rich. All the Van Duynes were; they had been since their Knickerbocker days, when they planted trees on the Bouerie, and smoked their long pipes on the banks of the Hudson. He never thought about money. There was no occasion.

For some time there were no letters. Then through his bankers the Judge discovered his whereabouts, and stacks of mail began to come in from the American consul's office across the street from Kelly's hotel—letters filled with good advice and gentle remonstrance from the Judge; flirtatious billet doux from Douschka, unaware that her stock had fallen; long letters from Jimsey, racey with metropolitan scandals, in which he, not Peter, revelled—friendly, good natured letters, always jocular. Then there were all sorts of forwarded letters—invitations to house parties and balls, friendly epistles, and a few bills. To these Harrison was directed to reply, enclosing checks; the others went unanswered, and Peter went to the races.

Winter, the weariest of his young life, went by; spring came, blazing and shimmering.

Peter could easily imagine it, coldly coy, flaunting into New York with daffodils and violets, filling windows with Easter hats, chocolate bunnies and painted eggs, and announcing itself by special songs and dances in the cabarets.

ONE DAY there came a cablegram for Peter—a reckless cablegram, very long and rambling. It was signed by Jimsey Vail and stated with appropriate regrets that the Van Duyne fortune was swept away, and the name up in the bankruptcy court. "The old man" (Jimsey must mean the Judge) was in Europe. Douschka was married to Jimsey. And the message ended, "Come back at once."

"Why should I go back at once?" asked Peter of Kelly. "Why should I go back at all, ever? If Uncle is in Europe and is not coming back, Douschka married, with Jimsey to take care of her, and there is no money left belonging to me, I ask you, Kelly, why should I go back?"

"But, Mr. Peter, don't take it like that?" exploded Kelly. "It *couldn't* be all swept away at once, that Van Duyne money! There was too much of it—and too much of it was in real estate."

"Yet it's gone, Kelly—Jimsey says so. Haven't you ever heard of fortunes lost in a day?"

"I have, but—"

"If it's gone I won't have a funeral over it, I'll tell you that."

"But Mr. Peter, you can't take it like this! You *have* to go and see about it."

"Nix on that, Kelly!"

"Do you want me to go, sir? I will if you say."

"No. Jim says we're bankrupt."

"I don't see how it can be, Mr. Peter. It ain't like you was in a mercantile business. All the money—all yours, anyhow—was tied up, I thought in gilt edge securities. If the Judge played heavy on Wall Street—"

"Never mind, Kelly. If he's in Europe



"'Ah! So you think I trapped you? I did, in a way.'"

and wants to stay there, let him. . . .
I say, Kelly, what is it like to be poor?"

"Lord! It's black and bitter and awful,
Mr. Peter!"

"Is it, sure enough? I never thought
much about it."

"You had no call to, sir. In the old
country, before I crossed over, it was
something terrible. The bits of girls
working in the fields like men. The old
people bent double with the hard toiling,
and still at it as they went to their graves.
The hard, hard work, just to get a little
fire to warm you, and praties to eat, and
a leaking roof over your head!"

Peter smiled to hear the lately dignified
Hawkins talking of "praties."

"Well, what do the poor do to get
better off? They look for a job, don't
they? . . . That's what I'll do. Get
me a job, Kelly."

"Oh, Mr. Peter? What do you know
about work, now?"

"I might teach very young beginners,
but I won't. Get me a job to ride or drive
something."

"I can ride a horse, drive a tandem, run
a car, or fly an airship."

The ex-butler started.

"Fly an airship? Can you now, Mr.
Peter?"

"Why, of course. I was an aviator.
What's the matter?"

"Nothing, sir. I was just thinking.
Very well, Mr. Peter. I'll try to get you
what you want."

Then Peter paid his bill, silencing
Kelly's eager insistence on his keeping
the best suite in the hotel, and ordering
his belongings moved to a more ordinary
room.

Peter called Harrison and paid his
month's wages, adding another month's
pay in lieu of notice.

Harrison was overcome. He was fond
of Peter and grieved at his misfortunes.
He offered to stay on without wages.

"Rylly, now, Mr. Van Duyne, I beg, sir
—I sye, sir, you cawn't do without a man,
you know! Rylly, sir, it isn't done!"

Peter beamed at the kind little cockney.

"There are six days more in this
month," he said. "You can spend them
showing me how to dress and wait on
myself."

BEFORE those six days were out
Peter had found a job. He was to
fly a sea plane, three times a week, from
Havana to West Palm Beach, in the ser-
vice of Kelly, who was under contract to
deliver stated consignments of liquid joy
to the thirsty millionaires residing there.

It was not without trepidation that
Kelly approached him with the offer of
this equivocal position. But Peter, who
still believed most of what people told
him, and could conceive of no cause why
any man should lie, saw nothing wrong
in the undertaking. His cellar in the
Fifth Avenue house had been filled with
private stocks of wines and liquors, replen-
ished by Kelly, at great cost to his em-
ployers, without inquiry as to his means
of obtaining it. If a man wanted to drink,
said Kelly, must he ask the United States
government? Did he ask them what he
should eat for his dinner? Not yet, glory
be, though that might be what the coun-
try was coming to, unless something was
done.

Buying and selling the drink might, he
conceded, be a breaking of the law. But
the way to get the country rid of a bad
law was to break it. Then the high muck-
a-mucks up in Washington might be
made to see what it was, after all, the
people, to whom the country really be-
longed, wanted.

Peter listened and assented. He was
not interested in the laws. He was al-
ready thinking how good it would be to
sit at the helm of an airship again. Thus
was Peter, six feet tall and twenty-two
years old, the very same little boy who
once sat at Sophie's knee and talked about
fairies.

FRIDAY, the thirteenth of April, Pe-
ter made his thirteenth trip from
Cuba to Florida. It was a glorious morn-
ing. The Flying Fish, pirate of the air,

was ready for flight. Peter, bright eyed, alert, confident, took the helm. Kelly who had given the last anxious inspection to the precious cargo, smiled at the brave figure of the aviator, who looked, in his flying togs, like a young Viking, out to court danger and adventure.

"I done ye all the harm I could," said Kelly, conveying thereby the statement that he had been especially careful in his arrangements. "Good luck to ye, Mr. Peter, dear!"

"I don't know about luck," laughed Peter. "It's Friday, you know—thirteenth day of the month and thirteenth trip. What have you got to say to that old superstition?"

Kelly was disturbed. He regretted the impossibility of obtaining a rabbit's foot, and even offered to lend the leaden Joseph he carried about with him.

Now the sea plane quivered, gyrated, flopped a little way like a young sand piper, and presently sprang clear into the air.

It hovered for an instant over Havana, then rose high into the blue, making for the north, its direct destination being a sequestered spot on the west coast between Palm Beach and the Everglades. The place of descent would be marked by a tall cocoa palm, from which would float a red and white pennant.

The Flying Fish was a little sea-plane, built to hold an aviator and a ship-shape consignment of choice liquors in wicker cases, to withstand the buffet of two elements, and to escape a pursuing enemy. The price of strong drink had soared so high, the demand for it was so insatiable, the risk of sale so great, that to Kelly each flight was of the greatest possible importance.

But to Peter, sitting aloft, drunk with the thrill of the outlaw, the pirate, added to the real rapture of flying, it was just a wild, sweet adventure, like the flight of the wild goose, as he cut the tropic ether. It was the realization of the childish dream in which he had longed immeasurably for the wings of a condor, or the

carpet of a Djinn. That morning he had awakened for the first time in months with the sense of being Peter Green-sleeves.

High up in the blue cavorted the Fish, across the ocean it sped. *Sobre las olas*—he whistled the old Spanish waltz tune between his teeth, and for a while forgetting Douschka and bankruptcy, he abandoned himself to happiness. Strong as a lion, free as a bird, and *flying!*

WHEN at last the ocean was crossed and Florida lay below him, he altered his course, steering a trifle to the east, east-by-north, and ran up the coast, past the Everglades, in the direction of Palm Beach. More than a hundred miles he flew before he began to look down through his binoculars.

A certain rich man who owned a ranch on the Florida coast, suffering dryness of the tongue similar to that which afflicted Dives in the lower regions, had ordered the present consignment. Cuba was Abraham's bosom to him, and our Peter the angel to be charged with his cooling supply.

Approaching the part of the country concerned, Peter saw the tall trees that fringed the coast, the gleaming beach, the sand hills, the giant palms. But where was the signal, the red and white streamer? He dropped lower, rose again, and flew five miles along the beach. Then he turned and flew five miles in the opposite direction. Then indeed he saw the fluttering pennant. At sight of it, he dropped down to land.

But suddenly he was disturbed by an unexpected sight. Behind the beach and sand palisades lay a ranch—a white, spreading bungalow, outbuildings, groves, which he could not remember to have seen before. Had he merely overlooked them?

Still descending, Peter sought with his glasses for the small car in which a man servant was to come for the air-freight. It was nowhere in sight. There was indeed a figure on the beach, but no short,

stocky serving man in blue serge. Instead a slender boy's figure in khaki, and a lifted gun, along whose blue steel barrel the sunlight glinted.

Peter, who had been gliding downward, reversed his steering gear to rise. Instantly a voice rang out: "Come down!"

He hastened his ascent as the voice, which had a bell like tone, called up, "Come down, or I'll shoot!"

"Shoot and be damned!" retorted Peter, making upward. Instantly the rifle rang out and he became conscious of a sharp pain, like a tongue of flame, running up his leg. He realized that he was coming down rapidly to earth, the plane having got out of his control.

Then he lay on the beach in a tangle of wreckage.

He was pinned down, and very sick at heart.

SOME ONE whistled; steps came, running. The boy drew near. . . . No, it was a girl in boy's clothing—in a khaki riding suit; breeches and a flare-skirted coat; tan boots, white shirt, and black tie; honey colored hair tied neatly with a black ribbon, and a campaign hat pushed back from her forehead. She still held the gun.

Beside her was an Indian boy, of fourteen or fifteen.

She looked at him with concern in her shadowed, violet grey eyes.

"Much hurt?"

Peter managed a curling lip.

"Did you shoot me, little girl, with your toy gun?"

She smiled, and softly stroked the barrel of her rifle.

"I'm sorry I had to wing you; it was the only thing to do. Couldn't let you make a get-away. Now there's something else I hate to do, but I have to. Arrest you!"

She flipped back the lapel of her coat and showed a big metal disk—a United States deputy marshal's badge.

Peter stared at his tormentor. How old

was she? Sixteen, seventeen—possibly. She had dimples.

"I'd like to see you arrest me!" he muttered.

He struggled to get his feet loose. With the boy's help, she freed him. A twinge of agony warned him to keep still; but—he'd show her. He'd stand up and walk off, if he died the instant he was out of sight.

"Don't do that!" she said quickly. "You can't stand—you're hurt."

Peter smiled. He drew himself up, shuddering, took a step forward—and fainted—fainted right into the girl's arms.

PETER came to himself lying on a wicker couch in a room with leaf green walls. There was a linen pillow under his head and something cool and wet on his face. A smell of iodine was prevalent. The girl and the Indian were doing things to his leg. He shut his eyes again, feeling weak, and realizing that the injured member was being bathed, bound and straightened. He felt his pillow smoothed, his face bathed again; a coverlet was tucked over him; finally the sting of a hypodermic struck his arm. He opened his eyes and looked into the face of the girl.

"Has the doctor gone?" he found himself asking.

"There wasn't any. It wasn't such a bad fracture; the ball went clean through. We were the doctors, Panther and I."

"Good heavens!"

"If you're uneasy about it," said the representative of law and surgery, "it's quite unnecessary. I've had Red Cross training—I was to do ambulance work, you know."

"Who brought me to this house?"

"Panther and I. Panther was the boy you saw. Easy enough. We made a sling; he took your feet and I your head."

Musing on all this, Peter fell asleep. The hypodermic soon had its way with him.

Late in the afternoon he awoke. He

felt better. The room in which he lay was large, one side hidden by a green baize curtain. There were muslin curtains blowing at the long low windows; a dying fire on the hearth; a deer's head with spreading antlers over the mantel piece; abalone shells on the shelf, and yellow jasmynes in an Indian pottery jar. A rush mat covered the floor; the chairs were wicker like his couch, and there was a table with a typewriter and papers.

Peter considered. He was helpless; a prisoner, trapped and disabled by that impudent boy-girl with the deputy's badge. Yes, trapped; he knew why he had made the wrong landing. The worst part of it all was the wrecking of the airplane, with the heavy money loss to Kelly. For the first time in his life, Peter had to think about money. His mournful musings were interrupted by the entrance of the girl and the little Indian.

PANTHER was a handsome boy. He was a Seminole, quite unlike the Indians of the North and West. He smiled at Peter, as he took away the tray. He was neatly dressed, like a white boy in Florida, in linen knickers and blouse; but his copper legs and feet were bare.

As for the girl he hardly knew her, in a black Georgette dinner dress, with her honey colored hair done up high on her head. Peter, regarding the enemy face to face, was forced to acknowledge that she was lovely. Lovelier even than Douschka.

"Don't you know me in girl's clothes?" she asked sweetly. "I wear the others mostly—they are so comfortable, and make me feel like a boy. I always dress for dinner, though. Father likes it, and one way to stand living in this country is to play you are somewhere else. Still, Florida has its resources."

"Trapping and shooting, for instance?"

"Ah! So you think I trapped you? I did, in a way."

She sat down on a wicker stool at his side.

"You see, my father is United States marshal. He has sworn to stop the bring-

ing of liquor into the country, now that the laws forbid it. I am one of his deputies—he has a number of them. And scouts. One of these wired last night that a lot of stuff would be brought by airplane from Cuba today. The plane has been across before on the same errand. We knew the landing signal—a red and white flag. When father is away, I take his place. At dawn this morning I sent Panther up the coast in a canoe. He found the pennant on a palm tree, brought it back and fixed it on one of the trees near our beach."

"I see. And then you set out to capture me single handed?"

"Well, didn't I do it?"

"By shooting me."

"The only way. Why didn't you carry a gun?"

"Who, me?" exclaimed Peter. "Never carried a gun in my life, except in the war. Oh, well, and when I was out hunting. But I never hunted much."

"You've missed a lot. You look like a nice boy."

"You were in the war, you say?"

"Yes. Ran away to join in Canada. Had a good time in France."

"Get decorated?"

Peter reached for his breast pocket, and blushed to find himself in a strange night shirt. Who put that on him? Panther, perhaps. Meanwhile the deputy brought his coat, and raising himself on his pillow he took out his decorations. The girl gave a cry at the sight of the Distinguished Service Cross.

"Oh—oh! What would I give to have won that? And you are so young! What branch of service?"

"Air."

"The Air,—ah, I see! You bad, foolish boy! How could you come down from that to this?"

Her eyes flashed. She had the air of an accusing judge.

Peter lay silent for a few minutes, then he said:

"I'll tell you about that,—if you care to hear."

"Please. I do care."

The deputy seated herself in an attitude of expectancy, elbows on knees and chin on cupped palms. Very much as Peter used to sit to listen to Sophie's folk tales. He told her most of his past history, leaving out his second personality as Peter Greensleeves. He feared she would laugh at him.

When he came to his falling in love with Douschka and her base betrayal of him—even with his familiar friend, he was too deeply in earnest to be embarrassed. And to his relief, this strange enemy friend did not laugh.

"It was contemptible of them both," she declared stoutly.

"Horrid!"

Peter felt encouraged.

"At first," he declared, "I meant to kill Jimsey. I would have killed him, if I hadn't seen that she was as much to blame as he. In fact I rather think she—she—"

"Well?" the deputy encouraged him.

"Took the initiative," he ended his sentence, blushing deeply for Douschka. "After that I was pretty miserable. I tried to get drunk, but it was quite new to me, and I didn't get much fun out of it. Then I hated everything and everybody around me. That was why I went to Cuba."

Then he proceeded to tell how Kelly persuaded him to seek the free air of the Happy Isle and of his accepting Kelly's suggestion to command and engineer the Flying Fish.

"The poor Fish!" he said. "What became of it?"

"I had it drawn by a team of oxen to the packing shed," said the deputy. "The cases of liquor are in the warehouse under the government seal. Father has not yet returned from New York."

"I liked the Fish," said Peter sadly. "Sorry you had to shoot it up."

"I'm sorry, too. But it had to be done, Mr. Van Duyn?"

"Please call me Peter."

"I will, if you will call me Natalie; my

name is Natalie Wyndham. You must sleep now. Call Panther if you want anything. Good-night, Peter! I'm sorry I had to shoot you. Good-night!"

NEXT MORNING, after a breakfast served by Panther, Natalie came in, again a boy, to fix up his leg according to Red Cross instructions, bathe his face, and smooth out his couch, all of which she did with extraordinary efficiency, and with some remorse mingled with her solitude.

Peter asked her to take everything out of his pockets. Besides the D. S. cross there was his watch, with the Van Duyn arms on it, letters and papers, including the fateful telegram; a thin roll of money and two Morocco cases. One was inscribed, "To my Princess," and one, "Douschka to Peter." The latter Peter opened, and held up to Natalie—the lovely empty face of Douschka beautifully painted on ivory.

"No expression," said Natalie. "No ideas; no feeling, no fun."

"You are prejudiced on account of what I told you last night."

"About the kissing? Oh, no. It was just what I would have expected from this girl."

"She never kissed me," said poor Peter wistfully.

"She would, if you had asked her," said Natalie. But Peter frowned at that. He opened the other case and displayed a string of exquisite, matched pearls, lying large and lucent in a bed of pale rose velvet.

"Lovely!" cried Natalie. "Most beautiful! Why do you carry around things like these? They are worth a fortune."

"But no one would think of selling them—family jewels," said Peter. "My godmother said I must give them to a princess. I was going to give them to my cousin; I thought she looked like one."

"Not in the least like a princess," said the deputy, firmly.

Again Peter's brow contracted. He

hated people to disagree with him. Douschka never did. He changed the subject.

"These things," he said, sweeping the papers and cases together on the coverlet—"I'd like you to keep them for me when you give me up to justice."

"But you could keep them yourself, or my father would put them in a bank for you."

"No, please; I want you to take care of them."

So Natalie locked them up in the desk that stood against the wall and hung the key around her neck on a thin gold chain she wore.

"This room," said Peter—"is it in your home, the big bungalow I saw behind the beach?"

"Oh, no. That is our home; but this is my play house. Father had it built for me two birthdays ago. I keep my treasures here—mine and Panther's. And look here!"

She drew back the green curtains at the end of the room and showed a small stage, very well set, and complete with drop scene, footlights and all.

"This is where I give plays—when I can get an audience. Some day, when my father gives his full consent, I am going on the real stage."

"The stage!" cried Peter. "Oh, but you mustn't! It's not—not for you!"

Natalie looked at him, her violet eyes shining.

"Peter," she said, "I know all about you now. *You believe everything!* Every old thing anybody chooses to tell you! Kelly told you law breaking was right—you believed it. Some one has been telling you actresses are all bad. They are not—do you hear? Not always bad. They don't have to be bad at all."

"I'm not saying all actresses are bad," Peter hastened to admit. "I'm not so narrow as all that. But the stage seems cheap—and common—for a girl like you."

Peter shook his head, and went on:

"A sixpence labelled Art, may hide the moon of life in all its glory!"

"The 'moon of life.' That's pretty—where'd you get it?"

Before he could answer, she burst out with:

"If only I hadn't had to shoot you! I want to show you my motor, my horse, my dogs—"

"You forget—I'm under arrest."

"I don't forget," said Natalie, knitting her fine black brows.

"By the way," he said, "what's Panther's status? He's not a servant, is he?"

"Oh, never! Panther is a prince. Yes, I really mean it—his father is king of the Seminoles."

"An Indian chief?"

"No; they call him king. His power over them is absolute; but he doesn't abuse it. He is good and gentle. His people almost worship him. And they adore Panther, and his sister Starlight, the princess."

"An Indian princess! Is this a Florida fairy tale?"

"Oh, no. It's quite true. But you mustn't confuse the Seminoles with other Indians. They're altogether different. Panther—you have seen what he is."

"A splendid little chap. Why does he live here? And, being a prince, how did he condescend to serve my breakfast?"

"Panther has been taught to serve a friend, a guest, or one wounded, with his own hands. Black Eagle would do the same. They have no such word as servant, meaning a menial, in their language."

"How strange!"

"They're strange people. Their lives and customs and creed are hidden from the outside world. They're very good, I know that. Kind and courteous to strangers, but they do not encourage them as visitors. They distrust white missionaries."

"They do not want them to talk to their young people."

"Why not?"

"Because," said Natalie with much simplicity, "they do not want their morals corrupted."

"Oh, indeed! You didn't tell me why Panther lives here."

"One day last fall I went down to the beach—luckily I was in my swimming suit! I saw a little boat beating out to sea, and at first I could see no one in it. I went after it, and by the time I crossed the breakers I made out a boy lying across the boat's side, his head almost in the water. The boat kept turning—untrimmed by the weight. I swam to it at last, climbed in, and laid him down on the bottom. He was bleeding from a wound in his arm. I took off my tunic, tore off a strip to bind up his arm, and with the rest made a tow line to tie to the boat's painter; took it in my teeth and swam back. It was some fight getting over the surf, but I made it, and fortunately Dad came down to the shore to look for me. He carried the boy in his arms to the house and we soon fixed him up. It seems that a duck hunter had accidentally shot him as he was coming through one of the lagoons in his canoe, hidden by the tall marsh grass. Like an Indian, Panther didn't wait for an explanation, but paddled away as fast as he could. Then he fainted and dropped his paddles; he'd have died if I hadn't seen him. When they missed him at home the scouts went out to hunt for him. The next day the king came here."

"A visit from a king!"

"A most majestic king. Very handsome—middle-aged, gentle, grave, noble looking.

"Father and I spent three days with them. Like people from another planet. They haven't much, but that little is a plenty for their simple needs. They have no punishments in their code of law. Every one works. They have no strong drinks. No one steals and to lie is considered a crime. They cannot read; the king fears that with education they will learn the sins of civilization. But I succeeded at last in making him trust me with Panther, who will be king some day, until I have taught him to read and write, and a

little more. I told the king that if Panther is to be father to his people he must have the weapon of knowledge for their protection. So at last he let him come. He calls me 'Moonflower.'"

"You don't resemble anything so clinging."

"No; but it's better than 'Startled Fawn.' They began by calling me that."

"Have you lived here always?"

"Except when I went away to school, and to take Red Cross training."

That evening when Panther came in to take away the dinner, and Peter lay listless on his couch, Natalie entered.

"I've had a telegram from Father," she announced blithely. "He won't be home until day after tomorrow. I've come to entertain you."

"Really?"

Natalie nodded and switched off the lights.

He lay waiting in the cool darkness some five or six minutes; then the green curtain slowly rolled back; the footlights lit the stage; music, pure and silvery, floated from the phonograph, under Panther's guidance.

Natalie floated out from the shadows, with a jasmine wreath on a fallen veil of golden hair, and the magic of the make-up box on her delicate face, undershading her deep blue eyes. Her gauzy black dress was caught up with sprays of jasmine; with lovely ankles, on fairy feet, she tripped and swayed; she danced like a wave of the sea, a flower in the wind, a butterfly in the air. Peter held his breath, sharply touched with the beauty of it. He was Peter Greensleeves again.

The dance ended. In a twinkling Natalie put out the lights; the moonlight from the open windows flooded the little stage; the player rendered the "Tales from Hoffman"; Natalie dropped to the floor, and sitting cross-legged began to sing to the music of the words of a very simple Indian folk song. Her voice was not loud, but as pure as liquid pearls.

Peter Greensleeves lay very still. He

was back in Fairyland—the beloved home of his childhood.

When the song was ended, Natalie rose, curtsied, and went out without speaking. Then little Panther tip-toed in, spread his blanket, and lay down in the moonlight.

NEXT DAY Natalie and Panther visited with Peter in the play house; all went merrily, even the removal of the splint and the straightening of the broken leg. But late in the afternoon Natalie came in with a sober face.

"Peter," she said, "will you trust me? The Seminoles do. Will you do as I tell you and not ask a single question?"

"Yes," he answered, after an instant's thought.

"All right. Just give yourself up to Panther and me, and don't say a word."

Peter Greensleeves was silent and passive. He was in the hands of his friends the fairies.

Panther brought in a well filled tray with dinner, which the girl and the two boys ate together. Then Natalie disappeared, and Panther managed to dress Peter in his aviator's clothes, but without the helmet and coat. And with only one boot—a slipper—was placed on the other. Natalie returned, adjusted the bandage over a slashed trousers' leg, and added a few touches to Panther's valeting. She wore her boyish dress, and had brought a large package from the bungalow.

At nine o'clock, when the moon rose, Panther brought in a light folding cot. Reminding him of his promise of non-resistance, they gently slipped Peter upon the cot; Natalie took one end and Panther the other, and they passed out into the night.

The little green play house stood on the left of a broad, white shell road leading to the sea. The surrounding country lay as still as a painted scene,—under floods of golden light,—the moon being but lately at full. A low, white bungalow stood amid clustering orange groves to

the right, showing many shimmering lights. Natalie pointed out the packing shed where the Flying Fish lay with its broken wing. But she had little to say; and the Indian boy was silent. Peter lay half dreaming, and drinking in the mysterious beauty of the lovely land, and the golden night.

They followed the road to the sea. Suddenly the wind rose fresh and cool, and strong with salt. Crossing the pali-sade of sand banks, they were down on the silver beach. The ocean was beautiful, crossed by a glittering bridge spun by moonbeams. The breakers rolled up grandly, crested with diamonds. There was the tall cocoa palm, with the pennant still flapping. Down the beach they went, until they came to a miniature bay, where Natalie's motor boat was waiting for them.

They rested the cot.

"Peter," said Natalie, "you are going on this boat. It's mine—I call it the Fly-by-Night."

"Very appropriate," smiled Peter. "But where do I fly to? Which way, please—to the department of justice?"

"Please don't try to be funny. Listen. Peter. Father will be back here tomorrow."

"All right. You're his deputy. I'm your prisoner. You hand me over to him as soon as he comes. Could anything be simpler?"

"That might be very well, if I hadn't shot you."

"Well, you *would* do it."

"Now, then, Mr. Peter, Father is terribly set against things to drink, and the people who buy, sell, or transport them. He'll take you straight to Palm Beach for trial. Your leg is doing wonderfully, if only you could have stayed in the play house until it was entirely healed up again. You see, if it isn't properly managed—it mightn't heal perfectly, or—or one leg might come out shorter than the other! Think of that! You wouldn't get the right kind of care in jail; nor even in the hospital they'd send you to, perhaps. And

if anything went wrong, *I'd* be responsible."

"Of course. It was assault with intent to kill."

"It was *not*! A deputy is supposed to arrest a crim—a lawbreaker and shoot him if he resists. But you see,—Peter, it's just, just the way I *feel* about it. After knowing you so well. So I'm going to send you down to the Everglades with Panther. Black Eagle and Starlight will take the best care of you until your leg is perfectly well and strong."

"You'll *send* me! Listen to her! I won't be sent. I'm going to surrender to your father the minute he comes. Have to surrender, when I haven't a leg left to stand on, thanks to you!"

"Peter! You'll break my heart, so you will. Listen! You are going to the Everglades to get well. Then you can do as you please. You can go to the ends of the earth if you want to. You can disappear. I would never betray you, nor would Panther, or any Seminole. But, if you want to give yourself up, you can come back."

"What is this place called, Deputy Marshal?"

"Our place? Wyndham Wood."

"At Wyndham Wood, Natalie, lie the ends of the earth. I will go no further."

"You will, when I ask it."

"Don't ask it, then."

"Do you think I could bear to have you go through life *limping*? And that is just what might happen. Oh, Peter, if you have a will and a conscience like this, why did you break the law?"

"I think—it was because I had no Natalie to keep me straight."

"You can come back."

Peter wavered, and then said:

"Well, then—I'll go."

THEY lifted him carefully on board the Fly-by-Night, putting the collapsible cot in the boat along with the suitcase Natalie had brought for his use. She took her seat at the motor, looking more like a slim boy than a girl. Only the

black ribbon at the back of her neck gave any suggestion otherwise.

Over the moonlit sea they sped; Natalie set her own limit, and was almost as wildly glad as Peter had been when he steered the Flying Fish to its death. She held her course straight and true. When at last the boat grated on the sand, the moon had set and day was already dawning.

Panther sprang out, and took from his pocket a rosy conch shell with many convolutions.

On this shell Panther sounded a note so shrill and clear that the wildoats on the sand hills quivered and the mallow bushes rustled with the vibration. Then he sat down on the beach and waited, happily digging his bare toes into the wet sand.

In the boat Natalie was taking out an Indian bag that held her prisoner's treasures and offering them to him.

He took a cigarette case from among the things, and said:

"You keep the rest until I come back. . . . I wish I were not crippled—I hate for you to go back—alone."

"But that's nothing, Peter." She took the sleeve of his coat and held it an instant.

"Peter—Peter, you're sorry you broke the law, now, aren't you?"

"Awfully, awfully glad."

"But I want you to be sorry. Say you're sorry. I'm sorry I shot you."

"And I'm glad. If you hadn't, we never would have known each other, perhaps."

"That's true. You'd have flown away. Still that doesn't make what you did right. It was a low thing to break the law. Say it was low."

"All right, dear."

"It was *darn* low."

"I'm so glad you can see it that way. You never did anything else that was low, did you?"

"I don't think so, Natalie. No."

"I just *know* you never did. Good-bye, Peter."

AT THAT MOMENT two young Seminole braves appeared coming through the mallow bushes, in answer to the shell call of Panther, who saluted them smartly. Peter was laid gently upon the cot and carried away by the Indians. Panther followed with the suit case, after telling his Moonflower sister good-bye. Natalie, remembering Seminole ethics, dared give him only a swift and sudden squeeze.

"I want to kiss Panther," she was saying to herself. "Heavens, I want to kiss them both!"

But Peter, watching her with anxious eyes, only saw her swift, competent movements, as she trimmed the boat, seating herself at the helm, and putting about for the return to Wyndham Wood. His fairy gifts did not vouchsafe second sight, or he would have seen her, far out at sea, take out the miniature of Douschka, stare at the beautiful, foolish face, and for one instant hold it low over the waves.

"I'd like to drop it," she murmured, knitting her black brows fiercely. "I'd love to."

But, neither law nor equity making this permissible, she restored it to the chamois bag with a sigh.

PETER'S BEARERS passed into the darkness of forest ways, swiftly and softly, their moccasined feet making no sound on the soft turf. Panther ran ahead, calling and whistling joyously. Overhead were tall trees; pines, with singing boughs, like harps; live oaks clothed in long mantles of Spanish moss; palmettoes, cocoa trees, date palms with fringed leaves; here and there, the eucalyptus, and the tree of heaven. On a lower range the dogwood threw wide its snow covered arms, splendid poinsettias flared out, beside great bushes of burning pink, honey scented azaleas. The yellow jasmine hung in bowers of bloom; and in the grass he could see beneath the bearers' feet tall violets, as blue as Natalie's eyes. They passed cane brakes, rustling with

the movements of deer, or cattle feeding; and from distant lagoons came the booming cry of birds.

This tropic world was new and strange to Peter; a sort of monstrous land of fairy and magic. He closed his eyes and fell asleep.

When he awoke he was in the Seminole settlement; the two bearers were setting down his cot before a towering wigwam covered with deerskin and decorated in turquoise blue, orange and crimson. Beside him stood a Seminole of heroic size, a towering and imposing figure, but with a face as gentle as Panther's, and with the same endearing smile—Black Eagle. In the spacious clearing beyond, various primitive domestic tasks were being carried on—the husking of maize, and pounding it in cedar mortars for the broods of fluffy young chickens and clucking hens; the washing of clothes and boiling them in steaming caldrons; the bringing in of vegetables and fruits. Half a dozen young women were at work, with three times as many children, boys and girls clad in gay cotton tunics, of a copery comeliness. Not far away, other wigwams indicated the neighboring Seminole village.

Panther now appeared, leading by the hand a tall girl in white, with a single eagle's feather in her black hair. She looked as stately almost as Black Eagle himself, with a cameo-clear profile and burning dark eyes.

"Starlight, Mr. Peter," said Panther, beaming. "My father, Mr. Peter. My father, this is the friend of Moonflower and Panther."

Peter sat up with his best smile and bow; but the princess laid gentle hands upon him, forcing him to lie down again. Panther, an advance courier, had given the message of Moonflower; the stranger was her brother from the far north, very valiant, and gifted with the power of flying. Now he was badly wounded, and she prayed her father Black Eagle and her sister Starlight to heal him with the powerful medicines of the Seminoles,



"Then he heard Natalie speak. . . . 'Peter! You'll break my heart. . . .'"

cherish him until he was restored, and then set him at liberty.

He received a royal welcome. A bed of balsam boughs covered with homespun linen, with a wonderful pillow that put one to sleep was prepared, then a bath in which curious perfumes were blended. After this bath and the application of various unguents, Peter was dressed in fresh white linen, similar to that worn by Starlight. He was attended by two skilful old women, under the directions of Starlight, who then brought him, with her own hands, a bowl of venison broth, cakes, maize with honey, and a cooling drink made of oranges.

Afterwards the king and certain older braves, men of tribal distinction, sat around him with their long, red-clay pipes and smoked tobacco of their own raising, with a rare and powerful bouquet of scent ascending in the wisps of pale blue smoke that went curling upward. When his visitors had withdrawn, with much ceremony, he could see numerous children and young people peeping at him, like so many dark elves and fays, hidden among the trees. But when he called them, they ran away, with trilling laughter. They were not at all like the gloomy Indians of the Northwest.

He slept again, dreaming of his childhood, of Sophie, and of the present, typified by Natalie,—now in her boy's dress, now in dancing frock, whirling and swaying, or crooning her folk song in the moonlight. He awoke, wonderfully refreshed, to see the presents the braves of the tribe had brought him,—offerings of fish and game, oysters and fruit. One boy, a crony of Panther's, presented a monster sponge, of velvet fineness, which had been brought by him, at peril of his life, from the depths of the Gulf, and had for some time been displayed as a trophy.

When night fell and the torches were lit, supper was served for the royal family at the guest's bedside, Black Eagle, Starlight and Panther vieing with one another in their attentions to Peter. Afterwards Starlight brought her guitar,

—a three stringed instrument of a primitive nature,—and sang to him. Then the Indians softly withdrew and he was left to the sweetest long night's sleep he could have imagined.

ON THE THIRD DAY of Peter's sojourn with the Seminoles, Panther was sent to Wyndham Wood to report to Moonflower. He assured her that their friend was being well cared for; he slept in a tent painted with the sun and moon, all blue and scarlet, as fine as Black Eagle's own; strange medicines made by Starlight were removing the hurt caused by the straight-sent bullet of Moonflower; the young men of the tribe paid him homage, and the maidens danced before him; Starlight herself sang him to sleep every night. At that, Panther was hurt and surprised, when Natalie snatched her hand from his, and abruptly turned away. It dawned dimly upon him that his white sister did not fully appreciate the favors of royalty, or was perhaps somewhat ungrateful, as all of her race were said to be. . . .

Peter began to look for Starlight's evening visit and slumber song. Not that it possessed much real melody; but it was strangely soothing and soporific—it brought strange dreams to him in his Indian fairyland. And then to see her as she sang—the slim dark fingers straying over the strings—the lovely dark face outlined against the pale sky—the regal dark head, the eagle's feather!

He watched her one night until the strange spell of her exotic beauty possessed him. He suddenly caught his breath, reached out a trembling hand, and imprisoned hers. She did not withdraw it; the song stopped with a broken chord; she sat as still as a statue. But as he drew nearer to her—something seemed to pass between them. Not a shadow—it was more like a light. Then the girl spoke, in a hushed, awed voice:

"I see"—she stopped, hesitating.

"What do you see, my Starlight Dream?"

"The face of Moonflower!"

The face of Moonflower! Yes, it was there. Peter saw it, too, and it looked wide eyed, reproachful. Then he heard Natalie speak. She did but repeat words he had heard her say before.

"Peter! You'll break my heart . . ."

WHEN THE MOON was young again, Peter could walk straight and strong, and had never felt finer. He might have had wings of his own, invisible wings. He had told all his story to Black Hawk—who spoke some English, as did Starlight—with occasional interpretive aid from Panther.

"Firewater is evil to my mind, and the law seems good," said the king. "But even a law that seems bad to us must not be broken. A law is from Above."

"Vox populi—vox—" mused Peter. "Now, how the devil does he know about that?"

He returned to Wyndham Wood in state, the entire family of the king accompanying him. They set out at evening, and about ten o'clock the next morning made their landing at the very cocoa palm that had once borne the red and white pennant. It seemed a spot for surprises; for a party was awaiting them on the beach. There was Natalie, in a new and very well cut riding suit, her golden head flashing in the sun; and the tall man, whose arm she held, might very well be Sheriff Wyndham, her father.

But who were the others?

As Peter lived, there was Douschka, and—Jimsey! And behind them the Judge!

Two boys from the bungalow came running down to beach the boat. Douschka flew to meet Peter with the old impulsive, bird-like movement, that he had once thought so beautiful.

"Peter, you darling!" she cried.

And then turning to Starlight and Black Hawk, she looked up at them, dimpling and smiling, as she said:

"Let me thank you for all your care

of him, and for bringing him back to me!"

Black Hawk bowed courteously, with an impassive face. But Starlight gave the unknown beauty a long, unsmiling look, and, taking Peter's hand, led him straight to Natalie, saying:

"Moonflower, you gave back my little brother from the sea. I have brought back your Winged Warrior safe and well."

"I thank you, Starlight," was all Natalie could find to say, but she threw an arm around the Indian girl, holding Panther with the other.

"It is to the sheriff you must give me," said Peter. "This, I believe, is Mr. Wyndham. I surrender."

"Perfectly unnecessary, Mr. Van Duyn," Natalie heard her father saying. "I have talked matters over with the Judge, your uncle, and you will simply be bonded to await your appearance at the next term of court."

"You've given me great anxiety, my boy," said the Judge, "but I'll have to forgive you, I'm so glad to see you again."

As for Jimsey, he insisted on drawing his former friend aside, out of earshot, for an explanation.

"Pete, you old hell cat!" he exclaimed, shaking hands tempestuously. "I wonder if there's such another ass on the face of the earth as you? Swallowed my telegram whole, did you?"

"Of course."

"Of course you did! Kelly told me so. Sh-sh—don't let any one hear about that telegram. Keep it under your hat, old thing."

"It was a lie, then?"

"I'll say it was! Ab-so-lute-lee!"

"What was the big idea, Jim?"

"Why, this. You just lit out, without a word to any one, and everybody wrote and wired, and wrote again, and couldn't get a cheep out of you. Begged you to come back—you wouldn't. Talked it over with Douschka, and we agreed that

a sort of Job's-tidings message would bring you back. But it didn't. Ass!"

"You're another! Well, I'm glad it was a lie, Jimsey. Better for you to be Ananias than for me to be a pauper, the Judge a felon and a fugitive, and Douschka a sacrifice—I suppose that was a lie too?"

"Oh, *ab-so-lute-lee!*"

Relieved of his secret, he hastened to return to the ladies, looking back over his shoulder to add:

"I say—you won't let the Judge know he was an absconding criminal?"

"No—I won't let the Judge know."

He hurried over to Natalie, and whispered:

"Oh, Natalie! Come and listen. Jimsey was lying. My money is all there—perfectly safe."

"Then," said Natalie in an icy sweet voice, "he lied about his marriage, too?"

"He did. . . . Who cares? . . . Oh, Natalie! You're my own aren't you? I'm not fit, I know—I'm just a foolish Greensleeves, who loves to fly and be happy. But you'll fly with me—won't you?"

"You *do* love me a bit? Or you wouldn't have come to me that night in the Everglades."

"Peter! What do you mean?"

"Just that. Starlight saw you—she showed you to me. Just for a minute—you came and went in the glimpse of the moon."

"Don't say anything but 'Yes' to me. I swear I will earn your father's trust. We'll have an airplane of our own, and we'll put a girdle round the earth, like Puck. How say you, little assassin?"

"But—you loved Douschka. . . ."

"An illusion. I have loved but you."

"Then, Peter—if the sheriff is willing!"

READING PEOPLE

By Katherine Negley

Mary Martha's nose shined, her hair was fastened by the roots and one hair-pin, her dresses were out of style and she wore thick glasses. Strangers thought she must be a blue stocking but she spent all her days reading French novels and her evenings at the movies.

Beryl was little, cuddly and adorable. She had dimples, curls and curves. She loved clothes and she was always the life of the party. People who did not know her very well supposed she was an ordinary debutante, but she wrote scenarios and made as much as a railroad president.

William Herbert was six feet, two inches, and well built. He was always well groomed. He had a dimple in his chin, a wave in his hair and it was a crime for a mere man to have his com-

plexion. He looked like a Greek god or a man of affairs. He was a barber.

John Henry was small and bald. He had a deprecating manner. He did not wear his clothes well and he did not know how to talk. He seemed to be a small salaried man, but he was the power behind one of the biggest corporations in the country.

A middle-aged couple on an east-bound train acted like newly weds on a honeymoon, but they had been married over thirty years and had grandchildren ten years old. Two seats ahead were a young man and woman who seemed to be perfect strangers. They were just married.

Oh, well, anyway, character reading is always much easier when you have a little data along with appearances.

The Best of the Jests Our Own Vintage



Though Lost to Sight—

"I see the ladies are beginning to wear longer skirts."

"Oh, well, I have a good memory!"

Whom They Do

Orator: And speaking of work . . .

Voice from rear: Landlords do the leased!

Not Much

Loquacious visitor: When I get scared my mind becomes a perfect blank.

Bored hostess: But there's nothing to be scared about here.

His Way

"No matter how you feel," said the jolly person, "you should always try to seem cheerful."

"I do," replied the morose one. "I always laugh when I go to a comic opera."

His Predecessor

The teacher of the history class asked little Johnny who the "First Man" was.

"You remember," she prompted, "he was first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen."

"Well, it must have been Adam," said Johnny, "because George Washington married a widow."

Slim Picking

The red faced man sat in the courtroom listening to a long list of indictments being read, the majority of which were for bootlegging.

"Gosh!" he breathed, "what would this court do without prohibition?"

"For Your Smile"—A Song

(Any other title would do almost as well.)

Were seashore sands all gems, love,

And were those sands all mine,

I'd give them in exchange, love,

To win your smile divine.

I'd lay them at your feet, love,

Then humbly wait my pay,

Yet still be in your debt, love,

Forever and a day.

Though all the seas were gold, love,

To spend at my sweet will,

I'd give it all to you, love,

And be your debtor still.

There's naught that I might bring, love,

Were mine the earth and sea,

Would seem too dear a price, love,

To win your heart to me.

(This stuff is dreadful junk, love;

I know it very well.

It surely is the bunk, love—

So bad it ought to sell!

I'd promptly throw a fit, love,

And raise an awful din

Were it to make a hit, love,

Like songs of Irv Berlin.)

Strickland Gillilan.



Drawn for Wayside Tales by Carl Anderson

"Dad, I've got a bone to pick with you."
 "What d' you mean, bone to pick with me, you
 young upstart?"

An Oversight

"My doctor put me on a rigid diet, but he said I could eat all the spinach I wanted."

"Well?"

"The darned fool evidently didn't know that I like spinach."

His Contribution

Mistress: Is your husband a good provider, *Jemima*?

Jemima: Pervider? Why the onlies' thing that niggah eve' pervides me with is argument 'bout when does we eat.

Still Chasing It

Guest at country hotel: Where is the chicken I ordered for my dinner half an hour ago?

Mine host: Hold your horses, mister. it'll be along directly. The cook ain't killed it yet, but she's got in a couple of nasty blows.

On the Road to Romany

You have heard the far lands calling—

You are wedded to the trail.

There's brine in your blood

When the tides are aflood—

And the trade winds are wooing the sail.

A star burns low in the westing,

It beckons you out of the night—

To the dream far away,

Where the typhoons at play

Kiss the bellowing seas so white.

But under the arms of the sheltering oak

The rustic cottage stands—

And someone there sighs

When the dim daylight dies,

For the touch of the gipsy hands.

Chart Pitt.

A Prestidigitatorian Prayer

Oh! conjure me back a silvery moon,

And a starry night—of course, in June!

Oh! conjure me back a lady fair,

With—I'm nearly certain 'twas—golden
 hair!

Oh! conjure me back the words we said—

We'd be faithful, we would, till we were
 dead!

Oh! conjure me back the strenuous
 troth,

Which would surely—but didn't—bind us
 both!

Oh! conjure me back, too, the red red
 rose,

Though why double epithets nobody
 knows!

Oh! conjure me back for a minute—no
 more—

The girl I so madly used to adore!

Then conjure me back, as soon as you
 can,

To what I am still—an unmarried man!

La Touche Hancock.

Concerning Ethel

Ethel has wonderful eyes,
Which I prize,
And a classic, demure brow above,
That I love.
Her nose, like a cameo fine,
Is divine;
On the exquisite grace of her throat
I just dote,
While the mutinous curves of her lips
All eclipse.

She has a trim little waist,
To my taste;
Her intelligent choice of attire
I admire.
I prostrate myself at her feet,
Small and neat.
Of many more charms I could write
With delight,
But choose, of the total, her heart
For my part.

Laura Lee Randall.

Snow Use Praying Here

Hill: I prayed for snow last night, but
the weather man didn't seem to get my
drift.

Dale: But he gave us rain this morn-
ing, so he must have got your patter!

Ultior Golf

There once was a golfer named Sutter,
Who always drove off with his putter.
He said: "I must say
It's a very poor way,
But I like to hear all the folks sputter."

Wild and Wooly

Betty had spent the morning at the zoo
and had been impressed with the sight of
the wild animals she saw there. That
afternoon she dashed into the house in
great excitement.

"Oh, mother," she exclaimed, "come
quick. Out in the back yard I've found
a wild worm."



Drawn for Wayside Tales by R. B. Fuller

Mickey (to lawyer acquaintance): What'd ye
charge to come to court in my defense? I beaned
de cop with a snow-ball!

Parallax

Within their room, two pretty girls
Are for a party dressing,
And limitations they possess
Find more or less depressing.

"Dear me!" one maiden says, and sighs.
"It really is a pity
That one must be so very poor,
When she's so very pretty!"

"Not so!" the other maid replies,
And hums a little ditty;
"For if a girl must needs be poor,
How fortunate she's pretty!"

Katherine Keife.

Music In Court

District Attorney: And what was the
chief cause of the downfall of the
Scratchmore Phonograph Co.?

Mr. Scratchmore: We shall let our
records speak for themselves.



Drawn for Wayside Tales by Jim Henderson

"Yes, ze Major ees my bosom friend."
 "And vere ees he from?"
 "Brest."

In the Big Chair!

Ned: I proposed to Hope, but she refused me.

Ted: What's the situation now?

Ned: Well, she still allows me to hope against Hope!

The Early Bird

Bock: Funny, isn't it?

Rock: Yes—what is it?

Bock: The devil gets up pretty early in the morning to get his dues.

Success

Typist: There's someone knocking. Why don't you answer?

Office boy: If it's the boss I'll get that raise. He told me this morning that every knock was a boost.

The Changing Times

Father: Always treat the object of your affection with chivalry, my son. When I proposed to your mother I was on my knees.

Son: Old stuff, dad! If you were doing the trick today she would be on your knees!

Circumstances Alter Them

Judge: You—a lawyer—dare say that having seven bottles of Scotch whiskey in your possession is not an illegality?

Attorney Lyalotte: Goodness, your honor! Is it against the law for one to carry a brief case?

Sentence Suspended

Teacher: Sammy, give me a sentence containing the word "anthracite."

Sammy Levinsky: We had a party last night and you should have heard my aunt recite.

The Valentine

I found an old valentine under a book,

The dust on its garlands was gray,

But the hearts and the darts and the roses and rhymes,

The spangles and gilt were still gay.

Some pretty young creature all blushes and smiles

Received it a decade ago,

And time has been kind and has faded it not,

Nor yellowed its pages of snow.

I'll send it once more with its message of love

To Mabel, whose velvety eyes

Have caused me to languish in infinite anguish,

With burning and yearning and sighs.

It will tell her a lover adores her, behold!

A lover whose heart is a true one,

And mirrors her image alone, and besides—

'Twill save me the price of a new one!

Minna Irving.



Drawn for Wayside Tales by J. H. Fyle

THE UNCALLED BLUFF

"Yo' Henry Jackson! Come out o' dat cellar! I hears yo' down there!"

Onward and Upward

"There was a time," mused Smith, "when beauty was skin deep. Now——"

"Well, what about now?" asked Brown.

"Now," went on Smith, "it's knee high!"

Her Failing

There once was a truncated rhomboid
Whose girl was a little too tomboyed.

It made him feel blue—

And so would it you:

For who could be by such a qualm buoyed?



Drawn for Wayside Tales by Marshall D. Smith

AT THE OPERA

"Gosh, and I thought this was nigger heaven!"

Angel

"Hitch Your Wagon to a Star,"
So some wise guy said;
His advice seemed good to me,
And I went ahead.

Lo, I found a lovely star
In a swell revue;
I didn't have my wagon left,
When that star was through.

The Next Step in Evolution

"They say he is engaged in a very important piece of scientific investigation."
"Yes, he's trying to evolve a new type of man that can drink wood alcohol without the usual result."

Would One

She can reach a man's heart through his
stomach, they say,
Maybe this is an old fashioned fetish,
But when she arrives at his heart in this
way
Would you call such a lady—croquet-
tish?

Little Here Above

They're painting the eyebrows in Paris, I
hear,
To match with my fair lady's dress—
Should we follow suit in the matter—oh,
dear,
Well—it wouldn't take much paint, I
guess!

He Did a Fade-Away

A fair movie queen on the Florida coast—
She's in a release called "The Millionaire
Ghost"—

Was out for a stroll where the sunlight
was warm,

In a sensible frock that showed her good
form.

And close in her wake, in a stylish new
tweed,

Was an angular chap with a head like a
bead.

"My dear little girl," said the simp, "tell
me, do,

Would there be any harm if I flirted with
you?"

"There certainly would," she replied, "you
galoot!

My hubby-director's all ready to 'shoot'!"
George J. Southwick.

Something Missing

She: You are a perfect dear!

He: Not perfect, darling, you have my
heart!

The Silver Lining

"Isn't it great!" chortled Jones. "Blinks-
ville is quarantined on account of small-
pox."

"What's great about that?" demanded
Smith.

"Well, you see," explained Jones, "I've
just bought a new car and inherited ten
thousand dollars."

"Well?"

"And all my in-laws live in Blinksville!"
he finished jubilantly.

The Season's Hit

"Here's a book," said the agent, "you
can't afford to be without."

"I never read," answered the victim.

"Well, buy it for your children."

"I'm single—I have no family. All I
have is a dog."

"Well, don't you want a nice heavy
book to throw at the dog now and then?"



Drawn for Wayside Tales by P. R. Carmack

IN RETREAT

"Hey, you fellers! I'm th' Gen'ral uv this
army, and I'm supposed t' be in front!"

New York Proverbs

A woid to the wise is sufficient.

Fine feathers make fine boids.

Don't cry before you are hoit.

Even a wويم will toin.

A boid in the hand is worth two in the
bush.

A boined child dreads the fire.

The foist shall be last and the last shall
be foist.

Live to loin and loin to live.

The oily boid catches the wويم.

The Frame

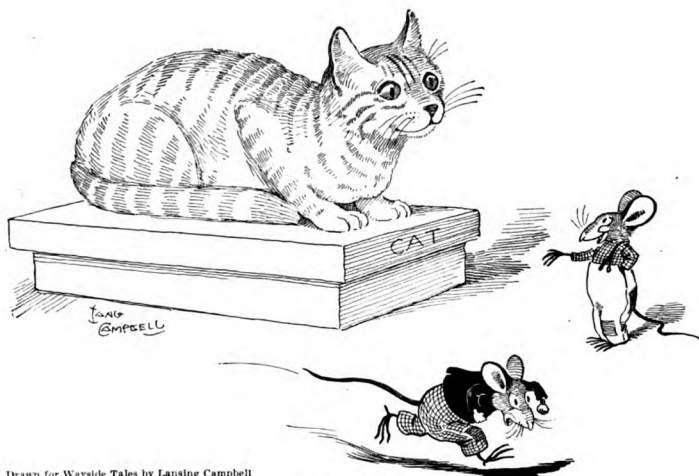
The artist: Much depends upon a good
setting!

The disappointed lover: Yes, many a
girl's beauty is spoiled by an ugly frame
of mind!

Native Slang

"Been to Paris?"

"Yes, just come back. Say it's a curious
thing, but the French have no American
slang expressions. The only one I heard
was *distangey*, and that not very often!"



Drawn for Wayside Tales by Lansing Campbell

"Don't be afraid—it's only a stuffed cat."
 "B-but she might have room enough inside for me."

Wanted—A New Camel

Watterson R. Rothacker, head of a large motion picture film laboratory, and, incidently, nephew of the late Colonel Henry Watterson, told this amusing story of an occurrence in a well known studio out in California.

A certain producer was filming "Queen of Sheba," and he was using some heavy-weight negroes to play the rôles of Nubian slaves. One of these "Nubians" fell victim to mal de mer, due to riding one of the camels, and after a bad paroxysm of nausea, he announced his resignation, to take effect immediately.

The director pled with him to stay. "George," he said, "don't you know your forefathers were born and raised in the same country where camels came from?"

The "Nubian" gazed weakly up from his unfinished lemon. "Yo'all cain't in-trigg me into stayin', suh. No black boy

evah was maint to ride that a-way. Cain't get me on nary camel agin, suh—"

"Come—come, George, we need you!" argued the director.

"Tell yo' what, suh," said the colored super. "Git me a nice, fraish camel an' Ah'll stay."

"A fresh camel?" repeated the puzzled director.

"Yessuh, boss. Dem ol' camels' backs is all wore down in de middle so 'tain't no wondah dey rides rough! . . . Yes, boss, get me a nice new one an' Ah'll stay."

The Guardian' Gait

Detective Finnerton: How did that "fence" manage to slip through your fingers last night?

Detective Reilly: Dunno! Never had trouble getting him before. Guess he must have changed his gait!

The Press Agent-less Past

When Alexander led his host
And made himself a top-notch winner,
Nobody read the Daily Post
To find out what he liked for dinner.

When Caesar said, "The die is cast,"
And waded forth to fields of glory,
The papers never searched his past
For dope to make a Sunday story.

When Cleopatra vamped some king
Until, poor goof, he lost his noodle,
The paper never said a thing
About fair Cleo's Chinese poodle.

When Shakespeare dallied with the stage
And wrote his classic melodramas,
Nobody scanned the feature page
To read about his pink pajamas.
Hinton Gilmore.

Hose!

A shrewd, young advertiser
Of ladies' hose,
Who was a little wiser
Than his foes,
Evolved an ad;
'Twas not half-bad:
A girl, short skirts, a great display of
hose.
He headed it, "What Every Woman
Shows."

Difficult to Comprehend

Father was trying to explain "Standard Time" to little Harry, but Harry was not sure that he understood.

"After all, it is no great matter," said father.

"You are now only in the fourth grade. When you have gone to school longer, you will learn all about it."

"May be so," said Harry, with a re-assuring smile. "The teacher says that even lots of eighth grade boys and girls don't understand longitude and gratitude."



Drawn for Wayside Tales by B. B. Fuller

Burglar: Wot? Movin' out?

Hats

Yes, I have quite a lot of hats
Here on the shelf together.
This softly shapeless one of felt
I wear in stormy weather.

A little toque with a knowing tilt
Is chic for the matinee;
This tam-o-shanter for out of doors
Is smart in its crimson gray.

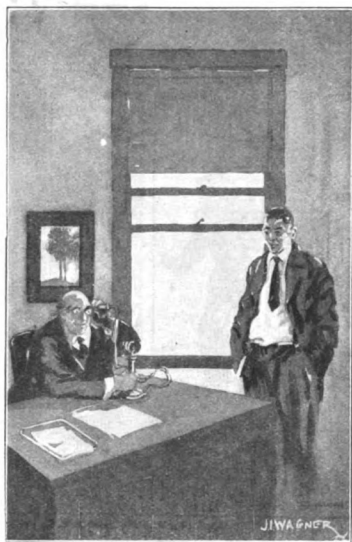
Don't you love a Paris model
Like this fairy bit of fluff?
And here is a bonnet in Quaker gray
For church demure enough.

Then why am I wearing this old blue thing,

All frayed like the flowers that wreath it?

We—ll—John thinks it matches the shade of my eyes,

And—once—he—kissed me—beneath it!
May Williams Ward.



Drawn for Wayside Tales by J. I. Wagner

"Hello, Central! Would you please suggest what number I might ask for in order to get Ridgeland 8-2-0-4-5?"

The Change

Lon G. Tood: What caused Nimbell, the steeplejack, to go into the circus?

Al. T. Toood: Wanted a change of "climb it," I suppose.

She Read the Advertisements

Upon the dressing table in the bride's boudoir stood a small, shallow cut-glass vial. In the bottom of the vial could be seen some pinkish-looking substance resembling plastering that had been dried and pulverized.

"And what is that?" asked the curious friend.

"I read," said the bride simply, "that one should keep one's wedding-day complexion. That is mine."

Strickland Gillilan.

That Little

"Man wants but little here below,"
You've oft heard someone swear it.
The women know that it is so
And that is why they wear it.

In Memoriam

First bachelor: Why weren't you at your chum's wedding this morning?

Second bachelor: I prefer to remember him as he was in life.

Not Yet

Ho: Is this free verse?
Hum: No, only fugitive.

Vice Versa

A text that has often been taken by pastors,

Is this that no man can serve two masters.

It's as hard by the law of topsy-turvature,
For a man sometimes to master two servants.

They Never Said—

Adam: When I was your age.

Eve: When I was a little girl.

Present Man: I can drink or let it alone.

Present Debutante: My first long skirt.

Millionaire's Son: How I earned my first dollar.

Present Day Married Folk: We have been married ten years.

Fair Enough

That bee you're most abusing
May yield the sweetest honey,
That poet most a-musing
May not be always funny!

The Disorder

The Doctor: Sure, I'm willing to prescribe beer for you but I can't think of any disease to name in the prescription.

Mr. Wetmore: Make it hydrophobia, Doc!

What is Your Occupation?



DO YOU LIKE TO DRAW?

No matter where you live or what your occupation may be, if you are spending any time at all in amusing yourself by drawing, you should devote that same time in a *practical way* so you will be able to do better work.

Among our students are men in the **Army and Navy, Doctors, Bankers, Lawyers, Architects, Merchants, Actors, Chauffeurs, Civil, Mechanical, and Electrical Engineers, College Professors, Students, Plumbers, Carpenters, Telegraphers, Railway Men, etc., etc.**

As there is no fixed time for the completion of the lessons, it is a MENTAL RELAXATION to work at them and not a task. Nothing is more interesting to a person who has ideas than to be able to draw them on paper. Even though you spend only *one hour a week* at drawing, why not *make that one hour count*?

If you are attending **school or college**, you should become more proficient during your spare time. It is an honor to be the *class cartoonist*. Quite a number of our students draw for their school papers. Such work is criticised without any additional charge.

Are you one of those who say—

***“I can make a good copy, but
I can’t draw an original?”***

If you can make a good copy you should have no trouble in soon being able to draw a good original, providing you are shown how in a PRACTICAL WAY.

CARTOONIST EVANS, in his course of instruction in CARTOONING and CARICATURE, will teach you the fundamental principles of the work first. You will be advanced as your own individual work merits. You will not have to keep up with or be held back by any class. **Each Student is a class by himself.** AND YOU WILL BE TAUGHT HOW TO DRAW ORIGINAL CARTOONS.

This School is endorsed by well known cartoonists because they know the students are given the right kind of “stuff” to work on. The students are not jollied. The work is criticised *frankly and honestly*, AND THE INSTRUCTION IS UP-TO-DATE.

Former pupils are drawing for some of the largest papers in the country. Such papers as the **Chicago Tribune, Chicago Daily News, Chicago Journal, Chicago American, New York Evening World, New York American, New York Journal, Los Angeles Herald,** etc.

Send a small sample of your work, and we will mail you the **PORTFOLIO OF CARTOONS** and **BOOKLET** with full details about the course. **THE COURSE IS NOT EXPENSIVE**

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Roger Eubanks, whose income from drawing is three times his old school-teacher salary.

School Teacher Becomes Highly Paid Illustrator

AS a boy, Roger Eubanks was intensely interested in drawing. So he took a short course in a leading resident art school. He then entered the field of illustrating only to find his work a failure. Then he took up school teaching as his vocation. During all the years Eubanks taught school he kept up his interest in drawing. Some day he meant to make a success of his talent. To continue the story in his own words, he says:

"In 1918 I decided to make one more effort, and though I could ill afford the time or money, I enrolled with the Federal School. I was greatly impressed with the practical value of the lessons. I studied the text books diligently and worked out the problems conscientiously."

Following his course of instruction in the Federal School, his comics appeared in the Capper publications and other papers. A short time after this, he received a letter from the Harlow Publishing Company saying that he

had been represented to them as being able to make illustrations "artistically and technically correct" and requested samples of his work. Right upon the heels of this request followed an order for twelve illustrations and a cover and wrapper design for "Tales of the Bark Lodges," an interesting book written by "Hentoh," a Wyandotte Indian. In regard to this deal Mr. Eubanks writes: "The check in payment for my pictures was substantial, but it was nothing compared to the pleasure of making them and the knowledge that I was able to do that kind of work."

Now Earns Three Times His School Teacher Salary

"I am making cartoons for the Oklahoma Leader," Mr. Eubanks writes, "and have a studio in Oklahoma City with all the commercial work I have time to do. But for the training received from the Federal School, I might now be teaching and receiving at best about one-third of what I now earn."

One More Effort Brought Success

It was Roger Eubanks' determination to make "one more effort" that landed him in his present position. Perhaps you are in the same rut. You may have ability but lack the training to make this ability pay you handsomely. Don't you think you owe it to yourself to find out what the Federal Course can do for you? Can't you put forth just "one more effort" as did Roger Eubanks?

A Book Full of Valuable Information—FREE

In the field of illustrating and cartooning you, too, may find your opportunity to win fame and fortune. Investigate the Federal School method of instruction. Our booklet, "A Road to Bigger Things," tells of opportunities in the illustrating and cartooning world and how many famous artists made the start that brought them fame and fortune. The booklet explains the Federal School method of instruction. Send for this free booklet. Just fill out and mail the coupon at the bottom of the page and the booklet will reach you by return mail. This book is sent you absolutely free.



"I'M NO SEE MUCH DIFFERENCE!"

A sample of Roger Eubanks' excellent work.

"But for my Federal training I might still be school teaching at one-third what I now earn," says Eubanks.

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ROGER EUBANKS' success is not exceptional. Everywhere, in every branch of drawing, Federal students are today holding responsible, well-paid positions.

SOSTENES DELGADO, JR., has employment on Kansas City newspapers and in animated cartooning.

JOHN PAVEL does chalk talk with his animated cartoon work in St. Paul. "Bart" Foss, his employer, says: "I wish to congratulate you on the practical methods used by your school in teaching animated. Jack Pavel's work is entirely satisfactory. It is surprising to find a young man who could take hold as he has done."



JOHN PAVEL

SOSTENES DELGADO



ALVAN C. HADLEY

ALVAN C. HADLEY, with the Greenwich Village Follies, made his start in Oklahoma as a Bart chalk talker. In cities visited, "Hap" is in demand for entertainment. On New Year's Day in Chicago, three club engagements netted him \$100 each. Newspaper comics for New York newspapers and magazine covers keep Hadley busy between theatrical engagements.

ALBERT WICK, head of the art department of the Hinde Dauch Paper Company in Sandusky, writes: "I have just completed another broadside for the company. The Federal School was an invaluable factor in my training—I would have been stumped without it. As it is, the advertising manager has confidence in my ability. I have the Federal School and its faculty to thank for this." Working with Wick is Harold Zeitzheim, who is making splendid application of the drawing while taking the same course.



ALBERT WICK AND HAROLD ZEITZHEIM



GEORGE H. RAY

ELMER WOGGON, Federal School graduate of Toledo, writes: "The home studio and art library in my new residence would not be complete without your invaluable collection on Illustrating and Cartooning. Anton Loetzko, one of your new students, now with me on the Blade art staff, is doing wonders.

ROBERT WILLIAMSON of Des Moines, writes of a new advertising firm he has just started: "Our highest dreams have been more than realized. At the present time we are absolutely snowed under with work. Bruce Meek, a Federal School student from Pawnee, is breaking in with us in fine shape, getting practical experience.

GEORGE HOLMAN RAY reports: "I have office space with the Winnipeg Free Press and two illustrations in the paper. Five days' work on a winter carnival cover netted me \$75.00."

THEODORE HOSINSKY has recently sold twelve drawings to the U. S. S. California magazine, "The Grizzly Bear," published on shipboard, aside from his regular work with a Los Angeles engraving house.



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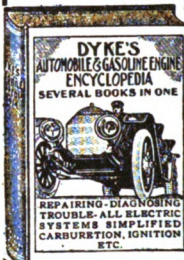
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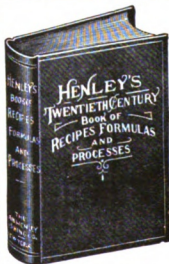
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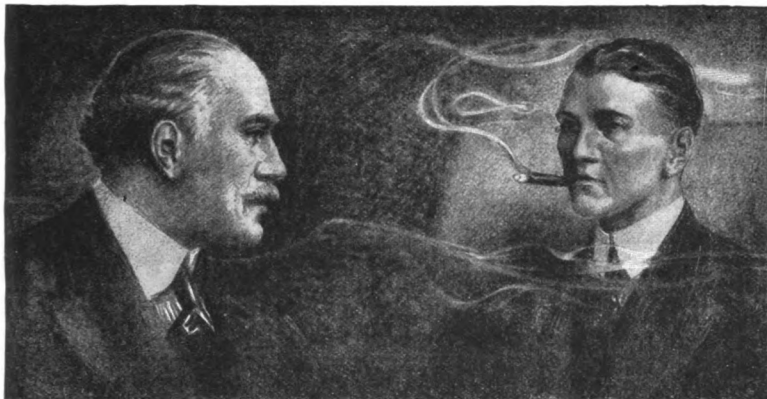


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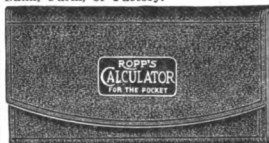
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Trace this through on your paper. (Don't hold your pencil too tight!) Then alongside of your tracing make a copy of the outline. Do this several times until you are satisfied with result.

2—The One-Quarter View



Do the same as above. Don't be nervous about the details. See how simple they are. Use strong broad strokes. Don't scratch.

3—The Three-Quarter View



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