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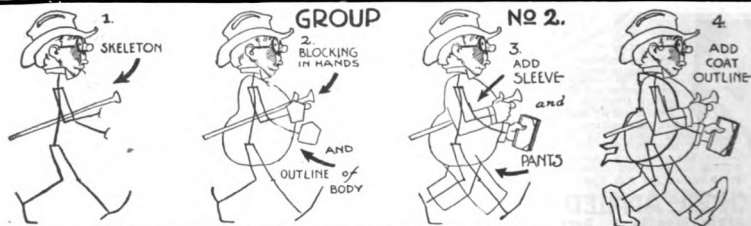
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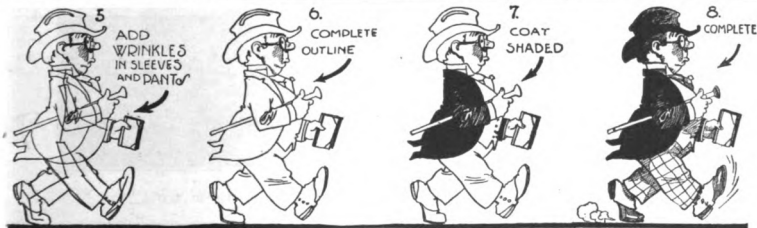
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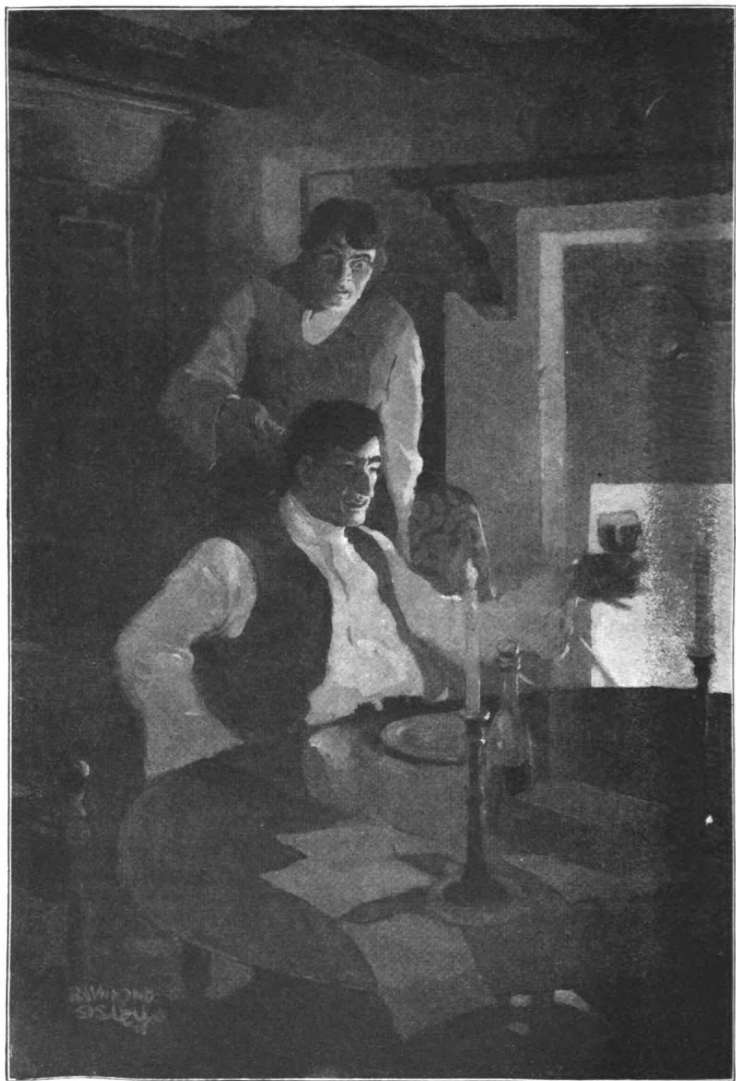
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"'Ha, John, I drink to you—here's misery for you in life and damnation in death!'"

WAYSIDE TALES

PUBLISHED MONTHLY AT 6 N. MICHIGAN AVE., CHICAGO

Volume 21

APRIL, 1922

Number 4

THE CUPBOARD

*A Story of Retribution
and Conscience*

By Jeffery Farnol

Illustrations by Raymond Sisley

AMONG all the tenants of Clifford's Inn none were more highly esteemed than Mr. John Jarvey, attorney-at-law. His clients, as the case might be, confided their woes to him unreservedly, depended with boundless faith upon his astuteness to extricate them from their difficulties, and respected him, each and every one, for his eminent and approved worth. As for Mr. Jarvey himself, tall and neat of person, kindly and unobtrusive of manner, he seemed to radiate a mild benevolence, from the crisp curls of his precise wig to the broad buckles of his trim shoes; in a word, Mr. Jarvey was all that a highly respected attorney-at-law could possibly attain unto.

Even Job, the gate porter (whose salutations were in exact ratio to his estimation of the standing and condition of the various residents), would lift knobby fingers to the brim of his hat with gesture slow and unspeakably respectful, while

Tom the bed-maker, a cheery soul, given alternately to whistling and sucking at a noxious clay pipe, checked the one and left the other outside when duty summoned him within the top-floor chambers of Number —, which was Mr. Jarvey's abode; and Christopher the bootblack, who plied his trade within the shadow of Temple Bar, with Mr. Jarvey's leg before him and Mr. Jarvey's comfortable, kindly voice in his ears, scrubbed and rubbed with a gusto to lend worthy Mr. Jarvey's shoes an added sheen.

Such, then, was Mr. John Jarvey, attorney-at-law, of Number —, Clifford's Inn.

Now it was upon a certain blustering and rainy December night towards eleven of the clock, that Job the gate-porter, nodding comfortably over the fire within his lodge, was aroused by a loud and imperious rapping on the outer door. Sighing, Job sat up and, having paused awhile

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to blink at the cozy fire and murmur a plaintive curse or so upon his disturber, got slowly to his feet as the summons was repeated and, stepping forth of his lodge, proceeded to draw bolt and bar, and open the gate.

A tall figure, in a long, rain-sodden, many-caped riding coat and wide-eaved hat—this much he saw by aid of the dim lamp that flickered in the fitful wind-gusts.

"Mr. John Jarvey?" inquired a hoarse voice, though somewhat indistinct by reason of upturned coat-collar and voluminous muffler.

"'Oo?" demanded Job aggressively and squaring his elbows.

The stranger raised a large hand to loosen the shawl about his mouth and chin and Job noticed a small, plain gold ring that gleamed upon the little finger of this hand.

"I said Mr. John Jarvey. He lives here still?"

"Sure-ly!" nodded Job. "Five and twenty year to my knowin'! But if you be come on bizness you be over-late! Mr. Jarvey never sees nobody arter six o'clock, nohow.

"Never did—never will, makes it a rule, 'e do."

"And he lives here—at Number —, I think?"

"Aye, Number —, top-floor as ever was, but if you be come on bizness it aren't no manner o' good you—Lord love me!" gasped Job as, swept aside by a long arm he staggered and watched the tall figure flit past and vanish in the swirling, gusty darkness of the Inn. For a moment Job meditated pursuit, but, thinking better of it, shook his head and proceeded to bolt and bar the gate.

"By goles!" said he, addressing the gusty dark.

"Of all the body-snatching raskell rogues you's the body-snatchingest—burn 'im innards and out'ards!"

With which malediction Job got back to fire and armchair and promptly fell a-dozing, like the watchman he was.

MEANTIME the stranger, with head bowed to the lashing rain, slipped and stumbled over the uneven pavement, blundered into iron railings, fell foul of unsuspected corners and, often pausing to peer about him in the gloom, found his way at last to the dim-lit doorway of Number — and stood to read, among divers others, the name of John Jarvey, attorney-at-law. He seemed to find some subtle fascination in the name, for he stood there with the rain running off him while he read it over and over again, speaking the words to himself in a soft, sibilant whisper, suggestive of clenched teeth: "John Jarvey, attorney-at law!" while his hands (buried in the deep side-pockets of his coat hitherto) began to fumble with the muffler that swathed throat and chin, to loosen the buttons of his caped coat, and his right hand, gliding into his breast, seemed to touch and caress something that lay hidden there. Thus stood he, peering from the shadow of his hat and whispering to himself so long that the rain, dripping from his garments, formed small, evil-looking pools on the dingy floor.

Suddenly he turned and, with left hand outstretched and groping in the air before him, and right hand hidden in his bosom, began to climb the dark stair.

He mounted slowly and very softly and so at last reached the topmost landing where burned a lantern whose feeble light showed a door whereon was painted the name:

MR. JOHN JARVEY

Clenching his fist the visitor struck this name three resounding blows, tried the latch, found the door unlocked and, flinging it wide, snatched off his hat and stared upon the man, who, just risen from the elbow-chair beside the blazing fire, stood staring back at him.

And surely, surely neither Job the porter, nor Tom the bed-maker, nor any of his many clients, would have recognized

the worthy and estimable Mr. John Jarvey in this grey-visaged, shaking wretch who wiped the sweat from furrowed brow with nerveless fingers and peered at the intruder in such wide-eyed, speechless terror.

"Aha!" said the stranger, flinging off his sodden coat. "Aha, John—though twenty years are apt to change a man, I see you remember me. Aye, I've been buried—damn you! Buried for nigh twenty years, John, while you—you that sent me to it, prospered and grew fat—curse you! But the grave has given up the dead and I'm alive again, John! And a live man has appetites—I have, many and raging! So here come I, John, freed from the hell you sent me to—"

"I never did, Maurice, no, not I—never—never—"

"So here come I, John, hasting you-wards to supply all I lack—my every need. For I mean to live, John, live on you, by you, with you. I mean to make up for all the wasted years. I have many needs, and every day these needs shall grow."

Mr. Jarvey's deep-set eyes, usually so keen and steady, flickered oddly, his glance wandered, his hands fluttered vaguely.

"I—I am not a rich man—indeed no, Maurice. What would you have of me?"

"All you possess—and then more! Your money, your friends, your honor, your cursed self-complacency, your life, your very soul. My wants are infinite."

"If," said Mr. Jarvey, in the same strange, hesitant fashion, "if you will be a little reasonable, Maurice, if you'd be—a little reasonable—if you only would—?"

"Bah!" cried the other, seating himself in Mr. Jarvey's cosy elbow-chair and stretching his long legs to the blaze. "Still the same snivelling coward! She called you coward twenty-odd years ago, and so she might again were she here and alive. But she's dead, John, dead and forgot by all save you and me. And being dead, should her ghost haunt your chambers tonight and behold you with

her spirit-eyes, shivering and sweating where you stand, she'd name you 'coward' again!"

FROM ashen white to burning red. from burning red to ashen white. and upon his pallid cheek, a line of sweat that glittered in the candle-light. with hands clenched to sudden, quivering fists, and head bowed between his shoulders, Mr. Jarvey stood and listened. but under drawn brows his eyes, vague no longer, fixed themselves momentarily on the thin, aquiline face opposite, eyes, these, bright with more than their wonted keenness ere they were hidden beneath sudden, down-drooping lids.

"Her—ghost?" he mumbled—indistinctly, his glance wandering again. "Is—she—dead, indeed?"

"Years ago, John, and with bitter curses on your memory! Here's her ring—you'll remember it, I'm sure," and the stranger showed a small, battered gold ring upon his little finger, then reaching out he took up a glass that steamed aromatically on the hod.

"Aha," said he. "what's here, John?"

"My night-cap, Maurice," answered Mr. Jarvey, his roving gaze now upon the worn carpet beneath his slipped feet—"rum—hot water—sugar and a slice of lemon. I—I didn't know she was dead, Maurice!"

"Aye, she's dead—and gone, like your rum and water," saying which the speaker emptied the glass and set it down with a crash.

"Dead?" murmured Mr. Jarvey, blinking down at the empty glass. "Dead? Poor soul!"

"Damned hypocrite!" cried the intruder, rising so suddenly and with so wild a gesture that his foot struck the iron fender, dislodging the poker; and Mr. Jarvey, starting to the clatter of its fall, stood with bowed head, staring down where it lay gleaming in the firelight.

"Pah!" exclaimed the other, viewing his immobile figure in pallid disgust. "You were always a repulsive thing, Jar-

vey! How infinitely loathly you'll be when you're dead!"

"Pray," said Mr. Jarvey, heavily, and without removing the fixity of his regard, "pray when—did she—die?"

"'Tis no matter for you—enough of it! I'm hungry—feed me, and while I eat I will tell you how I propose to make you the means of life to me henceforth, how you shall make up to me in some small measure for all those years of hell!"

"You will—blackmail me—Maurice?"

"To your last farthing, John, to the uttermost drop of your blood!"

"And if I—seek the shelter—of the law?"

"You dare not! And tonight you shall sign a confession!"

"And if I—refuse, Maurice?"

"This!"

MR. JARVEY slowly raised his eyes to the pistol half-drawn from the breast of the threadbare coat.

"You would murder me then, Maurice?"

"Joyfully, if need be. But now I'm hungry, and you keep a well-filled cupboard yonder, I'll warrant!"

"Cupboard?" murmured Mr. Jarvey.

"Cupboard—well-filled? Aye, to be sure!"

And turning, he glanced at the wide cupboard that stood against the opposite wall, a solid and somewhat singular cupboard this. In that—at some dim period, it had been crowned with a deep cornice, the upper molding of which had been wedged and firm-fixed to the ceiling; and it was upon this upper part, that is to say, between the true top of the cupboard proper and the ceiling, that Mr. Jarvey's gaze was turned as he crossed the room obedient to his visitor's command.

Very soon he had set forth such edibles as he possessed, together with a bottle of wine, and, standing beside the hearth again, chin on breast, watched while his guest plied knife and fork.

"And you—tell me—Maurice," said he at last, speaking in the same hesitant manner and with his gaze now upon

the gleaming poker, "you tell me that—you—would—murder me?"

"Aye, I would, John—like the vermin you are. But you will be infinitely more useful to me alive. By means of you I shall feed full, lie soft, and enjoy such of life as remains for me—to the uttermost."

"And I," said Mr. Jarvey, turning to stare up at the cupboard with a strange, new interest, "I must slave henceforth for your pleasure, Maurice?"

"Precisely, John!"

"An evil destiny, Maurice!"

And here Mr. Jarvey's glance, roving from his guest's lank form to the top of the cupboard, took on a keen and speculative intensity.

"Your sin hath found you out, John, and come home to roost!"

"A youthful indiscretion, Maurice."

"That killed a woman and sent a man to twenty years of hell! But this is past, John, and the present being now, you shall fill me another glass of your very excellent wine."

Mr. Jarvey, having dutifully refilled the glass, took up his station by the hearth again, while his guest, holding up the wine to the light of the candles, nodded over it, smiling grimly:

"Twenty years of hell and degradation—a woman's life! Ha, John, I drink to you—here's misery for you in life and damnation in death!"

The speaker nodded again and, sinking back luxuriously in the cushioned chair, raised the glass to his lips.

Then, swift and sudden and very silent, Mr. Jarvey stooped, and his twitching fingers closed tight upon that heavy, bepolished, gleaming poker.

II

JOB, the night-watchman, opening slumberous eyes, shivered and cursed and, crouching above his fire, stirred it to a blaze, but, conscious of a chill breath, turned to behold the door of his lodge opening softly and slowly, wider

and wider, until he might behold a dim figure standing without, a tall figure clad in a rain-sodden, many-caped riding-coat and a shadowy wide-eaved hat.

"Gate—ho—gate!" said a hoarse voice, indistinct by reason of upturned collar and muffling shawl.

Very slowly the unwilling Job arose, scowling, and stepped forth into a night of gusty wind and rain.

"Look 'ee now, my master," he growled, slowly drawing bolt and bar, "wi' all respects doo from one as ain't a genelman an' don't wanter be to one as is or oughter me, what I means ter say is—don't 'ee come no more o' them jostlings, pushings, nor yet shovings lest, as 'twixt man an' man a man should be drawn ter belt ye one for a body-snatchin' thief an' rogue, d'ye see!"

Hereupon the door swung wide and, with never a word or look, the tall figure flitted away into the driving rain and was swallowed in the dark."

III

COME IN!" cried Mr. Jarvey, sitting up in bed and straightening his night-cap. "Come in, Tom—Lord bless me, Tom. What is it, then? . . . Come in!"

Obedient to this summons, the door opened to admit a shock of red hair with two round eyes below that rolled themselves in gruesome manner.

"Lord love 'ee, Mr. Jarvey sir," quoth Tom. "Good mornin' to 'ee, I'm sure, but Lord bless 'ee—an' you a-layin' there a-sleepin' so innercent as babes an' lambs an' it a-moanin' an' a-groanin' an' carryin' on as do fair make me flesh creep, sir—aye, creep an' likewise crawl—"

"Tom," sighed Mr. Jarvey, gently, "Tom, I fear you've been drinking!"

"Never a blessed spot, sir. S'elp me, Mr. Jarvey, sir, not one, never so much as—O Lord, theer it be at it again—d'ye 'ear it, sir, don't 'ee? 'Ark to it!"

So saying, Tom edged himself suddenly into the bedroom but, with terror-stricken

face, turned over his shoulder to peer into the chamber behind him as, dull and soft and low, there came a sound inarticulate and difficult to define, a groaning murmur that seemed to swell upon the air and was gone again. Mr. Jarvey's hands were clenched upon the bed-clothes, the tassel of his night-cap quivered strangely, but when he spoke his voice was clear and even and full of benignant reproof:

"Tom, you are drunk, beyond question."

"Not me, sir—no! Take me Bible oath on't, I will! Sober as a howl I be, sir. But you 'eard it a-groanin' an' moanin' ghastly-like; you 'eard it, Mr. Jarvey, sir?"

"Nonsense, Thomas. Heard what?" Speak plain!"

"It were a grewgious, gloopy noise, sir—like a stranglin' cat or a dog in a—there! O love me, there 'tis again, sir! Listen 'ow it dithers like a phanitom in a churchyard, like a—"

TOM'S VOICE ended in a hoarse gasp as, somewhere in the air about them, there seemed a vague stir and rustle, a scutter of faint movement, lost in a fitful, whining murmur. Tom was upon his knees, cowering against the bed, his head half-buried in the counterpane: thus Mr. Jarvey's fingers, chancing to come upon his shock of hair, tweaked it sharply, albeit he spoke in the same benignantly indulgent tone:

"Tom-fool, you are a drunken fool and a fanciful fool. Have done rolling your eyes and go order my breakfast—a rasher of ham, Tom, and eggs two! Tell Mrs. Valpy I found the coffee over-weak yesterday and the ham cindery. Off with you, Tom, and bring my breakfast in half an hour."

Obediently Tom rose and, heartened by Mr. Jarvey's urbane serenity, shook himself together, pulled a wisp of hair, made a leg and hurried off on his errand.

Left alone, Mr. Jarvey sat up in bed, and, tearing off his night-cap, sat twisting it in restless hands. Then, all at once,

he was out of bed and, creeping on naked feet, came where he might behold that cupboard; very still he stood there, save for the restless hands of him that wrenched and twisted at his nightcap, while he stared up at a crack that ran along the cornice with eyes of dreadful expectancy. Suddenly, dropping the nightcap and setting both hands upon his ears, he backed away, but with his gaze fixed ever in the one direction until, reaching his bedchamber, he clapped to the door and locked it.

When in due season Tom returned with breakfast he found Mr. Jarvey shaved and dressed, as serene and precise as usual, from the crisp curls of his trim wig to the buckles of his shoes.

But as he ate his breakfast the cupboard seemed to obtrude itself on his notice more and more, so that he took to watching it furtively and seemed almost unwilling to glance elsewhere. Even when he sat giving Tom the usual precise directions for dinner, served always, winter and summer, at six o'clock, his look would go wandering in the one direction so that it seemed to him at last that the keyholes of the two doors stared back at him like small, malevolent eyes.

"A—steak, Tom—yes, a steak with—ah, yes—mushrooms—and underdone, Thomas. And a pint of claret—nay—burgundy; 'tis richer and more comforting, Tom—burgundy—"

"Very good, sir!" answered Tom; and now, even as the clock of St. Clement Danes chimed the hour of nine, he tendered Mr. Jarvey his hat and cane, according to immemorial custom. But, to Tom's gasping astonishment, Mr. Jarvey waved them aside:

"Not yet, Tom, not yet!" said he. "I've a letter to write a—ah—yes, a letter to be sure—the office shall wait—and—ah—Tom—I am thinking—yes, seriously considering—taking up—smoking."

"What—you, Mr. Jarvis, sir—Lord love me!"

"Why not, Thomas? It is a very innocent vice, sure?"

"Why so it be, sir, and comforts a man as-tonishin'!"

"To be sure! Now what tobacco do you use, Tom?"

"Negro-head, sir."

"Is it a—good—strong tobacco?"

"Fairish, sir."

"What is a *very* strong tobacco, Tom?"

"Why, theer's black twist for one, sir. My grandmother smokes it and fair reeks, she do. 'Oly powers, she do so, sir!"

"Black twist, Tom—to be sure. You may go, Thomas—and mind, a steak—underdone, with mushrooms."

When Tom had departed, Mr. Jarvey, taking hat and cane, crossed to the door, but, going thither, whirled suddenly about to look at the cupboard, and, sinking into a chair, remained to stare at it until the two keyholes seemed to blink themselves at him, one after the other, whereupon he stirred and, shifting his gaze with an effort, rose to his feet and, taking hat and cane, glanced once more at the cupboard and began to retreat from it, walking backwards. Reaching the door he leaned there and nodded his head:

"Black twist!" said he. "Burned in the fire-shovel!"

Then, groping behind him, he found and lifted the latch and, backing swiftly out, clapped to the door and hasted down the winding stair.

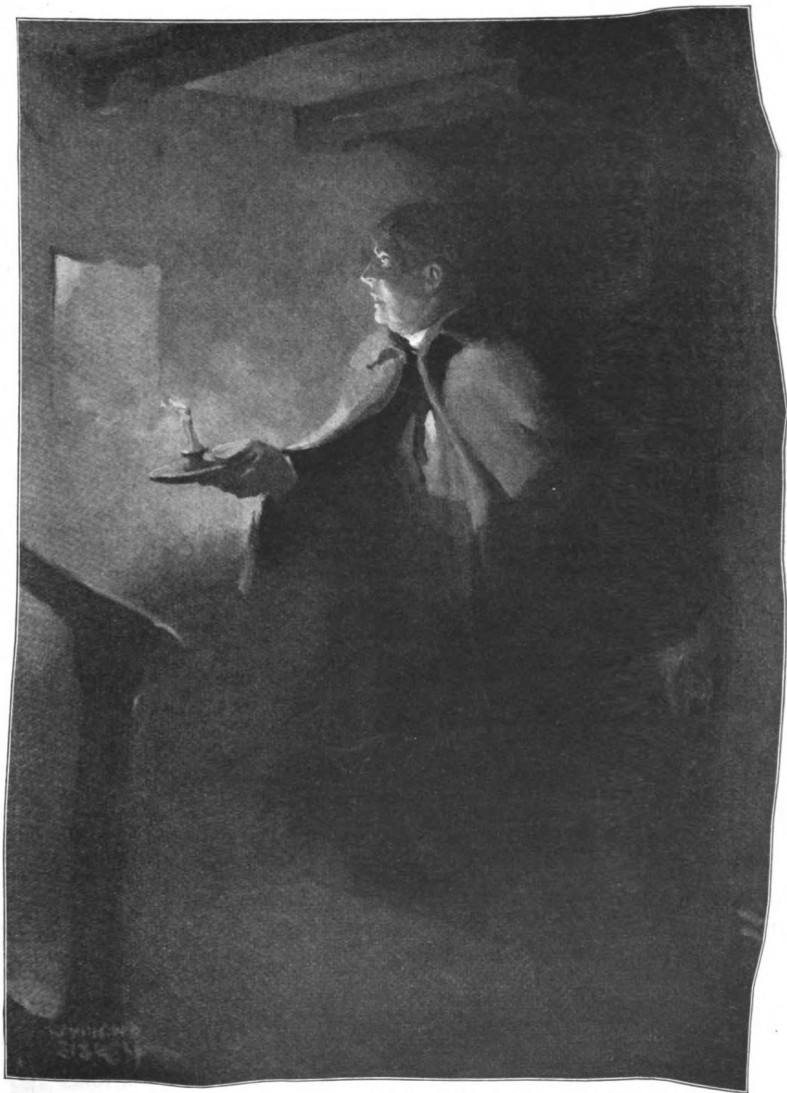
IV

IT WERE jest a fortnight ago this here very night, Job!" exclaimed Tom the bed-maker, spitting thoughtfully into the fire.

"An' tonight be Christmas Eve, Tom."

"As ever was, Job, an' 'twere jest two weeks ago, an' mark that. An' I know, becos' that very day I 'ad noo-painted the gate into Fetter Lane an' some raskell 'ad clomb over an' smeared all the paint off, consequently I 'ad to paint it over again. Two weeks tonight, Job, an' Mr. Jarvey never the same man since! Changed 'e be, ah—an' changin'—"

"'Ow so, Tom, 'ow so?"



"All at once there broke from him a strangled cry and he stood to stare at the small, grey shape."

"Took to smokin' 'e 'ave, for one thing, Job—place fair reeks of it of a mornin'—ah, reeks is the word—"

"Smokes, do 'ee?" quoth Job, puffing at his own pipe. "An' werry proper in 'im, too! Terbaccer's good for the inn'ards, Tom—comforts the bowels an' mellers the system."

"True enough, Job, but 'tis mighty strange in Mr. Jarvey—'im as never could abide the smell of a pipe all these years! An' now to take to smokin'—ah, an' uncommon terbaccer, too, judgin' by the smell o' the place of a mornin'!"

"Why, strong terbaccer's the sweetest, Tom! Gimme plenty o' body in me beer an' me baccy, says I—"

"Well, there's body enough in Mr. Jarvey's! Lord, fair choked me, it did 's mornin' when I opened the door—gamey, it were—I never sniffed sech terbaccer in all my days—no, not even my grandmother's—an' she reeks to 'oly 'eavens, she do! An' then, Job, when I opened the door 's mornin' wi' my key there's Mr. Jarvey 'unched up i' the arm-cheer over the 'earth an' the fire dead out. 'Lord love me, Mr. Jarvey,' I says, 'be ye sick, sir?' 'Never better, Tom,' says he. 'Only a little wakeful by reason o' the rats!' 'Rats?' says I. 'I've never seed none 'ereabouts,' I says. 'Why then,' says 'e, 'you didn't 'appen to see one run out o' the cupboard yonder—did ye—there!' 'e shouts, quick an' sharp-like, p'intin' with 'is finger—'down in the corner—don't ye see it, Tom?' 'Only this, sir!' says I, an' picked up one of 'is very own slippers. Whereupon, Job, 'e lays back in 'is cheer an' laughs an' laughs till I thought 'e'd choke 'isself—the kind o' laugh as makes yer flesh creep—"

"An' wherefore must your flesh go a-creepin', Tom?"

"'Cause all the time 'e was laughin' 'is eyes was big an' round an' starin'—"

"Ah!" nodded Job, "that's rum, that is. Rum took too frequent 'as a way o' makin' any man's eyes stick out—ah, as round as gooseberries, me lad, an' as for seein' things—rats is nothink. It's snakes

as is serious, an' pink toads an' big 'airy worms as twists an' wriggles ain't to be sneezed at nor treated disrespectful—but rats—wot's rats? A rat ain't—"

"What's that!" exclaimed Tom, starting and glancing suddenly towards the door.

"Wot's—wot?" demanded Job, starting also and scowling.

"I thought I 'eard somethink—outside."

"That's St. Clement a-strikin'. Wot yer got ter shake and shiver at St. Clement for—"

"I dunno!" muttered Tom. "I thought I 'eard footsteps outside a-creepin'—"

"'Ow could ye, be goles, when theer's six inches o' snow outside, as you werry well know?"

"Lord, Job—look!" cried Tom, starting up and letting fall his pipe to point with shaking finger. "Look—there—there!"

Following that shaking finger Job espied a small, furtive shape that, flitting from the shadow of the door, scuttered across the room and was gone.

"A rat!" he snorted. "An' then wot? Theer's a-plenty 'ereabouts, as you werry well—"

"Look—the door, Job—look at the door!"

AS HE SPOKE, very slowly and stealthily the door was opening inch by inch, until suddenly it swung wide and, as if borne upon the buffeting wind and flurry of snow, a tall figure appeared, who, clapping to the door, leaned there and, peering thitherwards, they recognized Mr. Jarvey.

"It came this way, I think?" he questioned, in a strange, high-pitched, querulous voice. "I've followed it a long time and it came in here—"

Suddenly this unknown, captious voice gave place to boisterous laughter and, coming forward, Mr. Jarvey hailed them in his own kindly, benignant tones.

"God bless us all, what a night! And still snowing—frosty and snowing—but seasonable; yes, very seasonable. A

Merry Christmas to you both and a Happy New Year! This old Inn hath seen a-many Christmases and known a-many New Years, and shall know a many more when we are dead—aye, dead and gone—eh, Job?”

“Why, sir, to die an’ go is natur’ arter all—”

“And so it is, Job. Death is the most natural thing—a good thing and kindly—the weary mayhap find rest at last and the eyes—aye, the eyes that watch us unseen, that blink upon us if we do but turn our back—these cruel, unsleeping eyes shall spy upon us no longer. Here is a joyous thought and this should make death welcome. Tom, my good Thomas, have you chanced to notice the keyholes of my cupboard—I cover them up sometimes—but they are always there!”

SO SAYING, Mr. Jarvey, having glanced over his shoulder towards the door, nodded and smiled in his kindly benevolent manner as he leaned forward to warm his hands at the fire, while Tom glanced from him to the fragments of his broken pipe on the hearth and Job puffed thoughtfully. Suddenly upon the silence stole the soft, mellow chime of St. Clement telling the hour.

“Ark to Clem,” said Job, stirring uneasily as the last stroke died away—“ten o’clock a’ ready—”

“Aye,” sighed Mr. Jarvey, his glance wandering to the door again. “The hours of a man’s life are numbered and quick in passing. I’ve heard St. Clement’s bells chiming my life away these many years, Job.”

“When then, sir, with all respect doo’, axing your pardin’, I says dang St. Clement’s bells wi’ all me ’ert.”

“No, Job, no. They are like the voices of old friends. I would wish for none other sound in my ears when I come to die.”

“Lord, Mr. Jarvey, sir,” exclaimed Job, wriggling in his chair, “why talk o’ dyin’? And this Christmas Heve, too!”

“An’ I’ll be goin’!” quoth Tom, rising

suddenly. “You’ll be takin’ your breakfast a hour later than usual, ’cordin’ to custom, tomorrow bein’ Christmas Day, Mr. Jarvey, sir?” he inquired.

“Why no, Tom,” answered Mr. Jarvey, thoughtfully, “tomorrow being Christmas Day you may take a holiday, Tom—”

“But what about you, sir—your breakfast—?”

“I shall be—very well, Tom.”

“Why, thank’ee, Mr. Jarvey, sir, I’m sure—good-night and a Merry Christmas to ye!” exclaimed Tom, touching an eyebrow. Then with the same good wishes to Job, he departed.

FOR A WHILE there was silence, Job puffing at his pipe and Mr. Jarvey leaning forward to warm his hands and stare into the fire; and watching him as he sat thus Job presently became aware of two things—firstly, that Mr. Jarvey’s lips were moving soundlessly; and secondly, that ever and anon at sudden and frequent intervals he started and turned to glance swiftly towards the door, very much as though someone standing there had spoken in reply. He did this so often that Job began to glance at the door also, and more than once thought he saw a small, dark shape that flitted amid the shadows. At last, his pipe being out, Job rubbed his chin, scratched his head, wriggled in his chair and finally spoke.

“Hexcuse me, Mr. Jarvey, sir, but wot might you be a-watchin’ of?”

“Watchin’?” repeated Mr. Jarvey, hitching his chair a little nearer to Job’s. “No, no—it is I who am watched, Job, wherever I go, sleeping and waking, night and day— which becomes a—little distressing, Job.”

“But ’oo’s a-goin’ to ’ave the imperance to go a-watchin’ of you, Mr. Jarvey, sir?”

Mr. Jarvey leaned nearer to lay a hand upon Job’s arm, turning him so that he faced the shadowy corner by the door!

“I’ll show you, Job—look—there!”

Following the direction of Mr. Jarvey’s pointing finger, Job thought once more to espy a small, vague shape crouched in

this dark corner, a shape that leapt suddenly and scuttered along the grimy wainscot and was gone.

"By goles!" exclaimed Job, staring. "It be that theer rat again!"

"Why yes," nodded Mr. Jarvey, "it does look like a rat——"

"And a rat it be, sir—only a rat——"

"And yet," sighed Mr. Jarvey, shaking his head, "who ever heard of a rat dogging a man through six inches of snow?"

"Rats," quoth Job sententiously, "rats is queer hannimiles, sir, and uncommon owdacious at times, but I never 'eard tell of a rat follerin' a man through six inches o' snow afore——"

"Why you see, Job," answered Mr. Jarvey, gently shaking his head, "I didn't say this was a rat, I merely remarked that it looked like one. But it grows late, Job, and rat or no, I must be going!" So saying he rose slowly and donned his great-coat, but with his hand outstretched toward the door-latch he shivered and turned back to the fire as if unwilling to face the bleak night.

"The wind's rising, Job," said he, shivering again and reaching his hands towards the fire. "Hark to it!" he whispered, as, from somewhere without, rose a shrill piping that sank to a wail, a sobbing moan and was gone.

"A dismal sound, Job, dismal and ominous—yes, a very evil noise!"

"An' the chimbley pot loose on Number Five!" said Job, gloomily.

FOR A WHILE they sat listening to the wind that rumbled in the chimney and wailed mournfully near and far, that filled the world outside with discordant clamor and passing, left behind a bodeful silence. Suddenly Mr. Jarvey was on his feet and, crossing to the door, paused there to glance back to the cosy hearth.

"A happy Christmas, Job," said he. "A happy Christmas to you and all the world!" And then he strode out into the howling night.

He was met by a buffet of icy wind

that stopped his breath, a whirl of driving snowflakes that blinded him, while the vague dimness of the Inn about him echoed with chaotic din, shrieks and cries and shrill, piping laughter that swelled to a bellowing roar as the rioting wind swept by.

Taking advantage of a momentary lull Mr. Jarvey crossed the Inn, ploughing through snow ankle-deep, yet paused suddenly more than once to stoop and peer. Now this way, now that, as one who watched something small that leapt and wallowed in the snow that lay on the ground about him.

Reaching Number —— he stood awhile gazing up the dark stair and listening until the pervading quiet was 'whelmed in the tumult of the wind and the rattle of lattice and casement. Then Mr. Jarvey, fumbling in a dark corner, brought thence a candle-end, the which he lighted at the dim lantern, and with this flickering before him began to ascend the winding stair.

And ever, as Mr. Jarvey mounted, his glance roved here and there, now scanning the dimness before him and now the gloom behind.

He reached his own stair at last and, pausing at the foot to snuff his candle with unsteady fingers, he went slowly up and up until, all at once, there broke from him a strangled cry and he stood to stare at the small, grey shape of that which crouched, glaring down at him from the topmost stair.

The candle fell and was extinguished; came a howling windgust that roared beneath the eaves, that shook and buffeted at rattling windows, and then in the darkness within rose shriek on shriek that was not of the wind, a rush of feet, a clash of iron, the crash of heavy blows and rending of wooden panels. But outside, the wind, as if wrought to maddened frenzy, roared and shrieked in wild halloo, louder, wilder, till, spent at last, it sank to a doleful whine, a murmur, and was still.

And upon this quiet was the stealthy

sound of a closing door, the grind of key in lock and the shooting of heavy bolts.

V

AND YOU DON'T 'AVE no rec-
'lection at all o' seein' 'm go out o'
the gate, Job?"

"Not me, Tom. Nary a glimpse of 'un
since Christmas Heve!"

"An' there's 'is door fast-locked an' me
knockin' 'eavens 'ard an' no answer—nary
a sound. Job—I don't like it."

"Maybe 'e's out o' town, Tom."

"Not 'im! An' then there's a curious
thing about 'is door——"

"Wot, Tom, wot?"

"Top panel be all cracked across. A
noo crack, Job."

"W'y then you can look through said
crack, Job."

"No, I ain't tall enough, but cracked an'
split it be. Come an' see for yourself."

"Why Tom the wind brought down the
chimbley pot on Number Five t'other
night, but I never 'eard o' wind splittin'
a door yet."

"Well, come an' see, Job."

With due deliberation Job got into his
coat, clapped on his hat and accompanied

Tom to the top chambers of Number ——.
Arrived on Mr. Jarvey's landing, he be-
held the door fast shut and sure enough,
a great crack in one of the upper panels.

With Tom's assistance Job contrived
to get his eye to the split in the panel and
thus peer into the room, and, doing so,
gasped and shrank away and, slipping
from Tom's hold, leaned against the wall
as if faint.

"What is it, Job—Lord love us,
what——?"

"We gotter—open—the door, Tom!"

"Aye, but why, Job—why?"

"We gotter—open—the door! Come
now—both together!"

BETWEEN THEM they forced the
door at last and then, beholding
what was beyond, cowered back, clasping
each other, as well they might. For there,
sure enough, was Mr. Jarvey, dangling
against the cupboard from a hook deep-
driven into the roof-beam, while above
his dead face, from the broken panelling
above the cupboard, was something black
and awful, shaped like the talons of a
great bird, but upon one of the talons
there still gleamed a small, plain gold
ring.

MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S STORM

By S. Monty Stanhope

LEAVE me!" cried the girl indig-
nantly. "I never dreamed that you
would take such a base advantage of me!"

"But—Virginia," he pleaded, "won't you
forgive me? I admit that I acted like a
fool—but—forgive me—"

"You had no right to kiss me!" she
stormed.

"I know," he admitted humbly, "but I
simply couldn't resist—you know how
much I care—how much I love you—"

"Love!" she scoffed. "Why, I only met
you this morning—how could you care so

soon? It's—it's—insufferable—you have
humiliated me so that I'm a-ashamed!
How *dared* you! I want you to go right
now!"

He bowed his head sadly.

"Remember," he murmured, "that if I
go now, I'll leave here and go back to
town—you'll never see me again—"

"Go!" she cried. "Go right away—I
don't care!"

"Well—" he hesitated awkwardly "—if
you're sure you *want* me to go, then
you'll—you'll have to get off my lap!"



"It was then that 'That Night' took on capital letters"

WITH LYNN HERON

By Winona Godfrey

Illustrations by Alice Harvey

AS HE WAITED at the stage-door with Ben and Billy, Mr. Sheridan Barclay thought that a little of this went a long way, and that the enthusiasm of those two young gentlemen made him feel old. He was twenty-nine. It wasn't that he had supped with so many ladies of the stage, because he hadn't. No, among his mother's grand array of her son's perfections, one of the most blissful boasts was that he had never been the least bit "wild."

It was a wonder, really, that Sherry wasn't just a mother's-boy, for he had the kind of mother, an admirable lady, of course, who easily forms the first syllables of that sad hyphenate. She did not now, it is true, select his ties, but she was still clinging to her selection of

a suitable wife. His long friendship with Charlotte Appleton had, perhaps, protected him from other sentimental episodes, and if he had ever examined the back of his consciousness he might have found a likelihood that someday he would marry Charlotte—mother would be so pleased. And he knew well enough that Charlotte on that someday fully expected to marry him. It was that sort of thing.

It had not, however, occurred to him that the desire of Ben, Charlotte's twin and Sherry's boyhood friend, too, to accompany him on this New York trip, was just a trifle in the nature of chaperonage. It would be a blow indeed to the Appletons to have the Barclay alliance bud nipped—why, the bean ranch up the coast was a regular gold mine, to

say nothing of oranges and walnuts Pomona-way, and some extremely promising oil leases.

They were celebrating the eve of their departure for home, as Ben put in "under the general auspices of our esteemed contemporary, William J. Crowner." The program had opened with the musical show, "Gay Gracia," in whose cast (among the exit-laughinglies) was "an old friend" of Billy's, a Betty Andrews, and for supper to follow Betty had promised to provide two of her friends to even up the crowd. Hence the stage-door.

"They come! they come!"

Billy pranced to meet two very blonde girls, and followed much rapid-fire conversation. Then:

"But, look here, Betty, where's Miss What's-her-name? Thought you said you'd bring another one? D'you expect our noble Sheridan here to flock all by himself?"

"Oh, she'll be along," Betty shrilled. "Lynn's having a session with Bernie tonight. You know, she's a comer, Billy, everybody says so. If Bernie stays in his right mind, he'll star her next season. Said she'd meet us here. That's her now!"

A taxi stopped, and from it alighted a white figure, waving farewell to a pudgy gentleman who had not bothered to descend himself. Betty swooped upon her.

"Hello, Lynn! . . . This is Billy Crowner, our merry little host—Miss Lynn Heron, Billy. And this is Mr. Appleton, from California, and Mr. Barclay—he's from California, too."

Miss Heron responded in a gay, crystal-clear voice. "Hello, Rose! Jolly of you to ask me along, Billy Crowner! How do you do, Mr. Appleton. Mr. Barclay." He took her extended hand, and she looked into his eyes, for the merest second, yet with a rather curious directness.

It was exactly then that That Night took on capitals for Sherry Barclay. She was beautiful or—could make you think she was. Above her white cloak, caught with one hand under her chin, her sleek

dark hair, shone black in the street-light. She was rather tall, slender with the round slimness of the dancer, and—and *different*, the young man from California was almost instantly sure, from these so blonde and fluffy and loud-jesting friends of hers. Or else—could *seem* different if she wished. For when the party was settled in Billy's car and she was allotted the seat beside "our gallant chauffeur," she talked slang over her shoulder in a high voice, but when she turned to Sherry, it fell into the low-pitched, delightfully inflected tones of some carefully-reared young aristocrat. . . . An actress of much talent—a "comer," they had said.

THEY drove countrywards, a high moon lighting them, speed making a tiny breeze against their faces in the hot, still midnight—and Sherry forgot to remember that she was an actress of much talent, that perhaps she thought she was expected to amuse him was why he found himself telling her about beans, about the ranch-house from whose verandahs you saw the Pacific, about how long he'd known Ben—even a little about his mother. Then—little silences—the chatter in the tonneau seeming so remote.

Perhaps there is not one who is the other half of us, who completes us, but in the first moments of love, or of that attraction that promises love, there is so often a feeling of being *re-united*, of having reached a journey's end. . . . Sherry, within ten minutes, was thrillingly conscious of the girl beside him, and there had become in that fact something blissfully comforting and exciting and exquisite and wonderful. He wanted to see her in the light, to know just what color were her eyes! He asked her if she were cooler now, and she replied: "I'm perfectly happy now."

"Aren't you always happy?"

She laughed a little. "Of course I am. And you're always happy, aren't you? You *must* be."

"Why *must*?"

"Why, you've just been telling me! What a lucky fellow you are. You've everything in the world."

He just caught at his amazed lips: "*Except you.*" He let the car strike a rut, and a chorus of protest rose behind him: "Don't look at Lynn, Sherry; look at the road!"

Around the next corner sprawled, lantern-strung, noisy, their objective, the Purple Goose Inn.

AT LAST under pitiless lights the serious young man from California might examine the electrifying being. He looked, of course, with no thought of analysis, only with wonder, through the daze-like silver fog of that ecstasy of infatuation called "love at first sight." The white cloak aside revealed white flesh of throat and shoulders, and bare arms, unblemished and exquisite. Behind her youth, a marvelous vitality kept, and would keep for long, her freshness unmarred by the wear of the stage, of such playtimes as this. Her face was made up, of course, but discreetly—mouth, generous, delicately sensuous, controlled; eyes, not definitely blue nor gray nor hazel, certainly not black . . . they seemed now a strange, deep purple, behind which were hung little far-off golden lights. They danced. At last, out of the whole world, after war—all those unconscious years—she was here! There was something pathetic in the simplicity of his surrender.

She did not respond obviously; sometimes she looked at him—thoughtfully.

Ben Appleton saw what was happening and exchanged a worried glance with Billy, ignored Betty's giggling, "That's *some* crush!" It was he who suggested a homeward move, and "stood by" on the verandah while Bill brought the car around.

The air was cool now and smelled showery, the pale and half-veiled moon hung low. People were going home—men yawned, women drew long breaths of the clean air. The girls still laughed

and chattered, but in spite of the fresh powder and rouge applied in the dressing-room, most of them looked bedraggled, eyes were dull, mouths drooped, wisps of hair escaped pins. The tired and sweating waiters glowered while they mouthed a thank-you-sir, and slipped a last tip into greasy pockets. To most, the night's pleasure was like a sucked orange, turned from fresh, shapely, and golden, to limp, stale, and unpalatable. Only to lovers can these nights remain enchanted. Sherry looked at the again white-cloaked Lynn, the sheen of her dark head at his shoulder, and thanked God for life when, feeling the caress of his gaze, she gave him the slightest of smiles and a glance from those reticent eyes of hers.

THEY had gone hardly two miles from the Inn when the car "died," and refused to be coaxed or tinkered into further headway that night. Two cars following offered assistance, but nobody had any tow-ropes and all they could give was transportation into town. It was decided to accept this. One was a seven and the other a four-passenger car, and it just happened that Sherry and Lynn, being nearest it, got into the latter. Upon such tiny decisions hang tremendous consequences.

Their hostess proved talkative and held forth the whole way. Sherry wanted to say many things to Lynn, but—here was her near, warm presence—and the future.

It would not be out of their driver's way to drop them at Lynn's apartment in Forty-seventh street. Sherry would take a taxi from there and not trouble further. The big car had vanished long ago.

Then—he stood alone with Lynn in a dim and dingy lobby, and some wild words tumbled from his lips.

"I don't want to leave you," he stammered. "*Lynn! Lynn!* May I see you tomorrow? I want to talk to you!"

He held both her hands against his breast, and she was looking, very gravely, into his eyes.

"Why—" she hesitated. "Yes, I guess so. Tomorrow's today, isn't it? I've something to tell you, too. About four?"

He agreed—and only kissed her hands for good-night—which must have surprised Miss Heron.

He did not come half way down to earth until he had walked six blocks, then he thought of a taxi, but the street was empty.

DAWN was in the sky when he let himself into the Crouner house, where there were signs that his friends had preceded him some time. He had never felt wider awake in his life and his head raced with tireless repetitions of every word Lynn had spoken to him, with pantomimes of her every posture.

He was madly, blindly, blissfully in love! What stupidity not to have spent his days to date anticipating this miraculous event! He could laugh happily at his state—without attempting the least analysis of the situation. He should have heard Billy's comment:

"The Sherry-er they are, the harder they fall."

After several hours of waking dreams, he gave up the attempt to sleep, and leisurely bathed, shaved, and dressed. Having heard sounds of household activity for some time, he was about to go downstairs, when there was a knock at his door. A maid stood there, with that wide-eyed face of carefully masked curiosity which servants wear when something is "going on in the family."

"If you will please step down to the library, sir."

"Certainly."

He ran downstairs, threw open the library door and stopped short in surprise. There was Mrs. Crouner, *en négligée*, one hand clinging to Billy, who half-sat on the arm of her chair. Ben leaned against the table, while in front of the fireplace stood a big man holding his hat in his hand. Ben and Billy, unshaven, in dressing-gowns, obviously hustled out of bed to this conference, eyed Sherry in si-

lence, and he was instantly aware that his being carefully dressed appeared to have some significance to them all.

Ben spoke first, awkwardly: "Sherry—ah—this is Barclay, Mr. Davidson."

Mr. Davidson acknowledged the introduction by turning his coat-lapel to reveal the badge of a police-detective.

Lynn! But he had left her safe so short a time before.

"What's the matter?"

He advanced into the room, closing the door behind him.

"You are Sheridan Barclay?"

"Yes."

"You were on a little party last night with these gentlemen at a place called the 'Purple Goose'."

"Yes, I was."

"With some ladies."

"Yes."

"Who were they?"

Of course Sherry saw that Mr. Davidson knew who they were, but he replied as before, calmly courteous:

"A Miss Andrews, Miss Rose Heath and——"

In spite of his intense desire to speak that name as coolly as the rest, it stuck in his throat. He moistened his lips to say, "Miss Heron."

Then—

"Why, what——"

Davidson interrupted.

"Just what happened after you and Miss Heron left the others?"

It was Lynn! He controlled himself.

"The people who took us into town left us at Miss Heron's apartment, and I—came away immediately. I could not get a taxi and walked home."

* "You did not stop at all at Miss Heron's?"

"Perhaps two or three minutes."

"What time was that?"

"Nearly three o'clock."

"And what time did you get home here?"

"I didn't look. Probably nearly an hour later. Will you please tell me what has happened?"

His tone was peremptory. Both his friends leaned forward and opened their mouths, to be stopped by a gesture from the detective.

"At three-twenty this morning the body of Tid Maury was found by a patrolman at the corner of Sixth Avenue and Forty-ninth street. He had been dead only a few minutes."

Davidson's eyes probed Sherry, although his tone remained casual.

Tid Maury? Sherry had never heard the name, and a tension relaxed in him. It was nothing about Lynn, then.

"Who is Tid Maury?" he asked, almost without interest, he was so relieved.

Davidson's voice had the ironic note of answering what one believes to be a purely rhetorical question:

"Tid Maury is—was—'Miss' Heron's husband."

Sherry's skin went gray under the tan and he felt a pounding in his temples. He kept his eyes on Davidson's, and they seemed to recede to pin-points, then rush back upon him, grotesquely enlarged, night-marish.

"You did not know Maury?"

Sherry replied in a cold, hoarse monosyllable.

"No."

He heard Davidson going on, and the voices of Ben and Billy and his mother, statements, questions, protests, sounding far-away and incoherent, though the meaning of it all was piercingly distinct.

Richard Maury, commonly called "Tid," dancer, comedian, had been for some time separated from his wife, known as Lynn Heron . . . was seeking reconciliation . . . last night young Barclay's infatuation for her had been remarked—evident to everybody. . . . What more likely than that an encounter with the jealous husband at such an hour had led to his death? . . .

SHERIDAN BARCLAY was taken to headquarters, subjected to a grilling examination, held for thirty-six hours, then released, since nothing could be un-

earthed to connect him with the crime, save the one circumstance to which had been given such a sinister twist. He could prove that he had never seen Tid Maury, and did not even know of his existence. Developments pointed to the conclusion that Maury had been struck down by footpads, who had been frightened away by the patrolman's approach.

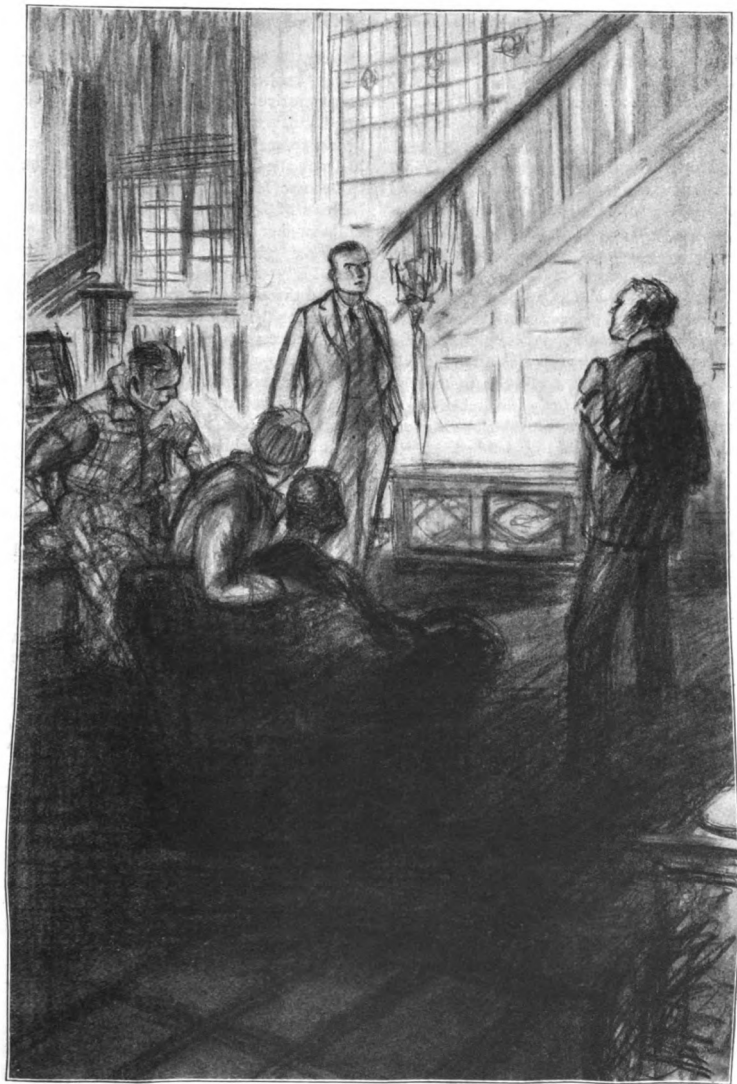
It was such a case as the sensation-mongers delight in. Headlines shrieked across the country—Did Rich Young Californian Kill for Love of Musical Comedy Star?—Beautiful Wife of Dead Man Defends Barclay! And so on. Sherry read with rage and shame that Lynn Heron, twenty-two years old, who would be starred this fall by Bernard Blake, denied any previous acquaintance with Sheridan Barclay and declared it impossible and preposterous that he could have had anything to do with the death of Richard Maury. She and Maury had been separated for a year, but they were friendly when they chanced to meet. She had not seen him for weeks. She refused further comment.

Paragraphers inquired archly why rich young Californians always gravitated in the Big City to musical comedy stars.

He received exactly fifty agonized telegrams from his mother.

To be accused unjustly is hard to bear, but to what might have been a really dangerous position Sherry gave little thought in the deeper agony of his disillusion. That swift, bright love of his was like a golden arrow aimed at the sun and falling broken on a dusty highway. He had knelt by what seemed a pure, sweet, sparkling spring and found the water muddied by the feet of the herd. All that was sensitive and fastidious in him revolted at this implication in the tawdry lives of tawdry people.

What glamor had been upon that girl, the wife of a cheap dancing fellow, parted from him, "playing around with other men"—that was what Betty Andrews had said to Billy in defense of her friend. "Well, say, she doesn't have to go into a



"Mr. Davidson acknowledged the introduction by turning his coat-lapel to reveal the badge of a police-detective."

nunnery, does she, because she made a mistake and married Tid? Got a right to play around a little, hasn't she?"

It was to her that he would have knelt as to a vestal.

How he must have amused her! What an ingenuous yokel she must think him! . . . Married—married—he did not know why that tasted the bitterest. And he could not escape in newspapers (which he seemed unable to resist) pictures of Tid Maury, a slim, handsome, laughing fellow—untimely dead. A little acquaintance would have soon brought him this same disenchantment, he told himself. He had not caught a glimpse of the real girl, he had been briefly bewitched by so sweet flesh and some mysterious essence that he had youthfully fancied of the spirit.

Ben Appleton told him that he had quarreled with Billy for having "introduced us to such a bunch! . . . This is tough on you, Sherry, but you know it's pie for the Heron. Lovely publicity! Bet Blake's running around her in circles now and raising her salary at every jump—"

"Cut that," Sherry ordered.

At the Crowners' he was received conciliatingly by Billy, with a somewhat aggrieved air by his mother. Here, too, was a note from Lynn—a few words only.

Dear Mr. Barclay—What can I say? Only a futile I'm sorry. If you can ever forgive me.—L. H.

Wearily he agreed to Ben's urgent plea that they "get out of this." Besides, Mother must be reassured—she was worrying herself sick. . . . They left New York that night.

On the train he punctiliously replied to Lynn.

Dear Miss Heron—You were not, of course, in any way to blame for what has happened, so there is nothing to forgive. I am sorrier, too, than I can tell you. May I wish you every success? —Sheridan Barclay.

And so home to fond, over-anxious, and quiveringly sympathetic Mother, to the

restless, blue, indifferent Pacific, to an exciting "gusher," to the plebeian but most remunerative beans, and to gentle, sheltered, cultured Charlotte, who was always trying to make him understand that *that* had not shocked her out of being willing to become Mrs. Barclay.

News of Lynn was not meager. Blake did star her that fall as "the most bewitching girl in the world—"PAULETTE"—a slender imported vehicle carried through a metropolitan season by the personal success of the well-advertised star, whose press-agent continued to embroider the mystery of Richard Maury's death. Every stone thus cast rippled across the country's press to make Mrs. Barclay shudder with fresh distaste, to make people whisper that Sherry Barclay was *really* the last fellow you'd expect of becoming involved in an *affair*, a scandal, murder.

AND SO THE YEAR dragged and drifted by, as years do. And Sherry went on about the business and pleasure of life, as men do, trying to convince himself that there was nothing in that secret room of his heart from which he carefully averted his eyes. When he motored into Los Angeles, which was not infrequently, he always saw Charlotte, and was aware of a droopy patience in her, and then he'd say drearily to himself: "Why don't I marry her—and be done with it."

Then Ben became engaged to a wonderful girl, and one June day Sherry got a note from him saying that Lillian and her brother were visiting the Appletons and . . . "Run into town a few days, won't you? I want you to meet *Her*, old boy, and help us do some stepping out."

Mother, always Charlotte's ally, hoping the love-making might prove contagious, urged him, and anyway there was no reason to refuse, so one morning he drove away toward the City of the Angels—came through the enchanted valley of San Fernando, and through Cahuenga Pass into Hollywood, and was proceeding

down its busy boulevard when—a billboard shouted to his casual glance:

"PAULETTE"
With Lynn Heron
*Opening of the New
Dartwell Theatre*
Monday Evening,
June 20th.

He had not been reading Los Angeles papers much lately—an odd thing that he should have missed the announcements of this engagement—and Mother certainly hadn't noticed it either! Ben—he didn't go into that. And this was Wednesday, Wednesday afternoon.

Lynn Heron—Lynn Heron. . . . He could see her—vividly—standing in that dim and dingy little lobby, the white cloak slipping from her white shoulders, her hands in his—her low voice murmuring . . . "About four?" And he had never seen her again!

HE HAD hardly greeted Katie at the Wilshire house when the telephone rang. It was Charlotte.

"Oh, Sherry, I'm so glad you're here! We'll have a little dinner tonight, and dance afterward.

"You'll like Lillian—we're all charmed with her. And her brother George is here, too. Come over as soon as you can."

More of that, with appropriate interpolations by Sherry. He had a few things to do, but yes, he'd come.

He changed his clothes and went on downtown.

Billboards everywhere:

"PAULETTE"—With Lynn Heron.

He drove past the New Dartwell where a sign announced "Matinee Today." He parked his car, and met some people he knew, and—it was four o'clock when, giving in, he walked up to the box-office, and almost an expression showed on the ticket-seller's face at his question.

"Last act's on now! Give you a seat in the last row."

Sherry went in.

She was on the stage—in a white cloak, which the tenor was lifting from her bare shoulders to reveal a flame-colored gown that made her vivid as an hibiscus blossom. Vivid. . . . A wispy little woman next to him kept whispering comments to her fat friend—"Ain't she full of life, Fay! I never saw anybody peppier, did you? She's grand, Fay, don't you think so?"

"Uh-huh," said Fay, "I should say so." The handsome baritone made love to her. She sang and danced with a background of twenty dress-suited chorus-men, all bawling their "passion to be in the fashion and so—in-love-with-you!"

She spoke her smart lines in a crystal-clear, yet not high-pitched, voice, making every point hit true. She knew what she was doing every minute; she had herself every minute perfectly in hand. Yes, she "knew her business," and had "personality"—the greatest prize of all in the theatre. The audience was for her heart and hand—and so was it any wonder that she radiated vitality and happiness!

THE Wednesday matinee audience, if its gloved hands cannot enact so many encores, had come solely to be enthralled, intoxicated by the glamor of the theatre, by music and laughter and youth and dancing and a semblance of beauty, taking the cup of simulated romance from the hand of any energetic, painted, artful young woman—such as Lynn Heron. This was Lynn Heron . . . this strange woman with the spotlight on the sheen of her dark head and her rouged cheeks and laughing mouth. . . . Why had she anything to do with him? Grotesquely he heard his own voice like an echo behind this merry chorus—Lynn! Lynn! . . . *I don't want to leave you. . . .*

He tried to be aware only of mawkish banalities, of all the vulgarity, the artificiality, the tawdriness that the sophis-

ticated prefer to believe is all that lies behind the asbestos curtain—especially that descending on the finale of a musical comedy.

The Dartwell's new tableau-curtains of maroon velvet swung slowly together, so that the last thing you saw was the charming figure of Paulette, turning from her lover's arms to stretch grateful hands to these her grantors of all that is called success.

Young Mr. Barclay pressed his handkerchief to his damp forehead and hurried from the theatre.

It seemed to Charlotte that she had never seen Sherry so talkative, even if at times he appeared to forget what he was talking about! Ben's Lillian, just a tiny bit disappointed at the unpretentious home of her fiancé, beamed on Mr. Barclay, of whose worldly assets she had been informed, and who might be in the family, too, some day.

"If Charlotte can manage it by moving heaven and earth," she observed to her shrewd little self.

George, nineteen, threw a bomb:

"We ought to have gone to a show somewhere. Say, you mustn't miss 'Paulette'! Lynn Heron's a peach! Fellow I know saw it in London, and he says the Heron puts it all over the English girl that created the part."

At eleven o'clock, Sherry, dancing with Charlotte at the stylish café, caught himself going over as if it were a refrain. *Might as well marry Charlotte—so suitable—mother'd be so happy.* . . . Charlotte, tilting her small fair head, smiled into his eyes, murmuring: "I'm so glad you're here, Sherry."

At twelve o'clock, an excited exclamation from George.

"Say, look who's here! Look!"

Coming directly toward them, with two hovering gentlemen, all in white and shimmering silver, laughing, carefree—"Why, it's Lynn Heron!" cried George. "I'd know her any place. It's Lynn Heron!"

Perhaps she heard him, for she threw

a glance in his direction, and encountered the serious face of Sheridan Barclay. Something flashed across hers, gone instantly. Then she inclined her head slightly in conventionally friendly recognition.

Sherry got to his feet. . . .

He did not sleep very well that night, and out of whirling, fantastic and far from restful thoughts he seized grimly on this: "I'm bewitched, that's all. It's silly and stupid and it's got to stop. I keep holding on to something that I know well enough isn't there. The only way to let go is to see that it isn't there. Daylight . . ." So at eleven a. m. he heard this: "This is Miss Heron's maid. I could take the message, if you please. . . . Yes, sir. B-a-r—oh, yes, sir, Barclay."

Then almost as distinctly:

"Miss Lynn, 's a man named Barclay. Says will you see him today sometime?"

The other voice did not reach him. Then—

"Hello, Mr. Barclay? Miss Heron'll be able to see you 'bout two, if that's convenient to you. . . . Yes, sir."

HE HAD ONLY TIME to glance at the personal touches in the hotel sitting-room, when she entered to him, smiling, perfectly composed, offering her hand, which he did not retain.

"This is kind of you. I did not think of your being in Los Angeles."

Her speech was the clipped, modulated, soft "a"-ed and "r"-ed English of the stage.

She could have admitted that it had not been so much trouble to acquire, and that she had by no means lost the ability to talk "regular."

He was not so much at his ease.

"I left New York very suddenly. I—was sorry not to have seen you again."

"I was sorry, too. I—it was such a terrible thing to happen. I knew you would never forgive me," she added very simply.

Sherry returned, carefully:

"That would be stupid of me, when you had nothing at all to do with it."

"As a matter of fact, I had everything to do with it."

She was so amazingly direct.

"Well—of course, in a way."

They looked at each other—curiously. She sat facing him, relaxed in the deep chair, dressed in a smartly and expensively simple soft silk gown, her crossed legs revealing a good deal of silken ankle. Her dark hair was lustrous, her eyes clear, her skin velvety fine, her hands white and shapely if not small; in short there was subtly upon her the bloom of that rare thing, a perfect physical condition, upon which has been skillfully superimposed all the art of the modern toilet.

We can seldom enough, if ever, escape the marks of our trades, and more plainly labeled than house-wife and shop-girl and school-teacher is the actress. That label is usually called sophistication. Lynn was younger than Charlotte, but she had long known at first hand more about the world, about life, more about men, manners and methods than Charlotte would ever surmise.

"I wanted to see you," she began. "I kept hoping you'd come until I knew you were on your way west. I was awfully surprised to hear from you this morning."

"So was I."

"I know," she said quietly.

H E WINCED, then leaned forward, throwing aside all this pretense. "What were you going to tell me that next day?" That did seem to startle her a little. "I haven't forgotten what I said and did that night," he recalled bitterly.

No coquetry lurked in her half-smile.

"Well—I was going to tell you several things. That I was married. . . . At first I didn't know that you didn't know that fact about me—then when I saw the kind of man you were, I understood that you didn't know, and that it would make a great deal of difference to you."

"Didn't it make any to you?" he asked, harshly.

"Why did you come here today?" she demanded with that straightforwardness that kept him bracing himself as under splashes of cold water.

"To see why I can't outlive an infatuation for a girl who—"

Certainly he had not come to say that!

She merely continued to look at him—to appraise him.

"Who what?" coolly. "You have an accusing air. You know—what happened wasn't very pleasant for me, either. Suppose it hadn't happened. Would you have have walked out and never said another word—as you have done?"

"Isn't it pretty futile to ask that?"

"I'm curious. You know, you almost made me believe that I had found something real."

She gave a little laugh.

"You were wonderful."

"Lynn!"

She examined him, still with the half-smile.

"And suppose I had been—just what you thought me . . ."

"Let us suppose that," he coolly conceded. "Very likely I should have begged you to marry me not later than the day after."

"And I should have done it! I needed an angel rather badly just then. You had a narrow escape, Mr. Barclay."

"Why are you talking like this?"

"Because—well, I am really a very honest person. And wouldn't it have been pretty absurd for me to have warned you the moment we were introduced that I had made a mistake at nineteen and married the wrong man? Though I saw very soon that you were old-fashioned—fastidious—that even—not to have been first, would shock, would be—disillusioning to you."

This astounding frankness! She was going on.

"And then to be involved in that horrible situation. I could hardly expect a mere—infatuation you called it. . . . No, I could not expect it to survive such a test."



"'Why, it's Lynn Heron!' cried George. 'I'd know her any place. It's Lynn Heron!'"

"Lynn, did you—did you expect it to survive?"

Self-righteous prig—it had never occurred to him that it was *he* who had failed *her*—he, who—

"How could I? Why, I was tossed out into the world as they toss puppies into a pond to learn to swim! Let me tell you it's a bit complicated at fifteen, what with men and clothes and the necessity of eating.

"Why shouldn't I be wise—at twenty-two?

"And being wise. . . ."

"I wish you'd tell me," he almost groaned.

"What?"

"About yourself—your life."

"That's why you came, isn't it?" And no acid in it at all. "So you could be quite done and go and marry her in peace. Which one was it? The little blonde with the anxious eyes?"

He found a grin somewhere in his racked system.

"Yes, that was Charlotte, since I'm so transparent to you."

She regarded him.

"Yes, I see how it is. A woman like me sometimes catches the imagination—isn't that what they say in the stories?—of a man like you."

She smiled, the slow, subtle and ravishing smile she used with such thrilling effect as Paulette.

"But you couldn't bear to see the plain sawdust in the doll, could you?"

"You hate me, don't you?" he said drearily.

"It was like this. . . ."

THERE WAS a whimsical note in the clear, ever-so-faintly ironic tones, half curiously reminiscent, as if she observed from a new aspect, events very seldom rehearsed.

"My father was an actor in one of these summer park stock-companies, and Aunt Althea had a house near the park.

"Mother lived with her. Mother's name was Lynette and she sang in the choir

and was going to be a kindergarten teacher.

"My father was romantic looking, quite, with dark curls—he called himself Edward Heron, but his name was really Henry Smith. To a snubbed little person like this Lynette I suppose he was glamorous.

"I have heard her say, ever so innocently, poor mother!—that the weather was so lovely that summer. They fell in love, and Aunt Althea made a row, and one night in a thunderstorm they eloped. . . . And pretty soon they had me.

"I remember playing with bedraggled dolls about so many very dingy stage-doors. We lived in shabby rooms—back apartments—and I've been handed out of windows with things in bundles—leaving old trunks to angry landlords. Mother went on in 'mobs,' and sometimes I was pressed in, too, to say, 'Mamma, kiss papa,' but mother hated it, and fairly trembled when my father put rouge on my little cheeks.

"Then when I was nine, father went on with a road-show and we were left behind in a little town, so I might go regularly to school. We didn't see much of him after that. Mother wanted him to settle down and let us have a home, and they quarreled about it, and finally he went off and we never saw him again. Maybe he was killed in some train wreck—but we never knew.

"Mother sewed and worked in stores and we were always thinking about the rent. And she worried for fear I'd get stage-struck. She feared and hated the stage, poor mother, and I was a dancing, healthy little animal sort of child. When I was about fourteen I wanted to stop school and go to work and she wanted me to keep on and be a teacher, maybe. And then—all of a sudden—she died."

SHE PAUSED, as one turns slowly the pages of an old diary. Distinctly as he saw the picture, he found nothing to say.

After a moment she went on.

"So, there I was—alone. I went home with a neighbor after the funeral and stayed a few months with her, washing dishes and helping. Then she passed me on to another woman—working for your board, it's called. I guess I had a pretty good appetite and this one made me hustle to pay for it. Unluckily, or maybe it was luckily. I don't know—you never do know just which things are—this woman had a son, and one day his mother caught him trying to kiss me. . . . You don't like this much, do you?"

She smiled at him, and he said: "Go on."

And he found his throat dry.

"Well, Mrs.—Spears, I think her name was—was hurt to find what an ungrateful little hussy I was, so she set me and my wicker telescope out on the sidewalk and told me to move on. . . . I remember I was so mad! But the washwoman was just going home, and she said I'd better come home with her for the night anyway.

"She had a daughter about my age who worked in a store, and so I went to work there, too. I got five dollars a week. . . . This boring you awfully?"

"No, go on," he said again, in a hard voice.

"I got awfully sick of this hit-or-miss living—besides, I knew my mother was unhappy about it, no matter where she was.

"And I had only one dress and holes in my shoes. One morning going to work, I noticed an old man drop something—pulled it out of his pocket with his handkerchief—and it was a five-dollar bill.

"So I skipped on and gave it to him, and he started asking me questions. He had sharp eyes, that old Professor Tevani—the end of it was that I went and kept house for him in the funniest old attic you ever saw.

"The old professor had a wreck of a piano and he gave me singing lessons, cursing my voice all the time because it wasn't grand opera.

"It was—of course it was queer. About a year of that and then some relations of his turned up and they took him off with them—in spite of him. It seemed to me I was always getting notice to move on that way.

"It happened that there was a musical show in town that week, and all of a sudden I said to myself: 'I guess I'll go on the stage.' Well—it was a sort of miracle—they took me on. We had a lucky season and I got back to New York contracted to the show business. I wasn't stage-struck and I knew mother'd hate it, but there I was just the same. Every morning when I got up I'd say to her: 'Don't you worry now! It's in me probably to do this, and what else can I do? And I'm going straight, mother, so don't you worry about me.'

"Sometimes I was in luck, and I've been stranded and hungry. . . . In a show after a while that—Tid Maury was with.

"We had a dance together and we got to be pretty good friends. He wasn't much older than I—and handsome—and full of fun. There was another man, then, too, older and—hard to fight. . . . So—one day—I don't suppose you'd understand why—just because we were young and it was such a lovely April day and we both had new clothes—I married Tid."

She paused a moment, and then continued, slowly:

"I don't think I'm sorry, even now. It was part of—my education, perhaps. You know that picture of the children dancing across a meadow? We were like that—for a while. All laughter and—heedlessness. . . . I suppose it—all this—seems sordid to you.

"But at that, mind you, I haven't been unhappy about it—I always said, 'Oh, well, it doesn't matter such an awful lot, does it?'

"I had some childish idea that if I didn't let on things were bad with me, mother wouldn't know.

"Pretty soon things got criss-cross with Tid and me. Because there wasn't any-

thing *real* between us at all. Things happened, and then more things, and finally at the end of it all, I said, 'I'm sorry, but what's the use going on like this? If it was any use, I'd do it.

"But it isn't."

"That's about all. That's the outline of the whole book down to that chapter where you came in. . . .

"Always I've got to pick myself up. Hurt maybe, yes, but what's the use not going on?"

There was nothing argumentative in the question, it was a mere statement of fact—of how gallant a fact it was she seemed unaware.

To him, as a waiter hands you glasses on a tray, had been given shelter, leisure, education, every advantage. And this girl—this vivid woman who faced him—had been tossed into life, in her own phrase, as a puppy is tossed into a pond to learn to swim.

Well, she knew now that he had been pining for her like a love-sick boy. And

she had not pined for him. Oh, he understood now—it was not that she could not be hurt; she could be hurt, but—she went on and left that hurt behind.

The high heart of her was not to be defeated—not by any man, not by love, not by life.

He could go and marry his Charlotte—and dream of Lynn all his days. But—even if she loved him, she could let him go and close the book, and go on valiantly about the business of life. And no man can bear that.

She was saying:

"You see. There's not one foot of common ground—"

"Does it matter?" Mr. Sheridan Barclay interrupted. "Will you marry me, Lynn?"

SHE LOOKED at him a moment with that so-straight gaze of hers before her mouth curved into a little smile and she replied quietly:

"Any time you like, Sherry!"

EVEN IN THOSE DAYS

By Henry G. Moorehouse

ALL ROME appeared to be in flames. In every direction the sky blazed with the light of reflected fires, and from below rose sounds of tumult and confusion. On a balcony of the imperial palace stood Nero, smiling out upon the burning city—and serenely fiddling.

Beyond in an ante-chamber Nero's auntie was ringing a fire-alarm. In dashed Poppaea Sabina, Nero's wife, wringing her hands.

"Oh! Oh!" wailed Poppaea Sabina, "the dreadful man! They say he had it set afire himself—everybody's talking about it!"

"Why, the old fire-bug," exclaimed Nero's auntie. "And there he stands, playing that frightful fiddle as if nothing

had happened. I wouldn't mind, only he's the worst fiddler in Rome!"

In extreme agitation Poppaea Sabina rushed out upon the balcony.

"My lord," she cried, forgetting in her excitement to bow, "Rome is burning! Canst thou not *do* something about it?"

Without ceasing to fiddle, the emperor winked reassuringly at her.

"My dear Poppy," said he, "calm thyself. There is no cause for alarm. I ordered this little conflagration myself, and it will bring many shekels into the coffers of state. You see, dear, it's going to make a five-reef thriller."

"But—"

"I am burning Rome," grinned Nero, "for the movie rights!"

THE SELLING TALKER



"You have earned your dinner," said Gallagher.

The Story by Newton Fuessle

Illustrations by J. H. Striebel

ONE MINUTE before the Twentieth Century Limited made exit from the Grand Central Station, two men strode through the gate, stepped aboard, and at once entered their state-room. One was Whitman F. Gallagher. The other was Gordon Penfield.

Gallagher immediately turned to the porter, thrust an appropriate sum of money into the black palm, and said in a low tone:

"Mr. Penfield and I are not aboard this train, Jeff."

"Yes seh. Ah'm on, seh."

"Very good. Bring us a large pot of black coffee."

"Raght away, seh!"

Gallagher was not accustomed to speak in low tones. His conversation was usually keyed in a much higher register. In his eyes was a look of authority and

command. He was impressive, from his stature down to his shine. There was a swing in his gait and a confidence in his bearing that stamped him as someone. His chesty figure was enclosed in an easy-hanging suit of grey that surrounded him with a two hundred and fifty dollar fit. He spoke with nervous fluency, was choosy about his words, and even choosier about the sort of business he went after. He was noted for his tunnel-work—for constructing underground passage-ways to attractive advertising accounts.

Gordon Penfield, his colleague, had the reputation of speaking the worst English and writing the best English of any man in the advertising business. But this, like most neat rhetorical turns, was an exaggeration. But Penfield could twist a bromide into an epigram at a moment's

notice, and he rarely went stale on an account. In build, he was taller and slimmer than Gallagher, less fussy in dress. He carried himself with a languid ease. Because of his contempt for most clients and his brusque, impolitic arrogance, Gallagher generally and general-like counted him out of most pivotal conferences.

"Devil of a place to have to sit all the way to Chicago," complained Penfield, with a resentful look at his companion.

"Compose yourself, my sensitive friend," replied Gallagher pleasantly. "This journey is momentous."

"Can you land that business?"

"I must."

"How much they going to spend?"

"Half a million the first year."

"That ain't so much."

"Still, it's something."

"Anybody else after it?"

Gallagher raised six fingers.

"Been cultivating 'em?" asked Penfield with a yawn.

"Wooing them," answered Gallagher, lightly tossing off a kiss in the general direction of the State of Illinois.

"Sanitary finger bowls," said Penfield, with crisp derision.

"Virgin soil for copy," replied Gallagher, caressing the phrase with his voice. "What's your writing slant going to be?"

"I don't know yet," was the indifferent rejoinder.

"You will when the time comes," returned Gallagher confidently.

The attendant returned with the coffee.

"This will keep you awake," said Gallagher to his yawning companion.

"Hope so," was the tired answer.

"When this slump hit the business," pursued Gallagher, "who would have foreseen that the humble finger bowl would be the thing to lift a potent finger to help overcome the evil effect of cancellations?"

"I wish it luck."

"Leave it to me," said Gallagher genially.

By the time the Century reached Albany, the two had already mapped out a

tentative presentation of the merchandizing possibilities.

"You have earned your dinner," said Gallagher with satisfaction. He pressed the porter's bell.

"I won't eat in here. I'm going to the diner," objected Penfield.

"You are not! We're not going to be seen on this train. It's always as full of advertising men as the erstwhile Ponchartrain. None of them are going to know that you and I are headed for Chicago. That's not the way I work."

And as usual, Gallagher had his way.

"How the devil did you ever land that motor car account that everybody was after?" asked Penfield a little later, cutting into a lamb chop.

"That was easy."

"How d'you do it?"

"While the rest of them were promising nothing more exciting than service, I guaranteed to sell personally thirty cars a year for them, besides what the advertising itself would sell."

"Who'd you promise to sell thirty cars to?"

"My friends."

"My God, you had nerve!" exclaimed Penfield, surveying the other.

"When you're in the agency business, my shrinking colleague, you've got to have nerve."

"But can you deliver?"

"I always deliver," was the confident reply.

The Century was entering Buffalo before Gallagher and Penfield entered their pajamas and laid upon their pillows heads that were weary of the subjects of bowls and fingers.

At Englewood, with a hint of dark circles under their eyes, but unseen by the watchful eyes of advertising circles, they left the train, and drove the remaining distance to the Greystone Hotel in a taxi.

"I never get off at the La Salle Street Station when I come out here after an account," explained Gallagher.

"Not the way you work, eh?" asked Penfield banteringly.

"That's correct."

When the taxi drew up to the curb, Penfield looked out and said:

"This isn't the Greystone Hotel."

"Private entrance. Do you think I'm going through the lobby?" was the prompt reply. "Gordon, my boy," added Gallagher, when they had been shown to adjoining rooms facing the lake, "I'm going to ask you to stick here while I run over to Adams Street to see these people and roll the balls on the finger-bowling green. Stay in your room. If you require food, drink, or cigars, have them brought up. Stay under cover. Don't be seen."

"Gee, but you've got to be humored," growled Penfield.

"You do as I say, and this business is ours. I've got an idea." ■

IN TEN MINUTES' time, Whitman F. Gallagher was ushered into the executive offices of the General Paper Products Company, Inc. The trace of dark circles under his vivacious eyes had vanished. His well-nourished face glowed. He walked with the springy step of the confident.

He was received by Mr. Kessler, president of the company; Bass, the general manager, and Houser, the advertising manager.

"Gentlemen," said Gallagher respectfully, "it is a pleasure not to be kept waiting." With easy unconcern, he laid his portfolio upon the table, and placed beside it a large leather cigar-fold, disclosing two inviting and unbroken rows of thick perfectos.

"I trust that Mrs. Kessler is well," he continued, addressing the head of the concern, "and that the young man has recovered from tonsillitis."

"The family is well, thank you; but how did you know that Roy had tonsillitis?" replied Kessler, helping himself to a cigar.

"Your physician mentioned it a moment ago at the hotel."

"So you know Dr. Denwood?" inquired Kessler, plainly impressed, speaking the

name of Chicago's most eminent physician.

"May I ask," continued Gallagher, addressing the three, "if you are still uncommitted as to your advertising?"

"It is only fair to say," stated Bass, at a nod from Kessler, "that a presumption has been established in favor of a certain agency. We listened to three solicitations yesterday, and to four the day previous. Everything that can possibly be offered in the way of service has already been tendered to us." Bass made a tired gesture toward a stack of documents at one end of the table.

"We are strongly drawn to this firm, as Mr. Bass was saying," spoke Kessler. "They are well-connected, and are highly recommended to us. They are a very substantial house. They do very fine work. They are not only advertising men, but business men."

"I know precisely how you feel," responded Gallagher sympathetically. "And yet," he continued, gazing from the solid countenance of Bass to the older, florid face of Kessler, and then at the slender young advertising manager, "and yet, I dare say I come to you with a message that not one of our esteemed competitors can voice, certainly that none of them can carry out. I come to you with a proposal that is unique."

His audience composed itself to listen. "You have here a product," pursued Gallagher, "whose merchandizing possibilities are incalculable." He moved his chair closer to the table. "We have in this country alone a population of one hundred and five millions of people. All of them eat. Not one meal a day, but three meals a day. You have a potential market for three hundred and fifteen millions of sanitary finger bowls per day, to say nothing of exports, for the moment. Once you get going, the vastness of this market will draw competition like molasses draws the flies. From the moment you start, you must dominate.

"Since your product is a monument to health and to the prolongation of human

life, you have a message of vast importance to deliver to every man, woman, and child, a message to every employer of labor who is concerned with the welfare and efficiency of his people, a message to every physician in the land, and to every teacher and every public official. Every child that has attained the age of two should have its own sanitary finger bowl. Every home must be educated to buy them by the case. Every board of education must be forced by the pressure of an aroused public opinion to provide every pupil with sanitary finger bowls to use after eating their luncheons. Boards of health must urge your product upon every citizen, must insist that it be used by every restaurant, hotel, café, and lunch-counter. The unclean, dangerous, old-line finger bowl must go. It is a disease trap. It means the dip of death."

KESSLER looked significantly at Bass. Both nodded with approval. The advertising manager reached for a pad of paper and made a note of the last and most poignant phrase.

"These facts, of course," continued Gallagher lightly, "are self-evident. I don't have to remind you of them. You, gentlemen, hold in your hands the future, I may say, of the race. How are you going to carry out your great mission? Your appeal is universal. It ranges from the hovels of the destitute to the banquet halls of the élite. Your product crosses every threshold. It belongs wherever fingers come in contact with food. You are the conservors of innumerable lives. The well-being of twenty-six millions of American families rests in the hollow of your corporate hand. Your opportunity is unparalleled and unprecedented. What do you propose to do with it?"

"Don't make the mistake, gentlemen, of delegating this great educational work to ordinary hands. Don't entrust so important an appeal to blacksmiths of the pen in the boiler-shop of an ordinary copy department. Your story requires just the right touch, just the right sym-

pathy and understanding. It must be told with simplicity and power," continued Gallagher in low tones that were almost hypnotic. "It needs that distinctive touch, that persuasive and beguiling element known as—quality."

GALLAGHER PAUSED. In the hitherto impassive face of Kessler he perceived a sign of response. Bass was puffing harder at his cigar. Young Houser was covering a pad with notes.

"What is it that distinguishes the King James version of the Bible?" demanded Gallagher. "What is it that sets Shakespeare apart? What is the differentiating touch that makes Dante and Milton live? Quality! But you can't shop around among advertising agencies and expect to find quality. It isn't a commercial commodity. You can't buy genius. You have to discover it. Having discovered it, you've got to know how to use it, how to nurture it, how to conserve it and make it perform. Gentlemen, I know of but one writer who can imbue your advertising appeal with quality. This gifted workman is held in reserve by me for only such carefully selected work as is worthy of his extraordinary efforts. I but rarely solicit an account for him to write. There are scores of national advertisers today who would gladly pay a premium to secure the services of the man I refer to—Mr. Gordon Penfield. It is this singular craftsman, this understanding artist, this eagerly-sought-after genius, recognized by two continents, whom I place at your disposal."

There was a moment of silence when Gallagher stopped.

"I know his work," said Houser, not without awe.

"I've heard about him," observed Bass with interest.

"What advertising has he written?" inquired Kessler.

Gallagher named some of it.

"But I say to you frankly," he added, "that I have hesitated to assign him to a number of these products. I felt that

they were hardly significant enough for his efforts. But your product—is different."

"Where is this Penfield? In New York?" asked the president.

Gallagher shook his head gravely.

"No," he replied. "I wish he were. Mr. Gordon Penfield is in London."

"In London?" exclaimed the others, disappointed.

"Mr. Penfield is in England at the moment, preparing an advertising campaign for the British Empire."

"Is that so?" answered Kessler, greatly impressed. "From what you say of him, I would like very much to meet the gentleman."

"You shall," declared Gallagher with sudden decision. "I will cable him to come at once."

Gallagher looked at his watch.

"It is now just five minutes after twelve," he added. "There is five hours difference in time. It is now five minutes after seven in London. The Sultan sails at ten. Mr. Kessler, may I trouble you to call your secretary?"

Kessler touched a button.

"Take a cable, please," said Gallagher briskly to the stenographer. "To Gordon Penfield, Hotel Cecil, London, England. Take passage on Sultan leaving London today, prepared to spend fortnight in America. Prepare on voyage complete presentation of merchandizing possibilities of sanitary finger bowls and their relation to human life. Draft definite sales plan and complete copy campaign. Arriving New York take Twentieth Century same day for Chicago. Meet me Grey-stone. Sign it Gallagher. Rush it off."

"You might be able to cut that down a few words. Cables come high," protested Bass.

"Haven't time. Send it," replied Gallagher, waving the secretary away. "I let nothing stand in the way of service."

"When will you have an answer?" asked Kessler.

"In seven days. Right here. The Sultan is a six-day ship. It will consume an-

other day to get from New York to Chicago."

"Mr. Penfield might not be able to get away from there on such short notice," objected Bass.

"I give orders. He obeys."

"But he might miss the boat."

"I pay him not to miss boats."

"But something might interfere with his getting your cable. He might not be at the hotel."

"It's his business to receive my cables."

"But, Mr. Gallagher," argued the president uneasily, "you want us apparently to withhold a very important decision for seven days, pending the arrival of this gentleman. And at the same time we have no assurance that he will be here."

"A week from today Mr. Penfield will be sitting at this desk with us. If he is not, I'll pay you a forfeit if you wish."

"No, I wouldn't want you to do that," replied Kessler, carried along by Gallagher's certainty.

"You repose great confidence in him," he added.

"This man isn't a butler. He's an intellect," replied Gallagher.

"Do we understand, Mr. Gallagher, that you charge the usual agency commissions?" asked Bass.

"Yes. Fifteen per cent on the net."

"And does that include the services of Mr. Penfield?"

"In this case, yes. He will write every one of your advertisements."

"On how long a contract?"

"One year."

"That's pretty short. 'Can't you make it longer?'"

"Impossible. A year from now I may have to add a special fee for the services of Mr. Penfield."

"Would you consider a two-year contract," inquired Kessler, leaning forward, "with an extra fee of ten thousand dollars to bind Mr. Penfield to do our writing, payable in advance?"

Gallagher shook his head.

"I never mortgage myself for more than one year in advance," he said.

LATE in the afternoon, Gallagher strode into Penfield's room at the hotel. Penfield was in his shirt-sleeves, and was punching a noiseless typewriter.

"What's new?" he asked. "Did you land the order?"

"The order is landed, but you are at sea," answered Gallagher. He recounted briefly what had occurred. "It seems that some of these other fellows had offered them service," he added. "I gave them an exhibition of service that made them look cock-eyed."

"You incredible nut!" exclaimed Penfield.

"You had to be staged."

"Say, what do you expect me to do for the next seven days and nights?" demanded Penfield painfully.

"Stick to the ship. This is it," said Gallagher, complacently surveying the room. "How do you like it?"

"Not a damn bit."

"A sea voyage will do you good."

"My God, I've got to have some exercise."

"Go on deck."

"Where the devil's the deck?"

"On the roof. There's the companion-way," said Gallagher, pointing to the fire-escape. "But for heaven's sake keep out of sight. If anyone sees you, we're stuck."

"But you registered for me, didn't you?"

"Certainly not. I told you I had an idea. Only you and I know you're in Chicago."

Penfield glared at his companion.

"That twenty dollars' worth of cable was an inspiration," continued Gallagher genially. "Recalling you from London nearly knocked them out of their chairs. You are now steaming tranquilly through the English Channel toward the Atlantic Ocean. How do you find the sea?"

"It's rough," growled Penfield.

"Any interesting passengers aboard?"

"I've met only one. He's an imbecile."

"*Bon voyage*, my boy," said Gallagher pleasantly. "I am off to dine at the Ath-

letic Club. Then I shall probably wind up at the theater. See you about midnight, old sailor."

Penfield groaned.

"Anything I can do to make you comfortable?" asked the other.

"When does this unspeakable ship get to New York?"

"Not for six days."

"She's a tub. Why didn't you put me on something fast?"

SOON after nine o'clock the next morning, Gallagher's telephone bell rang. It was Kessler speaking.

"Have you had word of any kind from Mr. Penfield?" he wanted to know.

"He will report to me in person in six days."

"Hadden't you better send him a wireless?"

"What for?"

"To see if he caught the boat?"

"It would insult him. He's as sensitive as a watch."

"But we're not sure he's coming."

"I am."

"When can I see you, Mr. Gallagher?"

"Three o'clock this afternoon at your office," said Gallagher, replacing the receiver.

He crossed to Penfield's room. The latter had eaten his breakfast, and was writing furiously.

"Where are you now?" asked Gallagher.

"Are you speaking geographically or of literature?"

"Both."

"We're three hundred miles out, making seventeen knots. Trade winds favorable."

"Gimme a match."

"How many ads have you written?"

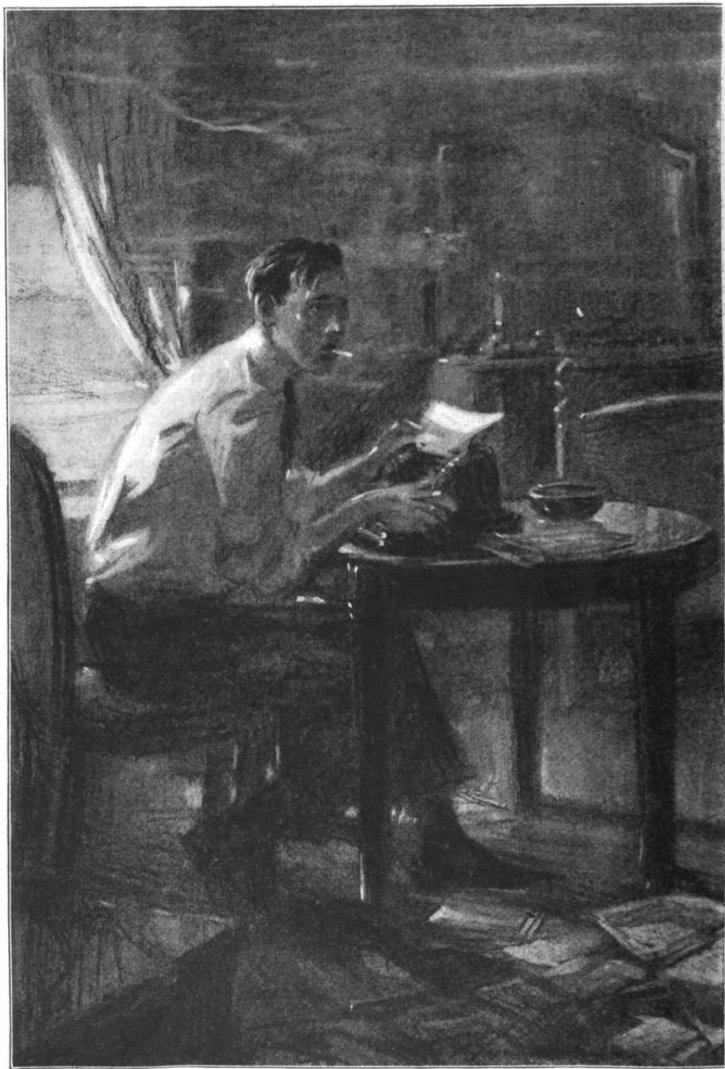
"Eight."

"Great work," said Gallagher. "You're coming."

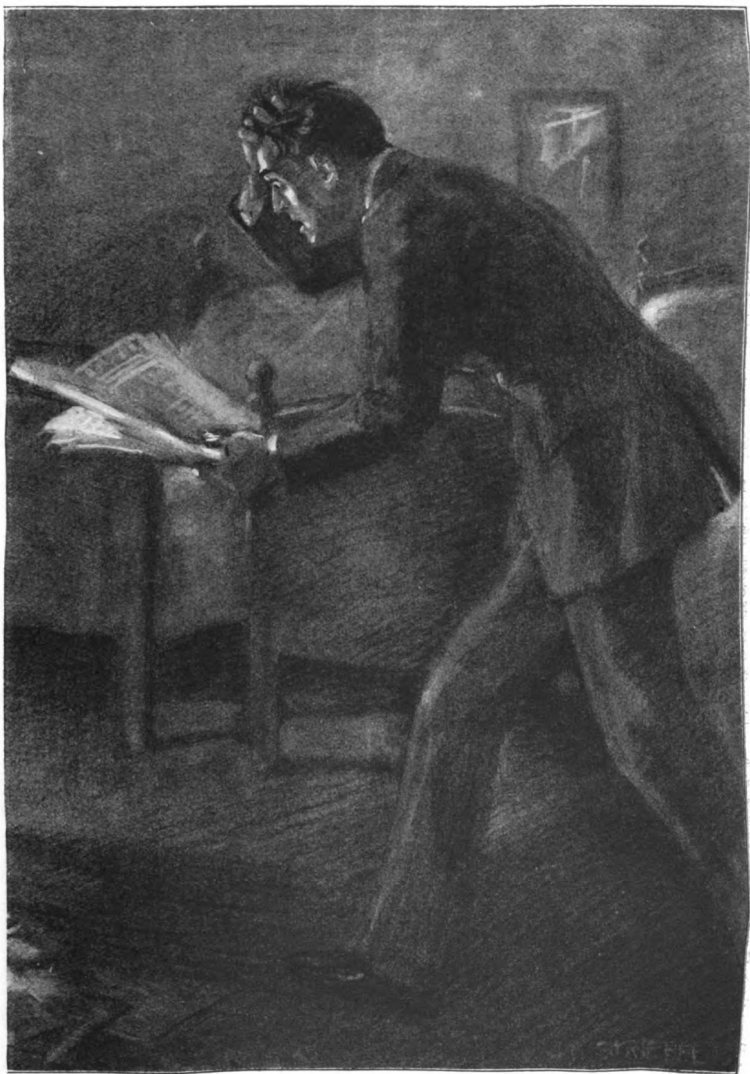
"This is literature," declared Penfield.

With an air of appropriate composure, Gallagher called upon Kessler at three.

"I don't want to appear like an old woman," began Kessler, "but how do we



"Gallagher was staring at the announcement with glassy eyes. Penfield uttered a peculiar
I turned it down."



cry. . . . "They offered me ten thousand dollars extra to tie you up for two years. And groaned Gallagher."

know that The Sultan sailed? How do we know she wasn't delayed?"

Gallagher stepped to the telephone.

"Give me long distance," he said to the operator. "Call New York. Get the Herald Ship News. Let me speak to them."

The connection was presently announced.

"What about Sultan?" he asked. "What's that? . . . Yes. . . . Yes. . . . Thanks."

He turned to Kessler. "Sultan sailed yesterday at ten-eight, London time," he said.

"She is now four hundred and twenty miles at sea. She's making sixteen and three-quarters knots."

Kessler looked relieved.

"Still, I wish you'd wireless Penfield."

"I know him. You don't," said Gallagher, shaking his head.

"My thought was that we might add something to his instructions."

"Add what?"

"Something about the high quality of our product."

"Tell *him* anything about quality?" gasped Gallagher aghast. "I tell you you don't know him," he added in aggrieved tones.

"I beg your pardon," said Kessler, seeing his mistake.

It was midnight before Gallagher again entered Penfield's room. It was strewn with typewritten manuscript.

"How?" asked Gallagher.

"Damn this cabin. I've got to have air."

"Have you tried the roof?"

"I'm afraid of that fire-escape," said Penfield, nervously.

"I keep telling them that you're extremely sensitive," observed Gallagher.

He glanced at a piece of Penfield's writing.

A look of delight illuminated his anxious face.

"You're sparking," he declared with approval.

"This is the work of my life," answered Penfield.

GALLAGHER was now making daily calls at the offices of the General Paper Products Company, Inc. Each time he had to reassure Kessler and his associates anew that Gordon Penfield was not only safely aboard The Sultan, but that he was laboring incessantly at their advertising.

"I know him so well," he told them once, "that I can fairly see him at work. Toiling in his cabin without even going on deck for air. Eats all of his meals in his room. No shuffleboard. Not even a whirl at quoits. Cabin grey with smoke. White with copy paper. He is absorbed with your product. He is mesmerizing millions with the greatest quality appeal of the times."

"I hope he's a good sailor," replied Kessler, with sudden misgivings. "What if he is seasick?"

"I give you my word that he isn't."

"But," said the other, "you say he is very sensitive."

"Sensitive as a thought current. Temperamental as a prima donna. But when he once gets wrapped up in a subject, as he now is, not even a storm at sea can disturb him. No matter what kind of weather The Sultan encounters, you may rest assured, Mr. Kessler, that Gordon Penfield is working just as undisturbed as if he were occupying a room at the Greystone."

"I am very happy to hear you say so," answered Kessler with relief. "Having given a negative answer to all other agencies that we have had under consideration, it would be painful to have anything interfere with Mr. Penfield's safe arrival and the quickest possible start for our campaign."

"We shall start to shoot on the day he arrives in Chicago," Gallagher assured him.

Upon Gallagher's return to Penfield's room, he announced: "They're afraid you're seasick."

"I am," said Penfield, looking up from his luncheon tray, and casting a melancholy glance at the lake.

"What's the matter? Ship rolling?"

"The captain says we're approaching the storm zone."

"Too bad," said Gallagher, sympathetically.

"Barometer looks ominous," said Penfield, finishing his piece of pie.

"Not so loud, old man of the sea," warned Gallagher. "Someone passing down the hall might recognize that voice of yours. You're still a long way from shore."

PENFIELD dipped the tips of his long fingers into the finger-bowl. His companion perceived that a slight shudder ran through him as he did so.

"Anything the matter?" he asked with concern.

"I hate a finger-bowl that ain't sanitary," complained Penfield. "I'm getting so that I believe it myself," he added, glancing at his pile of manuscript on the bed.

Gallagher beamed.

"How are you sleeping?" he asked, following Penfield's glance to the bed.

"Having horrible nightmares, thanks. Dreamt last night that I was compelled to paddle across the ocean in a paper finger-bowl."

"That's not a nightmare. That's a fact," chuckled Gallagher.

"I'm glad it hands you a laugh."

"Why not? This is the funniest piece of salesmanship I ever put over."

"Funny! If I don't get out of this cage, I'll go off my nut. Get me some whiskers."

"Get me a false face. I tell you I've got to have air."

"It can't be done. Every advertising man in Chicago would recognize your strut no matter what kind of a disguise you wore."

"I promise not to strut," pleaded the great Penfield.

"I'll crawl down Michigan Avenue on my hands and knees."

"Then they'd know it was an advertising stunt. You've got to stay right here."

ON THE FOURTH DAY of the good ship Sultan's voyage, when the liner was still two days out of New York, the president of the General Paper Products Company, Inc., moved by his increasing anxieties, dropped in personally at the Greystone to see Gallagher.

"Come right on up to my room, Mr. Kessler," replied Gallagher hospitably.

Kessler went up.

"You look worried," said the advertising man.

"Anything gone wrong?"

"I can't help worrying about your man Penfield," began the manufacturer. "It seems strange that you haven't had some kind of word from him. You'd think that he'd at least answer your cable, wouldn't you?"

"My dear fellow," replied Gallagher with unshaken confidence, "I beg of you to banish your fears. In three days he will breeze through that door and present us with the most epochal advertising campaign ever put on paper."

"It means an awful lot to me," said the manufacturer.

"I know it does. And it means a great deal to me, too. I regard your product as if it were mine. And this trip of The Sultan means as much to me as if it were the maiden voyage of a ship of my own."

"Is she likely to be tied up unduly at quarantine?" questioned Kessler.

"If necessary, Penfield will charter a tug in order to catch the Century. We believe in service," spoke Gallagher unctuously.

Gallagher's bell-hop entered, handed him a copy of the evening paper, and departed.

Gallagher took one look at the paper, and without a word laid it face downward on the table. A strange look took possession of his face; the color left it; his eyes grew ghastly.

Then he picked up the paper, crossed unsteadily to the door of the adjoining room, fumbled for the knob, entered, and closed the door behind him.

"Don't interrupt me!" growled Penfield,

attacking his typewriter ferociously. "Get out of here!"

"Look at this," answered Gallagher weakly.

He handed the newspaper to Penfield, and the following headlines stared the two men in the face:

*S. S. Sultan Sinks in Mid-Ocean
With All on Board! No Survivors!*

Gallagher was staring at the announcement with glassy eyes. Penfield uttered a peculiar cry.

"They offered me ten thousand dollars extra to tie you up for two years. And I turned it down," groaned Gallagher. "Why did that ship have to go down?"

"Don't be a fool!" exclaimed Penfield derisively. "I can be saved, can't I?"

"How can you? There wasn't a ship close enough to respond to her signals of distress. They couldn't even lower the life-boats," whimpered Gallagher, glancing hastily at the story. "You've written your last advertisement. Old top, you're at the bottom of the sea. You've crossed the River Styx, but you'll never write another stickful of copy. You have passed into the hands of Neptune."

"Say, what are you talking about!" cried Penfield. "Can't you tell 'em? Ain't they got a sense of humor?"

"Sense of humor? You didn't hear me sell you. You never heard such a line of selling-talk. I can't go back on it. It would kill my reputation!"

"A lot I care," sneered Penfield. "Do you expect me to die to save your reputation? You idiot, I've got to live. I got a family."

"It's too late to think of that now," moaned Gallagher.

"Get next to yourself, you lunatic! Tell 'em I was on another ship. Tell 'em anything.

"Why, this is the greatest copy I ever wrote in my life!" declared Penfield, tapping the manuscript that lay beside his typewriter. "Here is the labor of the last five days, boiled down into six stupendous advertisements—by Gordon Penfield!"

"Six sunbursts," agreed Gallagher. "I'll see that they at least do not perish. They will shed the light of a new day upon the darkened brows and groping fingers of the masses. But they can never appear over your name. You have ceased to exist," spoke Gallagher solemnly. "Your career is ended. Penfield, you're dead."

Gallagher gazed compassionately at his companion, confident that for once this marshal of words could muster no reply.

"There's nothing else to be done," said Gallagher in a voice of commiseration. "If you ever enter the advertising business again, it's got to be under some other name. I'm sorry."

"You've got more gall than any man that ever lived!" cried Penfield, transfixing the other with incredulous eyes.

"I can't go back on my word to a client," answered Gallagher firmly.

"All right," spoke Penfield after a moment's silence. "If I saw my finish in latitude 40, longitude 30, if I had to go to a watery grave to save your reputation as a salesman, I'll be darned if I leave any of my estate to you. If I didn't write these advertisements, nobody did. Gallagher, for five years you've made me do as you said. You've kept me under lock-and-key. You've made a regular slave out of me. Now we're done. I'm going to walk out of this hotel my own boss. I've had to die to do it. But, by Jove, I'm free!"

In Penfield's tired eyes flamed a look of triumphant relief. He picked up his finished advertisements, and before Gallagher could interfere, he tore them deliberately into bits and threw them out of the window.

"In memoriam," murmured Gallagher, staring dazedly out into the dusk, and seeing fragments of probably the most connected thinking that had been done in Chicago in years, fluttering off toward the brownish waters of Lake Michigan.

"In memoriam yourself!" retorted Penfield.

"Where do you get that stuff? It is your funeral. I'm too temperamental

a guy to be a salesman, am I? Well, I'm going to try it and find out. And I'm going to start right in on one of your own clients.

"I'm going to collect that ten thousand dollars they want to pay me for a two years' contract.

"And I'm starting now."

PENFIELD strode to the door of the room where Kessler was waiting. With his hand on the knob, he turned and added:

"Gallagher, good-by. And say, don't forget to pay your bill for these two rooms. You know I ain't registered. I ain't here."

THE EXPERIMENT

By S. Gordon Gurwit

VANDERGOULD DE PUYSER was very rich. Too rich. So rich that the sparrows had ceased to haunt the kitchen steps of his mansion for crumbs—said crumbs were so rich that they gave the birds dyspepsia.

And if you'll consult any popular novelist, you'll see that birds and children and dogs have an unerring instinct in most matters. Anyway, the birds left him.

On the other hand, all the girls loved Van because he was the author of the famous serial, "Pay To The Order Of—", and despite the fact that he had a tenor voice and a rough, brutal manner in handling cream-puffs. They wanted to nestle amongst his Liberty Bonds.

And Van knew it and therefore was unhappy. He wanted to be loved for himself alone, like a traveling salesman, not for his great fortune. Rich people are so seldom happy!

There were three girls, Ellyn, Jessie and Clysmia, who said they loved Van and whom Van could have been happy with—one at a time, I mean. He couldn't make up his mind which one to marry; which one loved him most—for himself alone.

They say it takes dynamite to penetrate reinforced concrete, but this is not true, for an idea finally came to Van's mind out of the very air, you might say.

He had his lawyers circulate the story that he had lost all his money and was broke—as flat as any famous artist.

After a week was up, he dressed poorly and went to Ellyn's house to see what she would say.

She told her maid to tell him she was out. She had no time for has-beens. She wanted an "Is."

At Jessie's house his offer of marriage was gently refused. Jessie knew the value of money even if she didn't have any. She went to the movies and read the papers.

Sadder and wiser, he went to Clysmia's home and she accepted him with raptures and kissed him on the nose—two points aft the beam on the port tack.

While she examined her engagement ring and was wondering how she was going to have it reset in a bar pin when she got a bigger one, he asked her gently to forgive his little subterfuge, and told her that the story in the newspapers wasn't true.

"What story?" she asked.

"Didn't you see the newspapers?" he asked.

"No, darling," she murmured. "I never read the newspapers—and besides, we've been down on the farm for a week and I only got in town a few minutes before you called."

THE GIFT OF THE DESERT

*The Third 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 strikes him with the butt of the gun and leaves him for dead. 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. Kelleen pilots her through the dark, across miles of desert, until they reach "Devil's Gulch," which, Kelleen explains, is known to but few people, and not at all, he thinks, to Meager and his men. It is a deep gash cut into the desert, invisible even to the experienced eye, until one is at the edge. After a scanty lunch, Kelleen goes to reconnoiter, soon returning within earshot of Deborah with Pedro and Sanchez, two Mexicans from Meager's ranch. Assuming that Kelleen (whom Deborah has discovered to be none other than the notorious "Frisco Kid," though he has explained that it is a fictitious part created to cover his real character of a federal secret-service man) is in on Meager's movements, the two Mexicans explain that Casebeer, a gun-runner, has chosen the Gulch as a rendezvous with Meager for that night. Also for Deborah's benefit, Kelleen brings out the fact that Meager's death has not yet been discovered. Kelleen then draws the pair down the Gulch, when Deborah is pinioned by a vicious creature and carried into a dark cavern, whose mouth is screened from view. Later, she recovers from the swoon, to find her captor fallen asleep at the entrance. She cannot pass him, so makes her way along a tunnel-like passage, which suddenly opens into a large room, illumined by a shaft of light streaming down through a long, narrow opening. And at the bottom of the point of light lies the body of a young man, shot to death. Installment three starts here:]

DEBORAH, startled, swayed back against the wall for support, staring down into that white, upturned face, clearly revealed within the little pool of light. She had witnessed death so often, in most hideous forms,

as to have no doubt the man was beyond help. Nor was it any personal fear of the corpse, even in that gloomy spot, which held her rigid. For the instant she seemed to have lost all power of volition, her very brain numbed by this unexpected

encounter. It was the face of a young man, his dark, wide-open eyes staring blindly up into vacancy, his brown hair, cut short, almost good-looking even in death, with cheeks freshly shaven.

This last was what aroused the girl, brought her back quickly to life and action. He had the appearance of having shaved that very morning; the stubble of his beard was not even visible. Then she noted two other facts—his revolver was in the holster at his waist, and the hand, held upright against the side wall, grasped a folded paper. He had just been killed, not more than two hours before, surely, and in no duel—perhaps he had fallen to where he lay climbing that narrow passage above. But the wound? There was none visible—not even a bruise on the face. As a woman, Deborah shrank from touching the body, but her training as a nurse instantly conquered. She must learn the truth, disagreeable as the task might be. On her knees, exerting all her strength, she partially turned the body—the man had been shot in the back.

She seemed to comprehend it all in a flash, visioning the scene as she rose quickly to her feet. He must have done the deed—that older man with the beard—shooting treacherously from behind. This younger man had been given no chance, probably did not even suspect his danger, before being struck down. His hand was not even on his gun in any effort at defense; he probably never knew. Perhaps he was climbing the passage up there, seeking for some way of escape from the tunnel, or else merely exploring the narrow hole leading to the bar of light above. He could scarcely have felt suspicion of any other presence, or he never would have been taken so completely by surprise. The other had stolen stealthily through those black shadows behind, and fired at the figure above outlined plainly against that opening. It had been deliberate murder. But the purpose was not so clear. To all appearances the assassin had never even approached his

victim after he fell. Confident of the deadly accuracy of his aim, he had left the inert body lying where it struck, untouched, not even the dead man's gun being removed from its holster, or the folded bit of paper released from those gripping fingers.

The unspeakable, treacherous horror of the act appalled Deborah. There must be some reason behind it all. It was too cold, cruel, deliberative, not to have definite cause. Some quarrel, some jealousy, or long hatred, must have led up to this tragic end—or, could it be the deed of insanity? No speculation now could solve the mystery, but the murderer still lived; he was back yonder in the darkness she had just left. He would no more spare her than he had shown mercy to this other victim. If he still slept she must take advantage of the moment for escape—the one chance up that long passage toward the gleam of light at the top. She stepped across the dead body, grasping her skirts tightly in one hand; then hesitated for an instant, obsessed by a new thought. Perhaps that paper might explain it all, might prove the very key to all this mystery. She bent, and wrestled it from out the stiffened fingers, hastily endeavoring to learn what it contained. It was a thick, tough sheet, the folds showing yellow and dirty as though it had been carried a long while, and there was writing inside, in fine penmanship, but so indistinct that her eyes were unable to decipher a single word in that dim light. She thrust it into the bosom of her blouse, her eyes anxiously searching the only possible way out.

It scarcely promised even that, as revealed by that single ray barely illuminating the passage. Apparently an irregularly sized hole, worn between layers of solid rock by the action of water, it led upward at a sharp angle, and, while wide enough at the lower extremity to permit the entrance of a full-grown man, it seemed to contract at the upper openings so as to make it very doubtful if an ordinary body could squeeze through into the

open air beyond. The hole was not smooth, but knobby, with projections of stone, to which hand and foot could cling, thus making it possible for one to clamber up safely . . . but the diameter at the top could only be guessed at from that distance.

Yet . . . Deborah felt that she had no choice but to accept this single chance of deliverance. She could not remain there with the dead man, or retrace her steps backward to where the murderer remained asleep on guard. Her belt was still about her waist, but its holster was empty; the revolver had **either** been removed while she was unconscious, or had fallen out during her fierce struggle at the entrance of the mine. Before beginning to climb, she drew the dead man's gun from its scabbard, and stuck it into her own. As she did so the light from above glittered on a pearl-studded handle, and a barrel of blue steel.

At first the climbing was not difficult, the slope being gradual, with walls sufficiently wide apart to afford comparatively easy passage. Outcroppings of rock kept her from slipping back—even furnished a sort of ladder up which she climbed. Then the passage narrowed, with a far sharper incline, the center becoming almost as smooth as glass. Deborah was obliged to find support against the irregularity of the sides, drawing herself forward by her hands, with feet groping in the darkness below for any projection against which they could rest. Yet she won her way upward, almost inch by inch, soon creeping over a narrow shelf, able, finally, to sit upright within a shallow niche at one side, where the stone had been hollowed out for a very few inches.

She was breathless from the hard climb, her heart beating rapidly. Hope almost deserted her as she traced the contracted passage leading from there to the top, a mere round funnel, through which she must actually force her body. The small, contracted opening above appeared impossible.

THE GIRL gazed over into the darkness below. She could see nothing, hear nothing, yet her mind pictured again the dead face of that boy staring up at her—she could not go back to that! Nor to the other, living horror, beyond! The fellow might be awake by now, seeking her, trailing her back through the tunnel, knowing his crime had been discovered, ready for any brutality rather than permit of her escape. He would seek her here first of all; however desperate the venture, she must go on; better to die there, caught helplessly in that rocky hole, than ever to fall again into the power of that beast. She listened intently, hearing nothing; then lifted her hands to feel upward. The sudden flap of a wing almost struck her face, and a bat scurried up the passage; she could see it shadowed against the gleam of daylight above. The girl laughed nervously, but did not even shrink back. She lifted one foot, seeking a fragment of rock to rest upon. . . .

Then a flare of red lit the inferno, a dull, muffled report echoed along the imprisoning walls, and a bullet brushed her hair, flattening itself on the rock beyond.

She shrank back into the little niche, scarcely certain of her escape, and rested there on her knees, not venturing to move. The shot had come from below; of that there could be no doubt, but there was no other report, no movement to reveal any presence. Deborah had no question as to who had fired—it must be the man she had fled from in the outer cave. He must have seen her outlined against that round opening above. It was a miracle she had escaped; but to have seen her the fellow must have stood directly beneath, beside the body of the dead man. Perhaps he would be there still, peering up to learn the result of his shot, wondering where she had disappeared so quickly. Her pulse had ceased to throb so rapidly, and she felt a strange coolness of action. She was safe enough where she was, behind that barrier of rock, and she drew the pearl-handled revolver out of its holster, and

listened eagerly for any sound of guidance from below. If he made any effort to climb up, she meant to shoot to kill.

She dare not venture to advance her face around the rock edge, lest the movement might bring her into view against that vista of light. She knelt thus, minute after minute, ready, but hearing nothing to guide her. The fellow was evidently waiting and watching, just as she was, disconcerted by her strange disappearance. No doubt he half believed his bullet had found its mark; that she had fallen, either wounded, or dead, into some crevice, but was afraid as yet to venture up that narrow tunnel. Yet surely the man would be crouched where he could perceive any movement above him. She could not remain there indefinitely waiting for him to gain courage to attempt the ascent. Her hand, with the weapon in it, reached noiselessly out beyond the edge of the rock, and pointed downward. A stone rattled below, and her finger pulled the trigger.

The muffled report echoed back from the rocks, the red flash of the discharge faded into darkness, and the pungent smoke blew back into her face; but there was nothing else. No cry, no crunch of a falling body, no thud of lead. She listened helplessly, half crazed to empty every load from her poised weapon into that silence below. What could it all mean? What had happened behind that black veil? No sound told, and yet she dared not move, might not venture to expose herself against that patch of blue sky above.

An hour passed, an hour of dreadful watching, of tense expectation. It seemed to her the blue light streaming through that opening was already losing its power, as though the sun was going down. If she would escape she must go while she could yet see the way. Desperate as the chance was, it must be accepted. Never before had she been so overmastered by physical fear, yet her will conquered, and she ventured out upon the open shelf of rock, and began

to clamber slowly up through the shaft of light. She did not look down, or permit herself to think of the possible danger lurking below. With lips closely pressed together, and heart beating rapidly, she drew herself up, inch by inch, bracing her body against the side walls as though in a chimney, making use of every projection as a support to either hand or foot, and thus steadily approaching the opening overhead. It was a more difficult passage even than she had supposed, almost choked in places by debris. Twice she had to stop, clinging desperately for support, and clear away fragments of rock before she could creep past, the loosened pebbles rolling noisily down the steep slope. Yet her courage had returned; there had been no attack from beneath, no evidence of life.

DEBORAH reached the end of her climb, breathless, her limbs aching from exertion, her heart sinking with dismay. It never could be accomplished, the passage of her body through that narrow opening to the world without. How sweet the fresh air felt; how beautiful the blue arch of the sky, yet it was hopeless of attainment. The very madness of the thought proved her salvation. Crazed for the moment, she began to dig fiercely with her fingers at the obstruction, tearing at a projecting point of rock, which suddenly yielded to the furious attack, a stream of loosened sand pouring after.

Little by little, madly tearing at the sides of the orifice, she managed to wear away every fragment back to the solid rim of rock. Even then the passage outward of her body appeared almost impossible. She unbelted the revolver, and flung it through the opening; then drew herself upward, fearful every instant of being irretrievably caught, yet finding purchase for her feet sufficient to thrust her slender body steadily forward.

At last, her shoulders emerged into the outer day, and she was enabled to drag the rest of her body over the rim of rock. Utterly exhausted, Deborah lay on the

sand, gasping for breath, conscious only that she had found refuge in a shallow ravine. She lay there outstretched in the shadow of a steep bank, without strength even to lift her head.

CHAPTER XVIII

Two Of a Kind

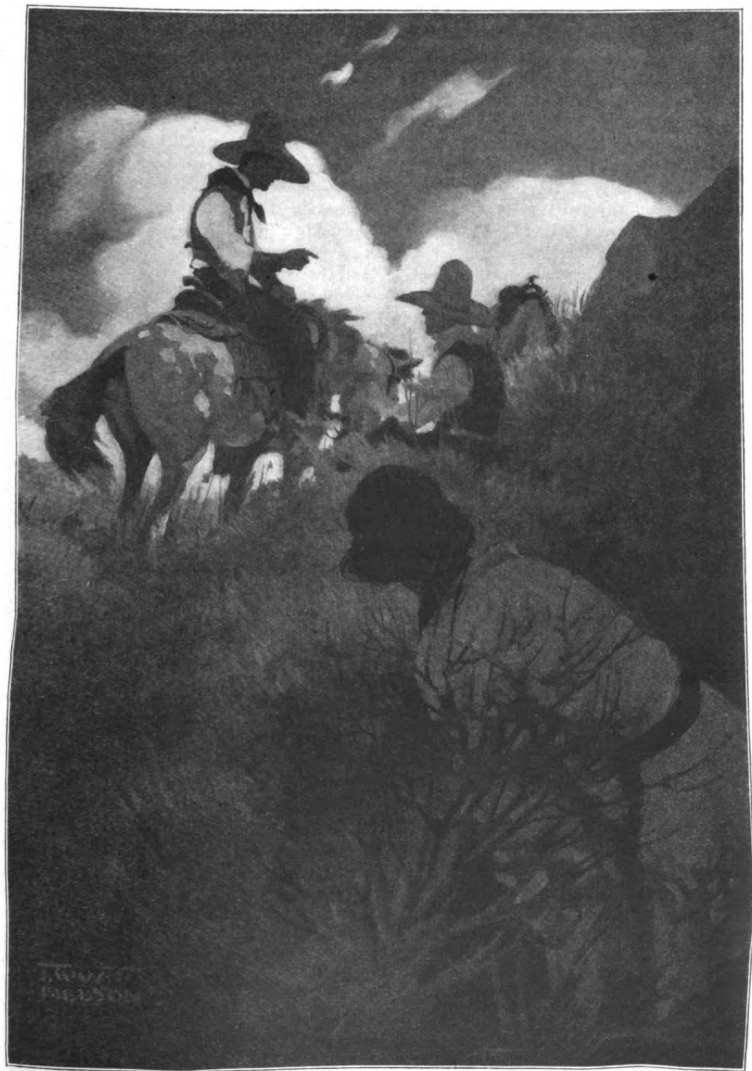
DEBORAH felt that she never would regain power to rise, yet this total exhaustion passed away, as she began to breathe more easily, and finally she sat upon the sand, gazing about at her strange surroundings, eager to discover what she could attempt next. The desperation of her plight was clear. She had escaped from that hell underground, yet was but little better off than before. She was upon the edge of the desert stretching outward toward the Meager ranch. It would be impossible to cross this on foot, with neither food nor water to sustain her; nor could she for a moment contemplate seeking refuge there, even if it were possible. Her only hope was to circle that hidden chasm, and then endeavor to find her way north until she reached some human habitation. The hope of accomplishing this was the merest mirage; the attempt probably meant death. She knew nothing of the country in that direction, how far the desert stretched, or the dim trails leading through its desolation. She had no horse, no food, yet somehow, in the exhilaration of that first moment of release, she could not wholly despair.

She arose to her knees, and looked about. It was a lonely, contracted scene, amid which she was concealed. Some rift in the rocks led down to that opening through which she had just crept. Perhaps it had formed a water course in other ages, but now the sand of the desert had drifted in, and covered all with a yellow mantle of desolation. A few gnarled shrubs clung precariously to the steep banks, while farther back, a bunch of more pretentious bushes hid the upper end of the depression. The sides were

too steep to scale even on foot, the loose sand foiling every attempt, so she was compelled to follow the course of the defile in seeking a way out. The sun was well down in the western sky, the little ravine lying largely in shadow, and for the first few yards of advance the girl had no suspicion she was not alone. The patch of sagebrush limited her view, and she was threading her way through these, when the sound of a voice speaking caused her to crouch suddenly down in the midst of the thicket, and lie motionless, scarcely daring to breathe. It was the voice itself which paralyzed her every volition, a voice instantly recognized, never to be forgotten—the voice of Bob Meager!

Her ears caught a word or two, disconnected, meaningless, an outburst of profanity, and a brutal laugh, yet there could be no possible doubt as to the speaker. It was Meager, rough, coarse as ever. He was not dead, then; the blow struck had no more than stunned the man, and—and she was his wife. Deborah's fingers dug at the sand in sudden agony, as that hideous thought came home anew to her mind. She was legally married to that repulsive brute, that foul-mouthed cur; he was there, seeking her, had in some way discovered their trail across the desert, and now, actuated by revenge, was seeking to get her once again in his power. She could conceive no other purpose in his relentless pursuit. In some mysterious way he must have discovered what had occurred, suspected that she and Kelleen had ridden away together, and then followed, like an Indian, on the trail. She lifted her head suddenly; another voice spoke quietly, indifferently, interrupting Meager's outburst of profanity as though it had never occurred. Surely, surely, that was Kelleen himself who spoke.

DEBORAH crept forward inch by inch, crouching low behind the sage until she could see the figures of the two men. Neither one faced her; Meager sat



"Deborah crept forward inch by inch, crouching low behind the sage until she could see the figures of the two men."

on the side of the bank, his horse grazing just beyond, while the "Frisco Kid" remained in the saddle, his mount still breathing heavily, as though he had only just arrived after a hard ride.

"Well, what difference does it make?" he asked quietly. "Am I in on this or not?"

"Of course you're in now," was the surly response. "I reckon that was what caused you to show up in these parts, ain't it? Casebeer squealed, and you got wise to the whole game. I wondered what was being pulled off when you rode in last night. Say, 'Kid,' who really piped it to you—Casebeer or Garrity?"

"The less you know about that the longer you'll live, Bob," Kelleen replied calmly. "It is enough that I do know, not only what you are up to out here, but that it was also your game to double-cross me. I don't take kindly to that sort of thing—"

"This wasn't no part of our deal."

"Well, I say it was; it's Mex war stuff, isn't it, that Casebeer's running through? Who got you a chance at that in the first place?"

He grinned, good-naturedly enough, waiting for the other to reply, then resumed:

"But let that go now. You thought you could throw me, which is an old story. You tried the same game once before, Bob. The scheme has never worked very well. You haven't got the brains to do it with. Casebeer never told me anything; nor Garrity. All I needed was to know you, and your kind. You were never honest in your life; and when I heard about this deal, it was easy enough to figure what was up. I didn't have to ask any questions of your gang. I came out to see for myself."

"What deal, 'Kid'? What do you mean?"

"This ranch inheritance Garrity fixed up so nicely for you. No, I haven't all the dope—not yet. But I'm on my way to it, all right; the rawest deal I ever heard about, and it will blow up like a

punctured balloon, just as soon as your stepmother gets nerve enough to see a good lawyer. That's true, ain't it, Bob?"

"The old man left it to me."

"Yes he did—not. I was down in old Mex when I first heard what was going on up here. Young Clair got hold of one end of the story somehow, and told it to me. He didn't know very much, only that you and Garrity were hand in glove, and that you were up here running things—you remember Clair?"

"He worked here on the ranch."

"Yes; that's what made him talk. He's square, that kid, and you fired him, and every other American on the place; then put on Mexicans. That made him sore. When he told me that I came pretty near knowing what was up."

"You did, hey! Wanted a hand in the game?"

"Why shouldn't I, Bob? I held you up when you was flat, didn't I? There is no reason why you should forget me now. Damn you! I mean to see that you don't. That's what I'm here for. Now listen—I'm on to what is going to be pulled off tonight—this Casebeer business. It doesn't make any difference how I found that out, or who gave it away. You sent Sanchez and his helper over here to take care of the Casebeer outfit—that's right, isn't it?"

MEAGER growled something indistinctly, his eyes angrily watchful, but Kelleen remained on guard.

"There is no use playing the hog, Bob," the latter went on coolly. "I've got the cards, and I'm no girl you can play the brute with, like you did last night. Sanchez naturally thought you sent me out here; I told him you did, and he saw me at the ranch last evening. Consequently it was easy enough to find out all he knew. He was supposed to meet you here, but, as you see, I came instead. I thought it might be just as well for us to reach an understanding before Casebeer showed up."

"You damned devil!"

"I appreciate the compliment," smiling ironically, "but I am here to do business, not to exchange felicitations. What time does this outfit come in?"

"Between now and midnight."

"What are they running?"

"War stuff, of course."

"And you have the way cleared—Garity brought you that information, no doubt. Has he gone back to Nogales?"

"Yes; this morning."

"I see everything has been attended to. Somebody with brains is engineering this. You and Sanchez do the rough work while the Judge clears the trail. All right; I've got it mapped out now. I was afraid the Mexican might be lying to me, but I guess he wasn't. You are really not supposed to be in this deal at all. The Mex takes the stuff across the line, gets your share of the boodle, and brings it back. All you need do is hide out here, and wait. Pretty soft, I'd say."

"Is it? Well, what are you going to do?"

"Play square, Bob. I'm damned if you deserve it, but I'll only take my share. I'll go along with the outfit, though, to make sure I get it. Then we'll split right here. Keep that hand away. You have been edging in toward that gun for the last five minutes. I've got you covered, you sneaking cur. I don't take any chances with your kind. Now are you ready to come clean?"

There was no immediate answer, and Kelleen settled back into his saddle, but still faced the other, who had risen to his feet.

"I came up here half inclined to kill you," the younger man said, soberly. "but now I am going to give you a show-down if you play fair. I know you would double-cross anybody if you had a chance. I don't mean to give you any. You stay here until I come back! If you fail, I'll run you down, no matter where you go. You get that?"

"Damn you—yes."

"And you know what that means?"

Meager's fingers clenched and un-

clenched, his tongue wetting his dry lips.

"You needn't make any promise, Bob. Your word means nothing to me. You stay here until I come back. If you don't, you are as good as dead—that's all. That's my pledge; and you know whether it is good or not. Anything more you want to say?"

KELLEEN backed his horse slowly down into the bottom of the gully, turning the animal's head toward the opposite bank, but still twisted in the saddle so as to confront Meager. He had drawn his revolver, and held it carelessly in his hand.

"You are such a dirty, low-down brute," he said, coldly, "it would really be a pleasure to put you out of the world. I sometimes wonder why I don't. The Mex tells me you got married last night. Was it the real thing this time?"

"That's none of your damned business."

"Perhaps not, but let's be social while we are together. Partners ought not to quarrel. Surprises me you should desert the fair bride so soon. You seem to have your head wrapped up—couldn't be a love tap, could it?"

Meager's temper obtained full control at this unpleasantry.

"Hell, I was drunk!" he growled viciously. "But she'll pay for it, the next time I get hands on the wench."

"So she got away then? Lord, Bob, I always thought you was a woman tamer. This one is of another sort, then, than those you are accustomed to handling; doesn't take kindly to the cave-man stuff!"

"She'll take it, all right, the damn little vixen. She hit me when I was drunk, and then got away; hid in the old lady's room. I reckon, for I couldn't find her nowhere. But I'll bring the girl out o' there tonight, by God, an' she won't have no drunk man to deal with, neither."

Kelleen laughed, evidently well satisfied with what he had learned, and having no further desire to add to Meager's dis-

comfiture. His restive horse suddenly sprang forward under the quick thrust of the man's heel, crashing through the tangle of sage, and up the steep bank to the level of the desert above. Deborah had barely time to sink her body lower into the sand behind her covert, when the startled animal swept past, one hoof scarcely missing her. Meager, with an oath, swung a hand back to his pistol butt, yet was already too late—Kelleen had gone over the crest, the faint echo of a laugh floating behind him tantalizingly.

CHAPTER XIX

More Complications

ALL THE GIRL could do was to remain silently where she lay behind that cluster of sage. Had she been seen by either of the men? Did Kelleen catch glimpse of her as his horse dashed up the bank? or had Bob Meager, staring after him, chanced to discover her hiding place? She had no means of knowing, but could only keep her motionless pose like a frightened rabbit. It was already growing dusk, and shadows hung over the gully, becoming deeper with every passing moment. If she had escaped observation so far she would soon be perfectly safe. And she was—she was!

The certainty was like a glass of wine, the blood coming back to her heart, her pulse steadying. Kelleen had ridden on, never pausing; she could hear the dull thud of his horse's hoofs in the sand, until the sound died away in the distance. And Meager stood there, revolver in hand, cursing impotently, finally leaping forward across the gully to where he could stare out over the edge of the bank toward where his enemy had disappeared. Neither man then had seen her; neither had the slightest conception of her presence, yet she dare not move, or attempt to change position; the slightest motion might mean betrayal. She shrank even closer in the shadow waiting. Would Meager stay there, or go away? In

truth, of the two men she dreaded him the least, despising the fellow so thoroughly as to have largely lost her fear. She could face him, fight him, if necessary; he was no more than a cowardly brute, whose measure she had already taken. But Kelleen! She was actually afraid of him. If she had still retained any lingering doubt as to what he was, that doubt had entirely vanished by this conversation. The man had worn no mask talking with Bob Meager; made no attempt to disguise himself. She recognized him now as thief, and border desperado, no better, probably, than those he associated with—and far more dangerous.

It seemed to Deborah as though that dimly outlined figure standing at the edge of the bank would never move. The fellow was evidently trying to satisfy himself that Kelleen had really gone, before finally deciding on his own course of action. Darkness was fast shutting down about them like a curtain, and great desert stars began to show overhead. She realized that Meager had slipped his gun back into his holster, and appeared satisfied now that he had been left alone. His actions, and certain muttered words, aroused her interest, and held her in concealment, watching his every movement. The fellow purposed something—but what? Those surely were night glasses through which he searched the horizon, crossing from side to side of the ravine, and lying flat on the sand while sweeping the circle before him inch by inch. Evidently nothing was discovered to awaken suspicion, for he came back to his horse, and loosened a long rope coiled about the saddle pommel, and, with this on his arm, tramped down the gully, within a yard of where she lay, his figure fading almost instantly into the darker shadows below.

AT THE MOMENT the girl scarcely conceived what his mission might be. Her whole mind seemed to concentrate on the opportunity for escape which

his absence offered. If she could attain the horse unnoticed and once securely vault into the saddle, she could be over the bank, and out into the black, noiseless desert almost in an instant. She arose, crouching upon her feet, yet hesitated an instant, feeling a sudden curiosity to learn what Meager might be searching for. He could not go far, for the ravine ended abruptly against a rock wall. She had a mental picture of the scene. . . . Good God! Could the man be seeking after that narrow opening through which she had just escaped? Could it be possible he knew of its presence there? Where it led? The secret of that mysterious tunnel in the cliff?

If that was not his mission what could he be doing now? Why was he so secretive? The whole affair fascinated her—that strange, hidden mine with the dead man lying in the black passage, and its long-bearded, ape-armed guard, peering vigilantly through the vines. Were they all connected together—part of some criminal conspiracy, into the vortex of which she had been innocently drawn? The opportunity to escape was now open; Meager had entirely disappeared in the darkness; she could no longer even distinguish the sound of the man's movements, while his horse, saddled and bridled, stood unguarded not a dozen yards away. Yet the girl lingered, waiting to assure herself as to the real nature of the fellow's mission. She no longer thought of who he was—her husband; but only of his purpose in that place.

Forth from the darkness to her strained ears came the sound of a low whistle, a peculiar note resembling the call of a wild bird, quite evidently a signal, as it was repeated three times. To Deborah's imagination the whistler must be bending above the orifice in the rock. There was a pause, the desert silence profound, and then again the same signal impatiently given. Apparently there was no response of any nature from below, and Meager lost control of his caution, for he burst forth in a string of oaths,

ending this tirade by calling down into the hole, his voice muffled as though he had inserted his head as far as possible within the narrow opening. The words came back indistinct, occasionally lost.

"Below there! You, Manuel! Answer me, you damn dog! This is Bob; do you hear? By God, the fool must be asleep. I'll skin you alive if you fail me now. What the hell does this mean?"

He apparently stood up, or at least lifted his head from out the aperture, for the voice sounded clearer to Deborah. The change startled her so she sprang to her feet, ready for escape before he could return, yet waited another instant, breathless, poised for flight.

"Damn the luck!" growled Meager to himself, unconsciously aloud. "When I want the fool he fails me. By God! something must be wrong; but what the hell can I do? I got to find out what's up—that's sure; an' there ain't but one way o' doin' it; I got to git down below, an' damn quick, too, before Casebeer gits here."

Deborah paused no longer. He was coming back; there was no other way if he intended going down the cliff. She ran swiftly through the dark, reckless of the scraggy sage, desperate to attain the horse. The man must have heard her, had some intimation of movement in the black night, for he gave utterance to a startled oath, and his feet crunched in the sand. But he was already too late, too far behind. In a moment more the frightened girl had gripped the bridle rein, flinging it back over the animal's head, and, in spite of his backing away, startled by her sudden appearance, had, in sheer desperation of terror, scrambled into the saddle. The horse wheeled sharply about, maddened by the flap of her skirt, and leaped forward, straight across the gully, and up the sharp incline opposite. She clung tight to the pommel, lying almost flat, letting him bear her where he would. Her eyes caught one glimpse of the man's figure, dim, indistinct, grotesque, racing toward them; then he fired twice, the red

glare lighting up the night. The next instant they were over the top, speeding frantically into the inky blackness of the desert night, no sound but the slugging of the animal's hoofs in the soft sand.

A hundred yards, and she sat up in the saddle, reining her frightened horse in, and staring back through the dark curtain. She had escaped, she was free! Nothing else mattered. Meager's hasty shots had failed; neither she nor the horse had been touched. Now he was back there helpless on foot, while she was free, and in saddle. But where should she ride? In which direction? Where was safety to be found before daylight? She drew the horse down to a walk, and studied the stars overhead, in an endeavor to determine even the points of the compass. Her heart seemed to stop beating! How lonely it all was, how deadly quiet, and desolate.

WAS THAT A SOUND—there to her left? She stared, half conscious of a deeper shadow looming, yet uncertain, checking the sudden spring of her horse. Then she knew, but too late; the black thunderbolt rushed upon her, and a man, leaning from his saddle, had clasped her arm, even as he jerked his own mount almost on its haunches.

"No shooting, please!" a voice said a bit sternly. "It is you, then?"

She suppressed the scream which almost escaped her lips, but her answer faltered.

"You thought it was I, then? You were seeking after me?"

"Of course; people scarcely meet by chance here—in this desert and darkness."

"But why, may I ask, should we meet by either chance, or otherwise?"

"Inclination may have had something to do with that, and a desire to serve. Am I not somewhat responsible in your case?"

"I do not care to acknowledge any such responsibility. I prefer now to go my own way alone."

"You mean those words just as they sound?" he asked, releasing his grasp on her arm, yet only lowering his hand to her horse's rein.

"The words certainly express my meaning exactly, Mr. Kelleen. Why do you retain hold of that rein?"

"To prevent any attempt on your part to ride away," he acknowledged, a slight coldness in his tone. "At least until we understand each other better. I had up to this minute supposed you were endeavoring to escape from that fellow back yonder; now I learn you were running away from me also. Is that the truth?"

She hesitated, then courage returned.

"I fear you more than I do Bob Meager," she answered honestly, "and despise you more."

"That is a pleasant statement. I wonder if I really deserve it? You think I deserted you, left you unnecessarily? First listen to my explanation—yes, you must; I shall not let you go until you do."

He laughed rather bitterly.

"Really it surprised me that I take all this trouble. I have never been termed a ladies' man, or cared particularly as to how I stood in their estimation. But I deliberately started out to help you, and you are not going to act the fool now, if I can prevent it. Will you listen to me?"

"I know of no way to avoid doing so; but I prefer that you release my horse."

He was resting over his pommel endeavoring to see her features through the gloom. Then his fingers relaxed their hold on the rein, and he straightened up facing her. They were too indistinct figures, barely discernible.

"I trust you," he said simply. "You are better mounted than I, and armed, but I will not believe you look upon me altogether as a villain. You had confidence in me last night—did you not?"

"Yes—last night. I was desperate, afraid, and—and I accepted all you told me."

"I am the same man now," he said earnestly. "I am Daniel Kelleen, just as

ready to prove my friendship now as then. You do not believe that?"

"No, I do not; I cannot. You insist on knowing why? There is no reason why I should not explain what has made the difference. Last night I accepted your assistance from necessity. I had to escape that ranch before daylight, and you offered the only chance. I—I did not know who you were then—only—only in a vague way. I rather accepted you as an American cowboy, and—and you made me trust you."

"During our night ride, you mean?"

"Yes, you told me a little about yourself; perhaps it was not true, but you made me think it was, and I gained confidence in you in spite—in spite of your—your reputation."

"I see—the 'Frisco Kid' business. That was a little off color, wasn't it? If I remember right you got my history principally from 'Pop' Reynolds, with all embellishments thrown in. Yet, nevertheless, you managed to like me? Is that it?"

"I had to trust you then. I tried to believe all you told me, and—and you were nice."

"Good enough; and then what?"

"It was not because you left me. I thought I understood that; you were seeking to save me from discovery. Yet even then I was not sure, not as confident in you as when we were alone together. I—I began to doubt, to desire to get away from you. Sanchez was too friendly, too willing to acknowledge your leadership, and obey your orders—and—and you knew too much about what was going on here."

"I did some pretty shrewd guessing, that's true," he said soberly. "I knew enough for that, at least; all Sanchez knew of me was my name, and that I was supposed to be a friend of Meager's. He saw me over at the ranch, and I bluffed all the rest through."

"He knew you as 'Frisco Kid'?"

"Of course. It was that individual's reputation which won his loyalty."

"So I supposed and I am beginning to

believe justly," Deborah said coldly. "You told me a very interesting story, Mr. Daniel Kelleen, which I know now to be false."

CHAPTER XX

Kelleen Becomes Master

KELLEEN made no movement, and for the moment no answer. He had anticipated this outburst, yet was not quite prepared to meet it. Her voice spoke again.

"You have lied to me, haven't you?"

"I prefer learning first why you reach this conclusion," he replied calmly. "Does it come from my conversation with Juan Sanchez?"

"It began there. I could scarcely help suspecting you after listening to what you had to say to that Mexican outlaw. Besides, he discussed you quite freely with his companion in my hearing before you returned. When you did come all you had to say to them only confirmed his statement—you are out here not so much in my protection, but as the representative of Bob Meager. I am merely your plaything en route."

"You are complimentary. Did I serve Meager, you think, by running off with his wife?"

"There is no law, or decency on this border where any woman is concerned," she burst out bitterly. "I have at least learned that. I do not know your real object; only that you are one of this disreputable gang; that you came here to serve its purposes; that I was therefore only an incident—to be lied to, and laughed at."

"You reached this conclusion from what you overheard of the talk between Sanchez and myself? Of course I knew you were there."

"Exactly, and did not even care. Your very insolence was an insult. You believed me then entirely in your power. I had fled with you into the desert. You thought there was no escape possible—that I was already compromised, helpless.

You could sit calmly there on your horse, laugh and sneer, and I dare do nothing to protect myself. Then you rode off, and left me—your last glance one of insolent triumph. It was then I fully realized that I was only your victim. I was afraid of you, and I hated you then."

His voice was very low, very quiet.

"You lost all faith? You attempted to run away, and hide from me before I could return?"

"I attempted to get away—yes. I could not remain there; it would even be better to die on the desert. But—but I am not wholly sure I had lost all faith. Nothing was quite clear, but—but I was afraid of you. You had lied to me; I could not trust myself alone with you any longer. But since then I have lost all faith—do you know why?"

"I can make a guess. You also overheard the talk between myself and Bob Meager."

"Every word. How did you know?"

"Because I had a glimpse of you as my horse topped the bank. I had sought you everywhere after I finally got rid of Sanchez. The truth is I was still seeking your trail when I encountered Bob skulking there in the gully. Our meeting was not prearranged; it was an accident. Were you there when we first came together?"

"No; which is quite fortunate for your story; it gives sufficient scope to your imagination. There was nothing said after I crept within hearing at least to show any serious lack of friendship between you. You talked like partners; and it was not for my sake, surely, for neither one had any conception that I was within earshot. That is true, isn't it?"

"Yes," Kelleen acknowledged. "It is true so far as it goes. You are perfectly justified in condemning me, as the facts stand in your mind. I am not going to even attempt to defend myself. I fear it would be useless. I am merely going to serve you, whether you wish to be served or not. But listen a minute before you cast me off utterly. Will you do that?"

THE GIRL HESITATED, biting her lips, angered by his insistence. "I cannot very well help listening; I doubt if I believe."

"Believe or not, as you damn please," he broke forth impatiently. "This is no time, or place, in which to play. I've made up my mind what to do, however you decide—only I'd rather you put some faith in me. It would be easier, and pleasanter for both of us. The truth is I have been with you—square. I came here seeking refuge just exactly as I explained to you last night. I knew this was a thieves' hole, of course, but had no suspicion that we were going to run into their outfit at this time. But when we did, I had to act along with them. There was no other way. I had you to consider, and I had something else to consider. I lied to them, not to you—to both Sanchez and Bob Meager. They are going to get the surprise of their lives tonight. Now listen. I came back there for you; I tried to trace you all the afternoon. I do not know how you hid your trail, but there was none to be found. Where did you go?"

"That is my secret."

"And you mean to keep it from me? Well, I knew you couldn't be far away, because you had not taken the horse. Finally I decided you must have climbed the cliff on foot, and I came up, and ran into Meager. Neither of us was very happy about it, but I had some knowledge of what was on foot from Sanchez. Only Bob wasn't there for that purpose; he pretended to be, but he had something else up his sleeve. You don't know what he was really up to, do you?"

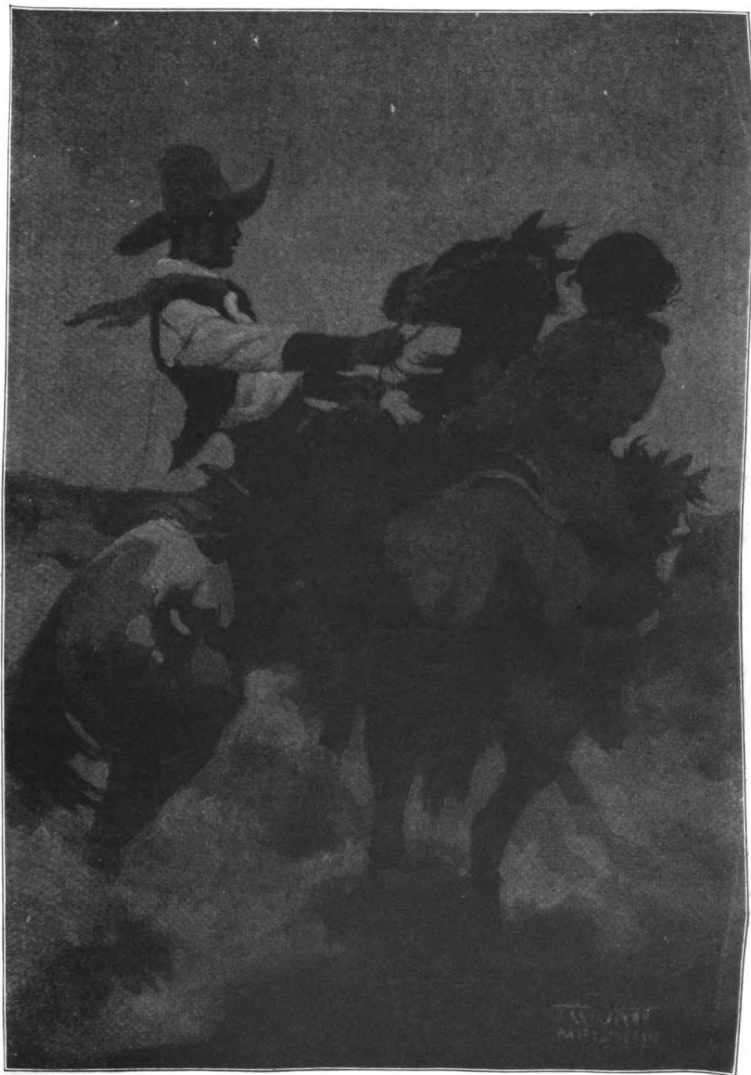
"No," she said quickly, not willing yet to tell her tale. "Why should I?"

Kelleen went on, undiscouraged.

"I didn't know how long you were hiding there. I only caught that glimpse of you as I rode away, crouched down behind the sagebrush. But that is why I came back."

"Because you saw me?"

"Yes; and because I believed Bob was



"Now, listen; from now on I am master, and I'll begin right here."

up to some trick. I even had reason to suspect, did I not, that you two might be there together?"

She faced him indignantly, sitting straight in her saddle.

"You thought I would secretly meet him?"

"Why not? You evidently believe every evil of me. How did I know you had told the truth? You are his wife, by your own statement. Why shouldn't I suspect finding you there together? Anyhow I went back to discover the truth. That is why I am here with you now."

"Believing that of me?"

"I hardly know—except not that. You were not with him, yet that is his horse you are riding. He fired at you, did he not?"

"Yes; he went past me down the gully after you left. It was dark then, and I was not seen. He had no knowledge of my presence. Then I stole his horse and rode away. I doubt if he even knew it was a woman he shot at."

The listlessness suddenly left her voice.

"But I am not going with you," she went on coldly. "If you are a man you will not try to urge me. I trusted you last night, but not now. I am not afraid of the night, or the desert."

"And you are afraid of me?"

"I am not your kind, Mr. 'Frisco Kid'; that is all the answer I need make you. Will you let me go?"

"Where?"

"I'll find my way; I have a horse, and the stars. By morning I'll be in sight of some point of guidance. Anyhow if the choice is between the cruel desert and you, I take the desert. Am I free to go?"

Kelleen laughed.

"You leave it to me then? Well, I say you are not going. I am not the sort of cur who would let you commit suicide just because you have taken a dislike to me. You would be lost in ten minutes; you don't know this country—it's treacherous as hell. Now listen; you are going to trust me, whether you wish to, or not. You needn't like me—that cuts no ice in

this affair—but you are going to learn that when I give my word to either man or woman, I'm going to keep it. Now, that's flat. If you want to go back to Bob Meager, all right. I'll take you to him, and we're done. But when you talk of my turning you loose in this desert, to take your chances out here alone, I am the wrong kind of man for any such job. You can hate me all your please, but we stick together, until I get you where there are white folks."

"I believe I do hate you!"

"All right; I don't mind that. Will you do what I tell you to do?"

THE MAN waited, leaning slightly forward, seeking vainly to distinguish the girl's features. There was no sound but the slight creaking of their saddles, and the breathing of the two horses. They were alone in the great void. He had spoken quickly, almost harshly, and the tone of command had aroused Deborah's resentment. The two wills clashed, and neither would give way, or seek compromise. Deep down in her secret heart a bit of faith in this Daniel Kelleen yet lingered, but she was in no mood then to acknowledge it. He was threatening her; trying to frighten her; endeavoring to force her into his power."

"No, I will not," she said sharply. "Take your hand off my bridle rein!"

She struck her mount suddenly, and the startled animal sprang forward, whirling sidewise from the blow, careening against the flank of Kelleen's horse as it swept sifly past. The next instant the wild race was on through the black night. She heard the man call to her, but the words were indistinguishable; then from behind came the crunch of his horse's hoofs in mad pursuit. And he was gaining, in spite of every effort. She rode recklessly, desperately, lashing her mount with the flapping end of her reins, yet, leap by leap, Kelleen drew closer, riding as he often had before in heading off a wild stampede of cattle, pressing her horse more and more to the right, into a

half-circle as he drew near. He had but one aim, one purpose, and his spurs drew blood as he compelled the animal he rode to give its last ounce of strength to the race. Inch by inch they drew closer together, the girl's skirt flapping against his leg; then his iron grip closed on the bit of her horse, and the two animals came to a stop, pawing the air, Deborah retaining her seat only by clinging to the saddle pommel. She was breathless, frightened, angry; but the man was conqueror, and in no mood for compromise.

"You fool! do you know where you were going?" he exclaimed sternly. "Straight to the edge of that hole; a dozen strides more and you would have been over. By God! I got you in time, but that is the last trick you'll play on me."

"You—you dare to speak to me like that—you?"

The man laughed grimly, the nervous reaction thus finding unconscious expression.

"Dare? I'll say I dare. What else could I call you? You didn't even know what direction you were going, and headed straight for a five hundred foot drop. Now, listen; from now on I am master, and I'll begin right here."

He jerked the revolver from out the holster at her waist, and thrust it into his own belt. The significance of the action robbed the girl of all defiance; she suddenly felt weak, helpless.

"You—you mean I must do whatever you say?"

"Exactly that. You came to me at first voluntarily; you ask my help. I brought you here, and I am going to take you out safely. You are at liberty to hate me, or like me, as you please. I am not asking anything but obedience. I tried being a man with you, and it failed to work; now I'll try being a brute, and see what happens."

He straightened up in his saddle, evidently startled by something in the distance. She could barely distinguish his figure in the gloom, yet knew that his

unoccupied hand was pointing to the right.

"Do you see that?" he asked, his voice tense, and eager. "Down below there—that dull red light? It's Casebeer's outfit coming in."

CHAPTER XXI

Talking It Over

SHE STARED down at the red glimmer uncomprehending, her mind still agitated by Kelleen's sudden forcefulness. At first the light seemed to move, to approach slowly, and then to stop. Deborah thought she could perceive figures passing back and forth within its radius.

"Is—that down in the gulch," she asked, the very silence a burden.

He answered without glancing about.

"Yes, just below the turn; there is a small cabin there. But I cannot quite make out what the fellows are actually up to. The trail leads straight on, but they seem to be unloading the mules. Does it look so to you?"

The girl did not reply, unable to distinguish clearly, her mind, in reality, more intent on this man sitting beside her than upon that indistinct scene presented beneath. He had seemingly forgotten her very presence, so deeply interested was he in what was transpiring below, leaning eagerly forward, with eyes never deserting the group now showing vaguely within the reddish glare of the fire, which illuminated that little section of the gulch at their feet. Its faint reflection even enabled her to mark the stern outlines of his face against the far-away radiance. Her hostility to the man somehow seemed slipping away. She could not understand what it was that held her there quiet, silent, watching him. The temptation to act came, and passed. It would be easy to snatch that loaded gun from his belt; a single shot would set her free. He was no longer thinking of her; his whole attention was concentrated on that outfit working below. Yet she did not

move; just sat there in the saddle, and watched him, wondering at herself. At last a sudden uncontrollable impulse caused Deborah to stretch out her hand, and grasp his sleeve.

"Who are you?" she asked directly. "You must tell me."

The man turned his face toward her quickly, impatiently, their leveled eyes meeting in the dim light.

"I have already told you," he replied, with no marked surprise in his tone. "I trusted you that far; but you chose to disbelieve."

"But can you blame me if I did?" she exclaimed, almost passionately, disturbed once more by his apparent indifference. "It was merely your word pitted against the things I have heard said about you—about the 'Frisco Kid'—before I ever saw you? Stories of all these others; against everything that has occurred before and since. In my mind you ranked as the most desperately bad man of this border, with a price on your head. If I had known who you were back at the ranch, I should never have ridden a mile with you, not even to escape from Bob Meager, or a charge of having killed him."

"Go on," he said, soberly, as she stopped breathless. "Let's have this out; there is no better time."

"I never knew until morning; until I finally recognized you. Then you told me that story—told it so I almost believed it true, almost trusted you. Really I had to believe, or pretend to believe, for I was there alone with you, helpless to protect myself, unable to escape. I was lost in the desert. Then you talked with that Mexican cut-throat, where I could hear all you said. He accepted you as one of the gang, and even obeyed your orders. He believed Bob Meager had sent you out here. You were certainly lying to someone, and naturally I supposed it must be me."

"Why you, may I ask?"

"Because the Mexican knew you; I didn't. I was only a woman you had picked up by accident the night before.

There was every reason why you should lie to me. When you rode away together, I was sure you would soon be back alone, and I determined you should never find me there. I made my choice—it was the desert and death, rather than you. You understand what I mean, Daniel Kelleen?"

"Yes, I understand," quietly. "Go on, let's have it all."

"Then up above, in that little gully, I ran onto you again, it makes no difference how I happened to be there. It was hours later; I had some time in which to think, and began to wonder if my decision had been right. Perhaps you were deceiving Sanchez, hoping thus better to serve me. I did not know; I doubted everything. Then, in the gathering dark, I crept through that patch of sagebrush, and found you in private conference with Bob Meager. You were surely not playing a part then, for you had no knowledge you were being overheard. Yet you were extremely friendly, you even claimed to be a partner—it was the very word used—in this Casebeer affair, and you finally rode away to perform your part of the night's work. After that how could I still retain faith in you? Or trust myself with you?"

KELLEEN did not answer directly, his gaze leaving her face and turning inquiringly to the strange scene revealed below. He stared at this a moment in moody silence. Then he swung down from the saddle, dropped the rein over the horse's head, and stood beside her.

"I am going to tell you," he said calmly, "if you consent to listen. I think we have ample time to talk this over. I don't know just what those fellows are up to down there, but apparently they are unloading the entire outfit. The only thing I can do therefore is sit here and watch the operation—this is a new deal. Will you trust me enough to dismount?"

There was something about the man, his quiet confidence, his low, even voice, his entire personality, which Deborah found impossible to resist. She earnestly

wanted to believe in him, and somehow his very presence restored to her a measure of faith. Hesitating an instant, even shrinking back from any personal contact, her lips refusing a direct answer, she yet permitted his hand to close firmly over her own, and draw her down from the security of the saddle to the common level of the desert sand.

Without a word of urging, or explanation, Kelleen led her forward to the very edge of the cliff, where an exposed rock, swept bare by the wind, gave them a seat. Directly beneath lay the narrow valley, dimly lighted by that single fire, about which black dots constantly moved, too far away to be clearly visible. Occasionally the faint echo of a voice reached them, but not distinguishable. It was like a scene thrown upon a screen. Kelleen dropped down beside her, peering first over the depths, the flicker of the distant flame illumining his face. She could not help but mark its strong outline.

"You really do not understand what is being done down there?" she asked at last, as he held silent.

"I do not."

He glanced aside at her, the trace of a smile on his lips. "In spite of my being so important a part in this conspiracy, I am wholly at sea. If you will only believe that to be true, Miss Deborah, we shall be a lot closer to understanding each other. There is something going on here quite beyond me. I had supposed this was a plain case of smuggling war munitions over the line into Mexico. But it isn't. I have been down there, and trailed every foot of that ground. Casebeer's outfit must have come in through that lower pass yonder—beyond the clump of trees," extending his hand, "and the only feasible way to the border lies up the opposite ravine, directly behind the cabin.

"All that they would require here is water for the stock, and a guide. That was to be Sanchez' job. He was to assure them that the way ahead was open, unguarded, and lead them over the safe

trail. They need all the rest of the night to make it in."

"But—but they are unloading the mules."

"That is exactly what they are doing—all of them; and taking the stuff back into the cabin. They are not going on at all; they are going back unloaded. Now what does it mean? Why did Sanchez lie to me about it? And Bob Meager?"

Deborah sat up straight.

"Why shouldn't they lie to you?" she asked quickly. "If you are really what you pretend to be to me?"

"Because they have no suspicion—they can have none. Not a thing has occurred to arouse such doubt. The game has been played too carefully. It's not that. Meager is endeavoring to double-cross me; I learned that up yonder, but nevertheless he has not the faintest suspicion as yet that I am not one of his kind. The fellow, together with Garrity, is pulling off something here out of the ordinary, which they want to keep me out of—that's all. It's a thieves' game, which I have butted into at the wrong moment."

HE STOPPED suddenly; then turned and placed his hand firmly on her own, where it rested on the rock surface, his voice changing.

"Miss Deborah, there is no masquerade between us. I do not know why I talked to you as freely as I did last night. I must have liked you very much, and trusted you. Anyhow I told you the exact truth, and there is no occasion now to deny it. The more fully you understand the situation the greater service you can render—and, first of all, you must repose confidence in me. I am Daniel Kelleen, a captain in the regular army, who has volunteered for special scouting detail to stop this border work. The character of the 'Frisco Kid,' has been made to order, to permit of my thus gaining the confidence of these outlaws. It has worked, and I am absolutely sure, even now, that I am not suspected by any of the gang. The whisper reached me a week ago that

munitions were being run through here—that Bob Meager's outfit was doing it; that this was the leak we had been unable to stop. I came up to Nogales; hung around there in the lowest quarters of the town, picking up stray bits of rumor. Finally I heard about Garrity, learned he was going out to the Meager ranch. His henchman spilt a little, leaving me to believe there was going to be a run made across the line this week—this Casebeer outfit. That's why I came out; that's how Garrity picked me up at Silver Springs, and I rode on with him to Meager's."

"And that is why you brought me to this place?"

"I was trying to accomplish two things at once—yes; but frankly I do not know where else I could possibly have taken you in any safety. I didn't know they were already here, but I was prepared for them—if they went on to the border."

"Prepared? How?"

She was deeply interested, now, impressed by his earnestness.

"I had sent word to our people from Nogales. There is a narrow pass through the hills on the trail below, which this outfit must use just before they cross into Mexico. There is no other way south leading from here. Early this evening a squad of cavalry got there from the north, and are waiting."

"And if the outfit they are watching for do not show up tonight, or early tomorrow, what will those soldiers do?"

"Hard to tell. My judgment would be to scout up this way, and endeavor to find out the trouble. This halt here has knocked out my plans completely; my guess at the game has gone wrong. As it is I have the choice of two things—either remain here, and learn what these birds are really up to; or else ride south, bring those troopers back, and round up this entire outfit on general principles. I'd like most of all to discover where Meager is."

"Perhaps I can help you."

"You?" lightly. "I hardly believe so."

"Don't be so sure; I have a story to tell you yet."

DEBORAH spoke rapidly, clearly, depicting her experiences in the concealed tunnel, her escape up the narrow passage leading to the desert level, how she came to be hidden in the gully, and what had occurred there after Kelleen had ridden away. The captain listened eagerly to her recital of adventure, interrupting the narrative with numerous questions. As she came to an end he sat silent endeavoring to think the strange situation out, and grasp its meaning. This fresh knowledge brought a new element into the affair, complicating the whole matter. The red flame of the fire below still cast its faint reflection over them, and it was quite evident the men at work down there had not yet completed their task.

"You say this was a tunnel?" he asked finally. "Dug out, you mean?"

"The light was too poor for me to tell very much. I thought at the time it might be an ancient watercourse, but work had certainly been done on it. I found a pick and shovel on a heap of loosened rock. Quite a pile of broken stone lay at the farther end, as though it might have been blasted from the wall. I had to climb over it."

Kelleen drew a long breath, his hand smiting his knee in sudden conviction.

"By God!" he said slowly. "I believe it must be the 'Lost Mine.' Meager may have found it, and is trying to keep it to himself."

"The 'Lost Mine'?"

"Yes; it is a tradition of this country, an old Spanish legend, I believe, but implicitly believed for a hundred years. Men by scores have lost their lives hunting for it from one end of this desert to the other. I heard it talked about more than five years ago, when I was first sent out here from the Point. The story goes that it was fabulously rich, discovered by a Spanish explorer, who carried samples of ore clear to Mexico City. He came there twice with laden mules, but refused all

definite information, and the men he took back with him as helpers were never permitted to go beyond the edge of the desert. He would then go in alone, and bring out the ore, a muleload at a time. No one ever tracked him; the only one who made any serious attempt to do so, was found dead.

"Then one day the discoverer failed to return to camp. He never did come back, and no trace of him was ever found. His name was Alvara, and ever since men have been hunting after Alvara's 'Lost Mine.'"

"And it was actually here?"

"It must have been. The old Mexican camp was south there in that canyon where I told you the cavalrymen were waiting tonight. I have had the spot pointed out to me by Mexicans who knew the story well. I am beginning to understand what is up—or, at least, suspect what all this may mean. Someone has accidentally stumbled onto this old mine. I don't believe the discoverer could be either Bob, or Garrity. But in some way they got wind of it, and have taken possession.

"This ammunition train, which is supposed to be headed for Mexico, stops right here.

Casebeer doesn't know what's up, and doesn't care. He gets his money just the same, with less traveling and danger. Maybe he asks no questions; maybe he knows what's up and is in on the deal. Anyway, under orders, he dumps the stuff—powder, dynamite, whatever it is—and hustles it out of sight into that cabin. Before daylight comes, his mule train is back again on the desert empty, traveling north."

"And there is nothing you can do, is there?" she asked.

"It is no crime to discover and work a mine?"

"No—only, perhaps, that dead man you tell me about; murder is still a crime, even on this border. There is something about this affair which isn't straight; otherwise Garrity and Bob Meager wouldn't be in it.

Those guys are playing dirt somehow—it is up to me to find out how."

CHAPTER XXII

Alone on the Desert

KELLEEN stood up, advancing to the very edge of the flat rock, where he could look straight down into the deep depression below. The cliffs were faintly tinted red by the flames of the distant fire, and his figure was rather distinctly silhouetted against the upper sky. Deborah called out to him in warning, but he only smiled back carelessly.

"There's no danger," he said confidently. "The sky back of me is as black as ink. I can't be seen from down below."

He leaned over, scanning the rock front and speaking back across his shoulder.

"There is no movement down there. Casebeer's outfit is not onto the scheme; afeity they go that stuff will all be carried into the tunnel. Meager will never dare leave it out yonder."

"What's that place called where the soldiers are?"

"Box Canyon—why?"

"I was wondering——"

A sharp spit of fire leaped out of the the night beyond the horses, accompanied by a dull report. The startled animals whirled and disappeared in the darkness but Deborah saw only Kelleen, poised there on the edge of the chasm—saw him fling up both hands, clutching vainly at the air, and then topple over, down into those yawning depths below. She could not even scream, but some irresistible instinct caused her instantly to roll back from off the stone into the slight depression at its base. In the black darkness of this shallow hole she lay motionless, scarcely venturing to breathe. In her fright and daze she yet comprehended all that had occurred; the shot had come not from beneath, but out of the desert. Kelleen had been killed, the horses stampeded; she was unhurt, but alone.

It was all over so quickly, the situation

barely flashed through her brain, before a voice spoke, a voice familiar and hated.

"By God, that got him! Did you see how he toppled plumb over the cliff? That settles his spying on us, I reckon."

"Sí, señor; but I would swear there was two of them there."

"You saw two?"

"No, I not see two; only the one standing against the light, the Señor 'Kid.' I know heem; but I thought he spoke, and sure, señor, there were two horses."

"Of course, he stole mine. I had a shot at him then; but there is no one else here. Damn you, look for yourself, Sanchez! This rock is clean as a billiard table, and there's no place to hide. Where the hell do you suppose those brons went?"

"We find 'em when the day comes; they not go far in the desert, señor. Where the 'Kid' fall—here?"

Deborah realized that the Mexican had clambered onto the flat top of the rock, and was peering down over the edge, while Meager remained on the sand, impatiently moving about.

"Well, what do you see?" he barked finally.

"Not one damn thing, señor; black like hell down there—he no live after that."

Meager laughed, chucklingly.

"I'll say he couldn't; not even if he was a cat. There ain't no use our hanging round here. That guy is out of the way, and we'll pick him up an' plant him, after these others clear out. Casebeer's outfit must be through by this time. Go on down, and start 'em back. You paid him?"

"Sí, señor; he never unload till I do; he what you call 'hard-boil.'"

"He's hard-boiled, all right, but by God, he's got to hold his damn tongue over this deal. I'll go on down with you, and have a final word with him. I'll tell that guy something he'll not forget."

THE frightened girl, crushed into the shallow hole, half beneath the shadowing rock, dare not stir for some time. The men might decide to return; some

dim suspicion might enter their minds, causing them to retrace their steps. She could see nothing, her face pressed hard against the sand, and the sound of the two died away quickly. At last, unable to remain in that posture longer, she cautiously lifted her head, and gazed about into the darkness. There was nothing to be seen, or heard, and she finally struggled to her feet, clinging to the rock edge for support. It was all plain enough, yet she could not seem to think clearly, and her limbs were so weak they would scarcely support her body. Kelleen had been killed, murdered. Meager had crept up in the dark, and shot the man down in cold blood as he stood silhouetted against that gleam of fire. The victim had toppled over the cliff, and, if not already dead from the bullet, must have been crushed into pulp on the rocks below.

These facts came home more and more visibly to the girl's mind. She had escaped discovery as by a miracle, and yet to what end? She was alone, lost, without either horse or weapon to aid her in escape. Both animals had disappeared in the desert night, her revolver had gone down with Kelleen. But one slender bit of fortune remained—her presence there was still unsuspected. The man whose discovery she had most reason to dread yet believed her back at the ranch, hiding from him behind locked doors, but helpless to escape his return. How she had ever evaded his recognition was a mystery, yet, thank God she had, and this fact alone gave her a slender chance.

Assured at last that the men had really departed, a measure of strength returning as she moved her limbs and faced the realities, Deborah crept back upon the flat surface of the rock and gazed frightened into those dizzy depths below. It was like a nightmare, the horrid memory which haunted her of Kelleen's body whirling down through that glare of red light. But by then the light had faded, the distant fire having died down to red ash, and her eyes were unable to penetrate the gloom beneath. She gazed into

a black void, seeing no movement, hearing no sound. The awful silence, and loneliness crushed her spirit.

What could she do? Where could she go? Not to those men there in the valley surely; not to Bob Meager, asking for mercy and release. He was impossible; her bitter hatred of him more intense than ever. To all the wrong done her in the past was added now this brutal murder of Daniel Kelleen—and suddenly, unexpectedly, the girl realized what this last meant to her. She refused to acknowledge the truth, fought it back there alone in the darkness, yet it would not be altogether ignored. Daniel Kelleen was dead—gone from out her life forever—and there came into her heart a desire for revenge, a mad impulse to fitly punish the murderer. She longed to become the instrument to prove her loyalty to him by action. Yet how? What was it possible for her to do?

DEBORAH STARED helplessly into the dense blackness of the desert, and up at the desert stars overhead, her mind obsessed with these questions. It was no longer herself so much as the aroused memory of him. She would carry on his work; she must at whatever cost.

But how? . . . The cavalrymen stationed at Box Canyon! They were waiting for the approach of Casebeer's outfit, or else some word of command from Kelleen. They could not be far away over there—to the south he said, and he had pointed in that direction. The stars would help her to keep the points of compass until daylight came, and then surely she could discern something else to steer her course by. She must go on foot, straight out into the desert; there might not be one chance in a hundred of her going right—yet the one chance was better than remaining there for Bob Meager to find her. She would rather die miserably in the sand waste than feel that wretch touch her again. God, yes, the kiss of Death would be sweet, compared

to the touch of his lips! She shuddered at the thought. His wife! The subject of his foul caresses; helpless to repel his lust, his brutal bestiality. She would make the trail; she would go south. This was all that her mind grasped clearly—the soldiers were camped at Box Canyon, and Box Canyon was somewhere out there to the southward. To reach them was her only hope.

She stood up and studied the sky. She knew so little of those stars! They frightened and confused her in their desert brilliancy, and yet she remembered enough to meet her immediate needs. The Big Dipper was easily found, and then the North Star. She must be right, for Kelleen had pointed over there, and the direction he had designated coincided exactly with what the stars told. She could not go far wrong if she kept that North Star at her back—she would be going south. A moment she paused, hesitating to take the plunge, a prayer on her lips. How lonely, desolate, black, the night was; the very silence seemed to hem her in, isolate her from all the world. Then, with firm-set lips, the girl went forward, plunging her way through the sand, instantly swallowed up in the black desert.

She plunged on recklessly, desperately, hope dying within her as she advanced. Nothing could guide her now, or save her, but God's mercy. The soundless void through which she moved, the impenetrable black curtain enveloping her, almost drove her mad. She could not fight the depression, or keep her mind clear. The sand shifted under her feet and twice she fell heavily, tripped by some protruding rock, and left bruised and breathless. Her advance was blind, uncertain, and she scarcely dared turn her face forward for fear of losing the guidance of that one star by which she endeavored to steer. She was lost utterly but for that, and when, for a moment, her eyes strayed, everything became confused, her every sense of direction gone. How long she toiled on, how fast her rate of progress, the girl never knew—the way was uneven,

with unexpected depressions here and there, and ridges of rock projecting through the sand, and occasionally mounds she had to go around. Once she encountered a shallow ravine, stepping off into it unconsciously, and then crawling painfully up the opposite side, cut by sharp splinters of stone, before attaining the level again. For the moment she lost her star, but finally located it once more, and plunged desperately on.

Then she saw something just ahead of her—a dim, undefinable shadow, which seemed to move. It was so hideous, so grotesque, and shapeless, her very heart stood still with terror. The girl sank to her knees, trembling, with no eyes for anything except that mysterious moving object. Misshapen, huge, looming oddly through the gloom, it was advancing steadily toward her—a formless something which neither resembled man nor beast.

CHAPTER XXIII

The Border Patrol

DEBORAH rose timidly to her feet, her heart beginning to beat once more, but not with fear. Forth from the darkness came the low whinney of a horse in sudden recognition, while as instantly that horrid shadow took both shape and form.

It was a horse, saddled, bridled, the rein trailing along the sand, one of the two animals stampeded by the shot which had killed Kelleen. He had sensed her coming in the desert night, and was even then dumbly welcoming her. The girl went forward slowly, doubtfully, fearful again of startling the animal into flight, but he remained quiet, sniffing at her as she drew near, and finally put hand on the dangling rein. It was the horse Kelleen had ridden, and Deborah hid her face in his mane, and cried softly, while he turned and rubbed his nozzle against her shoulder in silent greeting. It seemed too good to be true. The sudden reaction left her weak as a child.

Yet she must go on; there was more cause now than ever before to go on—more hope of success. She made the effort twice before she succeeded in dragging herself up into the saddle, but the horse stood patiently, making no attempt to break away. Once there the girl's strength came back, and with it, her determination. All was still, deathly still; not a breath of air touched her cheek; the dense night shut them in. Carefully, she located the only star she knew; it seemed utterly wrong in its position to her mind, yet she was faithful to it. Half afraid, yet not daring to venture otherwise, she drew the horse about, and rode south.

The night seemed endless, the black desert eternal. There were times when the girl lost consciousness of everything, except that shining North Star ever at her back. It was her one guide and hope; through it she retained sanity and faith. In that way lay Box Canyon, and those waiting troopers. She dare not ride fast, knowing not what pitfalls were ahead, the course irregular, up and down. The horse picked his way intelligently, the reins lying loose, except as she occasionally held him inexorably to the southward. She swayed wearily in the saddle, clinging to the high pommel for support, unable to see, yet aware that they crossed shallow ravines, and found passage occasionally along ridges of outcropping rock, and then advanced more easily for long spaces over wide expanses of sand, noiselessly as a specter. It was hard to keep awake, to concentrate, to remember—she had to struggle to realize this was not all a dream.

Then, after seemingly endless hours, the dawn came. Would she ever again forget it? She hardly knew at first what it was. Riding drearily with lowered head, she became dimly aware of a change, a lightening of the gloom about, a dull grayness tinging faintly the black wall of the surrounding night. Almost as she wondered, the daylight came, wan and spectral at first, widening her vista

on a gray circle. And the stars slowly faded from out a multicolored sky.

To the left a brightening white light shot up in long streamers, touching with more gaudy tinges the edges of fleecy clouds, while in the other direction a purple haze blended with the deeper shadows along the horizon. It was the coming of the sun, rising majestically above the far-off rim of the desert, and she was still moving southward; through the long night hours she had kept the faith.

Yet there was little of hope, of encouragement, in the picture unrolled before her. Her view gradually spread out in wider and wider circles, but with no relief to its drear sameness, or monotony. Sand, leagues upon leagues of sand, stretched wherever her wearied eyes turned, leveled by the wind, or cast upward in rounded hillocks, but ever gray, depressing, a sea of desolation, dead, unmovable, extending to the far circle of the overshadowing arch of sky.

It was all lifeless, not even a sagebrush, or Spanish bayonet visible. No animal moved amid that dreariness, no wing of bird cleaved the air overhead. The great plain was the very personification of death, and the girl's heart sank in despair as the intense loneliness gripped her soul. Where was the end? Was there an end? She began to realize hunger and thirst; to dread the fierce heat of that sun once it reached mid-sky, its rays scorching the hot sands.

DOUBTS assailed her. Had she taken the right course? Did Kelleen imply that Box Canyon lay directly south, and had she been led astray, and thus wandered blindly out into the very heart of the desert? Could she—could the horse live through such a day of torture as the rising sun promised? The animal plodded on grimly, with drooping head, unguided now by any pressure on the rein. He must know better than she the route—some instinct surely must lead him to water, if any there was in all that wide waste of sand and sky. Helpless,

hopeless, the girl drooped down wearily in the saddle, closing her eyes to the desolation. They plodded on drearily, her mind a chaos, haunted by every memory of horror arising from those swift-occurring events which had led to this tragedy. Her forcible marriage to Bob Meager, the bitter hatred his touch had aroused, his drunken, lustful eyes, the blow she struck him, with murder in her heart, the fleeing like a hunted criminal, desperately seeking escape.

Then the coming of Kelleen into her life, strangely, mysteriously weaving about her a web of fascination, even as they rode together through the darkness. She had never entirely thrown that off, the odd spell of his presence, his cool, confident words—she felt she never would. Even when she questioned him the most, she still secretly believed; and now that he was actually dead, not so much as the flicker of a doubt remained.

She saw again that dead man in the cave; experienced the grip of those savage arms, and once more, in heedless terror, fired down the black tunnel, and then struggled upward through that awful hole into the light of day. Then all that followed—followed so swiftly—was but a jumble of events, yet each distinct, unforgettable, burned on her soul. The talk of those two men in the growing dusk, the certainty of criminal conspiracy in which they were both concerned; the desperate effort at escape; the willingness to die on the desert rather than fall again into their hands; the capture by Kelleen; his words of faith, confidence, almost of love, restoring her belief in him—and then that shot out of the darkness sending him whirling headlong to his death.

True! It could not be true! It must be delirium; a wild fiction of romance raging in the brain of a half-mad dreamer. Yet this was the desert—the desert! She lifted her eyes to look, gazing out blindly over the dull gray expanse. Then she suddenly sat upright in the saddle, shadowing her leveled brows with one

hand as she stared straight ahead. What was it over yonder? A tree? A ridge of uplifted rock? Not much surely, and yet everything in the midst of that solitude. Her heart beat suddenly with hope. Perhaps that marked the end; perhaps that was where the trail ran—the trail to Box Canyon!

THE TIRED HORSE lifted his head, and whinnied, breaking into a slow trot, the sand crunching under his hoofs. Deborah was wide awake now, alert and ready. Yet it actually was a tree, and the tops of others began to show beyond; their presence promised water, grass, life; that horrid desert left behind. It was a long, dreary ride of an hour before they reached there, coming to a shallow valley through which trickled a mere rill, rock strewn, and almost as desolate as had been the desert itself, but with here and there a patch of grass visible, and a few scattered, wind-racked trees. It was a scene scarcely less dreary than the upper plain, yet to Deborah, and her horse, it was most welcome.

The latter came down the slanting bank gingerly, and made for the nearest water hole, the girl slipping quickly from the saddle, and seeking to quench her thirst farther up stream. The water, slightly brackish, but still fairly clear and pure, brought new life, the animal wandering about in his fresh environment, nibbling contentedly at the scattered tufts of grass, while Deborah studied her surroundings with awakened interest.

Old Tom Meager, in their rides together, had taught her some of the fundamentals of plainscraft—how to observe this thing, and that, when alone in the wilds. Now she applied these lessons eagerly, searching for some evidence of that trail which she felt convinced must run up this lonely valley. Nothing could be better adapted to the purpose of these outlaws than the course of this desolate desert stream, a mere thread extending through leagues of sand, lying sufficiently below the level to conceal their move-

ments, and yet furnishing water for their stock. In spite of its windings, the trend of the valley was clearly from south to north, and doubtless for years, perhaps for centuries, way back in the old Spanish days, it might have been the natural highway for desperate riders across the border—rustlers, cattle thieves, smugglers, and runners of contraband. Surely they must have left some trail behind.

But if so no trace remained along the western shore. Convinced of this Deborah, leading her horse, crossed the narrow stream, stepping from rock to rock, and clambering up the level plateau on the other side. Even here little was visible, and she would have overlooked even these signs but for old Tom's training. Whatever had been the story of the long past, this isolated trail up the valley could not have been used extensively of late—surely no cattle had been driven over it for a year, at least, a tough, wiry grass covering every open spot. Yet evidence was found—the scattered, dead ashes of a fire; the mark of a shod horse's hoof, an open sheaf knife, the blade not yet rusted from exposure, and a half-dozen emptied cartridge shells. Later, up stream a few rods, she found where a dozen horses had been tied to a picket rope, stamping their hoofs into the soft sod. But beyond this point the soil ceased, and, whatever trail there was vanished on a surface of hard rock which left no trace. Nevertheless, she mounted once more, and rode on, still with her course to the south.

Two hours later the valley had contracted into a mere chasm running between rock walls, these constantly increasing in height on either side of the little stream. Yet the trail followed became better defined, as along here passing caravans had been compelled to proceed in single file, wearing a well-marked depression in the stone. Thousands of hoofs must have done that, and the girl's imagination could but picture the scenes—the dark shadows of the gorge, the gloomy border desolation, the slow-

moving cattle goaded forward by men on horseback, Mexican raiders, or rustlers from the north, outlaws of all degrees; or perhaps a train of burros, laden with contraband, or ore, armed, desperate men guarding them through the black night passage. Then the mirage faded from her mind in sheer weariness of brain and body.

How terribly exhausted she was, reeling in the saddle from faintness. She ached from head to foot, and she felt strangely dizzy. Twice she dismounted to bathe her face in the running water, but she found it so difficult to climb up into the saddle again that she dare not venture a third time. She could only cling tight to the pommel, with eyes closed, and let the horse pick his own way along the outlaw trail.

Box Canyon! Could this be Box Canyon? She opened her eyes to look up, the great cliffs towering so high above she could scarcely gain glimpse of a ribbon of blue sky. It was like twilight where she rode, the walls purplish blue, nothing clearly visible a dozen yards ahead. She shuddered at the dreary loneliness, the awful silence. If this was Box Canyon, then she had come too late—there were no soldiers there.

She closed her eyes again, struggling for control, for courage, clutching at the pommel to hold herself upright. Then the horse stopped as though gripped by a hand, and a voice said shortly:

"Gee! but it's a woman. Say, wake up, sister, and tell us what yer' doin' here."

She stared at him dumbly, a boy in khaki, his hand grasping her bridle rein, a short rifle in the hollow of his other arm, his face featuring astonishment.

"Asleep, was yer? Hell of a place ter sleep."

"Are you a soldier?" she asked, struggling with her dizziness. "Cavalryman?"

"Sure—U. S. You're Yank too, ain't yer? That's what bothers me. Now if yer was Mex I'd know what to do."

"What?"

"Hustle yer on to the Lieut; he an the rest of 'em are back there."

"Yes, yes, I know," she exclaimed excitedly. "You are here to intercept gun-runners across the line. I—I have been hunting for you all night. He—he is dead—killed."

"Dead! Who's dead?"

"Captain Kelleen."

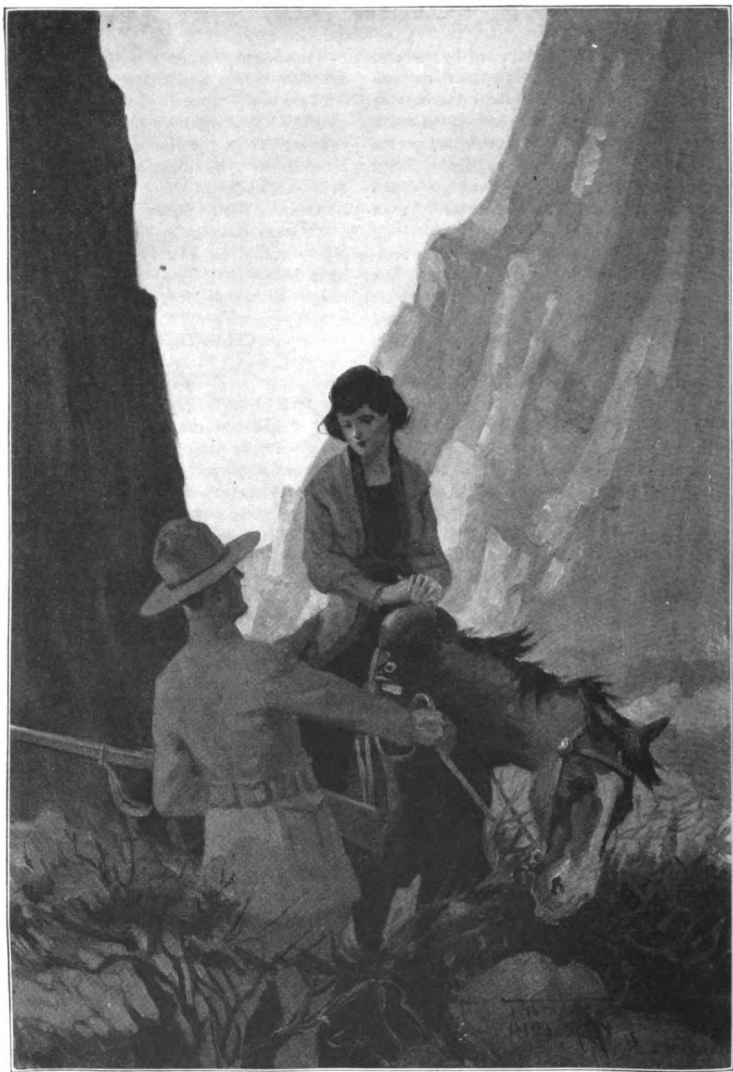
She reeled in the saddle, everything black before her. The trooper sprang and caught her as she fell.

CHAPTER XXIV

Alvara's Lost Mine

KELLEEN lay breathless on his back, staring up uncomprehendingly through the tangled branches of a tree. He was bruised and dazed, scarcely certain whether he was dead or alive, yet dimly aware of what had actually occurred. It all came back clearer, more definite, as the mist left his brain, but he felt no desire to move, to make any physical effort. Every muscle of his body ached, and he felt sick, inert, helpless. The red reflection of the fire yet clung to the face of the overhanging cliff, he could trace it clearly enough through those tree branches, and he shuddered at the distance from where he lay and the rim. He had fallen from there, no doubt of that; his brain grasped the fact, yet without fully comprehending all that had occurred. He remembered the spit of flame out of the darkness, the report, the bullet striking him, and the horror of that awful fall, as he grasped madly at the air. And what then? Did he lose consciousness? Did the shock numb his brain? He must have crashed headlong through those tree limbs, his progress stopped and diverted, until, by some fate, his bruised and battered body had been flung here, like a bit of driftwood on the beach.

He extended his arms, and felt about to be sure—yes, he lay there on a shelf of earth, out of which that tree grew; the gnarled trunk was within reach of his



"'Hustle yer on to the Lieut; he an' the rest of 'em are back there.'"

hand, and another tree, a smaller one, was at the left. It was so dark there he could see little, yet that fire was still below, and, if he should roll off, he would have another sheer drop, God knew how far. He dare make no effort to turn over.

How badly was he hurt? He felt cold perspiration bead his face, but when he tested his limbs they responded, not without pain to be sure, yet there were evidently no bones broken. The knowledge heartened him instantly. But he had been shot. He recalled that clearly—the sickening sensation as the ball struck, the very force of impact hurling him over. It was his left side; it must have been his left side, yet he was conscious of no special pain there—perhaps the flesh was numbed by the shock. He dreaded to learn the truth, yet forced himself partially to sit up, and examine. There was a hole in the coat, but none in the shirt beneath; the flesh was untorn, but painful to the touch, and decidedly swollen. The bullet had struck him, but failed to penetrate; had been deflected by something—his watch! Surely! He carried it there in his upper coat pocket. His fingers drew the wreck forth, and the bullet dropped into his lap; he picked it up—caliber “44”—with a queer feeling of horror, and then placed it in a pocket. The ruins of the watch he flung away.

Kelleen began to understand, and his mind to function. He was not killed, not even seriously hurt. He had been almost miraculously saved; but now he must serve himself. He harbored no doubt as to who had shot him, or why. The very manner in which it had been done, out of the concealment of the night, revealed the method of Bob Meager. It was his fashion, his style; the way of a coward who never met his enemies face to face.

Yet why should the fellow have held him as an enemy? The only answer Kelleen could find to this query was Deborah. The fellow must have seen and recognized the girl as she flashed past him on the stolen horse; he must have

followed, bent on revenge, discovered them together, and in sudden anger fired the shot. There was no other satisfactory explanation. Bob had not previously known the woman had left the ranch; he believed her still there, hidden in his stepmother's room, his helpless victim on his return. Otherwise the man had nothing against Kelleen, had no suspicions of him, except possibly a desire that he keep out of this particular affair. That surely was not sufficient to justify an attempt at cold-blooded murder. No, it must be the girl.

WHAT had become of her? Kelleen had no recollection of a second shot, so it was altogether probable she had been spared, and was again a prisoner in the hands of her brutal husband. If so, no greater service could be rendered the girl than an exposure of Bob Meager's rascality. With the fellow once safely in the hands of the law she would obtain release, and the opportunity of escape if she so desired. And he felt no doubt as to her desire. The man had taken her by force; her earlier dislike had been changed into hatred—and—and—since then another impelling force might have come into her life. Kelleen smiled, sitting up in the darkness, his mind dwelling over the memory of those hours they had passed together. He realized suddenly how much he really cared for her, how deeply her womanliness had impressed him; what it would mean if she should turn back to Bob Meager.

The very thought of such a possibility nerved him to action, to forgetfulness of his bruises. He had seen that in the depths of her eyes he would never forget; he would live to read that message again. The memory was inspiration, and hope. But where could he turn? Where could he go? He was one man pitted against twenty at least, his only advantage being Meager's belief that he was dead, and safely out of the way. He must remain unseen, undiscovered, until he learned the truth.

His mind grasped the situation swiftly, as he planned his own course of action. There was no reason why Casebeer's outfit should remain in the valley; they had already unloaded, and stored away out of sight whatever they had to transport. Their whole interest must be to get safely away on the back trail before daylight. Already the fire had died down into mere embers, and, he believed, a part at least of the pack train had departed.

After they all had gone only Meager, and his small party, would be left behind. How many there might be of these Kelleen had no means of knowing, yet it was scarcely probable many were in the secret of what was going on—Meager himself, Sanchez, and one or two others perhaps; not enough to prove particularly dangerous, if they did not even suspect his being alive. Tomorrow surely that squad of cavalymen must appear from Box Canyon; they would scout up this way, if nothing occurred to detain them. Those were their orders, and if they followed the trail, they could scarcely fail to reach this hole in the desert. All he needed to do in the meanwhile was to discover exactly what this gang was up to, and then wait.

To his mind the key of the whole mystery must lie in that cave tunnel described by Deborah. If he could once probe into its secret the whole strange case would be solved. Meager had endeavored vainly to communicate with whomever was on guard below, and failed. Perhaps the fellow was lying there in the darkness, dead, struck by that wild bullet the girl had fired. Bob had no time to investigate then, to learn the truth—he had been led out into the desert in his chase after the flying horse. Even now he might be delayed by his prisoner; by his final settlement with Casebeer; by the urgent necessity of seeing that everything was carefully stored, and out of sight, in that hut yonder. If any investigation was to be made, it must be attempted now—he would take the chance.

TO DECIDE with Kelleen was to act. The peril of the adventure scarcely occurred to him; his life had long before inured him to danger. All he sought was opportunity. Slowly, cautiously, keeping well back in the shadow, he lowered his body down the face of the cliff, taking advantage of every irregularity, outcropping rocks giving him foot and handhold, until he finally reached the firm turf below. As he glanced back over his course, marking the high outline of the crest against the lighter sky above, the memory of that awful plunge over the edge left him for an instant sick and nerveless. Then he drove the recollection from him with a bitter laugh. What odds? He was alive; he would pay the debt. He could not stand there like a frightened child in the dark. He moved on in the depth of the cliff shadow with eyes searching the gloom, and ears listening for any sound.

In that darkness he scarcely realized where he was, yet, when he came to it, experienced no difficulty in recognizing the mound on which he and Deborah had taken breakfast together. He climbed the sloping side cautiously on hands and knees, his revolver drawn, and clenched in nerveless fingers. The man was cool now, ready, advancing steadily through the maze of rocks strewing the surface, until he felt out the slight evidences of a trail. Here was where Deborah must have attempted her retreat, as it skirted the face of the cliff, which bulged out above him. The front was draped with clinging vines, while below he found a tangle of bushes, almost impenetrable.

Kelleen crept along these, vainly seeking some opening, and, finally, in despair, pressed them aside, crawling noiselessly into the dark covert, seeking that opening in the rock which must be hidden somewhere beyond. Its discovery eluded him, and it was not until he ventured to stand erect, feeling above the lower barrier of rock, that he really convinced himself of its existence.

He stood hesitatingly, his heart thump-

ing from excitement. There was no sound of movement within—only profound silence, and impenetrable darkness. Yet surely this could be no storage house, no mere receptacle for stolen goods as he previously had imagined. There was no beaten trail leading to it; no dead, trampled vines, no pathway opening through the shrubs. The secret of the place remained hidden, its shield undisturbed. Whoever came here must have weaved their way as carefully as he had, concealing all evidence of passage, leaving no trail behind.

What then did that darkness conceal? What did it really mean? Crime, beyond a doubt—yet of what nature, what degree? He could only learn within. With teeth clenched, and automatic ready, Kelleen drew himself up to the top of the barrier rock, lay there flat for a moment, keeping into the blackness, and then slowly lowered his feet to the surface below, groping blindly about with extended hand, which touched nothing. It was a ghastly place in which he stood with back to the wall staring into the intense darkness. He had no conception of what lurked behind that black, impenetrable curtain—what peril, what surprise. Somewhere within there lay a dead man, perhaps two; and, quite possibly, others not dead, but desperate and murderous, waited him along the grim passage. Perhaps they already knew of his entrance, and crouched there in readiness to strike. He must accept the chance and go on.

In spite of the shrinking of his flesh, Kelleen began to advance, feeling with his feet, and keeping one hand against the rough side wall. It was a tunnel beyond all doubt, leading at first straight into the cliff, the sides chipped and irregular, leaving to the touch of his fingers the ridge marks of a pick. Men had toiled here, not nature, and had plainly left their handiwork. When? How long ago? What had become of them? "Alvara's Lost Mine"!

The words seemed to burn themselves on his mind, and before him arose a vision

of the old Spaniard working there alone in the long years ago. Could it be possible? After all this time had he actually rediscovered that ancient storehouse of fabulous wealth, that golden treasury of which all northern Mexico had dreamed? And what of Alvara? He had disappeared men said; died in the heart of the desert; went forth never to return. Had he met that mysterious death here in this black hole, surrounded by his golden treasure? Did he lie there in loneliness through the long years since? And was he there still on guard over his treasure?

Kelleen stopped, holding his breath, conscious of the perspiration beading his face. Was the place accursed? Did Death lurk there mockingly, eager for another victim? He cast aside the thought with a gesture of bitter scorn. All image of the supernatural left him, and in its place came men. What was Meager, and his outfit doing here? That was what he must face and learn—not how Alvara died. He went on, cautiously, blindly, the darkness closing behind. God, how still it was! Was that a stealthy movement off there to the left? The man wheeled about, revolver swung up, and stood poised and breathless. Straight into his eyes leaped a burst of flame.

CHAPTER XXV

A Duel in the Dark

KELLEEN staggered backward, yet instinctively fired at the black, almost shapeless, shadow, revealed an instant in the flame. The speeding bullet had missed him by a hair's breadth, yet in the second of startled surprise he retained no power of action. He had seen the man crouched against the farther wall, a mere black blot, almost unrecognizable. Then that awful darkness again, and silence. With his first return of strength he stepped swiftly to one side, stooping low, and listening for the slightest movement. His heart almost ceased to beat.

Somewhere within that impenetrable

curtain the fellow waited, listening eagerly, probably uncertain still as to the effect of his shot. Kelleen was not sure of his position, yet somewhere, almost within arm's length, murderous and determined, a ready weapon in his hands, the man was endeavoring to locate him, with a desire to kill. It was to be a duel to the death in the dark. Both would never leave that tunnel alive; there was no way of getting out, no opportunity for escape. Any attempt would only reveal the position, and invite a swift shot. But was the man alone? What other antagonists lurked in the blackness? If there was but one, then they stood on equal ground—both armed, both blinded. He must accept the chance. Slowly, cautiously, not making the slightest sound, he moved stealthily in toward that left hand wall near which he had perceived the dim figure. He touched the rock with outstretched hand, and stopped in dread uncertainty. Out of the void came nothing to guide him.

He waited a minute, two minutes—it seemed an age—leaning forward, every nerve tense, his very breath suspended, nervous finger on the trigger. The fellow could not long remain motionless where he was; he would never dare. Unless that chance shot had gone home. The mere suggestion leaping into the brain brought to the hunted man a flash of courage. It might be, dim as his mark had been, hurriedly as he had fired, the chance shot might have told, leaving the fellow dead on the rock floor. He had heard no sound, no groan, no muffled fall, yet men sometimes died silently, instantly—there was a hope, a possibility.

He could not stand there cramped, with poised muscles, waiting for nothing, staring helplessly about into that blackness. He must know, act, learn the truth at whatever cost. He could bear that strain no longer. He advanced an inch at a time, feeling forward with groping foot, still obsessed by the idea that thus he might encounter an outstretched body on the floor. He had gone a foot, two feet,

three; then, suddenly his foot dislodged a pebble, which grated sharply in the intense stillness. Instantly the tunnel flamed again; he felt a sting in his shoulder, the impact driving him flat against the side wall—but he saw his man, and was ready. Firing once, he leaped forward, grappling for the dim shadow as the darkness closed them in again.

Kelleen's clutching fingers got grasp on an arm, which tore itself free. The butt of a rifle, wielded savagely, crunched into his chest, but the fellow stumbled as he struck the blow, and Kelleen's hand found grip once more in a mass of long hair. From then on it was a wild, blind struggle, silent, merciless, brutal, in which neither man gave, nor asked, quarter, instinctively realizing it was to the death. Kelleen's weapon was crushed out of his hand against the wall, his knuckles dripping blood, and he heard his antagonist's rifle crash to the floor the first minute of struggle. They closed desperately with bare hands, unable to break away, Kelleen's fingers clinched in the long beard, the other driving his fist again and again into his face in a mad effort to make him release the grip.

They swayed back and forth, tripping over a pile of debris, crashing against the wall, exerting every ounce of strength, breathing in gasps, but speechless. Kelleen lowered his head, thrusting it under his opponent's uplifted chin, and with one free hand struck with all the power he possessed. As he did so iron arms crushed him—such arms as he had never felt, like bars of steel—and the lunging body of the man seemed to force him irresistibly backward. Inch by inch he had to give, fighting desperately, hopelessly, to retain his feet; then suddenly crashed over into the darkness, the other falling full upon him, now gripping with one hand at his exposed throat, the other fumbling at his waist. The knife, the knife! It must be the knife the fellow sought.

What came next Kelleen never knew. He fought in delirium, in unconsciousness, the very breath crushed out of him, un-

able to break that strangle hold, or twist his body from underneath. He knew he touched the knife handle; that he reached it first, struggling to retain his grasp beneath the fierce pressure of the other's gripping fingers. In some way he must have turned partly, squirming on one side, so as to jam the fellow's hand between his hip and the hard stone floor. In that instant he had jerked the blade free, and slashed viciously at the huge bulk above him.

Again and again he drove in the steel, knowing not where he struck, but feeling a wild exultation as the limbs gripping him relaxed, and hot blood spurted on his hand. There was no moan, no outcry, but at last the man rolled over sideways, and lay still.

With the instant all strength left Kelleen.

The knife dropped from his fingers, and he rested motionless, scarcely breathing, his eyes staring up into the dark. He had won; he was not seriously hurt, yet for the moment could not even realize his victory.

It had come about so suddenly, so unexpectedly he could not credit the truth. He had been crushed helplessly, gripped in those merciless arms, smothered by that body, his throat held in a vise. Every hope had left him, and then—this silence, this panting for breath, this slowly returning consciousness. Yet gradually he knew; the knife, he had wielded—the knife—he had killed the man.

Whoever he was he had killed him; he lay there now beside him in the dark—dead.

The very horror of the thing started anew the blood in his veins, that dead man lying there, motionless, becoming cold, with open eyes staring up at the tunnel roof. And he had killed him—killed him with the knife. Yet it had been a fair fight, man to man, and one of them had to die. He could breathe better, now, and he sat up, trembling and shrinking back from contact with the dead body.

He could not see it, but he knew it was there.

Then the doubt, the fear, the questioning horror passed away. He laughed at himself for having been so unnerved. He had seen dead men before, and this had been a fair fight. His groping hand touched his own revolver, and he thrust it back into the sheaf at his waist mechanically, yet with a sudden sense of relief. Surely there were no others in the place; they would have heard the firing, the sound of struggle. He was safe enough then—for the present; but he must make sure.

Kelleen hesitated for some time, his nerves shattered and failing to respond to his will. The silence and darkness made it hard to get a grip on himself—he had a sense of being buried alive there with a corpse; of being himself half paralyzed.

Yet—yet finally the brain forced the trembling hands to action. He must see the face of the man he had fought and gain one glimpse, at least, of his surroundings.

Kelleen struck a match which gave forth at first a dim, spectral light between his trembling fingers, then glowed into sudden flame. He thrust it forward over the body of the dead man, and stared down at the upturned face. For a moment not a muscle relaxed, his form that of a statue, as his eyes searched those ghastly features. Where had he seen the man before? That hairy face? Those long, misshapen arms? Dead! Of course he was dead—but who was he? Somewhere in his memory, dim, indistinct, clung a recollection which would not become wholly clear. The match flickered, throwing weird shadows, the flame creeping slowly up the splinter of wood until it burned his hand. He cast it from him, and crouched there again in pitch blackness.

Then the vision came, his lips uttering a startled exclamation.

"By God! I know now; it's Manuel Gomez! It's the ape-man!"

Manuel Gomez—the murder, the outlaw, the dread scourge of northern Mexico, that bloodthirsty wretch, whose crimes had made him an object of detestation on both sides of the line for years. Manuel Gomez, the killer of women and children, the destroyer of towns, raider, thief, bandit, and insurrecto—the ape-man!

Kelleen had never seen him before, but he knew; there could be no other like that, and every story he previously had heard of the fellow came trooping back to his mind in vivid memory—cruel, remorseless, without mercy, hunted like a wild beast, yet ever escaping the toils, he had left a trail of blood over all that land. Well, he was dead now! Yet how came he to be there? Was this his hiding place?

Or—or was the man there for some new crime? If so—what? And Bob Meager? Juan Sanchez? Were they also sharers in his villainy? Could they be members of this fiend's gang? Was it from here he led his hell hounds over the desert and plain?

The recurrence of these names instantly brought back to Kelleen a realization of his own peril. Gomez was dead, killed by his hand. Unwittingly, unknowingly, there in the dark, in desperate combat, he had avenged a hundred murders by the thrust of a knife. But these others—they were still alive; they would surely come.

There could be no doubt of that. All that Deborah had told flashed across his mind—her encounter with this same Mexican ruffian—why she had even described the fellow's long, apelike arms, but he never once had thought of Gomez—of her creeping onward along the tunnel; the sudden change in its direction, and her stumbling over a dead body in the dark.

He recalled the story of her escape, creeping up that narrow passage, through which she could barely squeeze her slender body; the firing after her from below, and her aimless shot sent in return; then the desperate struggle which ended on the desert above. And what then? Meager, Bob Meager, going straight to that same hole and calling down for Manuel.

He had used his very name.

Well, there was no Manuel now on guard there, but he could not face these other two alone, and they would surely be there by dawn at least. Kelleen searched about on hands and knees for the gun Gomez had dropped, but could not locate it in the darkness. He rose to his feet, still dazed and confused, hardly able to tell directions, but driven by a wild impulse to escape, to get safely out of that silent blackness, that grave, in which he felt smothered and imprisoned. He wanted to breathe the fresh air, to look up at the wide arch of sky. He endeavored to find his way, circling the dead body, and feeling with one hand along the rock wall. His groping fingers discovered a crevice in the stone, as though the solid rock had been rent asunder, a deep, irregular gash yawning the length of his arm.

Kelleen even advanced a step into the strange fissure, wondering at its existence, tempted to explore its secret, when—when they came!

He heard them pressing aside the vines, and clambering to the top of the rock which helped conceal the entrance. They did this apparently without fear, with no impending sense of danger.

And then dropped to the floor of the tunnel.

There were two of them!

He could tell that by the sound—Meager and Sanchez!

(To be concluded next month)



YOU CAN'T BEAT FATE

By Harold de Polo

Illustrations by Alice Harvey

A MIDDLE-AGED gentleman, muffled to his ears in a luxurious fur coat, stepped out of a taxi into the whirling snow and haughtily bade the driver follow him with his grip. It was slightly past two in the morning, and the lobby of the exclusive New York hotel into which he went was deserted.

The hotel clerk, however, was at the desk immediately.

"Yes, sir. We have precisely what you wish. Twelve dollars a—"

"You were not asked the price!"

"Pardon, sir."

As the other signed his name on the line indicated, the clerk further studied him. The costly fur coat, falling almost to his boot tops, the golden *pince nez*, the cropped Vandyke beard, the penetrating gray eyes, all proclaimed him a man of importance.

"Yes, Mr. Bassett," bowed the clerk.

"I wish to be called at eight," the middle-aged gentleman flung over his shoul-

der, as he followed the boy with his baggage to the elevator. "Have to make the 'nine' train for Philadelphia. Don't forget!"

Again the hotel clerk bowed, most obsequiously—but could he have seen the individual who had registered as Irving J. Bassett, of Buffalo, New York, some five minutes later, it is not stretching it to say that he nearly would have been paralyzed with astonishment.

Scrupulously locking the door, after having regally tipped the bell-boy, the prosperous appearing Mr. Bassett, as he styled himself, allowed a confident and sort of gloating smile to cross his usually severe features. Following this, he stood before the mirror of the bureau, unbuttoned his long fur coat, and removed it. And beneath it, strange to relate, there was no suit of clothes. Indeed, he was garbed in a most strikingly peculiar costume. His shirt was immaculate, his collar was likewise, and the cravat he wore was in excellent taste.

Below the shirt-tails could be seen underwear of pure wool, of a far from reasonable brand, and his socks and shoes were of the finest. If this had been all, one might have thought any one of a number of things. That he was an extremely careless individual who had actually forgotten to properly dress, or that his suit might have been stolen, or perhaps that there was a wager of some sort, or an election bet to pay. But, hanging from just above his knees, secured by elastics, each leg was appareled with the bottoms of a pair of trousers, so that, with his overcoat on, one would deem him, naturally, fully dressed!

His queer garb, however, did not seem in the least to disconcert him. In fact, it rather pleased him. Carefully—and it might even be termed tenderly—he removed the trousers bottoms, opened his rather elegant valise, and very methodically put them away—into a hidden and secret partition at the bottom. After that, he arranged his toilet articles on the dresser, got into his pajamas, slid between

the soft linen sheets, and, clicking off the light, went peacefully off to a sound sleep, with a truly blissful expression on his face.

NEXT morning, when the telephone rang promptly at eight, to awaken him according to his orders, the middle-aged gentleman, cheerful though he seemed as to face, was again gruff as to voice:

"You're about two minutes late," he complained, and put down the receiver angrily.

Leisurely, he took his shower and got into his underwear and socks and shoes, and then put on his immaculate shirt and collar and cravat. Briskly, he once more stepped to the instrument on the wall.

"Hello, hello!" he called testily. "What's the matter with this service, anyway? It's eight minutes past eight, and you said you'd have my suit here sharply on the hour! . . . What's that? Well, don't do so much apologizing, but send a boy up with the clothes instantly!"

He sat down in a huge and comfortable rocker, now, and languidly lit a cigarette. Puffing it, and watching the smoke rings he created, he looked much like the fabled cat waiting at the mouse hole. And in three minutes—or perhaps four—he was rewarded. Again the phone rang:

"What? . . . *What suit?* . . . Hang it, man, the suit I gave the boy who showed me my room—a sort of a brownish mixture. Yes, he promised to have it sponged and pressed and to bring it back at eight sharp. This really is preposterous, you know. Kindly hurry and hunt it up, for I have to catch the nine-o'clock train for Philadelphia!"

Once more he hung up, and once more he flopped comfortably down in the arm-chair and studied smoke spirals pleasantly. And once more—this time in perhaps five minutes—the bell tinkled. Now, when he answered it, he had the air of a hunter who was ever and ever more closely and more surely approaching his quarry:

"How's that? . . . The boy is gone

—off duty? You can't find any trace of it at your tailoring department? . . . Why—why, hang it," he exploded, his voice rising, "but I tell you that I have to catch that nine train for an important conference in Philadelphia, and that I have nothing else but a dinner-suit with me. I—I— . . . Send me the manager instantly, do you hear—instantly. Something must be done!"

In a moment or two he slipped on his *pince nez*, regained his stern and forbidding expression that made him seem like a man of affairs, and stamped heavily up and down the room while he grumbled and muttered.

Presently a discreet and courteous knock sounded on the panel of the door, and he hastened forward and jerked it open:

"The manager, eh?" he snapped. "Well, will you kindly tell me what this means? I must confess that this is my first visit to this particular hotel, but I assure you that I was led to believe it was a responsible one."

And so on, in the same vein.

HE PAUSED, breathing heavily, and glared fiercely at the manager. The latter, who had been studying his man with the shrewd eyes of his profession, had undoubtedly come to the same conclusion as had the clerk, the night previous, regarding the standing of their guest.

"My dear Mr. Bassett," he purred gently, "I can promise you that no one more deeply deplores this unfortunate occurrence than I do, and I can likewise assure you that it is the first time it has happened in this hotel. It is probably some mistake of the boy's, for the tailor has not the slightest remembrance of having received your clothes to press. If you will just be patient while we further look the matter—"

"Be patient? Further look the matter—"

The irate Mr. Bassett became positively apoplectic. He purpled, he puffed, he shook with a mighty wrath:

"My good man," he finally managed to get out, in a booming voice, "are you endeavoring to have *fun* with me? Did I not tell you that I have to catch that train? Did I not tell you that I have only a dinner-suit with me? Did I—"

"Just a moment, Mr. Bassett, please. I shall try—"

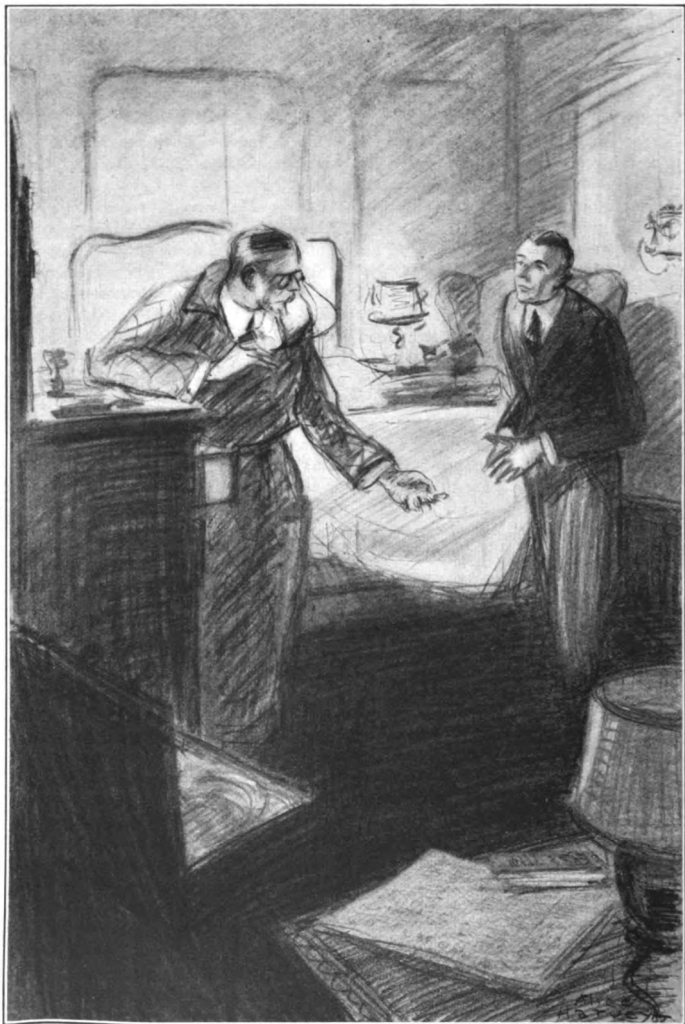
"You shall try?" roared the other. "Man—do something. But you shall suffer for this, don't forget. I shall sue this beastly hotel. I shall inform my business associates and all reputable men of Buffalo, I shall publish it in the papers at my own expense, I shall—"

He said much more, and his gestures and his voice were marvels of superb acting. He threatened numerous suits for damages, he shrewdly mentioned the names of several big business men of Buffalo whom he had taken care to learn made this hostelry their headquarters but were not here now, he dwelt on the gigantic deal that awaited him in Philadelphia, and, lastly, he pleaded and commanded that the manager "do something—do something!"

THERE is no doubt that the hotel man was impressed—exceedingly impressed. He was sure that he was dealing with a man of great importance, for outside of the other's looks, outside of his palpably expensive fur coat and baggage and other articles, he had so glibly mentioned the names of several big men from his own town. He realized, too, that any notice of the story, in the papers, would undeniably work a certain amount of harm to the irreproachable name the hotel possessed:

"My dear Mr. Bassett," he said, taking the matter into his own hands, "I shall do my best. I suggest, sir, that in order for you to make your train, or perhaps a slightly later one, we send out now and purchase the best ready-to-wear suit that can be procured under the circumstances. On the next block, there is an establishment that—"

"But dammit" snapped out the other.



" 'Man—do something. But you shall suffer for this, don't forget. I shall sue this beastly hotel. I shall inform my business associates and all reputable men of Buffalo.' "

still in the grip of his rage, "I tell you that my clothes are made by the finest man in Buffalo, the finest man in the world, I claim. I have the reputation, sir, of being a well-dressed man, and for this conference in Philadelphia I—"

"Please, my dear sir," broke in the manager, "allow us to do what we can. I shall send for several suits now, and, of course, we shall ask you to be good enough to accept a sufficient amount to enable you to purchase clothes such as we lost, and we beg of you to forget—"

"But, hang it," growled the guest, "I tell you sir, I'm the best dressed man in Buffalo. I should be. I pay my tailor a hundred and twenty-five for a business suit and—"

THE ANGER of the gentleman, however, gradually wandered under the soothing and expert handling of the hotel man. It is true that he continued with his grumbling, even during the period when a salesman from the select establishment, on the next block, was deftly assisting him in trying on several suits of clothes. He kept it up, too, after he had chosen a plain blue serge that really was quite presentable. Nor did he completely stop, either, when the manager, at the desk below, handed him a hundred and twenty-five dollars in crisp bills and begged him to kindly remedy the fault of the hotel when he got back to Buffalo. He switched, however, to the bellboy:

"Do you know what you should do to that boy, sir?" he said irately. "You should have him hanged and drawn and quartered! Nothing less—nothing less!"

"I assure you, Mr. Bassett, promised the manager, "that we shall most certainly discharge him. And I likewise assure you, sir, that on your next trip on from Buffalo we hope to have the honor of having you stop with us!"

"You probably shall," conceded the man in the fur coat, as he followed a boy with his grip to the taxi.

Then the gentleman with the *pince nez*, sinking back most comfortably into the

soft leather of the taxi seat, watched the driver spring to his place with a happy smile. As the car started, he broke into a chuckle—a chuckle of inordinate glee and triumph. But this quickly stopped, in a second or two, when the door of the machine was rudely jerked open and a man with a pair of hard blue eyes jumped inside, sat down beside him, and again slammed the door shut:

"So you're Bassett, heh? Irving J. Bassett, of Buffalo? I didn't think it would be such a cinch, but I'm admitting luck was certainly playing with me when I happened to be in the hotel lobby and heard the manager mention your name and the place you came from!"

"What — precisely what does this mean?" asked the man in the fur coat, creditably holding his poise.

"None of that, friend, it don't go. I guess you got the swag there in that bag. But say, if I was goin' to run off with all the jack that belonged to my partner, I'm blamed if I'd use my own name."

"But I'm not—"

The gentleman in the costly fur coat did not finish his speech. His brain was a rapid worker, as it had to be in the profession he had chosen. By some weird streak of coincidence, he realized, he had this time chosen the name of a man who had apparently run off with the funds of his business partner. It would do him no good, now, to profess that he was not Irving J. Bassett, for the detective had already heard him admit that he was.

He might as well go along to the station house. There, anyway, he was doomed. In a few minutes, of course, they would learn the truth, and the game with which he had been working the big hotels of the United States for the past three years would be ruined forever. Ah well, there would probably be a jail sentence when the managements prosecuted. He wondered, idly, how long a term he would get. Then he turned to his captor with a sigh:

"You can't beat fate," he said, thoughtfully—"can you?"

THE TAMING

By Ted Dickson, Jr.

Illustrations by Dorothy Phelps Christy

IT IS SAID that the only men bad enough to be run out of Thursday Island are those who can't measure up to the Thursday Island standard of wickedness. Be that as it may, Larry Pritchard was landed on the beach north of Port Moresby late one afternoon, after having been informed, more or less politely, that his room in Thursday Island was much more desirable than his presence.

It had been a matter of a trading deal in which Pritchard claimed to have been cheated, the passing of the lie in Wallaby Sam's, a blow, and a general free-for-all,

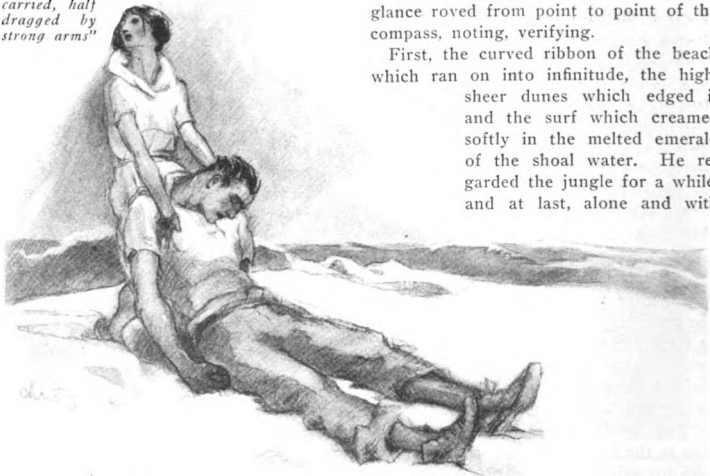
during which certain members of the pearling fleet took occasion to raid the money drawer, as well as Wallaby Sam's stock.

When the thing had simmered down Larry's opponent had put out to sea on his schooner with Larry's money as well as his outfit. But there had been time enough before being asked to vacate for Larry to find where his enemy had outfitted for, and there burned within him the determination to follow him to the uttermost ends of the earth, if need be.

And now, a week later, he was standing on a New Guinea beach, burning with fever, pockets empty, no outfit, and the Dutch schooner that had dropped him ashore standing out to sea again. His glance roved from point to point of the compass, noting, verifying.

First, the curved ribbon of the beach which ran on into infinitude, the high, sheer dunes which edged it and the surf which creamed softly in the melted emerald of the shoal water. He regarded the jungle for a while, and at last, alone and with

"He remembered when he was half carried, half dragged by strong arms"



himself for confidant, he made a gesture as if to seal his own folly and his whole destiny with final contempt. For that was Larry Pritchard; thewed like a colossus, jet black hair grown in a point over the brow of a student, a smooth firm jaw, clear eyes that were always inscrutable and a fine contempt for any desperate situation.

The heat waves and the fever were blurring his vision, and he was turning away, with a swing of his broad shoulders, when an outfit swung into sight around a distant cape. Quickly he mounted a dune and dropped from sight in the rank growth which edged it. It pays to be cautious in New Guinea. The outfit came on, and as Larry watched, he saw that it consisted of two persons, a man and a woman. As the two drew nearer, his whole body stiffened upon the ground and his teeth clicked together sharply, barely in time to cut short an ejaculation of surprise. For the woman was bound, bound securely with cords and a thong stretched from her wrists to her captor.

The two came on at a steady pace. Even at that distance the man's stride betrayed his race and Larry muttered "white man," and drew to his side a jagged lump of coral, for the man might not listen to reason and Larry had neither knife nor gun. He could make out the face of the man by this time, a square face, mostly covered by hair, with the square cut hair of the head hanging down below the ears. Two fang like teeth glistened in the sunlight when the man opened his mouth to talk to the helpless woman behind him.

As he approached the dune where Larry lay hid, he turned to look more frequently, more leeringly, at his victim. The woman was gagged as well as bound, and turning his eyes from the man to the girl, Larry received a shock which caused him to hug the sand more closely. Her eyes were looking quite calmly and unafraid up to Larry.

The man stopped and tore the gag from her mouth.

"I'll give you a chance," he said, and Larry, on the dune above, caught the note in his voice and held the fragment of coral ready.

"I'm stealing you for Jock O'Rourke, the man who's got your father's pearl lagoon and who wants you as well. I'm taking you there to him—to his island. You know what that means? But I've changed my mind. I'll give you a chance. I won't take you there. When we reach the schooner we'll beat it away from New Guinea. How about it?"

Many things happened in the next minute. The man caught her in his arms, and kissed her bestially, time and time again, upon the helpless lips.

She did not cry out. Only her wide eyes looked up to the top of the sand dune, looked questioningly, speculatively, calmly. Following the eyes the man looked up and the next instant Larry flung the stone, catching him on the forehead and crushing him to the sand.

He dragged up another stone, but the man



was too obviously far gone to render this precaution necessary.

He started down the sand and fell, as he rose to pick his way down, for the cast with the stone had tapped the last reservoirs of his strength. He was compelled to drag himself on his hands and knees down the sloping sand until he reached the level of the beach and rose, to come face to face with the woman.

It was not a woman but a girl. Her face was fair and her hair burnished jet, with hints of blue and purple in the strong sunlight. Her big eyes were looking at him appraisingly. There was no fear in them, no apprehension. She studied his face impersonally and he felt from her expression that she sensed his physical condition.

"You're a funny one," he said. "Aren't you afraid?"

"I'm afraid of no man," she said, "especially when he can't tie a knot any better than this one," and she slipped her hands easily out of the rope which ringed her wrists. Then she looked at the still figure on the sand. "He is dead, I suppose."

"If he isn't he ought to be."

A look of annoyance crossed her face.

"Then you've spoiled it. Spoiled the best chance I'll ever have to get to Jock O'Rourke, murderer of my father."

Tired and weak though he was Larry stiffened at mention of that hated name. Then hot anger surged to his tongue and crowded out thought of O'Rourke. Many women of many kinds he had looked in the eye and this was the first one—

"Spoiled it, you little she-devil. What do you mean? Didn't I save you from him? Or—perhaps you did not want to be saved from his attentions—I ask pardon."

THE sudden flash and flare of her anger, breaking like lightning out of a summer squall, checked his words. His lips parted in a grin of admiration. Tottering and wavering, with the world growing dim before his eyes, as it was, he did not stir or raise his arms against the thin-

bladed knife which seemingly slipped into her hand from nowhere, slit through his coat and did not stop until it pricked the skin over his heart.

"Saved me from him, did you? With my hands tied with a knot that a child could undo. Think you that I minded a little thing like a kiss when I staked far more than that to get my hands on Jock O'Rourke. A she-devil, am I? Helene Paschal to listen to such words from any man. If you know how to pray, best do it now, man."

"Pretty, very pretty," he grinned, "but you can't make it good. You thought you could, but you're only a woman after all. Your little flare of temper made you feel big for a time. See, it's dying out. You're growing tame. That's one of my specialties—taming she-devils."

A painter would have raved about Helene Paschal as she stood back, facing her tormentor. The fair skin of her face was flushed red, the thin, sharp lines of mouth and nostril were tremulous with rage, and her wide, grey eyes burned. Her head was thrown back in scorn; the blue-black hair of her head seemed alive with fury. With one foot advanced, the knife held behind her, her breath coming in angry gasps, she stood, a figure passionately, terribly alive on the loneliness of the beach.

"Oh, what a coward you are," she panted. "You know I couldn't avenge myself on a sick man. You coward."

Larry laughed drunkenly. The fever was blurring his sight, dulling his brain and filling it with an irresistible desire to lie down.

"Yes, I knew it," he mumbled, "you couldn't do it—because I didn't want you to," and the world turned black before him and he pitched to the sand.

AT THE END of several days Larry woke as a man wakes after a long, fever breaking slumber, weak and wasted, yet with a clear brain and a grateful sense of well being and comfort. He was lying in a bunk in the cabin of a ship, a schooner,

probably, by her build. In his physically washed out condition his memory reached back and pictured the world with uncanny clearness. He remembered vapory stages of consciousness when he was half carried, half dragged by strong arms, and then of being lifted by still stronger arms. That was the last impression made on remaining consciousness. After that the thread snapped. He turned with a frown of annoyance to look straight into the eyes of Helene Paschal who sat beside his bunk.

For the first time he saw her with eyes cleared of the fever blur. His annoyance vanished, for he saw that this woman, to him, was different from any woman he had ever known before. And he had known many.

In her wide grey eyes there rode a sorrow that reached out and held the observer, despite her evident attempts to keep it hidden. But the mouth belied the eyes. It was set with an expression of determination, almost superhuman, almost savage. It was as if this girl, just rounding her twenties, had turned herself into a force for the accomplishment of an object.

Many women had held a part in Larry's life—far too many. None of them had held his interest more than a few months; none of them had he failed to tame and break. And none of them had reached beneath the hard husk of him and touched the better man as Helene Paschal did at that moment. His past experiences, his past attitude toward women, his past manner of life, flashed through his mind, and he shoved them aside angrily.

For the first time she appeared to notice that he had awakened, and he smiled at her. She did not return his smile, merely studied him as if he were an interesting subject. She spoke no word, made no sign to welcome him back from his unconsciousness, but merely picked up a bowl of steaming broth and held a spoonful to his lips.

"Give me that bowl," he commanded. "I can feed myself."

For reply she dexterously tilted the contents of the spoon down his throat. There was a certain dexterity to her movements that told she had performed this action, many times before and there was nothing in her manner to indicate her sensibility of the change in his condition.

"You fool," he raged, half strangled.

He strove to rise, but her arm held him down easily.

"Lie down quietly, please," she said coldly. "This is no time for keeping up your play of being a tamer."

"Give me that bowl," he commanded.

For reply she picked up a strap which lay at her side. "You will either take your broth peaceably as I say, or forcibly, strapped in your bunk," she said curtly.

He glared at her, but she looked back without in the least losing her determination or self possession.

"You'll pay for this, you she-devil," he said.

"The phrase loses force through repetition," she said. "Will you take your broth without the strap?"

For a moment their eyes met in conflict.

"Have your own damned way," snapped Larry.

"You see," she murmured softly as he swallowed the first spoonful, "it isn't always possible to have your own way."

"Hold your tongue," he growled. "It's bad enough to be fed, without having to listen to your chatter."

"Quite right," she agreed, and the meal was finished in silence.

AT NOON she fed him again, without speaking a word and in the evening the same silent feeding took place. For three days the silence continued, until Larry was well nigh crazy. Then, on the fourth day, the first day he was able to sit up in bed, she spoke.

"You have just one week to pump myself and my men and get all we know about my father's pearl lagoon," she said abruptly. "In six days you should be able to travel, and then we will drop you at Port Moresby. Just six days and no

longer do you remain on my schooner."

"Six days," answered Larry. "I may take it into my head to stay longer."

"And that's all the good it'll do you. Six days you stay here, and not a minute more or less."

"Your interest flatters me," he mocked.

"Interest," she flared. "No stray cur comes to me without being helped. I could do nothing less for you."

"I believe you said something about Jock O'Rourke, that day, back on the beach."

"I did. Do you know him?"

"Slightly." Larry's voice was cautious. "I knew him in a little—trading venture, some time ago."

Her voice became bitter. "Jock O'Rourke was my father's working partner. Six months ago they found a pearl lagoon and came into Port Moresby for provisions. A virgin lagoon, my father said, but did not tell me where it was. They went back more than five months ago, the two of them, my father and Jock O'Rourke. And we have had no word, no word in all those months.

"But of Jock O'Rourke we have heard. At Samari, at Port Moresby, at the trading posts down the coast, he has been seen, throwing pearls worth a king's ransom across the bars and boasting that he is king of the richest pearl lagoon in the South Seas. And that can mean only one thing—that he has killed my father, his partner, and has taken the lagoon for himself."

LARRY dropped his eyes to the spread on the bunk. So that was where those pearls had come from. And O'Rourke had sworn by all the gods of the sea that he got them off a chief down in the Marshall group.

"But," continued the girl harshly, "what men have found, others can find. I sent a message broadcast that I'd find Jock O'Rourke and kill him, and he sent back word that he'd have me as well as my father."

Larry's thoughts were flitting from one

thing to another like a sea gull in a gale. Jock O'Rourke had a secret lagoon from whence came the pearls that he flung across the bars of the island continent. Pearls meant money and money meant the world to which Larry had long, long ago belonged; the world of men in evening dress, of lights and soft rugs, of women, soft voiced, shimmery gowned, whose eyes did not linger in frank appraisal as one passed. And this other world would give him power to forget this black-haired, semi-savage who looked him in the eye as no other had ever dared to do. His fingers flexed as he thought of O'Rourke. O'Rourke had bested him once. But he could not do it again. Once let him get his hands on these pearls, and no power on earth could tear them away. But how to reach O'Rourke? A trip like that took money, and he was penniless.

"O'Rourke," he mused aloud. "I've a good mind to go hunting this O'Rourke and bring him to you—to see what you would do."

It was the girl's time to mock now.

"It would be interesting to see what you would do when you came face to face with him. For he is a man for all his villainy. But his life is forfeit. I'll take toll from him for my father's life. No matter what comes to me, if I can bring justice to Jock O'Rourke for what he has done to my father. My hand, my own hand, will take toll when we meet, and none other."

"Jock O'Rourke interests me strangely," Larry said. "I think I'll get him and bring him face to face with you and see if you can make good the strong talk you've been dealing out."

"Get him," sneered Helene. "Your tongue."

"No! . . . On second thought it would be too cruel a punishment to make any man listen to your tongue. But Jock O'Rourke outfitted at Thursday Island less than two months ago—and I know where he outfitted for."

"Could you take me there?" the girl asked tensely.

Larry hid the smile of triumph that curved his lips. Women were so easy.

He struggled to his feet, clear headed, but a bit unsteady.

A big Admiralty chart lay on the desk. This he unrolled, holding its edge flat with books, and moved the oil lamp so that a broad circle of light irradiated Micronesia and Melanesia. He placed a pair of parallel rules on the map, straight down the north coast of New Guinea.

"Easily done," he said. "There should be no trouble about finding it. A straight run from Port Moresby, almost due southeast."

The girl rose.

"It's hard to have to bear with your company—but well or no well, if you can take me to Jock O'Rourke, you'll not be leaving this ship at the end of six days," she said grimly.

THREE WEEKS of close contact aboard a twenty-six ton schooner brings out characteristics and breeds intimacies or aversions in swift and unerring fashion. To Larry the girl remained a mystery. Her strength of soul and grim determination were so foreign to the type of women he had known, so foreign to the radiant beauty of her, that it disturbed him and left him with a strange sense of discontent, a tiny stab of remorse, for what he proposed to do.

Nights, when the slow hiss of the water, as it seethed from stem to stern, and the low croon of some member of the crew somewhere in the bows produced a soothing hypnosis, strange thoughts would rise in his mind. He wished that the past had been different. He actually felt unworthy. And there were times when he caught himself wishing that he did not deserve the sharp things she said to him. And each time he shoved them aside angrily.

Then one afternoon when the western sky was turning pale green above the sea line, like an etching, the fronds of a cluster of palms showed the land rise of Tomi.

The island of Tomi is shaped like a sickle, the lagoon lying in the crook of the steel with the handle of the sickle showing as a high, precipitous ridge, crowned with the clustering palms that they had first seen rise above the horizon. From the tip of the crescent blade to the shoulder handle ran the line of the reef, accented here and there with creaming surf. Up to the barrier the sea held the rich blue of a peacock's breast.

"You're no liar—yet," the girl said briefly, turning to Larry. In her voice was a note that had not been there before. But he did not notice it. In fact the hard note had been lacking from her voice for several days.

To get to windward of the peak unseen, Larry had to slant off on a long leg and then fetch up on another and it was after sunset when they crept into the lee of the cliff. There was no sign of human life. A few birds wheeled above the cliff, and once a flight of gulls scattered over its top like blossoms in a gale, and went soaring seaward in search of supper. The cliff rose sheer from the sea and Larry dared not anchor, for the water was spouting up the face of the cliff and roaring among the boulders in a manner not inviting.

He looked at his watch. It was nearly eight o'clock.

"Time to get busy," he said.

"What are you going to do?"

"Swim ashore and have a look-see."

"I shall go with you," she said. "I can swim like a fish. Two of us can do more than one and there's no danger."

But Larry was adamant. His plan held dangers that he was not willing to have her share, despite the fact that he told himself that he did not care to have her upset his carefully laid plans for revenge on O'Rourke and taking the pearls for himself.

With the fatty part of a bacon rind he carefully greased every inch of an automatic and swung it around his neck by a lanyard of twine.

Then, as he made ready to slip over the

side she slipped her hand into his with a firm grip and the touch sent the blood tingling to his finger-tips and he felt the pull at his heart from the swift flooding of his veins. Then he was gone in a momentary spatter of phosphorescent flame. And as he went he reiterated in his heart the determination that no weakening memories of a girl's wistful eyes should interfere with his aims.

HELENE watched as the half darkness enveloped him and turned back into her cabin with a sigh that was not altogether unhappy. She took council with herself concerning the lightening of her burden and reasoning, blushed; blaming herself for lack of loyalty to her father in forgetting, even momentarily, her grief and carefully nourished hatred of O'Rourke. And then, womanlike, she settled the argument, by getting ready for a swim to the cliff herself.

Larry made the trip easily enough, shooting up to the cliff on a comber and clinging to a rock in the yeast of sucking water, until the sea reluctantly subsided and left him free for his climb.

It was a tough climb and he was all in when he got to the top of the cliff and flung himself panting but safe in the shelter of the palms.

In the lagoon below him swam O'Rourke's schooner at anchor.

On the beach a group of natives were spreading a pile of shell, standing to windward for what protection they could get from the reek, and then Larry knew that he was right.

Behind the lagoon was the marsh, back of the marsh the jungle, and on the edge of the jungle a clearing with a corrugated iron bungalow with smoke coming out of the chimney. Larry breathed a sigh of relief. The smoke meant that O'Rourke, and whoever might be with him, ate and slept ashore.

He started down, keeping to cover as best he could until he reached the bush where concealment was easy. As he walked, the instantaneous tropic darkness

fell and the night was black and starless. He seemed to be walking in a black globe half filled with ink.

He felt his way through the growth carefully to the bungalow, past a lighted window whence came sounds of men talking, until his hand touched a break in the surface of the wall and his exploring fingertips told him it was a door. By infinitesimal degrees it opened beneath his hand a fraction of an inch—sufficient for him to see that there was no light in that room.

A FAINTLY muttered curse greeted Larry as he slipped into the room, and he froze into immobility, although instantly aware of the futility of it, outlined as he was against the lighter patch of darkness of the door.

"You yellow dogs!" came from a corner of the room. "What do you want with me now?"

"Easy," cautioned Larry quietly. "It's not one of your yellow dogs."

It came to him swiftly that this was no companion of O'Rourke's.

He slipped toward the corner of the room from whence the voice came. By the light that entered the door Larry could see a man lifting his head from a bunk. As his eyes became accustomed to the darkness he saw that the man was bound.

"Who are you?" asked the figure on the bunk.

"No friend of Jock O'Rourke's," Larry answered. "And you?"

A string of curses was his answer. Larry waited until the man had become more quiet before replying.

"You'd better quiet down a bit," he whispered. "Your friends are in the next room and it wouldn't do either Helene or yourself any good if they heard us."

It was a bold stroke and it succeeded. For a full minute the man lay stricken speechless.

"Man—man! Speak." He fairly wiggled in his impatience. "Mother of God. Don't play with me. Is my daughter

Helene alive and well? And how did you come to know of her?"

LARRY'S HEART leaped. He knew that he had found Helene's father. In brief whispers he related that he had been ill and cared for on the Paschal schooner.

"And is she well? That black devil they sent to steal her did not succeed? O'Rourke sent him and used to taunt me with stories of what he'd do when—"

"I know," interrupted Larry, and told how he had disposed of the kidnapper.

"You did that?" Paschal said. "You did that for my little girl. Then, may it please heaven, Ronald Paschal will not soon forget what he owes you, when the time of reckoning comes."

"None o' that," snapped Larry. "I did nothing for her. Why should I? What is she to me? I was sick and I figured I stood more chance with her than with the other. Besides, your 'little girl' seems pretty well able to take care of herself."

He bent over and with his knife slashed the cords that bound Paschal. "Best be getting the circulation back into your legs; you'll be needing them before long," he advised, and then tiptoed to the communicating door on the opposite side of the room. Inch by inch he opened the door, fearful each moment that the scream of a rusty hinge would betray him, and peered through the opening.

There were there men there besides O'Rourke, seated around a table on which were the remains of a meal. They were a hard bitten, reckless lot, and O'Rourke alone showed any superior intelligence in his face.

One of the men was talking, leaning far across the table toward O'Rourke, whose face was calm, but whose eyes held the hardness of balls of polished Chinese rock crystal. A sinister prescience of malignancy seemed to emanate from O'Rourke as hidden flame or ice might make itself manifest. The shadow of a smile—or a sneer—flitted across his face as the man spoke.

"The bargain was half for you and three equal shares for the rest of us," he said hoarsely, "and up to now we ain't had a look in on them. Fast as the boys bring them in you put them away. Me, I want to see what we're getting." A murmur of assent from the other two men followed his words.

O'Rourke's eyes danced behind their lowered lids like a mocking devil's, but his voice was silkily vibrant when he spoke. "You've kept as good a count of what the boys bring in as I have," he said, "but if it will do you any good to look at them, why, help yourself."

He took down a metal box from a shelf and unlocked it. Onto the table he poured from a box a number of shimmering globules that shone with satiny luster as they rolled a little way here and there and settled into groups.

LARRY, who knew something of pearls, held his breath at the beauty of the nacreous mass of varying color, silver and rose and azure. The lamplight checkered the table top with gold and in it the pearls seemed to be alive, so vivid was the iridescence. At least a dozen of them were the size of husked hazelnuts, and two, almost perfectly matched in size and shape, were as big as marbles, translucent, rosy-silver of hue, with a bloom that seemed almost fuzzy in its refraction.

He puckered his lips in a silent whistle. Surely such pearls had come from a virgin patch. He knew pearls and he knew that there were one or two of the larger of these gems that were being passed from hand to hand, that could be matched in but few collections.

"A good lot," said O'Rourke. "Their value is only to be estimated after they get in the market. Roughly speaking the lot here should bring between two hundred and fifty and three hundred thousand dollars. Of course, they may bring more."

"And the lagoon!" some one exclaimed.

O'Rourke lifted his shoulders. "Pearl oysters are sick oysters and the sickness



"'Were you not fighting for me?' she asked"

often runs in patches. The lagoon may yield us as many more like these, or the patch we have cleaned up may be the last."

Soundlessly Larry opened the door wide and lolled against the doorframe.

"Hands up, the bunch of you," he said. "Up! And high up! Get back into that corner," he said, as four pairs of hands went energetically skyward, "and keep on trying to raise the roof or something'll happen, pronto."

Larry was ready to shoot, if need be, and O'Rourke, best of all, had reason to know it. Nothing less would have kept them passive as he advanced into the room. Breathing hard, they followed every inch of his movements with fascinated avarice as he delicately picked up the pearls, tied them in his handkerchief and slid them into his pocket. O'Rourke, his hands trembling in the air, rocked gently to and fro as he stood licking his feverish lips with the tip of his tongue.

He kept the automatic trained on the scowling group until Paschal emerged from the other room and crossed to the window behind him. With a single movement of his free hand he ripped the rotten netting from the window and followed Paschal over the sill. O'Rourke's eyes followed him, his jaw was thrust forward. The veins on his forehead seemed to writhe, and his big, stump-fingered hands worked as if they longed to seek Larry's throat. His face was patched with the purple of fury.

"Next time," Larry remarked pleasantly, "that you fleece someone, best make sure that he can't follow you. It's safer."

"I'll make you suffer for this, you hellhound," O'Rourke roared, "if I have to follow you around the world to do it."

"No need to go that far," Larry answered. "You'll find me in New York—enjoying your pearls. Good night," he said mockingly, and dropped from sight at the window. Seizing the hand of the man who waited they raced through the scattered brush. Behind them the room broke into an uproar. From the window

came a volley of pistol shots, the bullets tearing through the leaves and stalks as the two, heads down, broke through the brush. They could hear the four swearing in unison. And Larry cursed himself for not having taken their guns.

THE BLUNDERING CRASH of pursuit sounded behind them. Then someone yelled for the boys, and there was silence, save for the noise of their own going. But Larry knew what O'Rourke had done; had set his boys, swift and sure as bloodhounds, on their trail. They came to the edge of the brush, where it broke into clumps before it faded away into the barren rock of the peak. And from ahead of them a red flash stabbed the night and a bullet went singing close to them.

The cliff top showed ahead of them, and then the starlight was blotted out by the silent passage of a shadowy, silhouetted figure, a native, naked save for a G-string, bearing a rifle—one of O'Rourke's Solomon Islanders. The natives, guessing his exit, had outstripped them on the trail and cut them off, barring them until the white men caught up.

Larry's breath was short, his heart pounding and his lungs panting from the pace he had set all the way up the steep slopes. To the right of them sounded a tinkle, the fall of a scrap of weathered lava dislodged by a native foot on a ledge. There was only the seaward side of the ridge left.

"To your left," he whispered softly to Paschal, and the two crept along the face of the slope.

LARRY remembered having seen through glasses that the face of the cliff held several ledges and that a fissure seamed it for half its length. Now he was forced to take the desperate chance of seeking that fissure, also to risk a fall of rock like that which had betrayed the man to the right of him, who was even now stealing along hoping to catch glimpse or smell of the two.

He found the fissure and with Paschal crabbed along it until the sea wind blew on his face turned to the rock. He knew that he had reached the end of the ledge. With infinite care he faced about, steadied Paschal with one hand, fingered for a clutch and gazed down. Fifteen feet below him, in the middle of a wide ledge, his black body merged with the cliff, his head thrust forward, peering, listening, sniffing for the first sign of the fugitives, was a native, still as if hewn out of the living rock. The glint of starlight on the blade of the three foot cane knife he carried first betrayed him.

Below, they saw the schooner coming up on a close inshore tack. Apparently they had heard the firing and guessed its cause. The vessel was little more than a shadow, save for the streak of liquid flame that made up her wake.

Inch by inch Larry crept until he was directly above the unsuspecting native, then literally dropped down upon him, lighting upon him in the perilous footing of the ledge, landing squarely between the shoulders and smiting with his heavy automatic. The end of the muzzle jarred against the savage's tough, thick skull behind the ear, and so great was the force of the blow that it was wrenched from Larry's hand and bounced over the edge of the cliff.

He saw it go with a sense of dismay. Then as Paschal landed beside him in the darkness he was startled by a voice almost at his elbow.

"You seem to have a habit of spoiling my game. In another minute I'd have had him," and Helene emerged from the shadows at the further end of the ledge.

Her clothes were clinging wet and in the starlight her hair was a dusky blur and, despite the moisture that turned it to little tendrils on her brow, filled with the iridescence of splintered rainbows. Being a woman, for all her strength of soul, she read the look in his eyes that he himself was unconscious of, and smiled at him with a spirit that blended so perfectly with his own that for the moment

he forgot time and place, the peril they were in, everything but the girl, with her red lips parted, her grey eyes wide between the long lashes, with a light in them to challenge every element of his manhood.

"I could not stay aboard when I did not know what was happening here," she said simply, and for some reason which he could not explain, Larry accepted her explanation just as simply.

There was but the briefest of greetings between Helene and her father, a hand-clasp and a hasty kiss, and scarcely had they parted when Jock O'Rourke's body hurtled from above and he landed among them, letting out a shrill "Eyah-a-ah," giving tongue like a dog sounding the alarm. And like a fox, Larry was ten feet away when he landed.

"Over the cliff with you," he whispered tensely to Paschal, "and take Helene with you.

"It's the only chance for all three of us. Quick, for the love of God. The climb is easy."

Then, soundless, feline in his desperate swiftness, he snatched up the cane knife of the unconscious native, sprang upon O'Rourke and swung.

THE KNIFE swept half way through its arc, stopped violently, tore itself from his hand like some animate thing seeking liberty and crashed to the ledge. It had met an overhanging boulder of the cliff and the rock had snatched the weapon from his hand.

He lifted his foot and struck with one motion. O'Rourke grunted, staggered, came on again. Larry leaped back, caught up a stone and swung it, O'Rourke caught it with hairy hands and they wrestled for it. He kicked out viciously for Larry's ankle and the stone fell between them.

From the corner of his eye Larry saw Paschal was climbing down over the edge of the cliff. Helene still remained on the ledge. Her hands were clenched at her side and her body bent forward tensely.

He called out to her to go, but she shook her head.

Larry used his fists. O'Rourke did not. To get his hands on his antagonist and tear the pearls from his pocket was his thought, to hug Larry to him, to overbear him, and once on the ground, to finish him there with fingers on his throat—O'Rourke closed in, his fingers fastened on Larry's arm, on his shoulder, and they stood locked, swaying. He kicked suddenly at Larry's ankle again, and missed, and they spun around, crashing against the cliff and wallowing there in the scant brush.

There they rolled and threshed. The brush sagged, rolling Larry uppermost in the scramble.

He struck viciously, swiftly, struggling to his knees, striking again and again at the face beneath him—and then the brush sagged again, plunging him downwards, his chest on O'Rourke's shoulder. The other's arm shot around his shoulder, holding him there, while the other arm sought for Larry's throat. Larry dashed his forehead against O'Rourke's chin and burrowed, protecting his throat, jabbing, jabbing, jabbing with terrible short arm blows against a head cut and streaming blood.

Then unexpectedly, suddenly, O'Rourke arched his body, surging upward, twisted. Larry felt himself being toppled sidewise and struggled desperately to hold his uppermost position. But there was no honest footing. His feet slipped on the rough stones of the ledge; he was forced sidewise, rolled over, and like an eel had squirmed from O'Rourke's embrace and with a shout was on his feet.

Suddenly his fighting instinct telegraphed his brain that O'Rourke was about to try something new. Suddenly it came.

Without warning O'Rourke kicked. The blow took Larry in the groin and he stumbled backward from its force. A cry of fear went up from Helene. But Larry sprang erect in an instant.

"All right," he called, "didn't hurt me."

THE SAVAGE dominating O'Rourke had seen and been caught by the flashing steel of the cane knife close to Larry's heels. A gleam of animal cunning showed in the depths of his eyes. To cripple, to kill, to destroy with one terrible stroke—that was his single passion. The knife opened the way.

Craftily he began driving Larry back. Little by little the latter gave ground toward the edge of the cliff. Closer and closer he came to the spot where the knife lay on the ledge. Once more his instinct warned him that O'Rourke was after a terrible coup, and once more his whole mind and body responded with extra vigilance.

As he circled, presently he saw the knife under his feet and understood. It was in his mind to call out to Helene to remove it; but before he could do so something whispered to him to hold his tongue.

He continued to retreat slowly, fighting back with every inch.

Now he had stepped beyond the knife.

Now it lay between him and O'Rourke.

Now it lay between O'Rourke's feet, and as O'Rourke stooped to pick it up, Larry, like a tiger, flung himself forward. It was what he had foreseen, what had made him hold his tongue.

The savage in O'Rourke's mind had made him reach for the weapon, the calmly reasoning brain in Larry's head had foreseen that therein lay his advantage. It was only for an instant, a few eyewinks, that he paused and bent over for the knife; but as Larry had flung himself forward at the psychological moment, it was enough. O'Rourke bent over with his hand on the knife, and for a flash he had left the spot behind his left ear exposed.

Larry's fist, swung from far behind him, struck the spot with the sound of a pistol crack. O'Rourke, stooped as he was, rolled over, crumpled and writhing, then subsided into insensibility; was quite still but for heaving lungs and the clutching of his broken and ensanguined fingers.

WITH a start, a broken sigh, Helene relaxed, and for the first time Larry was fully conscious that she was still there.

"Why did you not go with your father?" he asked.

"Were you not fighting for me?" she asked in turn.

"Are you afraid of that?" he asked abruptly, indicating the sixty-foot drop from the edge of the ledge to the sea.

She laughed scornfully and slipped her hand in his. He let it rest there for a moment and then withdrew it slowly, lingeringly. Then swiftly, he closed her hand over the handkerchief—the pearls.

"Keep 'em," he said. "You've earned them."

IT WAS a new Larry who ran down the steps of the Resident's bungalow in Port Moresby several days later. In his pocket reposed a third of the pearls rescued from Jock O'Rourke, and in his pocket was a copy of a lease entitling him,

as a one-third owner, to his third of the profits accruing from the lease of the pearl lagoon on Tomi.

At the foot of the hill on which the Resident's bungalow sits he met Helene Paschal. Her hair beneath the pitiless tropical sun was like a paradise plume and she laughed as she looked at him.

"What do you want?"

He tried to laugh his old cold laugh.

"You little she-devil, you. Aren't you afraid to come near a man that calls you such names as that?"

"I'm afraid of no man—least of all you," she said, and with a quick movement she caught his clenched fist in her hand and held it tight.

With an impatient gesture he jerked his hand free and walked away. He did not look back. She followed patiently, and she smiled happily as she walked. For he was walking straight toward the little white church, and the house of the Padre, nestling beneath the pandanus palms.

THE CRUSH

By Gene Markey

YOUNG TOWNLEIGH, the gay bachelor, was dead, and lying in state. In an attitude of proper grief Dobbs, his manservant, tiptoed about the chamber, prepared to usher in any friends who might call to view the remains.

Came a beautiful lady with honey-colored hair, and wept silently for a moment, then turned to Dobbs.

"We—were to have been married," she told him tearfully.

Whereupon the perfect manservant sighed and offered words of consolation, and the beautiful lady with honey-colored hair went her way.

A few minutes later a bewitching bru-

nette was shown in, and after gazing upon the placid countenance of the deceased, raised her tragic eyes to Dobbs.

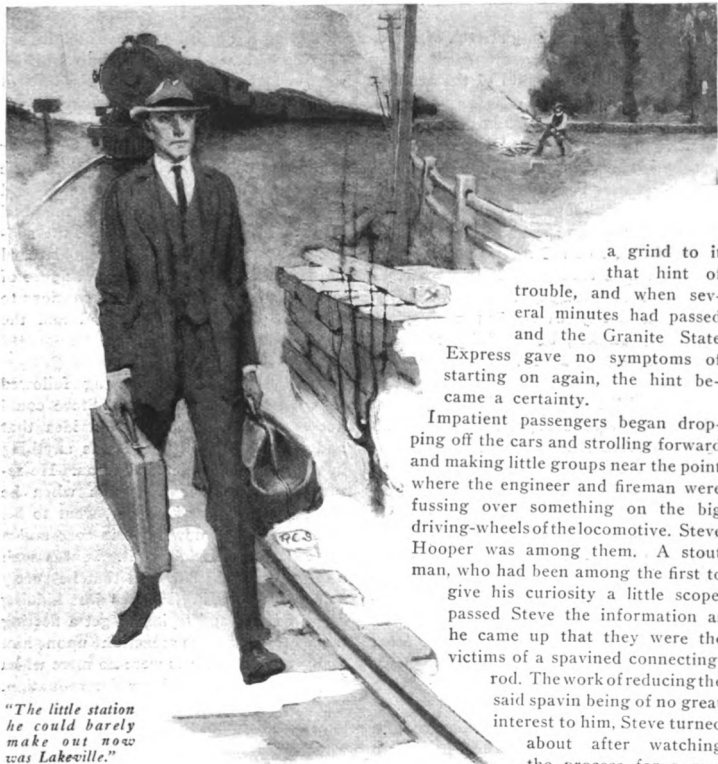
"Ah," said she, "we were to have been married."

Whereupon the perfect manservant sighed and offered words of consolation, and the bewitching brunette left.

No sooner had she departed than there arrived a charming Titian-haired girl, who stood with bowed head at the foot of the bier for a time, then turned to Dobbs and murmured:

"We were to have—been married."

... Before evening the perfect manservant had consoled seventy-six of them!



"The little station he could barely make out now was Lakeville."

ONIONS IN SPAIN

By Barker Shelton

Illustrations by Ray Strang

SOME two score miles across the Massachusetts border, and into the territory of the state from which it took its name, the Granite State Express came to an unscheduled stop. It was one of those sudden stops with a jolt and a shake and

a grind to it that hint of trouble, and when several minutes had passed and the Granite State Express gave no symptoms of starting on again, the hint became a certainty.

Impatient passengers began dropping off the cars and strolling forward and making little groups near the point where the engineer and fireman were fussing over something on the big driving-wheels of the locomotive. Steve Hooper was among them. A stout man, who had been among the first to give his curiosity a little scope, passed Steve the information as he came up that they were the victims of a spavined connecting-rod. The work of reducing the said spavin being of no great interest to him, Steve turned about after watching the process for a moment or two, and strolled back towards his car.

The Granite State Express had picked out a picturesque spot in which to attempt suicide. To the west was a ragged line of hills covered with pines, with here and there among them patches of gray birches, very straight and in sharp relief against the pines because they had not yet come to leaf; and behind those hills the flare of an early April sunset climbed up the cirri clouds even to the zenith.

Between the line of hills and the rail-

road tracks was a rolling stretch of meadows and tilled land, stone fences marking off the various ownership of the acreage. Here and there, at sparse intervals, groups of farm buildings dotted the fields just coming to their first green of the season. The houses were all small and, for the greater part, painted white. They seemed after-thoughts added to the big looming barns and sheds.

To the east of the track was more flat country, with similar fields and scattered groups of buildings. A higher line of hills, identically overgrown with pines and gray birches, bounded his range of vision in that direction.

IT WAS the sort of landscape that got under Steve Hooper's skin. He always watched it and similar stretches of country from the car window when he whizzed through them. No matter how many times he saw it, or how familiar with it he was, he never seemed to get enough of it. And there was always an expression partly wistful, partly speculative, as he took it in. It was there tonight, as he stood with his hands in his pocket beside the temporarily defunct Granite State Express. The flare of that sunset behind the hills made the vista even more appealing than usual.

Across the fields, dim in the twilight, an indistinct figure, like those in certain canvases by Corot or Turner or somebody or other his brother's wife was always raving about, a man was cleaning up the brush on a piece of land and stacking it in a great pile. Presently he touched the pile off. The smoke of it went straight upward in the still air and mushroomed out like a huge blue-gray umbrella.

To the average person beholding it that brush fire was just a fire; pleasant to watch in the coming dusk and the still air of the April evening. To Steve it had a deeper significance. The man feeding that fire across the fields was adding one more bit to the land he tilled. Presently he would be plowing that field, planting it

or sowing it down as the case might be; coaxing old Mother Earth into fruitfulness, which to Steve Hooper's way of thinking was a wholly satisfactory sort of occupation.

So, while everybody else was looking at his watch and grumbling about the equipment of that particular line and voicing opinions that, while the road-bed was about as bad as it could be, the rolling-stock was sure worse, Steve watched the bon-fire and envied that dim figure of a man across the fields his preparations to till that particular bit of land and the actual tilling of it later.

NEVER BEFORE having followed an impulse in his life, Steve could not really believe the sudden idea that had popped into his head was anything in the nature of a determination. He refused to believe it was such when he climbed the steps of his car, went to his seat and hauled down a rain-coat and a bag from the rack above it. It was such a crazy, irresponsible idea that he surely wouldn't follow it. He was just kidding himself along and trying to get a fleeting taste of what the reaction upon him really would be if this were no mere whim but an honest-to-goodness determination. Very presently, of course, he would climb aboard the smoker up ahead with his raincoat and his bag, touch off a cigar, wait patiently for the Granite State Express to get under way again, and let it haul him to the point where his first spring trip, whooping up such paints and oils and varnishes and shellacs as the Corbin-Bristol Paint Company dispensed really began.

But the mere fact that up to a certain period in his life a man never has followed an impulse does not argue necessarily that he is immune to the lure of the same for all time. Steve took another wistful, speculative look at the dim little groups of farm buildings. For the first time he seemed aware of that haunting, compelling smell of loamy soil that comes after the first warm rains of spring. Combined

with it was the faintly acrid hint of the smoke from the brush fire.

He did stop the fraction of a moment at the steps of the smoker; he did make one slight movement as if he were about to board it. Then he took a firmer grip on the bag, wrinkled the muscles at the corners of his mouth and set off sturdily up the track. A trainman by the locomotive tossed him a warning as he passed.

"We'll be going on, sir, in a very few minutes, now," he said, more or less anxiously, as if he and he alone were answerable for seeing to it that everybody was herded back aboard at that much hoped for moment.

Steve grinned at him with a rollicking glint in his eye.

"Go to it, son!" said he. "I surely shan't attempt to detain you."

There wasn't an inch of that line with which Steve Hooper was not familiar. Lord knew he had traveled over it often enough to know the number of knots on every telegraph post. Therefore, he was aware that the little station he could barely make out now up the line in the gathering darkness was Lakeville. He knew that opposite the station was one general store, one pharmacy and one garage; that three roads radiated from a sort of little village square.

As he stepped on the first board of the platform of that station the engine of the stalled express let out a series of brays from its whistle, as if it would tell the world of its recovery from its recent indisposition, and forthwith it began to puff importantly. All the way thither there had been a grin on Steve's face. It broadened as he heard the express getting under way. He listened to the puffs growing sharper and quicker until they were merged into a rumbling drumming sound, and he peered down the line to watch the headlight growing larger and brighter. He waved his raincoat and his bag in a delighted godspeed as the train went thundering past Lakeville.

"Whoop-ee!" he yelled as any nine-year-old might have let his emotions of

the moment get the better of him. Then he plodded across to the general store.

TWO MEN, the forerunner of the regular evening bunch of loafers, occupied a settee near the fireless cast-iron stove in the center of the place. The proprietor of the store hitched himself off a high stool in a cage-like box of wire where he had been casting up accounts at a desk as Steve came in. He eyed the newcomer with all the affable suspicion with which strangers are greeted in places like Lakeville.

"Yes, sir?" he said interrogatively, his flat hands bracing themselves on a pile of bolt goods on the counter.

"I wonder," said Steve, "if you happen to know any farm around here that's shy a hired man?"

"Placin' 'em, are ye?" the storekeeper inquired.

"No," Steve denied. "Want a job myself."

The proprietor strove to hide his surprise.

He was a wiry little man of sixty-odd, who seemed hungry for anything out of the dull routine of his daily life; a man to delight in behind-his-hand whispers; the sort to try to build wild romances out of nothing. He took a pencil from behind his ear and caressed a temple with the rubber on the end of it.

"Ain't heard of anybody wantin' any help," he said. "Know of anybody that's hirin'?" he appealed to the two men by the stove.

"I heerd Ellis Coombs say he'd got to have a man soon. Donno's he wants one jest yit, though," one of the pair gave information.

"Might try there," the storekeeper suggested.

"Big farm?"

"Fair sized. Twenty-acre or so, ain't it?"

Again he appealed to the counsellors by the stove. They nodded in unison.

"I believe he keeps four cows now, a good deal of poultry, but he's sold his

sheep. Used to run two hundred head or so."

"How do I get to his place?"

"You'll earn every cent you git outer him, I'll tell you that much, m' friend."

"Where'd you say this place was?" Steve repeated.

The storekeeper gave him instructions so minute that Steve was sure a stone image could not have missed the Coombs farm.

"You don't look exactly like a man that's used to farmin'," the wiry little man gave Steve an opening for further conversation as he finished orienting the Coombs place.

"Well, if you want to farm you've got to begin sometime, haven't you?" was Steve's smiling answer. "Good-night!"

He went out of the store. Discreetly the proprietor followed him to the porch and watched him disappear in the dusk.

"Pretty slick appearin' feller to be lookin' for a job as farm-hand," he said to the two by the stove with a meaning shake of his head. "Guess I'd better phone Ellis and tell him about this bird I've jest steered up his way."

THEREFORE, when Steve had followed a very long road from the little square by the station, and had passed through a patch of pines, and down a slope, and across a stone culvert spanning a swollen brook, and climbed a long, long slope on the other side of the culvert, and spotted the lights showing in a house at the top of that grade as the lights of the Coombs place, and had started to turn in at the gate, he found a heavily-built, oldish, slow-spoken man (forwarned by that message from Warren Babb's store) leaning on one of the gate-posts as if he were expecting some one.

"Is this the Coombs place?" Steve inquired.

"Yes, this has been the Coombs place for over two hund'erd years," the man leaning on the gatepost drawled.

"And this is Ellis Coombs I'm speaking to?"

"Yes, I'm Ellis Coombs."

"They tell me at the store down by the station, Mr. Coombs, that you might possibly be in need of a hired man."

Ellis Coombs gave this simple statement as much thought as if it were a new amendment to the Constitution he had been asked to vote upon, before he answered:

"Well, I dunno as I'm in need of any help right off. Shall want some bimeby when I start spring work. I don't start my plantin' as early as some others. I never try to rush things. Wait till the ground's warm and meller before you put stuff into it expectin' of it to grow, says I."

"You wouldn't by any chance want a man right away, then?"

Again Ellis pondered long and silently.

"Well, I dunno about that, nuther," he made known the result of his deliberations at last. "If I could git hold of a man that was strong and spry and willin' and warn't onreasonable in his expectation of wages, I might—I don't say I would sure, jest *might*—take him on now and carry him through the summer. There's gear to be overhauled and put in shape and an orchard to be trimmed up and a lot of odds and ends before real spring work commences. And I ain't what I was once, I find; not what I was once."

"I'm strong and I'm willing, and presumably I'm spry," said Steve. "I think we could make a dicker about wages satisfactory to us both. How'd I do?"

But Ellis Coombs was cautious. "Couldn't say. Don't know nothin' at all about ye," he declared. He might have added a thought running in the back of his mind something like this: "Except what Warren Babb has just telephoned me about ye, and whatever that poor, suspicious critter thinks of folks is jest about as good as nothin' to go by."

"I want work somewhere."

"Well, now, over to Plympton. They're short-handed at the spool-mill."

"I want work on a farm."

"So? . . . Worked on farms considerable, have ye?"

"Well, no, I haven't, Mr. Coombs. The simple fact is I never worked on one in my life."

"Thought not."

"But I want to work on one. I'll even take less wages than you usually pay to offset my inexperience."

"Last summer," said Mr. Coombs, more slowly even than he had been speaking. "Herm Hallett hired a feller that come along to his place lookin' for a job like you have to mine, and 'twarn't two weeks later that constables come lookin' for a man that was mixed up in a shootin' scrape down to Lowell, and the man they wanted was Herm's hired man that was a good worker and jest what Herm wanted in the help line."

Steve threw back his head and laughed.

"Nothing like that in my young life, I assure you," said Steve. "References, is it? I'll give you wads of them. I'll prove to you any time you'd like me to do so that I'm a respectable salesman of the Corbin-Bristol Paint Company."

"Are a salesman, or was a salesman with that firm you mention? You been fired, ain't you?"

"The present tense holds good, Mr. Coombs. I'm still a salesman with them."

"Then I don't get your wantin' to work on a farm. It sorter needs explainin', seems to me."

Steve laughed again.

"Right you are," he said. "I'll just give you that little explanation. I'll give it to you straight, and you can substantiate every detail of it, if you wish. I'm one of these lads with the back-to-the-soil bee buzzing around in his bonnet. I believe the man who tills the soil does the most important work in the world because it is the most fundamental work. Everything else, all civilization is built upon the foundation of that ancient and honorable occupation. I've always wanted a farm; dreamed of having one and working it. It's a joke with my family

and friends, none of whom for generations have done any work of that kind. But joke or no joke with them, I'm in earnest about it. The cities are getting crowded. A whole lot of people have got to stop throwing a front and get back to fundamentals and the country. Why not I for one of them?"

"Yes, they's a whole lot of talk about farms and farmers, particularly since the way the war opened people's eyes. But it's mostly talk, I guess, at that," Coombs commented.

"I'm not too bad a salesman in my own line. I've made a little out of commissions besides my salary. And I've stacked that away for a farm. I shall never have enough to be a kid-glove farmer that sits on the front porch and watches somebody else do the farming. Any farm I ever have I'll have to work and get part of my living, anyway, out of it. I've dreamed for years about a place like that, where it's quiet and Nature gets half a show——"

"Been buildin' a few castles in Spain, eh?" Mr. Coombs interrupted him.

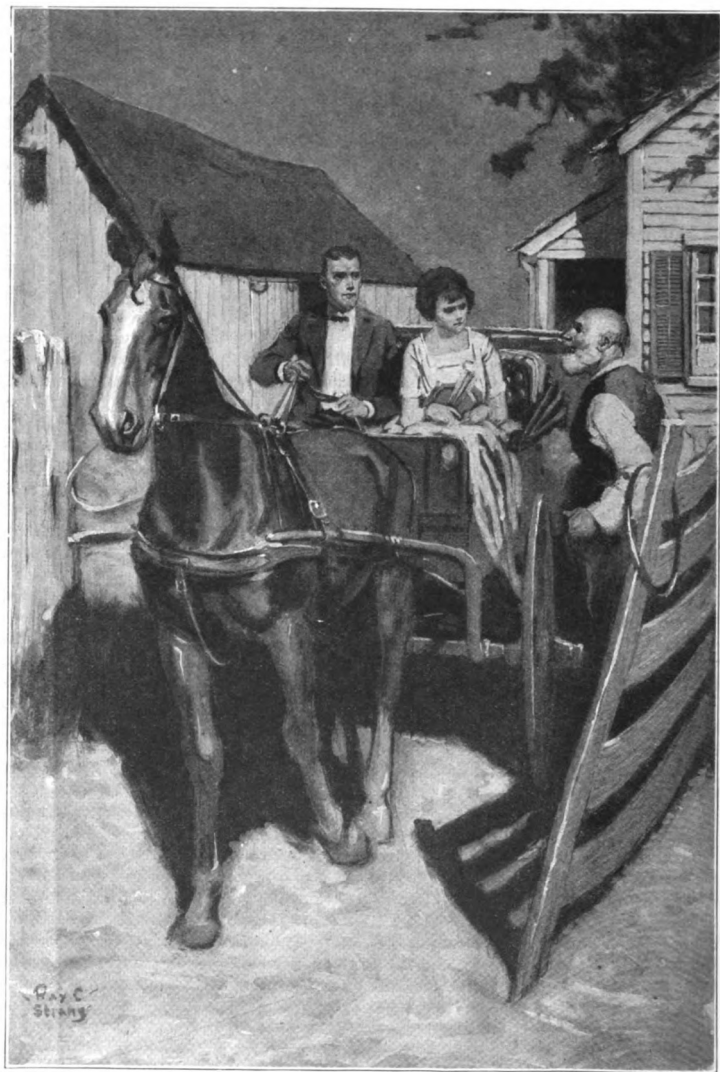
"No. Raising a few onions in Spain. Same thing in the end. That sort of a dream I've had for years. It's quite prevalent at a good many desks and counters in the city. Only, lately, I've been a little uncertain whether or not I really want that farm I've dreamed about, after all."

"What's changed your ideas?"

"I'm afraid I'm going to be very much interested in a lady."

"If you're afraid you're goin' to be, ain't it a pretty pointed sign that you are?"

"Possibly. Anyway, before the thing gets running away with me wholly I want to be sure about this farm business. The lady wouldn't be partial to a farm. I can't imagine her contented in the country, or working with me as she'd have to work if I had that farm I've always planned to own. Sort of a question with me of the lady or the dream-farm, see? Perhaps the farm wouldn't be at all what I thought, either. I've got to find out. So I want to work on one—just about



"Often in the evening they would run over to the park and dance in the pavilion. . . .
Steve and Sibyl Coombs, in fact, got on very well together."

such a farm as these farms around here, because a farm like one of them is what I've always had in mind. I want to see it all at close range. I want to find out whether my interest in my contemplated farm is greater than my interest in the lady, or the other way round."

MR. COOMBS had lifted himself erect from his sagging position against the gate-post as Steve explained things.

"This is passin' interestin'," he observed. "Let's sut down and talk it over a little more fully."

He led the way across the yard to the back of the house. Like the prevailing type in the vicinity it was a story and a half affair, painted white, with an ell at the rear. A great barn loomed into the night behind it, and wood sheds and open cart-sheds connected it with the house, quite a straggling line of them.

Steve's guide led the way to a bench by the kitchen windows in the ell, through which the yellow light of kerosene lamps filtered. He knew well enough why he had been conducted thither, even without the added evidence of the spectacles Mr. Coombs drew out of his pocket and adjusted as they seated themselves. Ellis Coombs wanted a better view of his prospective hired help. But if the light from the kitchen windows gave this to him, it also gave Steve a better idea of his possible employer.

In the glow of lamplight he saw a round, fat face, bronzed and wrinkled by years of sun and wind; a gray mustache, a close-cropped beard, a bald head and a pair of small, shrewd, twinkling eyes of pale blue. All in all Mr. Coombs seemed not a bad sort.

"If you sell paint for the Corbin-Bristol people you must have a passable good job," Mr. Coombs suggested.

"Quite satisfactory," Steve admitted.

"And you've throwed it up, or will throw it up to try this experiment in farmin'."

"No. I'll just take a good long vaca-

tion. I've got it coming to me. I haven't taken a vacation for several years. Besides, one of the kids at the office could cover my territory at present. No one is buying much in our line just now. Everybody is holding off for a drop in prices."

"I see. Then you could git your job back any minute and I wouldn't be doin' ye no injury if I took ye on and then fired ye because you warn't what I wanted."

"Not the slightest."

"What made ye pick out Lakeville, anyway?"

"The Granite State Express happened to get stalled a half-mile below the station this afternoon. Engine got a cramp in its connecting-rods, or something of the sort. And while they were waiting I strolled up and down the track beside the train and got thinking of the farm and the lady, and all at once it struck me here was a good time and a good locality to put things to the test——"

Mr. Coombs chuckled. "No one can accuse ye of bein' one of these undecided folks, can they?" said he. "I've a good mind to resk ye. Bein' green, I couldn't afford to pay ye the wages I could a reg'lar hand that had done the work before. Can ye milk?"

Steve shook his head. "Have to learn," said he.

"You'll find me willing and fairly quick, I think."

"What wages, d'ye think you oughter ask?"

"You'd know better than I what I'd be worth to you. Make me an offer."

Mr. Coombs went into one of his trances of deliberation.

"I couldn't give ye more'n fifteen a month," he said, at last. "You wouldn't be wuth more'n that; not at fust, anyways."

"You've hired a man," Steve announced.

Ellis Coombs seemed somewhat surprised that his first offer had been snapped up with no dicker over the matter.

"Well, if it's all decided then, let's have supper," he suggested.

HE GOT UP from the bench and opened the back door. The aroma of ham and buckwheat cakes came drifting out to Steve. He followed Coombs inside. It was the usual wide, low-studded kitchen; scrupulously clean and orderly. A table, set for two stood in the middle of the floor, and a young woman in a long white apron busied herself at the stove. She was rather pretty and seemed wholly efficient about a house. The way that not even the surprise at the advent of a stranger could make her neglect the things on the stove told Steve that.

Ellis Coombs took off his hat and engineered a stiff sort of bow.

"Sibyl, this is the new hired man I've just took on. Name's—name's—darned if I ain't forgot to ask him his name."

"Steve Hooper," that gentleman supplied the necessary information.

"This is my daughter, Sibyl, Steve. Sib, set another place for Steve and let's have supper right off, if it's ready."

The ham and the buckwheat cakes lived up to all the promises they had given Steve when he first followed Coombs into the room. Steve had never enjoyed a meal more in his life; his new employer said if there was anything he liked it was to see folks eat hearty, and he urged Steve to it. Sibyl flushed with pleasure now and then at Steve's compliments to her cooking both verbal and otherwise.

SHE WAS a quiet young woman, not the quiet of shyness, either; but the quiet of a natural reserve that Steve could readily believe was an inheritance from her father. She was probably twenty-five, Steve thought. He liked the way she said nothing unless she had something worthwhile to say; and the telling way she put it across when she did speak. He learned in the course of that supper at the kitchen table that she had ambitions to teach; that she had been through

the Normal School in a nearby town; but that her father's need of her after her mother's death had brought her back to Lakeville and kept her there. He also gathered from certain covert pleasantries of her father's that she was not wholly contented here but was trying her best to keep that fact from him.

"Trouble with places like this town of ours," said Ellis, looking meaningly at his daughter, "is that there ain't no young folks. They git out as soon as they grow up, and nothin' but the old fossils like me stick."

"Some of the fossils are well worth sticking with," said his daughter with a little nod to him indicating the particular variety she meant.

"Perhaps another decade will change all that, Mr. Coombs," said Steve. "Let's hope so, anyway."

"I dunno," said Coombs. "I've been hopin' that for years and years. But I've about give up. There ain't much here in Lakeville nor places like Lakeville to keep you from gittin' into a rut and goin' to seed year by year."

Sibyl gave him a puzzled glance that said quite plainly, or anyway Steve thought it did: "I've never heard you say anything like that before." But she did not seem particularly disturbed about it.

After supper Steve went back to Warren Babb's store. He had seen a lot of khaki clothes on one counter when he had dropped in there earlier in the evening. He'd need work clothes.

"Dad, who and what is this new hired man?" Sibyl demanded of her father when Steve had poked down the road.

"Says he's a paint salesman, and I guess he is.

"He claims he's got the farmin' bee in his head; wants to buy a small farm he's been savin' up his money to git, but now he's sorter oncertain whether or not he'd want it and be contented on it after he got it. I ruther guess he's workin' out to cure himself of that idee about a farm."

"He's come to a good place to be cured, hasn't he?"

"Shouldn't wonder, Sib. Shouldn't wonder," her father chuckled.

STEVE came back with his purchases from Babb's store and the pleasant retrospect of a half-hour there in which Warren Babb had asked much and learned little. Ellis Coombs conducted him to a room over the kitchen where he had to watch out not to bump his head against the sloping ceiling. But its two windows looked down the slope and across a valley to the hills to the west, and the bed was very comfortable and there was a little air-tight stove and a box of split wood against chilly evenings.

He drew a rocking chair close to one of the windows and sat down. A waning moon had just risen. There was light enough to see very plainly the sheds and the looming barn, the sloping acres of the farm, the valley and the range of pine-covered hills in the distance. He would imagine for the moment that this was his farm; that he had bought it; that he was starting out on the life he had always dreamed of living and had enthused about overmuch to many much-bored friends, no doubt. Then he thought of Corey Whiting. Corey Whiting was the lady whom he knew wouldn't care for a life of the sort he was pretending to start.

She was his brother William's wife's closest friend. He had seen a lot of her at William's house, and William's wife had done her best to have Corey and himself make a great hit with each other. Corey was a corking sort of girl; full of life; sure of herself; with a keen, incisive mind and a ready wit. Great little pal, Corey! It was she who started the choicest bits of tomfoolery about his farm bug.

COREY worked with a big linen concern. Just started in, little eight-dollar-a-week bundle girl and now she bought every bit of table-linen that concern handled. That was the sort of girl

Corey Whiting was. Went to Europe twice a year. She was somewhere on her way thither now. Steve had seen her off just forty minutes before he boarded the Granite State Express that very afternoon. He had certain well defined notions that Corey Whiting wouldn't look upon him wholly with disfavor if it wasn't for his bug about getting back to the soil. He knew he didn't look upon her with disfavor under any conditions. But he couldn't quite bring himself to give up those plans of years and years. He'd have to be very, very sure Corey was worth more than all those plans had come to mean to him.

Well, here he was, off on an experiment which would prove to him where he stood; sitting in the hired-man's room at Ellis Coomb's place, looking out into a wonderful moonlit April night and pretending this farm was his own. He liked the feeling this pretense brought him. He had always been tenacious to an idea to the point of making it almost an obsession. Always been like that from the time he was a child. And this owning and working a little farm proposition was about the most obsessing obsession that had ever hit him amid-ships. And that being so—that being so—

He thought of Corey, waving him a good-bye at the rail of a promenade deck that very afternoon; then he took a look down the slope and across the valley. He went to bed, scowling in troubled meditation.

He was up early next morning, before Ellis could pound on his door to rout him out. He went at his new job hammer and tongs which was Steve's way of going at anything he set his hand to. Three days after he had come to the Coombs place Ellis said to him: "You sure take to it natural, son. Guess you must either like farmin' or else you've thought about it so long you've made yourself believe you do."

"Maybe just first enthusiasm," said Steve.

"We'll see how I hold out."

THE FIRST SUNDAY afternoon he was in Lakeville, Steve fared forth to look the place over. Four miles from the Coombs farm was Deepwater Lake from which the town took its name. A boggy marsh spoiled the whole Lakeville shore; but on the other side in the town of Plympton a sharp, rocky bluff, shaded with pitch pines, made an ideal spot for cottages and camps. The lake shore in Plympton, four miles of it, had not been neglected.

During the summer months Plympton became a young city. There was Deepwater Lake Park with its casino and its bandstand, its usual camp-following of hair-raising diversions, its fireworks display thrice weekly, as a center of attraction.

Packed about it were hotels and boarding houses and cottages galore. A trolley line ran thither from Plympton village. The sweltering population of three mill towns and two shoe towns flocked thither to ride the roller coasters, spill themselves out of the tilting-bowls, listen to the band concerts and watch the fireworks.

Deepwater Lake as a summer resort was highly popular, that is, on the Plympton side of the lake.

Steve poked over to the boggy morass on the Lakeville side that Sunday afternoon, and looked across at the deserted summer colony on the opposite bluffs. He had heard a great deal about Deepwater Lake Park and its mushroom growth the past few years, but he had never been there. He skirted a road that rounded one end of the lake and brought him into Plympton. He poked along the pine covered bluffs.

One or two of the cottages showed signs of at least temporary occupancy. It was a very warm Sunday afternoon for so early in the season. Here and there an automobile displayed itself in a tiny yard, and a family group picnicked on a porch.

One of the cottages was just receiving a coat of rather violent green in two

shades at the hands of a small, thin man with spectacles on his nose.

THE PAINTER paused in his labors as Steve strolled past. He commented affably on the warmth of the day. Steve agreed it was. The gentleman with the spectacles asked if Steve by any chance was looking for a cottage for the summer. Steve replied he wasn't, and the man with the spectacles voiced the opinion that what with conditions as they were this year he didn't believe cottages were going to rent very readily. He, it seemed, owned three of them; also it became clear that he was a foreman in the cutting room of one of the factories in the nearest shoe town. He seemed, too, to have had enough of wielding the paint brush for the present, at least. Steve found himself sitting on the steps beside the foreman of the cutting-room listening to that gentleman who seemed inclined to talk. They smoked cigars Steve had fished out of his coat pocket.

He learned a great deal about the summer colony on the shores of the lake. His informant rattled on glibly from one thing to another. One thing that had struck him forcibly, it seemed, was the way the farmers in the vicinity were neglecting a splendid opportunity. Here was a summer resort of over ten thousand people; a retail market right at their doors for all the garden truck they could raise; yet, would Steve believe it, practically all the vegetables peddled at Deepwater Lake in the summer came from the city? Yes, sir. That was so. He could prove it. He'd been interested in the matter and looked into it closely. He'd thought of buying land himself in the vicinity and going to it. Only, he had a good job and he was sort of old to try out a new position. But he had looked it up carefully.

A man named Shaw ran two or three vegetable carts. Pretended to be a farmer and raise the bulk of his stuff. But he didn't do it. Shipped it in from the city. That's what he did. All you had

to do to believe it was to buy some of the stuff and try it. City market stuff, plus the disadvantage of having been again shipped out here to the lake. Wouldn't that cramp you? Shaw tried to make 'em think he raised it all. He didn't raise one per cent of the stuff he sold; Steve's new-found friend had taken the trouble to find out accurately about it. Now warn't the farmers dead slow; as good soil as you could find in the United States and retail market right at their doors, and this man Shaw shipping stuff in from the city, paying market prices for it, plus transportation—and making money!

HE GREW quite enthusiastic on his subject. His glasses wobbled about on his thin nose as he shook his head and thumped the porch floor with his doubled fist. Steve was apparently more interested in a couple of song sparrows scrapping in a syringa bush at one corner of the porch than he was in the other man's story of Shaw and his somewhat-past-their-prime vegetables.

But presently as the tale was finished, Steve swung about sharply to face the man who had been laying down the law.

"My friend, I believe you've given me an idea," he said.

"You ain't a farmer, are you?"

"I'm interested in it. Any patent or copyright on that idea of yours?"

"You bet there ain't. Take it. It's yours. I'd give it to anyone that would bring fresh vegetables here, the sort we'd really ought to be getting, and charge reasonable prices for 'em. Go to it."

"It's worth thinking over, anyway," said Steve.

That night on the bench by the kitchen windows he said to Ellis Coombs:

"Been poking around that summer joint over to Plympton this afternoon."

"Purty spot, ain't it?"

"Did you ever stop to think if you put this place into a truck farm there was a retail market over there for everything you could raise on this place or ten places like it?"

"Yes, I've thought it over consider'ble, off and on. Others has thought of it, too."

"Why on earth haven't you done it?"

"Raisin' the stuff's easy enough. But you got to sell it after you raise it."

"Man, there's your market waiting for you."

"I'm a farmer. I ain't a peddler," said Coombs.

"Why not let someone else do the selling?"

"Well, tell me where I'd git sech a party, that was honest and trustworthy."

"I'd undertake that end of it at first, until you could get going strong enough to put on a number of carts. Selling is just where I fit. I could sell red paint to an undertaker."

"You mean you'd take it over and peddle it?"

"Let's try it. Let's put this place into a truck farm this season."

"You'd have to have a good supply of water to raise that sort of stuff. Lettuce now, and early peas—hit a drought in May or June and you wouldn't have ary a one."

"How about the tank in the barn and the pump?"

"Tank's big enough but I'd like to see any three men pumpin' water enough into it by hand for what ye'd want for that purpose."

"We'd get an engine. Then you'd have to pipe the water down to the fields from the tank. How much would that cost at a guess?"

THEY figured it out, and the price of two second-hand motor-trucks. They added the expense of extra help they would need. They estimated what could be raised and the retail price of it.

"Them figgers is attractive, that's a fact," said Coombs, running them over for the twentieth time. "An' you'd undertake the sellin' part. Bet you'd sell the stuff, fast enough. Yes, I know Shaw and the sort of stuff he peddles over there. Home-grown things right



"Steve, I wanted to know if I could stand farm life. So I took this place as hired girl on a real farm."

outer the ground would put him clean out of the running. I reckon, handled right, we could have about as much of that trade as we wanted. Yep, them figgers look good to me; but the pump and the pipin' and them two trucks, even second-hand ones, would take pretty much all I've ever been able to save up. I dunno's I'd want to resk all I've saved even if it does look attractive-like. Somethin' might happen to spile these reckonin's we've made."

"Look here, Coombs, I've got all sorts of faith in this project. I'd like to see a farm here make money—real money. It can be done."

"No doubt of it; no doubt of it, if them figgers are correct!"

"Aren't they? You'd ought to know whether or not they are."

"They're as nigh correct as can be, I guess."

"Tell you what I'll do. I'll stand the cost of the engine and the piping and the two trucks. I'll pay for the seeds. You pay for the extra help we'll need to raise the stuff; I'll pay for the extra help we need to sell it. We'll go fifty-fifty on the profits. Is that fair?"

ELLIS thought this over carefully. And while he was thinking it over Sibyl came to the back door and stood looking down the slope. She was dressed in white. The lighted doorway made a frame for her. All in all, Sibyl was a very pleasing picture at the moment. And Ellis Coombs noticed that Steve's eyes were fixed on that picture.

Presently Ellis chuckled under his breath.

"Sib," he called to the girl, "we're agoin' to lose our hired man."

She turned towards him, taking her eyes from the vista of the slope and fixing them upon Steve.

"You've got enough, then? You're cured?" she asked, as if such a thing was to have been foreseen from the first.

"Cured?" her father chuckled again. "Cured nothin'! Instead of bein' cured

he's goin' into farmin', head, neck and heels. Yep, we've lost our hired help. He's riz inside of a week to be a partner. Steve and me's goin' to sell what vegetables is sold this summer at the park across the lake."

THEY put in the engine and the piping. They bought the trucks. Ellis' enthusiasm mounted day by day; and, enthused, Steve had to admit he knew how to make those acres of his yield what he wanted them to yield.

Summer came. Deepwater Lake Park got under way, and the cottages came, and the hotels and boarding-houses filled up.

Steve fared forth with his first truckload of vegetables. It was a trim-looking truck. A legend, "Brook Valley Farms," was conspicuous in gilt letters on its sides.

And business boomed from the outset, as might have been expected of vegetables fresh and crisp, neatly arranged on the double decks of the truck and properly talked up by an affable young man who knew his business.

In a few weeks' time the second truck and the young man Steve had broken into the selling end of the game to pilot it, together with the truck he ran himself proved inadequate to handle the rush of business. So he got a third truck and broke in another young man, and then he had to find yet another man to take over the truck he had been running, because they had not vegetables enough on the place, and it behooved him to hustle about the country and buy more, fresh and up to the standard of their own product.

Sibyl went with him to show him the various places where he might hope to buy the goods he was after. He found these days with Sibyl very happy ones. Often in the evening they would run over to the park and dance in the pavilion and try the latest thrillers that had been installed there. Steve and Sibyl Coombs, in fact, got on very well together indeed.

He was making more money than he had ever made in his life, and he saw chances in the future for a comfortable fortune, for the summer place on the other side of the lake had not reached its growth by any means. The real estate men who handled the property were plotting out and selling like hot cakes land in the immediate vicinity that did not front on the lake shore. Where there were ten thousand people there in the summer now, there would be thirty thousand a few years hence.

He was beginning to like Sibyl mighty well. Now and then he had a fleeting day-dream of great happiness; a future here in Lakeville, on this farm, with Sibyl; a comfortable bulwark in the bank, business growing year by year. Yet, somehow he was not wholly satisfied with that day-dream. Nor could he quite decide why he was not.

AUTUMN came. The resort across the lake went into its long silence until another summer. Steve and his partner settled up. Ellis Coombs sat smiling at the figures which represented his share.

"This is what I've allers dreamed of," he said at last, lifting his eyes from that statement. "Sibyl can git some life now. I can take her away. She ain't never liked Lakeville, and she ain't never been really happy here. We'll go to the city, where she wants to be, and where she belongs."

Steve suddenly stiffened a bit. Ellis did not notice it.

"She seemed quite happy here this summer," said Steve.

"That was because she knew she was goin' away. Sib's got to have life and something goin' on to be happy. I've watched her. I know. She ain't the kind that would ever say much about it. She's stuck here with me because I had to stay. Now that I ain't got to stay I'd oughter give her a little happiness, hadn't I? I wisht we didn't have to come back at all. I wisht we could jest stay on in the city same's she wants, to pay her up for stick-in' here with me."

"How about you?" asked Steve rather curtly.

"Perhaps I ain't so averse to some other place than Lakeville myself. I'd like to move around a little. And if Sib wants it, I sure want to go."

Steve got up quite suddenly.

"Wait," said Ellis. "What sort of a deal could I make with you to handle things here another year, so'st I wouldn't have to come back?"

"I don't know that you could make any," said Steve. "I don't know that I want to come back."

"Thought you was tickled to death with farmin' and this project you worked out this year."

"I've thought so—at times."

"Well, ain't you goin' on with it? Ain't we goin' on with it together somehow?"

"I don't know. I'd have to think it over."

"Steve, what's wrong?"

"There was a lady in this experiment at the very beginning—remember?"

"So there was, warn't there?"

"We're forgetting her."

"Sho!" said Ellis, his face lengthening. "Thought you'd decided about her long ago."

"So did I. But it seemed I hadn't."

"Sho!" said Ellis softly and rather dispiritedly again.

THE REASON why he had not been wholly pleased with those day-dreams of his was quite suddenly apparent to Steve. He could picture a life with Sibyl here in Lakeville; but, he couldn't picture a satisfactory life with her anywhere else. And if that was the case it was perfectly patent that Lakeville rather than Sibyl Coombs was the main thing he had dreamed about. Moreover, it flashed upon him that he could picture perfectly satisfactory life with Corey Whiting anywhere; here in Lakeville if she were contented, or hawking paints and oils for the Corbin-Bristol Company if she wasn't.

It occurred to him that Corey Whiting must be back from her trip abroad by this

time; that she must have been back for two weeks or more. But never a word of her return had he received. It also struck him very forcibly that he wanted to see Corey Whiting, and at once. Life on a farm?

He loved it; it was all he had expected and more; and he had proved he could make more money here in Lakeville in one concentrated summer's work than he could in two years on the road for Corbin-Bristol products. Not that he loved farm life less—

He took the first train out of Lakeville next morning. Ellis besought him to consider next season, and make some plans for it. He quavered that Steve had got him started right and now he'd simply got to see him through. Steve said he'd got to think it over for a time; later he'd let Ellis know what the results of such pondering over the matter might come to.

At the linen concern they told him Miss Whiting had been back over a month. She was taking a vacation. She was staying at a little town in the foothills of the Berkshires. All her mail went out addressed care of an M. H. Lothrop.

STEVE was in that little town in the Berkshire country as soon as he could get there. He located the residence of one M. H. Lothrop. It didn't seem to be a boarding place. It might have been a Lakeville farm.

He started to rap on one of those New England front doors that are seldom opened save for a funeral, thought better of it, and went around to a side door.

A motherly-looking, gray-haired woman with a little girl clinging to her skirts and peeping out at Steve shyly, answered the summons.

"Is this the Lothrop place?" he asked.

"Yes. I am Mrs. Lothrop."

"There's a Miss Whiting here?" . . .

Corey Whiting appeared from regions within and to the rear. She wore a gingham dress and a long apron. Her sleeves were rolled up.

"Well, for goodness' sake, Steve?" she

said, yet somehow she did not seem vastly surprised at the sight of him.

THE GRAY-HAIRED, motherly woman and the child seemed to have melted away. Anyway, the next time Steve thought of them they were not there. In his exuberance of the moment he had kissed Corey, and Corey, flushing somewhat, to be sure, hadn't resented it.

"Come in!" she said.

She took him through two dim rooms.

"You won't mind being entertained in the kitchen, will you? You see, I'm the maid."

"You're the what?"

"Hired girl," she corrected her first statement. "Steve, I've been looking for you to show up here for several days."

"The hired girl, Corey! What—"

She looked at him with an odd smile, in which there was both amusement and tenderness.

"I heard you'd taken a long vacation and put some of your theories to the test. I heard—from William, of course—that you were managing a truck farm, and that it wasn't a mere whim of yours after all, because you were making good at the job and that you were tremendously happy in the work. Steve, I wanted to know if I could stand farm life. So I took this place as hired girl on a real farm."

"And I imagine you've had just about enough of it."

"Then your imagination is playing tricks with you. Steve, you've got a little money put away and so have I. I wonder if there isn't enough, if we pool it, to buy a little farm."

STEVE bounded out of his chair. He caught her in his arms. He kissed her again—several agains, in fact.

"Corey, I don't know whether or not we've got enough to buy the Brook Valley Farm in Lakeville. It's a paying proposition and old man Coombs will want a whale of a price for it, no doubt. But I'll wire him right away and find out."



"Such a look as one sees in the eyes of an old salt."

PERFUME OF THE NIGHT

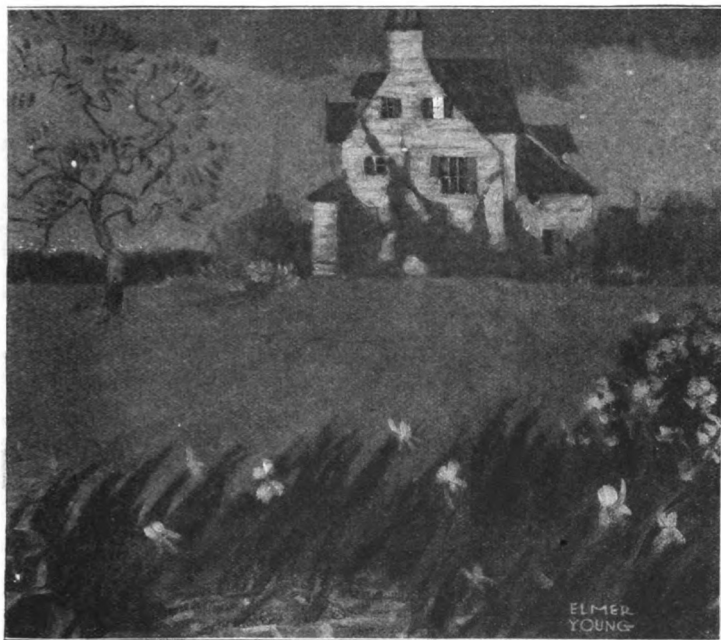
By Katherine M. Roof

Illustrations by Elmer Young

THAT Langely was a poet seemed sufficient explanation of his strange story to many, but not to those who knew him best. For if he wrote verses he seemed in all other respects like the rest of his fellow-men, except for a certain social elusiveness, and that look of remoteness in his eyes—such a look

as one sees in the eyes of an old salt, habituated to long consideration of far horizons.

The fact that the old Jouet house had taken so strong and so curious a hold upon his imagination was doubtless part of the thing that had made him altogether a poet.



"He claims that it can be reached by means of the subway," said Billy Gaines, "but I have my doubts. I think it is just a ruse to alienate his friends."

The large frame house in which Langely roomily lodged was near a patch of woods, he said, and there were blue gleams of the river between the trees. Best of all, quiet—blessed, unbelievable quiet such as the author dreams of, but seldom finds. And most desirable of all, it was near the Jouet mansion, that wonderful old relic of colonial days with its beautiful, half-ruined old garden in which were to be found the remains of a fountain and a sun dial, overgrown but fragrant box borders along the old curving paths, forgotten rose bushes and fruit trees.

"That wonderful old relic of colonial days, with its beautiful, half-ruined old garden."

Langely talked a great deal of buying the house and fixing it over. He described this dream in detail to Billy Gaines, who was an architect, but after listening to him for some time Billy one day nipped his dream in the bud.

"I motored past your old house the other day. I admit it has radiant possibilities. But I inquired about it and found out that it is coming down in the fall—a real estate deal."

The statement shocked Langely's sensibilities, since the idea of forcible destruction jarred upon his dream.

THE EVENING after Billy's announcement Langely walked through the broken gate of the Jouet mansion up the stately path to the white pillared

verandah, and around the curving path to the garden behind the house. The air was fragrant with the fresh greenness of early summer, and cool with the breath of twilight. The box that had lain all afternoon in the warm sun gave out a spicy sweetness. Roses were blooming on the neglected bushes, and in the branches of the old trees the robins were singing. Walking about the bowl of the broken fountain, Langley sat down on an old iron seat, a relic of the occupant of fifty years ago, his evening reverie tinged with the melancholy sense of enjoying a beauty that cannot last.

As he looked up at the fine old structure, still holding its whiteness in the twilight, Langely noticed to his surprise that there was a light in one of the upper windows. Had the deserted house acquired an occupant, he wondered? But no, his landlady had told him only yesterday that it had been vacant for seven years. It might be that a tramp had broken in, or mischievous boys. Then he decided that the effect must have been caused by a reflection from somewhere.

The next moment it was gone. The window was as dark as it had been before. It must have been a reflection, then. . . . He forgot all about it as he watched the twinkling lights appear in the valley between him and the river. The first line of a poem leapt into his mind. He began to turn it about, his idea taking shape. Then suddenly, yet as one might say *softly*, without shock or sense of interruption, he became aware that someone was standing before him—someone who had come silently down the path from the house, clad in light flowing garments.

He looked up and caught his breath with a sense of shock. It was a woman with beauty of a dark unusual sort—that much he realized at the first glance. But what he was aware of to the exclusion of all else were her eyes. Dark eyes they were, that seemed to eat into his innermost consciousness by reason of some demand they made; a demand—it came to him fantastically, and not very

explicitly—that he was in some way to satisfy. He stared at her, forgetfully seated . . . darkly radiant eyes, dense shadowy hair and a mouth that somehow emphasized the demand of the eyes. She stood before him motionless, save for the slight movement of one white hand that trifled with a rose.

LANGELY had no idea how long he remained speechless, held by her strange eyes, but after a time he found his feet and stammered his apology:

"I am afraid I am trespassing. I was assured that the house was unoccupied. I hope you will forgive my intrusion."

Her voice seemed to the poet's fantasy as if it were the perfumed night become audible:

"Forgive? . . . If you only knew how glad I am. . . . I have been waiting here so long."

Then he became aware that she had slipped into the seat beside him with her soundless movement.

Langely's surprise flashed out in an impulsive exclamation.

"Waiting? But surely not for me? I have never seen you before. There can be no mistake about that! No one could see you and forget."

He noted the abandonment of her pose, the soft relaxation of the woman of the South.

"I have heard that so often that it is like a familiar couplet in a book," she said.

And now her voice was like the scent of the rose in her hand. He fancied that she spoke like some faint, indescribable accent.

He leaned toward her, feeling as if he were in a dream, yet he could hear the shouts of the boys in a vacant lot half a block away, the twittering of the birds in the branches over his head, and the far away rush of the trains.

"What are you waiting for?" he asked.

He felt the immeasurable blackness of her eyes upon him.

"What are you waiting for day after

day. . . . What are you waiting for in your heart?"

He drew back with a catch of the breath. Something about this unknown dark woman made his senses swim. . . . All Langely's heroines were dark women. . . . She repeated it softly, so near that he felt her breath upon his cheek.

"What are you waiting for in your heart?"

After a moment's hesitation he answered:

"For experience, I suppose—beautiful experience. An immense, supreme, overwhelming awareness of life."

It did not feel strange to be talking thus to the dark woman. It was as if he were living in one of his own poems—one of his best poems.

A faint smile lighted her face with untranslatable meanings.

"That is what *I* have been waiting for—years and years."

"Has it seemed as long as that?" he asked.

Her faint smile faded. Into her face, indistinctly seen in the twilight, came something like fate.

"It has been a long time," she murmured, and in the silence it seemed to Langely that a cold breath blew over the deserted garden.

He gazed at her like a man hypnotized. Indeed, the sensation creeping over him was not comparable to anything he had known. It was like the feeling of attraction toward a magnetic woman, yet indescribably different—dreamlike, and yet poignantly vivid. He felt that he had to speak to break some spell, some danger.

"But you said—you said," he stammered, "or did I dream it?—that you had been waiting for *me*."

He felt her great eyes upon him, mysterious wells of darkness.

"I think, I hope it is *you* I have been waiting for—"

It should have seemed strange, yet it did not. The only question his mind held was concerning her identity. Who was she? Was she really living in the de-

serted house? How long had she been there?

"I did not know there was anyone living in the house," he said.

The inscrutable smile deepened in her eyes.

"Oh yes. . . . I—I come and go."

He did not want her to go. It came to him suddenly that he must somehow detain her.

"Oh, I *hope* you are not going away again directly," he said.

"Not directly—no. I think I shall stay until—"

She did not finish, but her eyes rested on his with something that seemed like a promise. He felt his pulses quicken.

"Then you come often?" his glance indicated the house.

She bowed her head and smiled. Her slow glance swept the moonlit garden.

"You love the place—it belongs to your family perhaps?"

She inclined her head silently. He was aware of her eyes upon him.

"And you like to come here."

His color rose, his heart began to beat unaccountably.

"It is so good of *you*—to let me come here," he said.

"I watched you the first time you came. I saw you, but"—and he fancied that she laughed softly at some secret—"you did not see me."

LANGELY wondered how that could have been. He had peered into the shuttered windows that day and even tried the doors. The place had certainly been closed. . . . Then his speculation as to what her meaning might have been drifted from him, obliterated by the strong vibration of her presence.

What they said, how long they were there, Langely could not have told afterwards. The time slipped past in a dream that was not like anything he had experienced before. Something like this in his most ecstatic moods of fancy he had vaguely divined, but never really imagined. In that hour some part of Langely

hitherto dormant and asleep awoke to an awareness of life as keen as the white edge of a flame.

She rose to her slender height at last, and stood looking down on him in the darkness, forgetful for the instant that he remained seated.

"Will you come again tomorrow at this hour?"

He rose quickly.

"You are going to leave me now?"

"I must. But you will come tomorrow?"

"Need you ask?"

HE WATCHED HER drift up the path until her form seemed to mingle with the deepening shadows, and in her going he felt that she drew after her some actual part of himself, some vital inner thing.

He told no one of his discovery that the old Jouet house was beautifully, mysteriously inhabited.

The next evening at twilight he sought out the old seat in the garden. He never doubted that she would come. He had waited but a few moments when the scent of roses announced her presence. Indescribably he found her seated beside him, as if years of understanding, of love-making, lay behind them.

"I love you," he said.

"If you can not love me I think that I shall die."

She looked at him strangely.

"And would that be the end? Death does not kill love. If it did—death would bring peace."

It was an odd answer, even in his unnatural mood that struck Langely.

"Love after death—that would be rather a cold sort of love, wouldn't it?" he said.

"Love after death is both heaven and hell!"

The words of her seemed to pass on the night wind. Her dark eyes held him, penetrated him. He smiled and thrust out his arms.

"Love me . . . love me *now*."

BILLY GAINES crossing a field from Langely's lodgings to the old Jouet mansion of a Sunday morning found his friend coming down the walk leading from the entrance to the gate.

"There you are, Langely! They told me at your lodgings that you spend half the night here now. Have you really fixed up quarters in the old place?"

The unexpected question brought the color to Langely's face.

"No, indeed. In fact, someone else is living here. But I—I am allowed to sit in the garden."

Billy Gaines glanced at him sharply.

"Someone *living* there," he said. "Surely you are mistaken! Your landlady spoke of it as 'that old deserted place,' and she knows all the neighborhood gossip."

Langely suddenly realized that he could not tell Billy Gaines of that miracle of the garden that had taught him love. He answered evasively:

"Oh, the landlady—she is a random chatterbox. You shouldn't have let her annoy you. But it is true I spent a good many hours in the garden. It is wonderful at night—a sort of 'misty mid region of Weir.' It makes you think of Poe and Verlaine."

"And Langely," added Billy Gaines, with light half-humorous tribute.

Then he gave the poet another scrutinizing glance.

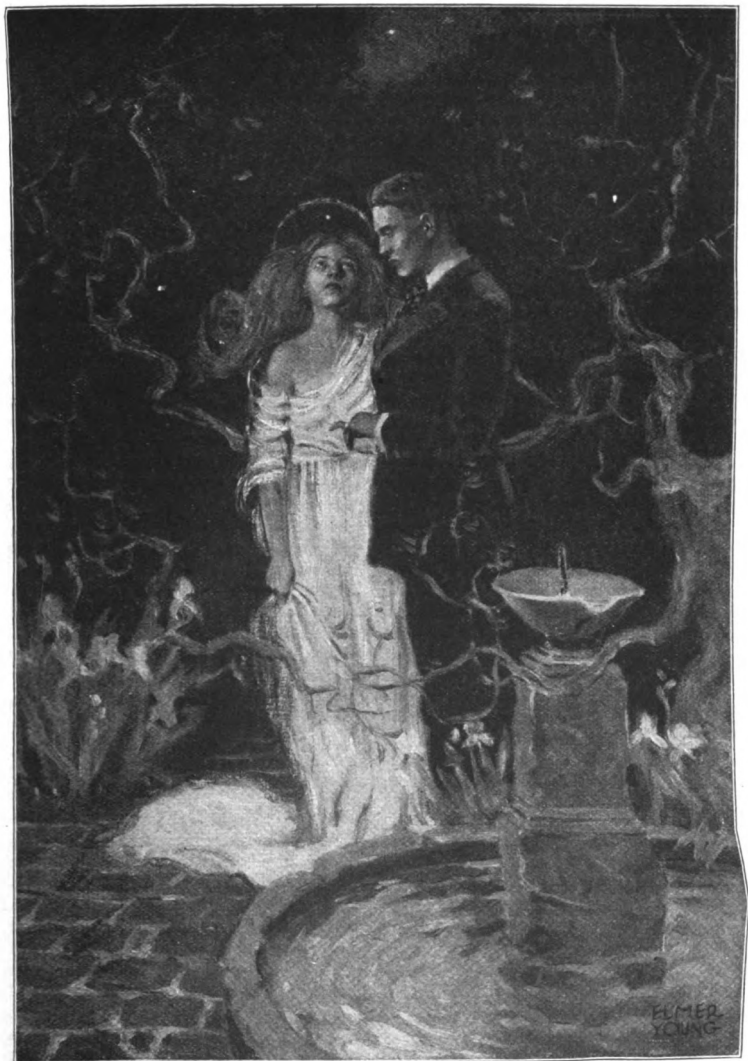
"She said you often wandered in the garden all night. See here, old man, isn't that rather overdoing the poetic frenzy?"

Langely did not smile. "You seem to have been having quite a cozy little chat with my landlady," he said.

GAINES looked up. There was something about Langely that discouraged personalities.

Billy Gaines quickly reverted to the impersonal.

"I have learned the history of your old house," he said. "That is why I took that endless journey out here in the subway and the long sprint to your lodgings. Thought you might like to hear it."



"Oh help me to stay longer!" she cried."

If the interest that Langely feigned was not convincing, the fact did not disturb Billy Gaines. He began his story at once.

"A famous erratic beauty lived here in colonial days—Maria Jouet. Her mother came from the Spanish West Indies; her father was a French Huguenot refugee. It seems that Maria had all the men in old New York in her train. Her eyes were as dark as midnight—according to the book—and seemed to pierce right into a man's innermost heart."

Something told Billy that he had caught his listener's attention then.

"Maria was engaged to half a dozen men. There were at least four duels on account of her, and not less than three suicides. She seems to have been inconstant and wilful, but not cold. On the contrary, she had the fiery temperament of the South, and she declared that our men did not know how to love. What sort of melodramatic lovemaking she wanted I can't imagine, with all the gay cavaliers at her feet; but the ideal she sought she never found.

"When she was twenty-four and still unmarried—at what was a ripe old age in those days—one of her lovers shot her; and what do you suppose her dying words were? 'I regret your impulsive action, my friend. I had wished to live until I had found love, love such as I desire'."

Billy Gaines' story was finished, but Langely remained silent so long that he offered him a polite cue. "A great old story, eh? You can't always hope to dig up such a romantic tale about a picturesque old house."

Langely's answer was indirect. "Spanish and French you say she was. Is there a picture of her anywhere, I wonder?"

"I don't know, but I can find out. Ransom's up on all those strange things, you know."

"Ask him."

Langely's glance passed over the house and lingered an instant upon the garden; then he turned abruptly and faced in the opposite direction.

"Come, let's have a tramp," he said.

II

THAT NIGHT under the murmuring trees in the garden Langely lived in his captured dream. Perhaps some memory of Billy Gaines' story lingered in his whispered question, "Is this love as you have wished to know it?"

An arm resting in his, she seemed like a flower giving up its perfume to the night. . . . "As I have never dreamed of love."

As he watched her, strange thoughts drifted through his mind, fantastic imaginings, connecting this woman, this exquisite mysterious reality, with beautiful Maria Jouet who had died without finding the man of her heart. . . . What did he know of this woman; after all, this strange being who could move the depths of his being with a glance, a movement? Nothing—nothing at all, of her life, her history, her name even. She was as mysterious as the night itself. His ignorance began to torture him.

If he should lose her, if she should suddenly go away, how would he ever find her again?

"You have never told me your name," he said.

"Does love need a name? . . . It is Maria."

Langely started. It was an odd coincidence certainly. But no. She had implied that the place had belonged to her family.

What more natural than that she should have the name, as she had the Spanish appearance, of her ill-fated ancestor, a great-great-aunt perhaps. A strange heavy silence seemed to rest over the garden. It had rained in the night and the bowl of the broken fountain was full to its brim. In the starlight the pool gave back strange quivering glints of light. He turned to meet her eyes, dark with a look he had not seen before, a look that filled him with sudden foreboding.

"This cannot last," she breathed. "Who knows, dear—"

"There shall be no end. . . . But if it comes I shall end also—and you. I cannot live without you. But why do you speak of the end, heart of my heart? You are not going away from me?"

She sighed a sigh as light as the night wind in the trees.

"Perhaps."

Why did the fear of death strike him then sharply like the thrust of a sword? "Not death!" he exclaimed involuntarily.

She did not answer and, absurd and unfounded as his panic seemed, it increased with her silence.

"Death *shall* not part us, it shall not, it *cannot*. Why only the other day you said that love does not end with death. . . ."

Again her eyes smiled strangely. There was a derisive sweetness, but no joy in her smile.

"Death is a mystery that the world does not understand. It is not what we call death that ends love, and yet—there must be an end to love."

He strove to draw her closer.

"No, no! Love is eternal. Such love as ours can never end."

He felt her start.

"No? Then what?"

"I do not know," he said. "I have tried to think. I have even wondered if I were insane, and you perhaps some beautiful strange delusion, some figment of an unreal world. . . . I have wondered if I have passed into some other plane of life—reached to some other higher octave—"

He met her eyes as dark and unrevealing as the pool.

"She does not know what I mean?" thought Langely.

III

NEXT DAY Ransom, museum curator, Egyptologist, archaeologist—every sort of "ologist"—dropped in upon Langely at his club.

"Here is your Maria Jouet," he said. "I unearthed this old print for you. It is a copy of a painting of the period."

Langely took the print and looked into the face of the woman he loved. A strange and inexplicable resemblance—the same name, the same eyes—what did it mean?

He did not remember afterwards how it came about, what his explanation had been. He could never have told it to Billy Gaines or anyone else he knew, but Ransom was different. If you told Ransom that Diana on the tower had stepped down and dined with you he would have had his explanation of the illusion. Ransom knew so many things that he was as understanding as God and as impersonal as an encyclopedia.

"It might be," mused Ransom. "It is possible. . . . The Japanese—indeed many Oriental people—have that belief you know—that love may exist between the dead and the living. You, a poet, capable of moments of exaltation, would naturally be more open to such experiences—admitting that they exist. The spiritualists would call it obsession. The Japanese interpretation is prettier—of the soul held to earth by some great desire and able somehow to take on at will, for a time at least."

Langely started. "Temporarily?" he said. "You mean that it must end?"

And his heart turned cold with the memory of her words.

"Of course, necessarily. It is a supernatural condition. Of a necessity it cannot last. The disembodied draws its strength from the living."

"But the spirit—what we call the *soul*—the thing that desires life, communication—that does not end?"

Ransom shook his head. "There we come upon the great mystery," he said.

IV

THAT NIGHT again Langely sought his dark woman. It seemed to him that she was weaker than she had been. She left the garden earlier, not, however, before she had slipped a ring upon his little finger.

"Wear it always, *always*, until the end," she said.

A moment longer he held her close, with an odd sensation that she was slipping from him.

"The end of what?"

" . . . Of all this," she whispered, and with her kiss it seemed that she drew upon the soul of him. "Oh help me to stay longer!" she cried.

The strangeness of her words came back to him afterward with the sensation he had had before that she was in some way actually drawing her life from his. He could not remember how she went away, or when he left the garden of his dream.

Langely found himself in his room about an hour after midnight. . . . He sat down at his window, staring into the night, but conscious of it only as the dark beauty of a woman. He turned on his light to examine the ring she had given him. It was an old ring, a single ruby in a quaint, beautiful setting. He wondered what inscription might be engraved inside the delicate circlet, but he would not take it off.

V

SOME TIME before dawn he became aware of a red glare against the horizon, and the next moment realized that the fire must be in the direction of the old house.

Another unmeasured space of time and he was in the crowd of onlookers. The fire engine had not arrived. The neighbors had been tardy about sending in the alarm.

"Only an old empty house," one said. "Nothing near enough to catch. It'll save the owners the cost of tearing it down. The house-wreckers were going at it next week."

Langely beat through the crowd with a terrible face. "There's a woman in there," he said. "My God, don't stand staring like that!"

The people looked at one another and then at Langely. At last a grey-haired man answered:

"That's all right, young feller. There ain't no one lived in that house these seven or eight years. I live in the next house, an' I know."

But Langely replied wildly.

"No, no, there *is* a woman there I tell you. I've seen her, talked to her. I *know*."

Then, as he stared into the leaping flames, he gave a cry.

"There, *there*, at that window—don't you see!"

And before they could stop him Langely had rushed into the burning house.

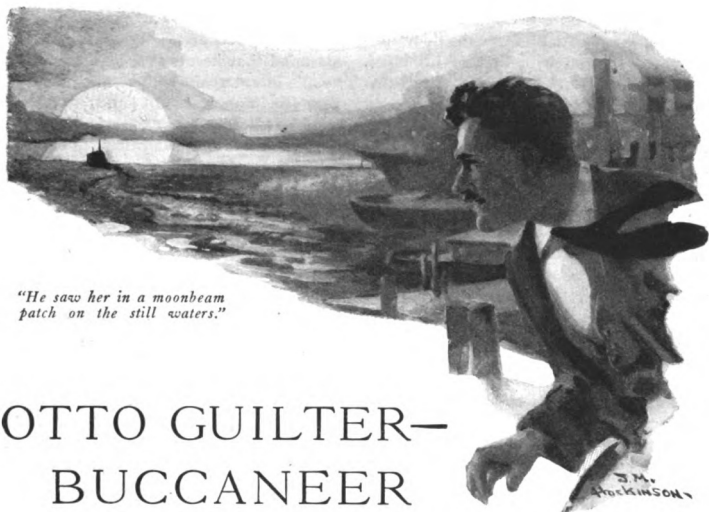
"Mad!" ejaculated the man who had answered him. "Stark, staring mad—fire mad, I guess—like a hoss."

Even as he spoke there was a dull roar and the structure fell in with a fierce upward flare of flame. A woman insisted afterwards that she had heard a sound like a cry in a woman's voice.

"But not frightened—as if she were glad," she said. But the men who stood near her said there had been no cry.

THE PAPERS next day had an account of the tragic death of Rodman Langely, the poet, who had had an odd fancy for the old Jouet mansion. It was said that he had rushed into the burning house to save a manuscript he had left there, probably the manuscript of his new poetic drama.

Some days afterwards, among the ruins they identified some of Langely's belongings, among them a beautiful and curious old ruby ring bearing inside the circlet the initials "M. J."



*"He saw her in a moonbeam
patch on the still waters."*

OTTO GUILTER— BUCCANEER

By Frederick Sleath

Illustrations by James M. Hoskinson

DAVIS, under-manager of the Carn Shipbreaking Company, looked up from his desk and took an instant dislike to his visitor. Don Jose Sebastian—so the clerk had announced him—came bowing into the room, and held out his hand. He was a broad-shouldered, tight-hipped man of medium height, swarthy, handsome and graceful enough to be a Spaniard; but Davis had sailed too many seas and known too many men not to recognize the type. "Deep sea tough," was his mental description—and, nodding to the outstretched hand, he motioned him to the chair on the other side of the desk.

"What can I do for you, Mr. Sebastian?" said Davis, curtly.

The Don smiled blandly. He too had recognized the type of man in front of him, and was bent on being as conciliatory as possible.

"Are you Mr. Martin, the managing director?" he asked.

"I'm not," said Davis.

"Then would you be so kind as to find out whether he can spare me a few minutes, Mr.— Mr.—?"

"Davis," said the under-manager ungraciously.

"Mr. Davis," repeated the Don, with a polite little bow over the name.

His gaze swept downward with the bow, leaving the under-manager's face for an instant. And in that instant Davis saw a strange thing happen, the first of two incidents that warned him that he was faced with no ordinary interview.

Directly opposite him was the door connecting his room with that of his chief, "Big Jim" Martin. Without a sound this door suddenly opened and Big Jim stared in at the visitor, an incredulous look on his face, a look that changed into one of astonishment, hate and exultation. Then the door closed and hid him from view.

So swift and unexpected was it that Davis nearly cried out in surprise. But he had wit enough to topple a ledger off the desk to the floor and to dive after it to recover himself. When he rose again the second strange thing was taking place—the Don had twisted round in his chair, his face turned to the connecting door. His hand had gone to his hip pocket, and the fingers were half closed on the protruding butt of a revolver.

"Here! What's the matter, Mr. Sebastian?" Davis exclaimed, reaching swiftly into the drawer in front of him for his own gun.

But the weapon was not needed. The Don turned round at the call, and gazed at him apologetically.

"A thousand apologies," he murmured. "My dear sir, I do not know what to say. You will think me very stupid, but I turned round just now, fully expecting to see someone at that door. Someone—really, I am ashamed to confess it—someone about to shoot me. You know the prickly sensation at the back of the neck that often warns men like you and me of danger? I see you do, and I am pardoned."

Again he made his graceful little bow. Davis noticed with astonishment that he was perspiring, and that a yellow tinge had crept into his swarthy skin.

"There *was* no one at that door, Mr. Davis?" he asked suddenly.

"Of course not," said Davis. "Visitors are not shot in British offices," he added,

feeling that his denial had scarcely sounded convincing enough.

His grip was still on the revolver in the drawer, yet what to do he scarcely knew. His chief's past, he had long suspected, was one out of which many enmities might well arise: it had flashed into his mind that here was a man come with hostile intent against him. But if so, then Big Jim was warned, and his counter would assuredly be quick and all-satisfying. He could only wait for it to be made.

"Will you kindly state what your business is, Mr. Sebastian?" he asked coolly.

B-r-r-r! went the telephone bell before the Don could answer him, and with a hasty "Excuse me," he grabbed at the instrument.

"Hello! . . . Mr. Renwick, of Renwick & Sons, speaking. Are you Carn?" It was Big Jim's voice—by the sound of it from one of the telephones outside the offices.

"Carn speaking. Good afternoon, Mr. Renwick," he replied glibly. "Mr. Martin is out just now," he continued in reply to a murmur of approval. "Can I do anything for you? Davis speaking."

"Yes, you can!"

Big Jim's voice sounded very earnest.

"I had to clear out just now. I could not trust myself to remain. Find out all you can about that darned dago with you. Fix him for an appointment tomorrow, and if he seems shy about it, phone me at once. I'm at the gate-house. Got that?"

"Very good, Mr. Renwick. I'll see to it. Good-bye," said Davis, gravely replacing the instrument.

As he did so he glanced up quickly at the Don and caught a look both of suspicion and annoyance on his face; he had felt the man watching him intently.

"Well, Mr. Sebastian?" he enquired.

"I hear you say Mr. Martin is out," the Don snapped at him. "Yet outside I was told that he was in."

"The clerk probably meant—" began Davis.

"It was not the clerk," the Don interrupted, Davis stiffening. "It was the gate-

man. I asked especially before coming in, for my business was not with inferiors, and he told me that Mr. Martin had just been arrived a few minutes. Yet now you say he is out. I do not understand. My business is important. I will not be put off. I insist on seeing him."

SEBASTIAN stared insolently across the desk, his urbanity gone, his manner plainly indicating what treatment he was accustomed to mete out to those who dared to cross him. Yet as Davis reached forward to ring for the clerk, the insolence instantly dropped from him.

"No, no, Mr. Davis!" he said, deprecatingly. "There is no need to have me shown out. I spoke in haste. Accept, I beg you, my humblest apologies. It is merely that I do not know your British customs and ways."

"That is quite evident, Mr. Sebastian," said Davis coldly.

"I fear it is," the Don agreed, though his eye had hardened for a moment. "Might I ask," he continued, "when Mr. Martin is likely to return?"

"Possibly not for a month. If your business is sufficiently important I can recall him. But I wish you would hurry up and tell me what it is."

"Ah, but that is not so easy," the Don murmured. "May I ask first that you will treat what I say in strictest confidence?"

"Absolutely."

"It is very necessary. And, Mr. Davis, I have friends."

"If you mean," snapped Davis, "that those friends of yours are mighty handy with a gun, then you had better understand that there are several men about the office just as handy."

The Don bowed.

"So I was told," he said, courteously. "That, in fact, was why I came here. My proposal is bound to appeal to such men as you speak of. Know, my dear sir, that I represent Don Hernandez, exiled president of—need I say, Mr. Davis? We are gathering forces for a counter-revolution. We need your help."

"Mr. Martin is done with those days," said Davis, smiling a little. "Your South American republics are best left alone."

"No, no. You mistake me. It is not personal help that we seek, though we should be glad of it. It is what you can give us. Your firm has lately bought four German submarines from your government? Is it not so? And, of these, the U. Z. 72 is perhaps in the best—"

"It's no good, Mr. Sebastian," Davis interrupted. "Those submarines were bought on a breaking contract, and we could only sell on similar terms. Mr. Martin would simply not consider it. I cannot recall him to deal with such a matter."

"Even if we offer fifteen—no, twenty thousand pounds? Nearly five times—am I not right?—what the U. Z. 72 cost you to buy?"

"It makes no difference."

"Twenty-five thousand, then? . . . Stop! Do not shake your head. We are wealthy. Thirty thousand? . . . And perhaps a little more, a very little something for yourself, eh? What you say?"

THE man smirked cunningly across the desk at Davis, who nearly flung the ink bottle at him—his fingers happened to be playing with it at the time.

"We can't have anything to do with filibustering, Mr. Sebastian," he said shortly. "Do you realize what a risk you are asking us to run?"

"But I do not see it. You merely equip the boat with the necessary stores. Even that is superfluous if only you chose your watchman with discretion. I can bring a trained crew. We slip away in the night. We disappear. Who is to know what has happened? She may have been stolen? She may have broken away. She may . . . Mr. Davis! I will offer fifty thousand."

He had become excited as he spoke, twisting his body about and gesticulating, rattling out his sentences in short, sharp bursts of words. Yet he made his offer impressively enough, his voice grown

husky and strained, and he leaned back in his chair, breathing heavily, but collected. On his face was a certain dourness as of a man fully conscious of the immensity of an undertaking, conscious also of his will and power to carry it out.

Davis leaned back also, and, under a guise of considering the offer, wondered what was behind it. The Don had lied to him—he had no doubt about that; the bid was too high. Less than half expended in bribes would have worked a bloodless revolution in that republic. Davis knew its people well. Why, then, had such a figure been offered for the U. Z. 72? A dozen of her like could have been bought for the money, were the market only chosen discreetly.

Some big plot was on foot, some daring enterprise. Of that he felt certain. But there was nothing more to be learned from the Don, whose appearance indicated that he was a little uneasy about what he had already said. Big Jim knew something, however. Filled with an eagerness to hear what it was and to communicate his own news, he brought the interview abruptly to an end.

"I will get into touch at once with Mr. Martin," he said. "Your offer is one which we cannot afford to ignore. Can you call at this time tomorrow?"

"And Mr. Martin will be here?"

"Either that, or I will have definite word for you."

"I will come," said the Don, and bowing, he left the room, not waiting for the clerk to escort him.

SEVERAL MINUTES afterwards, Big Jim Martin entered. Davis had been awaiting him impatiently, expectant of much; and now he felt disappointed. Never had he seen Big Jim more unperturbed. Just what he might have expected, he admitted—his chief had often plunged him into the midst of queer and thrilling circumstances, and always taken his own way and own time to make their significance plain. Therefore he told what had passed at the interview, emphasizing

nothing, and making no inferences; and he was heard in silence till the end.

"What do you make of it, sir?" he then queried, as Big Jim still seemed disinclined to talk.

"What's her history?" asked Big Jim.

"The U. Z. 72, sir? Nothing very startling. She is one of their late 'Z' boats. Got caught in a net in the Channel and captured undamaged. Her commander seems to have been a very decent chap. Picked up the crew of a mined trawler and transferred them to another, and other things like that. He was interned with the crew, and the 'sub' used as some kind of a decoy ship."

"And what do you think she is wanted for now?"

"Don't know, sir!"

Davis fidgeted impatiently. He wanted to be putting questions himself, but dared not do so unencouraged.

"He might be going to use her for piracy," he suggested.

"Possibly. But fifty thousand pounds seems a lot to pay for the privilege. Gad!" Big Jim exclaimed. "I wonder where he got it."

"You know him, sir?"

"Yes, I know him, Davis. He is one of the two men that I wanted to kill with my own hands, and I thought him dead."

The words were spoken so calmly that for an instant Davis failed to grasp their meaning. When he did so, understanding came on him with the force of an electric shock. He sat up and gaped.

"By Jove, sir!" he murmured. "By Jove, sir!"

"Aye. He cost me my brother," Big Jim continued, speaking just as calmly, but his big shoulders hunched a little; he kept his gaze fixed on the floor. "He was on his way home with his wife to serve in the war. They were aboard a small South American coaster. A submarine stopped and boarded her. And Dave shot his wife before being shot himself. . . . The darned dagoes made no sort of a show to save them—they were only a pair of Britishers; what did it mat-

ter? I've met most of them since. . . . That was your Don Sebastian, Davis. What do you think of him now?"

"But—but, sir, I don't understand! The man's a Spaniard?"

"Is he? Yes, I have heard people put the color of his eyes down to the best Vizigoth blood, but there's a nearer strain than that in him. He was the brat of a German woman by a dago father. He is Otto Guilter."

"Not Guilter of the U. Z. 64, sir?"

"Yes."

"The Pirate?"

"The Pirate—the man who took advantage of his country trusting him with a submarine to start playing for his own hand in a way that Kidd, Cosh, Flint, and those other old beauties never equalled, or thought of equalling. His own government was horrified when they heard."

"But good heavens, sir, Guilter was caught and sunk. I know a man who was there."

"In circumstances which the Germans described as atrocious until we published a few of his crimes, and then they were sorry they spoke. Quite so. Nevertheless, he must have escaped, even though certain honest merchant toughs got the name of popping him down their funnel. That was Otto Guilter sitting in this room half an hour ago. How he came to be here, and why, I don't know. But it was Guilter."

"And I sat opposite him!" said Davis. "If only I had known."

DAVIS stared across the desk, his eyes focussed hardly on the point where the Don had been sitting. After a while he said:

"What d'ye mean to do, sir?"

"See him tomorrow and act on any chance he gives," said Big Jim. "He doesn't know me. At least I don't think so. I'll get him, some way or other. Meanwhile I want to see those submarines. I haven't seen them yet. Are you coming?"

He rose as he spoke and moved towards

the door. Davis followed him—out of the offices into the yard, and through it towards the beach where the old ships lay. The breaking gangs were on each of them, busy as ants on a carcass and to much the same end; and then along one of the twin piers to the landing stage where were moored the Company's launches and tenders they came.

The yard was throbbing with activity, for Big Jim had of late been buying heavily. There was much to attract the eye of an engineer. But Davis noticed nothing; he was scarcely conscious of making the journey, so deeply had his mind been stirred by Big Jim's story, so greatly was his attention absorbed by the ideas and memories it had aroused.

Even when they were embarked and fast approaching the dilapidated fleet that his chief had collected for breaking, his vision included only the submarines and one other, hunters and hunted—a broken backed tramp, newly rescued from the shallows where a torpedo had sent her.

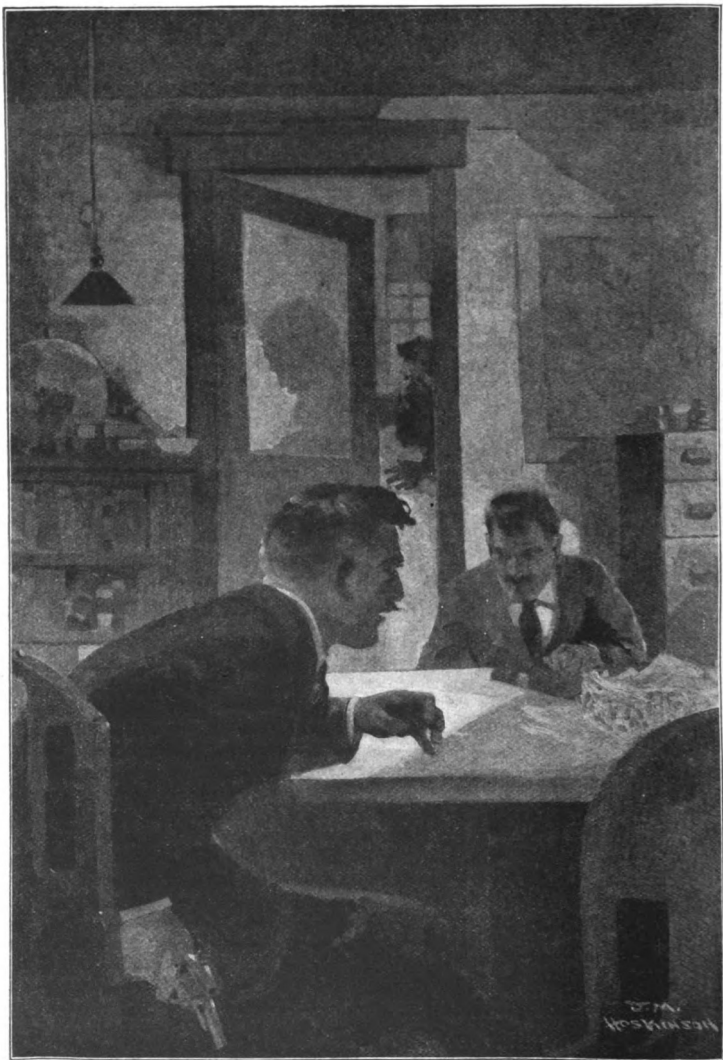
She swung abreast, but beyond the second "U" boat, a sorry symbol of the war they had waged. They were moored in line ahead, the nearest craft to the shore. An easterly haze had crept over the estuary, blurring their outlines and making their numbers undistinguishable. Like long, low, thin shadows they lay on the surface of a grey sea, the sinister tilt of their bows giving them a queer, sentient look, suggestive, somehow, of thin-lipped evil men.

So at least thought Davis, as he sat silent in the launch's sternsheets. What new devilry was being planned for one of them? He pondered hard over the question. His chief had spoken to him twice before he heard or answered.

"Which is the U.Z.72?" Big Jim was saying.

And there was a suppressed excitement in his tones, in his attitudes, as he stood, his fingers clenched on the top cabin bevelling, that made Davis spring quickly up beside him.

"That one straight ahead, sir," he an-



"'Here! What's the matter, Mr. Sebastian?' Davis exclaimed, reaching swiftly into the drawer in front of him for his own gun."

swered. "The second between us and the tramp."

"Good God!" he heard his chief say in the slightest of whispers; and then again, "Good God!"

Some new phase of the mystery had evidently revealed itself; he glanced eagerly at him. But Big Jim said no more.

THEY made the submarine. At a signal from Davis the engine was throttled down, and they drifted slowly round her. Surprisingly huge she seemed when viewed from alongside, after the appearance of slightness that the distance had given her. The conning tower rose above them like a monolith. There were markings on its plates, markings that Davis had noticed before; little dents and grazes, close together and numerous.

"Is that corrosion on her tower, sir?" he asked, with the object of drawing his chief into conversation.

Big Jim started out of his absorption, picked up the question from his subconscious memory, and smiled queerly.

"No, that's not corrosion, Davis," he said. "Certainly not the corrosion you mean."

He surveyed the whole length of the submarine before adding:

"That's the result of machine gun fire at fairly close range. And I fired the gun."

"Put about," he ordered gruffly, noticing the curious glances of the launch's crew; and he offered no further explanation. But back in the office, the door shut securely behind them, he turned excitedly to Davis.

"Do you know what she is?" he said. . . . "She is Guilter's old ship— . . ."

"Don't look such a disbelieving Jew, man. I'm certain," he exclaimed. "I knew her even before seeing that pepper-potting. I've seen him standing on that very tower scarcely much further away than you are from me now. It was in the early days of the 'Q' ships. I went off in an armed launch to examine a curious looking neutral flying distress signals,

and out he came from behind her, gun ready and all, thinking we were a nice fat, harmless merchantman. Gad! I swept his gun crew into the sea. Was just getting on to him when the blasted gun jambed, and he slipped back behind the neutral and got clear away. I saw his boat a second time, but a devil of a long way off, just after he had played pirate on the Esmeralda. You bet your life I'm not mistaken. There's not much about the points of that ship I'm likely to forget."

Davis could only stare at him.

"Don't you see the game he has been playing?" Big Jim continued. "His boat was the U.Z. 72 all along."

"And he changed it to Z. 64 when he meant to play giddy hell," exclaimed Davis. "By Jove, sir! What a swine!"

"Aye! And the poor devil who commanded the real Z. 64 got all that should have come to him. Perhaps that wasn't the only number he used. Perhaps most of the tricks the Germans played at sea were due to his boat alone. And to think he was captured and brought ashore decently and kept in honoured captivity here so long! He's a cunning devil. . . . By the way, did he say anything to you about inspecting her?"

"Not a word," answered Davis.

"No. He's too clever for that. But he said he could bring a trained crew, didn't he? I expect it's his old lot, though how he managed to get them back into this country beats me. He must have powerful support somewhere. Not Don Hernandez and his putty set of dagoes, Davis. The great German Jew is on this job."

"But what is it, sir?" interrupted Davis.

"Don't know for certain. Only got an idea, and it's not fit for putting into words yet. I'm off home. I'll burst if I stay here. Send Old Stewart up to me in an hour, and just carry on."

IT WAS USELESS to question him further, as Davis well knew, and, left alone, he manfully pushed the matter to the back of his mind and settled down to

work. An unusually heavy rush of business helped him; all afternoon his telephone bell was incessantly ringing; the darkness was down before he had time to look at the submarine again. But his interest revived overnight, and the morning found him impatiently looking forward to the Don's arrival, and wondering continually what Big Jim meant to do. When the Don was at last shown bowing into his room he maintained his accustomed calm with difficulty, and, scarcely replying to his greeting, ushered him through the connecting doorway.

Big Jim sat at his desk, stiff and grim, and made no attempt to rise.

"I haven't had time to consider your offer," he said, brusquely cutting short the Don's graceful palaver. "Frankly, I don't like it. But your price is tempting. If you will give me a banker's reference, I will let you know in a week."

"A week," exclaimed the Don, in something like dismay. "My dear sir, I was given to understand that Mr. Martin was accustomed to make up his mind very quickly."

"Then I am sorry to disappoint you, sir," said Big Jim. "This is a matter that requires careful consideration, and I am not going to rush into it."

"No. Quite . . . quite so," murmured the Don, obviously taken aback by the manner of his reception, and not knowing for a moment what to say.

"But a week is a very long time, Mr. Martin," he continued, recovering himself. "Too long to suit my friends, I am afraid. Much depends on whether we get your submarine quickly. The time for our coup is very near. If my countrymen rise and we are not ready to cover a landing of our forces, there will be much slaughter, and more oppression—"

"And I don't care a tinker's cuss if there is," interrupted Big Jim.

EVEN Davis started at the rudeness of Big Jim's tone. It seemed as though the Don were going to draw his revolver. Was that his chief's aim, to get

a chance to shoot? But again that quick re-assumption of urbanity took place. Watching it as an outsider, Davis could not help admiring the self-control that it portrayed.

"Pardon my impatience, Mr. Martin," the Don said politely. "And naturally it is too much to expect you to be distressed on our account. But could you not start making the boat ready for sea, on the chance that you decide to accept my offer? It would save much time. Possibly it might induce my friends to wait, instead of taking the business elsewhere. Better still—could you not allow me to make an inspection? I would then know whether the reports we have had about her condition are trustworthy."

"She is ready for sea," interjected Davis—and then, slowly: "She came up under her own power."

"Pardon me, Mr. Davis," said the Don, keeping his glance so pointedly on Big Jim that Davis felt swept out of the way. "Well, Mr. Martin?" . . . Big Jim was hesitating.

"I don't want to attract suspicion," he said, doubtfully.

"But surely I must make an inspection some time," the Don persisted.

"Yes, that's true."

But still Big Jim seemed to hesitate.

"Are there any gangs out on the boats just now?" he asked at last of Davis. "No? . . . Very well, Don Sebastian, we will go at once."

DAVIS accompanied them uninvited. The plot was developing, and he was anxious to keep in touch with every phase; but what the developments were, he did not know. Big Jim's attitude had puzzled him. Yet somehow the idea had entered his mind that his chief had been playing up to this inspection. Therefore he watched the Don carefully from the moment they boarded the "U" boat, and soon became aware—and the discovery brought with it a little thrill of excitement—that Big Jim was watching him also, but far more intently, and with far

greater care. Thereafter he watched his chief instead.

With practiced eye the Don examined the instruments and controls in the conning tower. Everything was perfect; he expressed himself as well pleased, and they descended into the hull.

"The officers' quarters, I suppose," he said, pointing to a cramped little row of berths near the foot of the ladder.

Big Jim nodded, and motioned him towards the engine room.

"You had better examine the important parts of the boat," he advised, "while there is any light coming through the scuttles." But he had to be reminded of those berths at the end of the inspection: he walked forgetfully past them and started climbing up to the conning tower.

"Mr. Martin," called the Don apologetically, "there is still something else. Naturally I am interested in what may be my future quarters."

Without waiting on his guide he made towards the berths and tried to open one of the doors. But it was locked; a fact which surprised Davis, and roused his attention: it suddenly occurred to him that the Don seemed unduly interested in those berths, and his chief too much the other way. Yet, watch as he might, he could see nothing of any significance; and back in his office, Big Jim, gone to speed the visitor away, he had to admit that he was even more puzzled than before.

But enlightenment came quickly. Big Jim burst in on him, and hurried him down to the launch again. They sailed to the submarine and scrambled aboard.

"Is it the berths, sir?" cried Davis eagerly, as he saw Big Jim hurry that way.

"Aye," replied Big Jim, his voice trembling with excitement. "Hop into the engine room and bring tools. I want to take out a plate."

He was in the first of the berths, and examining a portion of the steel skirting above the bunk, when Davis returned.

"This is Guilter's old quarters," he ex-

plained. "Did you notice how anxious he was to get a squint inside? I was banking on it. I saw you watching him, too. Did you notice anything? Didn't you see his eyes? That's what you should have watched. . . . Gad! He was cool enough, but they simply burned when he looked at *that*."

He tapped a portion of the paneling.

"That's what he was after, and I guessed it as soon as I recognized this craft. Don't you see?"

"What, sir?" muttered Davis, still mystified.

Then he gave an exclamation of surprise—cleverly let into the paneling, at the point indicated by Big Jim, were four rivets, painted over, and concealed to any but a trained eye.

"By Jove, sir! What are those rivets doing there?" he exclaimed. "There's no frame or anything else near them."

"That's just what we want to see," replied Big Jim. "Get the plate out. But be careful. Don't mark it."

Quickly they unfastened the section and lowered it.

"You see," cried Big Jim triumphantly.

On the inside of the plate, and fastened to it by the rivets, was a metal box, japanned like a cash box, about a foot square with a depth of six inches. It was locked. With a deft turn of a spanner Big Jim broke the hasp, and wrenched up the lid. Davis gave a little cry of wonder. The box was full of precious stones!

"The proceeds of his piracy," said Big Jim grimly. "I suspected it. He might well offer fifty thousand pounds. There's nearly a million's worth there. That came out of the Esmeralda," he continued, pulling out a great rope of pearls. "It belonged to Mrs. Henry J. Munro, poor woman. It's worth fifty thousand alone. That's her diamond star. And—well I never!"

He dived his fingers in among the gems and raked out five large rubies.

"The Five Hearts of Burmah. Do you see them, Davis. There's nothing like them in the world."

"Then the Mahratta was submarined after all," Davis exclaimed. "And she was thought to have gone down in a typhoon, with all hands."

"Aye. That old rajah was aboard her with his rubies. I always thought she had been submarined. She was too stout a craft simply to founder. And there's many another stout ship represented here," said Big Jim, gravely regarding the jewels. "Sunk with all hands, every one of them, poor devils. What a cold-blooded hound Guilter is! And he walked into my office and thought to get away with it all! Gad, he'll learn something different!"

He emptied the box of its contents and wrapped them up carefully in some sack-
ing.

"Up with her, Davis," he ordered, laying hold of one end of the skirting and raising it. "We must leave everything as we found it. He's a cunning devil, and I don't want to rouse his suspicions too soon. Put some grime over your hammer marks."

THE FIRST thing that caught Davis's eye on entering the yard next morning was the U.Z. 72 tied up at the end of the pier.

"Yes," Big Jim admitted when questioned. "We brought her in last night. She's better out of harm's way. Just write to that friend of ours telling him that his offer is refused. I am going up to town to lay the whole case before my pal, the Home Secretary, so you will have to deal with him yourself, if he comes here again—and it is almost certain that he will.

"Don't let him—him know, of course, what we have discovered, but tell him definitely that there is nothing more doing, and that we start breaking her on Friday. His face should be worth seeing when he hears that. Kick him out if he gives any trouble.

"All right," said Davis as surlily as he dared: he had expected very different measures to be taken against the Don—

very different, at any rate, from a mere laying of his case before a cabinet minister.

But he wrote the letter, making it as frigid as he possibly could, and looked forward to the Don's protest visit with some little satisfaction. It was Wednesday. On Thursday morning his visitor awaited him on the office doorstep. There the interview began and ended. The Don opened it with the offer of a bribe. Davis stiffly repeated what Big Jim had said and ordered him out of the yard. Much to his disappointment, he went without causing any trouble, bowing, graceful to the last.

THIS apparent readiness to accept defeat would certainly have aroused some suspicion in the under-manager's breast during the course of the day, had not another exceedingly heavy rush of business called for all his attention, and not till he left the office and sat in the quiet of his home, did he begin either to remember it, or to invest it with any significance. There came another and still more disquieting memory, however, once the first perturbation had entered his mind.

On his way home from the office he had seemed to notice an unusually large number of foreign seamen lounging about, square-headed, evil-looking fellows: sailors, he had thought at the time, from certain German vessels in the neighboring harbor. But what if they were Guilter's old crew, gathered together perhaps to steal the submarine?

It was only a vagrant fear at first, but it recurred and recurred, and grew into conviction. Surely not without some further effort would such a man give up so mighty a prize! The jewels might be removed, but the submarine remained—the means by which they had been won; by which more could be won, if the expirates only turned pirates once more. And were they not likely to do so, urged on by disappointment at finding the booty gone?

He telephoned the yard to enquire if all was well. After some delay a night watchman answered and gave the necessary assurances. . . . Still he was not satisfied.

His house stood on the high ground above the offices. He went to a window and looked out. Beneath him the lights were burning, and, further away, those of the ships on the morning station—just the ordinary night spectacle that he had looked down upon many a time. Yet he put on his boots and coat and went out, and the moment he entered the yard gateway he knew that his fears were well grounded; but too late. A fist smashed out from a shadow by the wall, took him on the point of the chin, and stretched him senseless on the ground.

DAVIS awoke to the sound of something unwonted happening at the end of the landing pier. He scrambled to his feet and rushed thither. He was sick and dizzy; many times he stumbled. And just as he neared the point where the submarine had been moored, he saw her in a moonbeam patch on the still waters, stealing out to sea. The Don was on her conning tower. He heard his voice issuing orders. Then a shadow hid her. A minute later she slid, half submerged, into another splash of moonlight and slipped silently beneath the surface.

There was the sound of a motor launch approaching from the moorings. Idly he waited. He could do nothing. The submarine was gone, and the police . . . it was a job for admiralties. Presently the launch came into view. He recognised her as one of the yard tenders. Stewart was aboard, with all the night watchmen. *That* was how the submarine had been stolen so easily.

The launch glided alongside the jetty and made fast. Catching sight of him on the pierhead, the mate called out a greeting, and scrambled hastily up the steps, shouting loudly as he came:

"That old gunboat sprang a leak. I had to take off all hands to save her!"

"Wheesh!" he added in a warning whisper as he reached the top. "For the love of God, Mr. Davis, say nothing before the men."

He caught Davis by the coat sleeve and drew him away. Davis went with him, hurrying, his heart quickening to the mystery's last phase. Not by accident, then, had the yard been cleared that evening of its watchers! In Stewart's store-room he learned the reason. One small glow lamp was burning. Stewart, he noticed, avoided its radiance, and stood off in the shadows, a grim, unforgiving old man.

"MacNeil, o' the Esmeralda, was almost brother to me," he started mumbling. "There was the chief's own brother, and many a poor soul forbye. Out o' the depths: into the depths. Never fear, Mr. Davis!" he exclaimed, his voice rising and stern.

"She'll not go far, sir. She'll reach the twenty fathom line, mebbe. But she'll stay there."

"What have you done?" Davis asked in a whisper.

"We cleared some o' her deck plates o' rivets, *him* and me, that night we brought her in."

Stewart's voice had dropped once more; he shuffled further and further into the shadows.

"We fixed them together again with burnt sugar in the holes, and left her there for him to take if he wanted to. We reckoned he would. Fine strong stuff for rivets, burnt sugar, Mr. Davis, if only it wouldna melt in water."

HIS EYES glinted challengingly out of the darkness. Involuntarily Davis averted his gaze. Somewhere beneath the surface of the night-bound sea the black waters were rushing in on Otto Guilter and his blood-guilty crew. Out of the depths they had come for their villainies: into the depths they had gone. . . .

When he looked round again, Stewart had stolen away.



"Bonus became, in a way metamorphosed. He felt prosperous; he began to feel that he was entitled to be numbered among the elite."

"UNIFAWMS RANK"

By Edgar Valentine Smith

Illustrations by John S. Curry

AS THE IRATE FIGURE of Pleiades Shandy flounced out of the shop, Mistuh Cicero Godwin, proprietor of the High Five Tailoring Emporium, lapsed into a period of ponderous thoughtfulness. Pleiades was the last of a series of recent callers, each of whom had expressed in varying terms—but with a wonderful unanimity of sentiment—just what he thought of Mistuh Godwin and his method of doing business.

Although not by nature of a self-effacing disposition, there were times when Mistuh Godwin affected a certain modesty of demeanor; there were occasions when he was perfectly willing for someone else to occupy the spotlight. In short, circumstances oftentimes provided

conditions wherein it was desirable that some other person should be the goat. Such conditions, it seemed to Mistuh Godwin, prevailed this morning. Following this idea out to its logical conclusion, he now bent a coldly calculating glance upon his assistant, Bonus Gaines.

"Looks lak it's up to you, Gaines," he stated, with an air of finality.

"Me?" Bonus snorted. "You better look ag'in!"

"You ain' denyin' 'at you tuck de orders?"

"Nunh!"

"An' promised silk linin's wid de coats?"

"Co'se! I tole all 'em niggers——"

"You admits it?"

"I admits 'at you give me 'pacific orders

to tell eve'y man 'at his coat would be lined wid fancy silk."

"How you gwine prove I give 'em orders?"

The query stumped Bonus. He realized suddenly, with a sort of light-headed feeling in the pit of his stomach, that he couldn't establish his contention. He had no witnesses. On the other hand, two score of Mobile's leading colored citizens could furnish positive and cumulative evidence that he had made representations which had not been fulfilled.

The trouble between his employer and himself had its inception in a midsummer sales campaign which Mistuh Godwin had launched some thirty days before. In an effort to stimulate sales, he had cast about for some unique selling point. A sample bit of gaily-colored silk furnished the inspiration. Silk linings—and at the same price as the cheaper alpaca or sateen ones—in the coat of every customer who should order a suit within the next fortnight! Bonus Gaines had been issued positive and specific instructions to promise this.

Thereafter, for two solid weeks he trudged through the sweltering summer heat, up one dusty street and down the other, patiently lugging an enormous sample book almost as large as himself. But the sweat of his brow bore fruit.

The result was immediate and soul-satisfying. For, since it is generally known that during the summer months a coat is worn, draped gracefully, wrong side out, over the crook of the arm, the promise of genuine, first quality, multi-colored silk linings made an almost irresistible appeal. As a result, Bonus' commissions—to be paid by Mistuh Godwin in the not-definitely-mentioned future—mounted commensurately.

With the delivery of the suits to their owners, trouble checked in at the High Five Tailoring Emporium. For, in forwarding the orders to his Chicago connection, Mistuh Godwin suddenly remembered that by substituting a cheaper lining for the one promised his customers

a saving of about two dollars per suit would be effected. The idea appealed to his frugal soul, and he acted upon it. Hence, trouble.

MISTUH GODWIN was unabashed. To each of his wrathful clients he denied calmly and categorically that he had ever instructed Bonus Gaines to offer silk linings. He seemed to be pained, in the face of the angry avalanche which descended upon the High Five, upon learning that his assistant had been guilty of such a deliberate, wilful—these were his own words—low-down misrepresentation of facts. Bonus' heated protests of innocence availed nothing. For Mistuh Godwin could not only talk longer; he could talk more loudly—much more loudly—than his diminutive assistant.

The shifting of culpability, however, failed to satisfy an indignant *clientele*. It was not until each man had been allowed a substantial cash refund that his lacerations were healed. Naturally, this called for further action upon Mistuh Godwin's part. With business as dull as it was, he simply could not afford to stand this loss personally. It was with a view to the avoidance of this that he had provoked the debate with Bonus.

"An' since dey's no evidence to substantiate my 'sponsibility in de premises," he continued, "you'll hafta stan' it yo'se'f."

"Whut?" Bonus demanded shortly.

"Ain' I had to re-infun' 'em customers in order to restrain dey good will?"

"S'posin' you is? Wheah does I come in on 'at?"

"You don't. Yo'n is de outgo."

"Meanin' which?"

"Dem re-infun's will hafta come outen yo' pocket."

"Huh! I sees you colleckin' it f'um me."

Mistuh Godwin was wonderfully patient.

"De colleckin' process won't hahdly be necessa'y," he returned mildly.

"How you gwine git it, den?"

"I puts into operation de simple rule o'

'limitation by restrainin' de money f'um de commissions an' salary I ain' never paid you yit."

Bonus yowled an indignant protest.

"*Wha-a-a-t?* When you tole me outhen yo' own mouf—"

APPARENTLY Mistuh Godwin's patience had at last become exhausted. He held up an authoritative hand. "Desis', please," he ordered coldly, "till I gits t'h'ough expatiatin'!"

Bonus desisted.

"Since you is done went an' almos' plum' ruiny my business," his employer continued, "ordina'y jewishprudence deman's 'at you reimburses me fo' de damages you is caused." He picked up a sheet of paper which contained a list of names with amounts opposite. "De lis' shows 'at I paid out a dollar an' a quarter on eve'y one 'em suits, an'—"

"Means you expects me to pay 'at?"

"Puhcisel'y! An' 'at don't include delimitation damages."

"De which?"

"Accawdin' to law, when one man disrup's frien'ship betwix' one er mo' pussons, he's guilty o' delimitation o' de affections. Which you is done de same. 'At constichutes damages. An', when de afo'said damages cain' be arrove at—"

"Dey's done been arrove at. Ain' you paid 'em niggers a dollar an' a quarter puh each?"

"'At won't cover it; 'at won't neah cover it. Think o' de mental agony yo' onreckkliness is caused me to suffer! Think o' de reputation you is almos' gave me! Naw-suh! I don't chahge you no less'n two dollars on eve'y one 'em suits!"

Bonus railed. He might as well have kept silent. He rose up on his hind legs and raved. He entreated; he threatened. It was useless. Mistuh Godwin coldly informed him that if he wasn't satisfied he could take the matter into the courts. The bluff worked. Bonus had not the slightest desire to get mixed up with the law in any way. There was nothing left, then, for him but unconditional sur-

render. His capitulation carried with it the severance of the relations which had existed between himself and his employer for the past sixty days. When it came to a settlement between them Bonus was not surprised at finding that the "re-infunds" and the "delimitation damages" tallied exactly with the amount that was owing him for commissions and back salary.

EVER SINCE the occasion, when, as a member of a labor batallion recently returned from France, he had been allowed one hilarious day's leave in New York City, ambition had gnawed at Bonus Gaines' vitals. A plain gold sign on Fifth Avenue which bore the words, "Madeline, Modiste," started it. A companionably-minded passerby gave the information that a modiste was a ladies' tailor. Forthwith there was born in Bonus' mind a great idea. He would return to Mobile and put up a shop as near like Madeline's as he could afford. At any rate, he would have a sign like that. A certain deftness in the manipulation of a pair of ivory-colored, black polka-dotted cubes during the return trip from France had added quite materially to his capital. Therefore, when he finally landed in Mobile, he was ready to embark in the tailoring business, save for the fact that he lacked experience. This he had gotten—in a way—in Mistuh Godwin.

His connection with the latter gentleman being now severed permanently and completely, he rented a shop of his own. Within a day or two thereafter, there appeared a neat gold sign upon his window:

GAINES
Gents' Modiste
&
Investments

The fact that he had decided to deal in second-hand clothing also was responsible for the last line. Since an investor was one who bought and sold things it ap-

peared to Bonus as being particularly appropriate.

ONE of Bonus' first acts was to array himself in the most influential-looking suit of clothes that could be had in Mobile. The rest of his raiment seconded nobly the effect produced by the suit. And it all had its effect upon Bonus. He became, in a way, metamorphosed. He felt prosperous; he began to feel that he was entitled to be numbered among the *élite*, the worth while. Evidence of this may be obtained from a conversation which took place between Mistuh Godwin and himself shortly after the opening of his shop. He observed his late employer standing upon the sidewalk immersed in a study of the sign. Bonus strolled to the doorway. Mistuh Godwin glanced around at his approach. His gaze took in the startling sartorial effect produced by his ex-employee.

"Huh!" he ejaculated. "Some folks seem to think 'at a fine set o' harness 'll make a racer outen a dray hoss!" His eyes returned to the sign. "Lot o' gole-plated specifications to be hung onto nothin'!"

Bonus produced a silver cigarette case, extracted a gold-tipped cigarette, lighted it, and set adrift a languid cloud of smoke in Mistuh Godwin's direction.

"De gole sign is signifigit," he announced.

"O' what?"

"De kine o' business gwine be ca'ied on heah. A quality tailor shop——"

"Tailor shop?"

"Ain' de muskels o' you' brain workin', Godwin? Mean to say you ain' know 'at 'modiste' is de Eyetalian word fo' tailor?"

"Calls yo'se'f a Eyetalian?"

"Nunh! I's plain Texas blon' lak you is."

This was a new Bonus Gaines. Mistuh Godwin simply couldn't get him at all. Momentarily, he was stumped. Consequently, his comeback was noticeably weak. "Thinks you's smaht, huh?"

"Smaht?" Bonus reached into a pocket and pulled out a roll that would have strangled a boa constrictor. "Smaht 'nough, Godwin, to gether me dese heah filthy luces." He waved the roll tantalizingly under the other's nose. "An' as fa's as I 'similates 'is in my business, I 'cumulates me some mo'." He threw back his head, expanded his chest, and exhaled another cloud of smoke. "Feas' yo' eyes, black man; feas' yo' eyes! You is permitted to gaze on de comin' cullud tailor o' Mobile!"

"Comin'? When does you staht? Somebody mus' a th'owed you into reverse geah. Er, maybe de brakes is on, an' ain' nobody tole you 'bout it. You's ridin' fo' a fall widout no return coupon. Yo' money will las' you till some playful pusion comes 'long an' fines out you's got it. When 'at happens, you an' 'em afo'said filthy luces kisses good-bye."

"Nigger talk, Godwin; nigger talk! When I divo'ces 'is money, I gits me value received back. I's a business man now, wid a business instinck."

"Business instinck? You? Was to come 'long some man sellin' gole bricks, you would be a repeat customer."

"Prove it!" Bonus' dander was up. "Is you got a frien' in 'at line o' business, I welcomes him. Sen' 'im along!"

"You's faded!" Mistuh Godwin whirled about and strode away. As he rambled down the street he mused upon the sudden change which had taken place in the once meek and lowly Bonus. The latter's *insouciance*, his easy assurance, puzzled, no less than it peeved, Mistuh Godwin. Bonus Gaines had become pronouncedly cocky—too cocky, in fact. He needed a lesson. Discipline would do him a world of good. Take some of that conceit out of him for one thing. And he had actually dared Mistuh Godwin to show him up.

IT WAS a few days later that Beauregard Lazenby dropped into Bonus' shop. Beyond the fact that he was the bosom companion of Mistuh Cicero God-

win there was perhaps nothing serious that could have been charged against him. His manner, now, as he approached Bonus fairly exuded mystery.

"Bonus," he began, "kin you keep a sec'et?"

"Yeah."

"You knows 'bout de new suits de Guardeens is gwine order, don't you?"

Bonus did. For that matter, it was common knowledge that the Uniforms Rank of the Guardians of the Gates Ajar had decided, after considerable debate upon the subject, to purchase a complete set of new uniforms. And Bonus was not only aware of the fact, but he had already gotten quotations from the colored tailoring house in New Orleans with which he had formed a connection, and proposed to go out for the business. He signified as much to Beauregard.

"Well," the latter continued, "some us boys is organizin' a new lodge, an'——"

"What you comin' to me fo'?" Bonus interrupted coldly. "I ain' no j'iner."

"Ain' solicitin' you to jine. Lis' is already filled up. Gwine be jus' a hund'ed of us, an' we's all Unifawms Rank. What I come fo' is 'bout dem."

Bonus perked up. "Unifawms?"

"A whole hund'ed of 'em. Trouble is finyances. New unifawms cos'es too much. Could you buy de ole suits f'um de Guardeens fo' us cheap? Quick as us gits promulgated financially, us orders new ones f'um you."

"Whyn't you ast de Guardeens yo'se'fs?"

"Whyn't we? You knows how niggers is 'bout dey lodges. Come time de Guardeens fines we gwine staht opposition to 'em, dey don't let us have de ole suits a tall."

"'At's true, too."

BEAUREGARD stated the price which the proposed new lodge could afford to pay for the old uniforms, leaving it to Bonus' ingenuity to purchase at a figure that would net him a profit. The proposition held out some promise. Bonus was

eager for business. The outfitting of a new lodge, even with old suits, would certainly help. It would be a starter, at any rate. Presently he agreed to Beauregard's proposal. The following morning was the time that had been decided upon by the Guardians for the opening of bids and the awarding of the order. The committee having the matter in charge, headed by Pleiades Shandy, Most Grand Worthy Ensign of the Uniform Rank, would be at the lodge rooms at nine o'clock and would then make known their decision. Bonus would be there. He would take up with the committee the question of the purchase of the old uniforms. Beauregard seemed to be unusually eager to have a definite answer at the earliest possible moment. He made an appointment with Bonus at the latter's shop for eleven o'clock the following morning.

Bonus was at the lodge rooms on time. The moment he entered into the august presence of the committee, however, he realized that Fate had dealt him a nasty jolt. For every single man of them was counted among the list of those to whom he had sold a suit while in Mistuh Godwin's employ. And it was apparent that each of them had been convinced that it was Bonus, and not Mistuh Godwin, who had played the low-down on them.

Bonus advanced and handed his bid to Pleiades Shandy, chairman of the committee. The latter accepted it, glared coldly at the young man for a moment, and then laid the sheet, face downward, upon a table. Then he turned to Mistuh Godwin, the only other bidder present.

"You knows de specifications fo' de unifawms?" he asked.

But Bonus hadn't been squelched. Before his ex-employer could answer, he broke in, "Light blue, baggy-laigged knee pants wid yaller stripes; red jackets wid green trimmin's; white fezes wid purple tassels, an——"

"As cheermun o' de committee," Pleiades continued, as though Bonus had not spoken, "an' also as Mos' Gran' Wu'thy Ensign o' de Unifawms Rank, I desires to

designate a few things befo' us places de order.

He proceeded to designate just what the committee required and must have. The new uniforms were to be, in every respect, similar to the old ones. No change was to be made in material, colors or sizes. Any deviation from the order as given would be sufficient grounds for the rejection of the goods.

It was at this juncture that Bonus erupted once more. "I's willin' to promise——"

"Was yo' promises automobiles," Pleiades shot out heatedly, "eve'ybody 'at knows you would quit ridin' on de street cars! Speak when you is spoke to!" He turned to Mistuh Godwin again. "Yo' figures seems to be in line, Mistuh Godwin, so us fixes up de contrack. Fus' thing, dough, us disperses over to de lawyer——"

"Lawyer?"

"Sho' to be!" Pleiades Shandy was nothing if not a business man. "Thinks 'is is some li'l ole fo'-bits deal? Dem hund'ed unifawms means sho' 'nough money. Dey's de penalty clause, too."

"How come any penalty?"

"Case you fails to fill de contrack as puh skiddool. Come 'Mancipation Day us has a big peerade. Niggers wants to shine in 'em new raiments. Pahty 'at gits de order mus' agree to have 'em heah den. Otherwise de lodge collects a penalty o' fo' bits puh suit fo' eve'y day de unifawms is late."

PERHAPS Mistuh Godwin would have argued this question had he not observed that Bonus was upon the point of breaking out again. "Lead me to yo' lawyer!" he agreed hurriedly.

But he did score one point. Considering the fact that the handling of the business called for a large outlay of capital, he argued that the lodge should pay him a certain sum as earnest money. After some discussion it was agreed that he should receive a deposit of two hundred and fifty dollars.

Then Bonus had an inning. He offered to buy the old uniforms. The pleased expression which immediately bathed the faces of the members of the committee evidenced the welcome with which this was received. Even Pleiades Shandy's grim visage relaxed momentarily. Here was a man who was making a straight offer to buy something which they had all decided would have to go to the junk pile. It would be positively sinful not to take him up. After several offers and counter offers had been made, Bonus bought the old suits for a dollar and a half each.

"Us delivers when de new ones comes in," Pleiades stated.

"You delivers right now, whilse I's got de money," Bonus retorted. He had sensed the eagerness of the committee to make the deal. "Cash an' delive'y. 'At's me!"

"Why de sudden needcessity?"

"Ain' puttin' out nothin' 'is mawnin', Mistuh Shandy, excep' de cash money fo' 'em unifawms. I's a investin' man, an' de sooner I buys, de quicker I sells. Quick sales an' small proficks. 'At's me!"

Pleiades turned to the other members of the committee. "Do us do any peeradin' befo' 'Mancipation?"

"Nunh!" The chorus was unanimous.

Bonus paid over one hundred and fifty dollars, verified the number of suits, and prepared to get them to his shop.

As the committee filed out of the room, Mistuh Godwin paused for a fling at Bonus. "Some investor!" he commented. "Dey ain' but one thing in yo' favor."

"Yeah?"

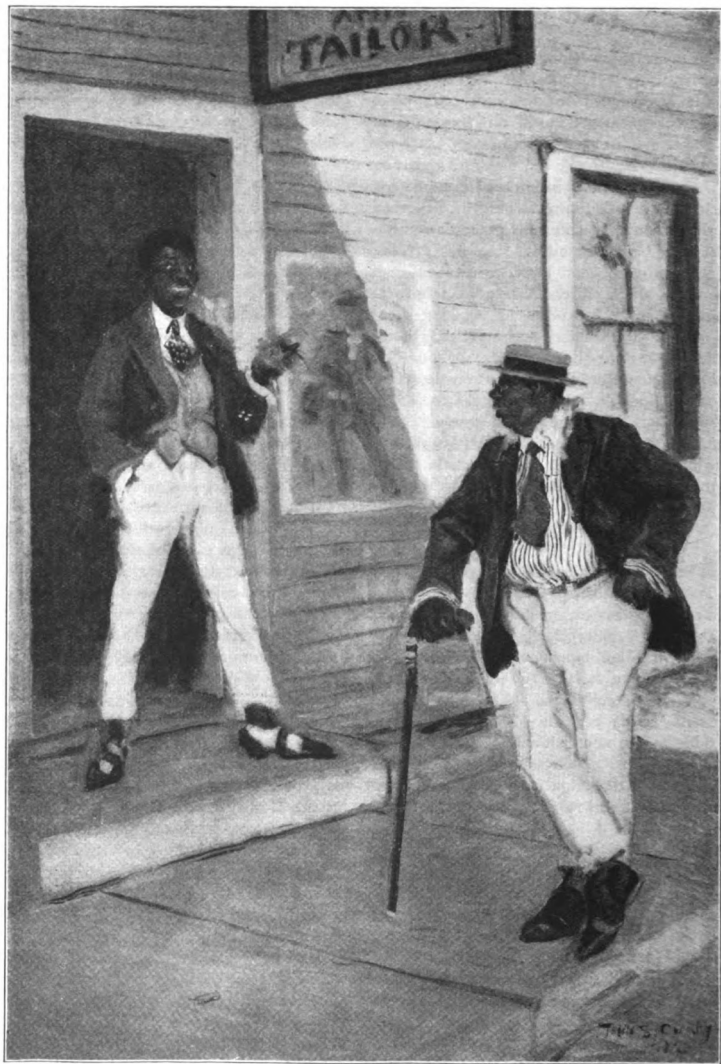
"Jus' one. You has a leanin' to'a'ds de puhmanent kine."

"Puhmanent?"

"De ones 'at you never gits yo' money back fum."

Bonus smiled condescendingly. He felt that he could afford to. At the price that Beauregard Lazenby would pay for the old suits he would more than double his money.

"Maybe you don't know as much 'bout dis deal as I does," he said.



"'Feas' yo' eyes, black man; feas' yo' eyes! Yo' is permitted to gaze on de comin' cullud tailor o' Mobile.'"

Mistuh Godwin smiled too. "Maybe not." Then he laughed irritably.

THE REMARK, and particularly the meaningful laugh that accompanied it, followed Bonus all the way back to his shop. What was there for Mistuh Godwin to laugh about? All during Bonus' dickerings with the committee for the purchase of the old suits his late employer had not spoken a word. Bonus tried to shake off the thought that the latter was up to some of his tricks, but the idea persisted.

At his shop he sat down to await the arrival of Beauregard Lazenby. The hour of their appointment, eleven o'clock, came, but Beauregard did not show up. Twelve o'clock came and still the latter had not put in an appearance. At one o'clock Bonus gave it up.

That afternoon he started out on a search for Beauregard. It was fruitless. No one in any of his regular haunts had seen him that day.

It was not until he returned to his shop late that afternoon that a solution of the mystery was forthcoming. Shortly after his arrival the telephone rang. As he took down the receiver a voice came over the wire:

"Tell Mr. Gaines to come to de 'phome."

"Dis is him."

"Him pussionally?"

"Yeah."

Bonus heard a chuckle at the other end of the line.

"Is you de heavy-investin', fas'-sellin', small-profitin' Mistuh Gents' Modistey Gaines?"

"Y-yeah. Who——"

"Jus' wants to congratulate you on de puhanment investment you made in 'em unifawms 'is mawnin', Mistuh Modistey." Bonus now recognized Mistuh Godwin's voice. "Now you kin take up some other line. S'posin' you tries sellin' safety razors at cullud sociables fo' a while. Don't blame Beau'egahd. Blame me. Gole bricks——"

Bonus gurgled a mangled expletive into the transmitter and slammed the receiver back upon its hook. Once more he experienced that terribly gone sensation in the pit of his stomach. By a simple twist of the wrist, as it were, Mistuh Godwin, carrying out his boast, had made him look—and feel—like a counterfeit Russian paper rouble. There was no denying the fact that he had bought the first gold brick offered. He groaned aloud.

ALL of the next forenoon he gloomed about his shop. Then he began to revolve in his mind certain weird and sundry plans for revenge. The unwonted mental strain soon told upon him. After ten consecutive minutes of it he yielded to the somnolent call of the summer day. Coincidentally, he dreamed. It seemed to him that he was back in France. . . . They were unloading cargo at a French port. . . . He could see the face and figure of his old top-kick, 'Poleon Beaudre, of New Orleans. . . . He could even hear Sahgent Beaudre's voice.

"Snap outen it, Fo'-Bits!"

This was the name that Bonus had earned from his war-time slogan, "Shoots fo'-bits!"

He smiled in his dream. Again Sahgent Beaudre's voice.

"Fo'-Bits, is you comin' for'd er goin' af? I has to sight 'long dis pos' to see is you movin' er not. Make it snappy!"

Someone slapped him upon the back. He roused partially and gazed about him, blinking stupidly. For there, in the flesh—unless he were still dreaming—stood 'Poleon Beaudre!"

"Whoof!" Bonus sprang to his feet, the remnants of his dream still clogging his brain. "'Scuse me, sahgent, I mus' been asleep!"

"Mus' been?" 'Poleon shook him rousingly. "You still is, black boy. Wake up! Come to! Resuscitate yo'self! 'Ts ain' France. Us resides once mo' in de lan' o' de brave an' de home o' de free."

Bonus, still half dreaming, grinned uncertainly. "'Tain' de ole top-kick?"

"Usetah own 'at as my puhfessional rank in de service, Fo'-Bits. Now it's plain 'Poleon Beaudre, fashionable gents' tailor, o' New Awleans, Lou's'ana, what stan's befo' you. I int'oduces myse'f." He extended an ornately engraved card. "I invites myse'f to set down." He pulled up a chair. "Impawtant business brings me to yo' domicile. How come I ain' git de order fo' dem hund'ed unifawms?"

FIVE MINUTES' conversation brought enlightenment as to the object of 'Poleon's visit. It developed that he was the president, secretary, treasurer and sales manager of Bonus' New Orleans connection. This was the first intimation that either had of the business relationship that he bore to the other. Upon leaving the service, 'Poleon had returned to the tailoring business which he had perforce given up when the selective draft called him. He had prospered enormously.

In his own words, he had made more money than a blockade runner. That proposed order for a hundred uniforms represented quite a juicy slice of business, and he had yearned earnestly to secure it. Not hearing from the quotations which he had submitted to Bonus, he had decided to come in person and see about trying to get the business. And here he was. Furthermore, he wanted the order.

THEN Bonus opened up. Necessarily his remarks must be censored, since they consisted almost entirely of strikingly vivid but unprintable—references to Mistuh Cicero Godwin as an individual, an employer, a business man, and a citizen of the community. Bonus referred to Mistuh Godwin's past, his present, and prophesied fervently and hopefully as to his future.

'Poleon listened sympathetically and believingly, as his former comrade told of his original break with his employer; of his effort to secure the order for the uniforms, and the reason for his failure to even get a hearing before the committee.

'Poleon expressed his indignation. He agreed that Mistuh Godwin was the low-downest kind of a low-down dawg. He also seconded heartily other designations as applied to Bonus' ex-employer. But it was not until he had been conducted to a rear room of the shop and shown the old uniforms that he really reared up raged.

His vocabulary proved to be more extensive—and fully as descriptive—as that of his friend.

After a bit, though, the two returned to the front of the shop, where their talk shifted to business matters.

"Is you still got de quotations I made you on 'em unifawms?" 'Poleon asked finally.

Bonus fished in a drawer and drew out the document. "Heah 't is."

'Poleon studied the sheet. "'Em prices oughta landed de business, Fo'-Bits."

"Ain' I know 'at? Dey was lower'n Godwin's. But 'at ole committee wouldn't gimme no chance. Dawg-gone 'at nigger!"

"Hm-m-m!" 'Poleon appeared thoughtful. "How long-is Godwin got to furnish 'em unifawms in?"

"Almos' fo' weeks."

"What if he don't puhduce?"

"What?" Bonus grinned ecstatically. "Picture it for' yo'se'f, Kick. 'Mancipation peerade been 'nounced. Ole unifawms been sole. One hund'ed niggers expeckin' dey new ones. One Godwin an' no unifawms. One ambylanch—maybe one undertaker—an' no mourners. *H-o-d dawg!*"

'Poleon seemed to be wrestling with some sizable mental problem. Suddenly he straightened in his chair. For a moment he gurgled wordlessly. And then: "Wait a minute, Fo'-Bits; w-a-i-t a m-i-n-u-t-e! I's wrasslin' wid a idee as big as a chu'ch. Le's see kin I surroun' it wid my brain. Hol' on, boy; hol' on!"

He held his posture of concentrated thought for several moments. Then he grinned relievedly. He motioned Bonus to draw his chair up closer. With heads

together, they then went into an executive session which lasted a full hour.

Thirty minutes later Bonus bade his friend good-bye at the railway station. 'Poleon departed with renewed assurances of his undying friendship.

On his way back home, Bonus dropped in for a personal interview with Pleiades Shandy. Since he had disposed of the old uniforms Pleiades felt more kindly toward the young man than he had before. His greeting was almost cordial.

THE PROPOSITION which Bonus submitted convinced Pleiades that his opinion of the former—arrived at upon the occasion of the sale of the old suits—was correct. Bonus Gaines was crazy—plain crazy—that was all. Pleiades had never before heard such a weird proposal as he now listened to. But Bonus persisted, though steadfastly refusing to state all of the reasons for his intended action. He simply kept harping upon the fact that there was *always* a possibility that such and such things *could* happen.

"You won't lose a cent!" he insisted earnestly.

"Nunh!" Pleiades assented, smiling. "I ain' one 'em kine."

He considered the proposition carefully. After all, Bonus was right—up to a certain point. One must always face the possibility of one's best laid plans being upset. And what Bonus was offering was, at least, an anchor to windward.

Pleiades rose and led the way to his desk. "Come heah!"

Fifteen minutes later he handed Bonus the duplicate of a closely written sheet of paper. "Sati'factory?" he asked.

Bonus read the agreement, thanked Pleiades fulsomely, and left.

In his own shop he seated himself and laboriously indicted a letter to 'Poleon Beaudre. Then he decided to call it a day.

Next morning he resolved to pay a visit to his former employer, Mistuh Godwin. As he entered the High Five Tailoring Emporium he found the proprietor busy

completing the order for the uniforms for the Guardians, which he purposed mailing to his Chicago connection. As each suit called for a separate specification sheet, the work had been arduous. Consequently, Mistuh Godwin was more or less awearied. Other than a few pertinent remarks as to the mentality of persons who rambled round the world recklessly buying cast-off clothing, he had little to say.

BONUS took the reference to his recent exploit calmly. The day was sultry, and, besides, life was too short to worry. From time to time he mopped his brow with a handkerchief which he kept continually pulling out and replacing in his pocket. Presently he bade Mistuh Godwin a friendly adieu and left.

And presently, too, Mistuh Godwin's labors were finished. He leaned over the side of his chair, and, with the forefinger of one hand, started to sweep the perspiration from his forehead. The finger halted in mid-movement. Mistuh Godwin's eyes had detected a letter lying upon the floor. Stooping, he picked it up. It was addressed to Bonus Gaines. Mistuh Godwin devoured its contents. As he read a gargantuan grin spread over his face.

"Luck," he breathed gleefully, "is you jes' nachelly tryin' to san'bag me?"

Apparently such was the case for the letter contained quotations upon one hundred uniforms of the same specifications as those for which Mistuh Godwin had just made out the order. And the price was one dollar per suit lower than had been quoted by his Chicago connection. The letter was signed by Napoleon Beaudre, President.

He gathered the sheets which he had just made out and placed them in a drawer. "I lets you res' right wheah you is temporaneously," he murmured softly, "whilse I busies myse'f."

He wrote out an inquiry to the New Orleans house, emphasizing the importance of delivery within a certain time, and requested an immediate answer by

telegraph. Hurrying downtown he mailed the letter, first affixing a special delivery stamp.

LATE the following afternoon he received a telegram in reply, which stated that the business could be taken care of within the time limit named, but that, as an evidence of good faith, a cash deposit of two hundred and fifty dollars must accompany the order.

Mistuh Godwin did not delay. He secured a certified check for the amount from his bank, enclosed it with his order, and mailed both to New Orleans.

For three weeks he rested happily. Then a cloud appeared upon his horizon. It took the form of Pleiades Shandy, Most Grand Worthy Ensign of the Uniform Rank of the Guardians of the Gates Ajar. Pleiades had dropped, in kind of casually to make inquiry about the new uniforms. Not that he was particularly anxious, of course, as Emancipation Day was still a week off.

The latter smiled his reassurance and showed the formal acceptance of the order by the New Orleans house. With his mind apparently at ease, Pleiades withdrew.

Two days later he appeared again. Mistuh Godwin had only that morning received a letter stating that satisfactory progress was being made on the order. He showed this to Pleiades. But, even with this assurance, the latter evidenced some concern in the matter.

THE DEPARTURE of his caller left Mistuh Godwin in a strangely unsettled frame of mind. Not that he had any reason to believe that his New Orleans connection would fall down on the order. Still . . . something of that sort *could* happen. And about the last thing on earth that Mistuh Godwin wished to see was the dawn of Emancipation Day, with those uniforms undelivered and five score of his brethren all clamoring for a personal and pugnacious interview at once. He shivered at the thought.

That afternoon he sent a telegram asking that he be advised as to the progress that was being made toward shipment. A favorable reply soothed his feelings temporarily.

Pleiades called again two days later. He was accompanied by two other members of the committee.

"Heard anything?" he asked.

For answer Mistuh Godwin showed the telegram which he had received the day before. . . .

The morning before Emancipation Day arrived. Mistuh Godwin, hurrying, after a sleepless night, to his shop, noticed that two members of the committee trailed him from his lodgings. At the shop he found two others awaiting his arrival. Within half an hour Pleiades Shandy arrived and joined the group.

MISTUH GODWIN was frantic. The lodge would have a meeting that evening and those uniforms had better be on hand. He dispatched a frenzied wire to New Orleans. An answer was received shortly after noon. The suits had been shipped by express and would arrive in Mobile at six o'clock that evening. Mistuh Godwin hurried out with the message and showed it to each member of the committee in turn. They appeared relieved at the news—but they did not relax their vigilance.

At the railway station there was a nerve-shattering wait of half an hour. And, at last, on time to the minute, the New Orleans train pulled in.

Scarcely waiting for the express shipments to be unloaded, the committee, still faithfully on the job, followed Mistuh Godwin to the delivery window. At the latter's fevered inquiry, the clerk nodded an assent. "Just came in," he said. "Want it tonight?"

Mistuh Godwin did. With the assistance of the committee the enormous bundle was loaded upon a truck and the party set out for the lodge rooms.

It was difficult for Mistuh Godwin to keep down his superfluous spirits. He

boiled over. He was threatened with arrest by a traffic policeman for attempting to sing. In his exuberance, he even slapped the dignified Pleiades Shandy companionably upon the knee.

"Whut you reckon 'em niggers would a done to me," he gurgled ecstatically, "had a been I didn't git 'em unifawms on time?"

THE SAME TRAIN which brought joy to the heart of Mistuh Cicero Godwin also brought 'Poleon Beaudre, of New Orleans' back to Mobile. For a few moments after his arrival he was as busy, in a way, as Mistuh Godwin had been. He had brought with him several trunks. He hunted up a porter and showed his checks.

"How long it take, black boy," he asked, "fo' me to git 'em trunks out?"

The porter sized up his prospect. "Jes' 'bout as long as it'd take me to slip a ha'f dollar into my pants pocket—s'posin' I was offered one."

'Poleon offered the half dollar, received his trunks in record-breaking time, gave specific instructions for their delivery, and was soon speeding on his way to Bonus Gaines' shop.

"You brang 'em?" Bonus asked eagerly, when the joy at their reunion had subsided.

"As baggage," 'Poleon answered.

Bonus grinned. "How much you chahge Godwin?"

"Two hund'ed an' fifty. 'At makes yo' proffick one hund'ed great big roun' i'on men."

"Kick I takes off my hat. You's a nachel-bawn cullud business gen'us. Us splits 'at hund'ed.

"Us splits nothin', Fo'-Bits. 'At was frien'ship. You's welcome. I makes mine offen de legit'mate paht de transaction. When do Mistuh Shandy meet us?"

"He don't. His contrack wid me—he wrote it hiss'ef—is to deliver one hund'ed *new* unifawms, puh specifications, to

de lodge rooms by eight o'clock tonight, *puhvidin'* Godwin fell down on de order."

'Poleon smiled. "*Puhvidin'*, huh?"

"Yeah!" Bonus glanced at his watch. "Us got a ha'f hour, yit."

The shop was within half a block of the lodge rooms. Suddenly 'Poleon held up a hand. "Thought I heard sump'm."

Bonus listened for a moment.

"Ain' hahdly had time to git deah," he commented. "'At ole truck travel slow-er'n you did."

He pulled out a couple of twenty-five cent cigars, passed one to 'Poleon, and they lighted up. Then they sat silent, waiting, listening. They visualized the scene which would shortly be enacted in the lodge rooms. The arrival of the Committee upon the stage. Pleiades Shandy's inevitable explanatory remarks.

'Poleon broke the silence. "Oughta be a interestin' an' rememberable occasion fo' Brothuh Godwin," he mused contentedly.

Bonus uncorked a grin which threatened to slit his ear lobes. "Gwine be a sufficiency o' happenin's fo' him to recollect it by, Kick. You take a whole hund'ed 'Mancipation peeradin' niggers an' let 'em fine out 'at what Godwin has furnished 'em ain' nothin' but 'em ole unifawms what I bought offen dey committee. Den——"

He ceased speaking suddenly, his whole attitude tense, rigid, attentive. "Listen!" he whispered.

FROM THE DIRECTION of the lodge rooms of the Guardians of the Gates Ajar came a sound as of many voices raised in one gigantic groan. The noise swelled into an uproar. Then—bedlam.

Bonus Gaines, gents' modiste and investor, settled luxuriously back into his chair.

"An', speakin' o' gole bricks," he mused contentedly, "sometimes when you th'ows 'em, dey bounces right back at you!"



THE RED SHELL

By Edwin Baird

Illustrations by Garrett Price

IT WAS a hideous thing. Even in that miserable neighborhood, where beauty was unknown and ugliness abounded, its wretchedness was pronounced. You would scarcely have called it a house. A mean shanty, perhaps, or a scrubby hovel, or a shabby, rickety, tumble-down shack.

The last bit of glass had been broken from the windows by mischievous boys. Petty thieves had stolen everything of value. Stripped, abandoned, lopsided and loose in the joints, it crouched upon its rotting foundation as if trying to hide its shame from your gaze. And across the industrial squalor of South Chicago its two vacant front windows stared like great, sightless eyes.

Two children—a small boy and his sister—on their way to school that winter morning, stopped before the pitiful old cottage; and the little girl, pointing, said: "See that house? It's got spooks in it. Min Smulski says it has."

"I ain't afraid o' no spooks," said the boy, and picked up a stone and flung it, defiantly, through one of the staring windows.

"I betcha you are, too, afraid," asserted his sister. "I betcha you dasn't go *inside* that house."

"Whatcha bet I dasn't?"

"I dare you to go inside. I *double-dare* you!"

His courage thus questioned, he put down his school books, bravely entered the small front yard, sunken below the street level and strewn with refuse, and, after a momentary hesitation, strode boldly through the front doorway.

Then in another moment the boy came tearing from the house, hysterically screaming at the top of his voice, and dashed madly for the sidewalk, tripping and falling in his frantic haste, clearly beside himself with terror. Instinctively, the sister turned and fled, also screaming.

They were stopped at the next corner by a machinist named John Kolchak, who was returning home from his all-night shift in the steel mills.

"What's the matter with you kids?" asked Kolchak.

The little girl began sobbing wildly. Her brother, breathing hard and trembling with fright, pointed toward the shanty.

"They's a man back there in that house!" he gasped.

"Well, what of it?" demanded Kolchak.

"He's all over blood. He's layin' back there on the floor, with blood all over 'im."

"How do you know?"

"I *seen* 'im!" excitedly insisted the boy.

"I went in and seen 'im layin' there."

"You oughta keep outa that house," said Kolchak. "What business you got in there?"

He put several more questions to the child; then, following a moment's indecision, he walked down the slovenly thoroughfare and entered the shanty by the back door. In the tiny rear room, which long ago had served as a kitchen, he discerned nothing save an old felt hat and a ragged overcoat lying in a corner.

And then he started for the adjoining front room—and stopped abruptly on the threshold, with a quick intake of breath, and stood quite motionless for a space, gazing in horror at the body of a man lying on the floor in a pool of blood.

THE MAN lay on his back, with arms flung out; and one of the first things that Kolchak noticed was that he wore expensive evening clothes. Then, entering the room and kneeling beside the prostrate form, he discovered the man was dead.

He rose shakily, stepping back from the body, and glanced nervously round the room. Several feet away, lying upside down, he saw a high silk hat—an incongruous object in this moldy chamber—and, involuntarily, started to pick it up; but he suddenly checked himself,

remembering a warning he had heard somewhere never to touch the evidence in a mysterious death before the coroner's arrival.

He brought his gaze back to the dead man's face. It was the face of a man in middle age, clean-shaven, well-kept, somewhat fleshy; the face of a man, one might have said, who was accustomed to leading other men, who generally had his way in matters. Robust, vigorous, sternly self-confident—that sort of face.

At this moment, however, he presented no pleasing aspect. The broad expanse of his white shirt bosom was drenched with blood, which also had dyed red his white piqué tie and waistcoat, and stained the black silk facing of his coat lapels. He was a powerfully-built man—more than six feet tall and well proportioned—and this seemed to accentuate the violence of his death.

Kolchak's employment in the steel mills had inured him to the uncertainty of human life, and he had, in a sense, grown hardened to sudden death, to frightful and fatal accidents; but this thing, somehow, affected him differently. This gave him a queer feeling of nausea. It shocked him, dazed him, almost deprived him of power to think.

Presently, though, he recognized that he must immediately notify the police; and he fled from the house—heedless of the two children, who had followed him at a discreet distance and now stood watching from across the street—and hastened to a nearby Polish grocery and telephoned the South Chicago police station.

FIFTEEN MINUTES later a patrolman and two detective sergeants reached the scene. The news had already spread through the neighborhood, and a group of frowzy foreign-born women, their heads swathed in drab shawls, clustered around Kolchak, who was excitedly talking and gesticulating. The noisy arrival of the patrol-wagon quickly augmented the crowd.

"Where's the guy that knows about this?" demanded one of the plain-clothes men.

Kolchak stepped forward. "Right here. And there's the house," he added, pointing.

"What was *you* doin' in that house?"

"Those kids over there," said Kolchak, gesturing across the street, "are the ones that found 'im. They told me about it."

The plain-clothes officer turned to the patrolman.

"Fetch those kids," he said. Then to Kolchak. "You come with us."

The two detective sergeants, with Kolchak between them, entered the sunken yard and passed inside the shanty. The beshawled women followed as far as the door, and stood there, gaping curiously.

When the policeman entered the shack, dragging the unwilling children with him, he found his brother officers examining the hat and overcoat which Kolchak had found in the kitchen. The pockets of the coat were empty, but to the inside pocket was sewed the label of a Detroit tailor, and this label indicated that the coat had been made for a Jacob Peabody on November 17, 1916. The hat bore the label of a fashionable haberdasher in Michigan Avenue, and the sweatband was perforated with the initials, "N.P."

Both hat and coat were of excellent material and splendid workmanship, and it was clear that each had once been costly; but now they were so worn and frayed and disreputable that even a street-sweeper would have spurned them. Wrapping them together, the detectives continued their search, but found nothing else of any significance.

And then a deputy coroner arrived and took charge of the investigation, and there promptly ensued a number of startling developments. Loosening the dead man's evening waistcoat, he removed from the pockets a thin solid-gold matchbox, bearing the monogram, "L. K. B.," a gold-handled penknife of similar design,

eighty-five cents in silver and the stubs of two opera tickets for last night's performance of "Rigoletto."

Exploring further, he plucked from the trousers pockets a watch of extraordinary beauty and value, and a gold cigarette-case, both chased with the "L.K.B." monogram, from the coat-tail pocket a linen handkerchief, likewise monogrammed, and finally he drew from one of the hip pockets a soft leather wallet containing \$850 in currency.

He counted the banknotes, which were of large denomination, then slipped from another compartment of the wallet some cards, papers and other memoranda; and when he glanced through these he gave a low whistle of amazement.

"D'you know who this man is?" he exclaimed, looking up at the others, who stood watching him. "It's Lewis K. Batterman, millionaire president of the Batterman Firearms Company! Good Lord! If the chief had known this he'd have come himself. He thought it was some cheap little Polish killing. One of you run quick and call him. Tell him what I've found here."

He bent again to his task, as the policeman sped for the nearest telephone, and presently, with the dead man's body stripped to the waist, he ascertained that death had come from a bullet wound directly above the heart. The bullet had bored its way through the man's body, and was now found lying on the floor.

The coroner examined it by the light from the window, and his brows drew together in a frown of perplexity.

"This is a new one on me," he remarked, showing the bullet to the detectives.

"I never saw one like that before. It's a .45 caliber, all right, but look at the shape of it. Like a corkscrew!"

The bullet, indeed, was of a singular conical formation, sharply pointed and with an odd groove spiralling it from end to end.

"It's not a lead bullet, either," observed one of the detective sergeants, holding it

in the palm of his hand. "It's made of solid steel. That's why it ain't mashed."

THE CORONER was gathering up the objects, which he had removed from the dead man's clothing, and while thus employed he espied the silk hat. Before touching it, he measured its distance from the body; and he suddenly realized that the hat had not fallen here. It had, instead, carefully been placed in this spot, bottom-side up.

Then, lifting the hat, he found within its silk-lined interior a pair of new white gloves, neatly folded and evidently put there with deliberation. Puzzled, he returned the hat to its resting-place and absently unfolded the gloves; and all at once he became aware of an obstruction in one of the fingers.

Turning the finger inside out, he brought to light a cartridge shell unlike any he had ever seen. He perceived it was a .45 caliber shell of unusual shape, but what particularly interested him was the color of the thing. It was a lustrous red, and when he held it against the winter sunshine, streaming through the sashless window, it shone like a huge drop of blood.

He turned to the detective sergeant, who was still inspecting the steel cartridge.

"Let me see that thing!"

Tossing the white gloves back into the hat, he screwed the cartridge into the red shell. It fitted perfectly. Indubitably this shell had contained the bullet which had taken the life of Lewis K. Batterman.

CHAPTER II

HOW CAME the strange red shell in the finger of the new white glove? And how came Lewis K. Batterman, multi-millionaire, to be lying dead in this abandoned shanty? These questions were presently puzzling the chief coroner, inspectors from the state's attorney's office, a finger-print expert and two detectives from the Chicago Detec-

tive Bureau, and the swarm of newspaper men who swiftly swooped upon the spot. And the investigation, proceeding rapidly, presented more baffling questions:

Was Batterman murdered, or had he killed himself? If he had killed himself, how had he placed the shell in the glove *after* the fatal shot was fired? And where was the weapon that had fired the shot?

If he had been murdered, what was the motive? Not robbery, surely, since his valuables were untouched. And why had the murderer deliberately left a clue behind in the shape of the blood-red shell?

Chief of Detectives Daniel Galloway had assigned to the case two of his crack men—Stephen Quinn and Burton Cahill—and these two were now on the job, each working in his own individual way. Quinn and Cahill had long "traveled together," and they had encountered and solved many a hard riddle in criminology; but their methods and characteristics were totally unlike.

Quinn, imaginative, a deep reader and thinker, attached much weight to trifles, and liked to delve beneath the surface, seeking hidden springs, mysterious motives.

Cahill was the usual sort of plain-clothes man—phlegmatic, stolid, possessing little if any imagination, but tremendous tenacity of purpose; he believed in taking the shortest cut, following the obvious line of reasoning, and keeping right after your man till you got him. And it must be conceded that in most instances Cahill's course was the best.

Here, however, was something different—something fantastic and bizarre—that seemed to offer an opportunity for Quinn's more subtle method. That blood-red shell in the white glove—there was something to stir a man's fancy!

While Quinn, eagerly alert, examined these objects and the tall silk hat, Cahill inspected the miserable room, frowning heavily at the broken plaster, at the cheap wooden flooring, rotting here and there, exposing the ground beneath—a dreary,

desolate place, he thought, in which to pull off a killing.

Suddenly he asked:

"How'd he get here? Anybody know?"

Nobody knew, apparently; but a few minutes later a reporter for an afternoon newspaper, seeking a telephone, came upon a magnificent limousine, bearing Batterman's initials, standing in the street just around the corner from the shanty. He promptly reported his discovery; and Cahill and two other detectives, followed by a group of newspaper men, hurried to the spot, searched the luxurious car, found nothing of importance, and went to the nearest house.

THE HOUSE was empty, but they discovered the tenants—three Polish families—in the crowd outside the shanty. Under severe questioning, one of the frightened women admitted she had seen the car standing there at five o'clock this morning, when she rose to get breakfast for "her man," who worked in the mills.

Neither she nor the others had heard the automobile arrive; but it now seemed clear, at any rate, that Batterman had driven to this sordid neighborhood, had parked his car a short distance from the shanty, and then had deliberately walked to his death.

But why? What could have brought this man of wealth from an opera performance to this ugly spot?

Cahill pondered the question, in his slow, methodical way, as he walked back into the shanty. He saw Quinn standing near the window, still absorbed in studying the white glove and red shell, oblivious to the newspaper photographers who were taking flashlights of the "death chamber," and then he procured the ragged overcoat and decrepit hat for further examination.

FOLLOWING a preliminary autopsy, the coroner announced that the man had died of an internal hemorrhage, caused by the steel bullet passing through his body, and had probably been dead for

several hours when found by the school children. He ordered that the children—especially the boy—be kept available for the inquest, and had the body sent to the morgue (where later it was positively identified as that of L. K. Batterman), first removing the evening clothes, which were given to the finger-print expert, together with the silk hat, for his inspection.

For perhaps the seventh time, the crumbling old shack was thoroughly searched; even the rotting floor was torn apart, and the broken walls ripped open. The yard was similarly combed. And when all was done, no new clue had been found—nothing that could shed the slightest light on the tragic mystery here.

The luckless Kolchak was "held" by the police, not because they believed him guilty, or even implicated in the crime, but because they knew this "story" would be given much prominence in the press, and they must show the public some sort of progress. For a like reason, a dozen or more "suspects" would speedily be caught in the dragnet, which had already been thrown out.

Quinn and Cahill, having "cleaned up" at the shanty (which now was surrounded by curious foreigners), started back to the city in the slain man's limousine.

"The first thing to do," said Cahill, "is to check up on this guy's movements last night. We'll start at his home."

"Right. D'you know, Burt, I'm tremendously interested in these things"—Quinn drew from his pocket the white glove and red shell. "Just look at the color of that shell! Ever see anything like it? Red as blood! And why on earth was it put in Batterman's glove and carefully placed in his hat? Strange!"

Cahill, guiding the big car glitteringly through the unkempt streets, glanced at the objects from the tail of his eye.

"It was done by a nut," he declared. "That's the angle I'm workin' on. Some crazy nut pulled this job, and it's up to us to find him." He nodded at the bundle on the seat between them. "We'll stop



"Cahill, with a quick movement of his right hand, deftly snipped from the desk calendar pad the memorandum page of yesterday."

at Tully's, on the way out, and learn who bought that lid."

When the slovenly felt hat was shown to the manager of Tully & Tully, an expensive haberdashery in lower Michigan Avenue, he whistled softly and exclaimed:

"An old timer, sure! We haven't sold that style hat for years." He looked at the initials in the sweatband. "Unless 'N.P.' has a charge account with us, it would be practically impossible to tell who bought it."

"Look up your charge accounts," suggested Cahill.

The manager consulted his books, and found that two of his "charge" customers possessed the initials, "N.P."—Nathaniel Porter and Norton Payne. Going further back through his records, he found that both had been buying their headgear from Tully & Tully since this particular hat was in vogue.

BOOTH MEN had offices downtown; and the detectives called, first, on Mr. Payne, an insurance sales manager in Jackson Boulevard, who emphatically denied ever having bought a hat of that sort, and then on Mr. Porter, a La Salle Street stock broker. As they entered Porter's office, Cahill recalled that this was the "Nat" Porter of whom he had often heard, a dashing and conspicuous figure in Chicago's smart society.

Porter, a dapper young man with a ready smile, glanced up busily from his desk. "Good morning, gentlemen. What can I do for you?"

Cahill, eyeing him narrowly, dropped the grimy hat on the desk.

"Is that your property," he bluntly asked.

Porter gingerly lifted the dirty thing, looked inside, then looked up, inquiringly.

"Why, yes, it's mine," he said, smiling at them in a puzzled way. "At least, it *was* mine—I threw it away long ago. But what's the idea? Why do you bring it to me?"

Ignoring the question, Cahill asked: "Where'd you throw it away?"

"Why," laughing uncertainly, "I suppose it was discarded in the usual way—tossed out with other old stuff. I don't remember exactly. I haven't seen it for years. Probably my man-servant could tell you. But what—"

"Is this servant still with you?"

"Yes. His name is Schmaltz—Otto Schmaltz. But what's happened? Why all the mystery?"

"That hat," said Cahill evenly, still closely observing the debonaire young man, "was found this morning near the dead body of Lewis K. Batterman."

"What!" Porter half rose from his swivel chair, his smile suddenly gone. "Dead? Batterman—dead? Why, he can't be! I saw him only last night at the opera, talked with him—"

"He was murdered," said Quinn.

"No!" gasped the young man; then he sank back into his chair and stared at the two detectives, his eyes wide with incredulous horror. His graceful urbanity had quite deserted him. Moistening his lips, he asked barely above a whisper: "Murdered, did you say? Where? How? For what reason?"

Quinn narrated, briefly, the circumstances of Batterman's death; and young Porter, listening silently, drummed nervously on the arms of his chair, his face pale, his eyes cast down, gazing vacantly at the desk before him—a picture of stunned dejection. But when finally he lifted his eyes it was clear he was mastered by another emotion. "Nat" Porter, plainly enough, was all but paralyzed with—fear!

CHAPTER III

QUINN, finishing, abruptly asked: "At what hour last night did you see him?"

"It was between the first and second acts of 'Rigoletto'—about nine o'clock, I should judge. I met him in the promenade of the mezzanine floor at the Auditorium.

"Anybody with him?"

"He was alone," said Porter, passing his hand shakily across his eyes, both elbows resting on the desk. "I think he mentioned, however, he'd brought somebody with him. He didn't say who it was. His wife and daughter are at Palm Beach."

"Was he in good spirits, or did he seemed worried?"

"He was in excellent humor," Porter declared. "I never saw him happier. In fact, his joviality was so pronounced that I remember commenting on it. He said he had good cause for feeling elated, and would tell me about it later on. That's why, gentlemen, this thing is so hard to believe. I simply can't realize—"

"What else did you talk about?"

"Nothing else, except—" The young man suddenly checked himself, then added shortly: "That's all."

"All except what?" insisted Cahill.

Porter swung back in the swivel chair, biting a corner of his lip in nervous agitation, and swung forward again and began fingering some papers on the desk. He was making a visible effort to recover his poise. But his haggard face still reflected stark fear.

"That's all I can tell you," he murmured at last.

"But you *did* talk of something else?"

"Only a personal matter. He said he would see me this morning about it. Said he would come to my office. I was expecting him, in fact, at the very moment when you men came in."

"What was this personal matter?" doggedly persisted Cahill.

"I—I'd rather not say."

"Why?"

"Good Lord, man!" exploded young Porter, suddenly losing control of himself.

"It had nothing to do with his death—nothing whatever!"

He shoved back the chair and sprang to his feet.

"You must surely realize," he hurried on, nervously hastening to a closet, "I'm as anxious as you to learn how that old

hat of mine happens to be mixed up in this incredible thing. But we're wasting time here," opening the closet door. "I suggest we see Schmaltz at once. I'll go along with you."

He plucked from the closet an expensive new overcoat and a stylish felt hat, likewise new and expensive. And in that instant—just as he turned his back to the desk—Cahill, with a quick movement of his right hand, deftly snipped from the desk calendar-pad the memorandum page for yesterday.

"Before we go," he said, concealing the bit of paper in his hand, "I want to ask you another question: Do you know Jacob Peabody of Detroit?"

"Yes; quite well. Why?"

"This coat," said Cahill, displaying the ragged garment which he had held rolled beneath his left arm, "belongs to your friend, Peabody—and it was found, with your hat, in the house where Batterman was killed."

PORTER, in the act of slipping on his new coat, paused abruptly, startled, it seemed, by this fresh intelligence; and the detectives, narrowly watching his face, saw the fear leave it for the first time.

"Well, this *is* a mystery!" he exclaimed, laughing with palpable relief. "What do you make of it, anyway? Can either of you fathom it?"

"Not yet," said Cahill, grimly, thrusting his right fist in his overcoat pocket. "But we will before we're through."

"Well, our first objective is Schmaltz. If you two are ready, let's go."

The three went out together and forthwith started for Porter's North Side bachelor apartment.

En route, however, Cahill stopped at headquarters and (quite unknown to Porter) advised his chief to establish telegraphic communication with the Detroit police concerning Jacob Peabody.

Also—once he was free from Porter's eye—he smoothed the wrinkled sheet of paper, filched from the young man's

memorandum-pad, and scanned the two lines penciled there:

"Mason Rawleigh—9:30.

"Batterman—3:15."

CHAPTER IV

SCHMALTZ shed but little light on the matter, and that little was unsatisfactory. He "couldn't remember" ever having seen the hat before, but was of the opinion that it had been sold, together with other cast-off clothing, to a Hebrew peddler, who periodically visited the neighborhood in quest of old wearing apparel. He didn't know the Hebrew's name, but understood he lived "somewhere in Halsted Street." And Halsted Street is reputed to be the longest and most populous street in the world!

Further interrogation failing to elicit anything of value, the trio drove to Batterman's home—an ornate palace in Sheridan Road, built, apparently, for the purpose of proclaiming the enormous wealth of its owner. New and glittering, huge and opulent, the great mansion seemed fairly to shriek the word, "Cash!"

The housekeeper, a middle-aged woman of loquacity, told them she had charge of the establishment in the absence of Mrs. Batterman and her daughter, who were now at Palm Beach; then added:

"If you gentlemen are looking for Mr. Batterman, I advise you to try his office. He's not here."

"We're not looking for him," said Cahill, "but we *are* looking for information.

"When was it you last saw Mr. Batterman?"

"Not since last night. He dined at home with a gentleman from St. Louis, and after dinner they went to the opera, the gentleman saying he wanted to hear Galli-Curci sing. He never came back—Mr. Batterman, I mean—and I suppose he passed the night at his club. But, still and all, there's something peculiar about it, because—"

"Not so fast," Quinn interrupted. "Who is this St. Louis man? What's his name, and where is he staying?"

"His name is Mr. Durant, and he's staying at the North Beach Hotel. I think he's a customer of Mr. Batterman's. At least—" Abruptly she paused and looked apprehensively at the officers. "Has anything happened?" she asked with sudden anxiety.

"Yes," said Quinn; "Mr. Batterman has been killed."

The woman uttered a half-stifled scream and sank shudderingly to a divan in the gilt reception-hall. When she had recovered from her shock sufficiently to be coherent, Cahill asked:

"How did he act last night? Did he seem worried, troubled?"

"In all the time I've known him," she declared, her voice trembling yet emphatic, "I never saw him more joyous. He was laughing and joking all through dinner. . . . Oh, isn't this simply terrible! I must telegraph Mrs. Batterman at once. She'll be overcome, poor woman—"

"Do you happen to know," Quinn keenly put in, "what caused him to be so joyful last night?"

"Not exactly; but I did hear him say he was about to do something that would make a great deal of money for him—millions, he said—and startle the world. Those were his exact words. He said this thing he was going to do would 'startle the world.' He seemed awfully jubilant about it."

"Haven't you any idea," urged Quinn, "what sort of thing he had in mind?"

She shook her head, her fingers twitching and twisting together. "No; I heard him. Durant ask him what it was, but he only laughed and said, 'You'll know before long, old man. So will everybody in America.' And that's all I can tell you about it. . . . I'm so upset by all this—"

"Where's Mr. Batterman's chauffeur?" asked Cahill.

"He's probably in the garage at the

rear. His name's Fred Merrill. If you want me to call him—"

"Never mind. We'll find him."

THEY found Merrill polishing a smart coupé in a somewhat absent-minded manner, his thoughts apparently being elsewhere. Informed of what had happened, he exhibited horrified consternation; then, quieting somewhat, he told the detectives he had driven his employer to the opera last night, and had parked the limousine in Congress Street near Michigan Avenue.

"About nine o'clock," he went on, "I ducked over to a lunchroom on Wabash Avenue for a cup of coffee and a sandwich.

"I guess I was there—well, maybe thirty minutes, maybe less. Anyway, when I got back, the car was gone! I thought maybe it'd been stolen—"

"Was this *after* the first act of the opera?" Cahill interrupted.

"Yes; when I passed the Auditorium the first time I saw a lot of people there in full-dress, and I knew it was an intermission. They were gone when I got back, and I guess the curtain was up on the second act. Well, after looking everywhere for the car, and not finding any trace of it, I drifted back to the Auditorium and went inside through the hotel entrance, wondering if I'd better notify the police, and then I met the boss's friend, coming out for a smoke after the second act, and he asked me if I'd seen the boss anywhere—said he'd left after the first act and hadn't come back. I guess that's all I can tell you, except that we never found the car."

"And why," asked Cahill, "didn't you notify the police as you thought of doing?"

"Because," said Merrill, "this friend of the boss told me I'd better not. He seemed to think the boss had taken the car himself—gone away in it somewhere."

"Well, *we've* got the car now," said Quinn, "and you can come along and

drive it for us. Take us, first, to the North Beach Hotel."

CHAPTER V

HENRY C. DURANT of St. Louis—a wiry little man with thinning gray hair—was discovered in his hotel room, restlessly pacing the floor in pajamas and slippers, and nervously smoking a cigarette. A silver-mounted flask of whisky stood open on the chiffonier, and the odor in the room denoted he had been drinking freely thereof.

A quick anxiety troubled his countenance as he briskly admitted the two detectives, convoying young Porter and Merrill, and began popping questions at them:

"Are you men police officers? Where is he? Is he all right? I hope nothing's happened—"

"First," interrupted Quinn, "we want to ask you something: Why have you waited all this time, without reporting the disappearance of your friend, Lewis Bat-terman?"

With an energetic movement, Durant tossed away his cigarette and snatched another from a box on the chiffonier.

"It does seem strange," he acknowledged, nervously striking a match, "but this whole thing is so unusual—I couldn't decide what to do. I did think of the police, of course, but I knew if I told them, and he later turned up all right, he'd never forgive me. He *is* all right, isn't he?" Durant suddenly demanded.

"He's dead," said Quinn.

"*No! My God, no!*" Durant, in the act of touching the lighted match to his cigarette, dropped both and staggered back as if dealt a blow between the eyes. The news affected him in much the same way as it had young Porter, only, unlike Porter, he evinced, instead of fear, an overwhelming horror. He reached tremblingly for the whisky-flask and poured a stiff drink, which he swallowed at a gulp. Then: "How'd it happen? How did he die? And *where?*"

They succinctly gave him the details; and when he had attained a semblance of calm, Cahill said:

"Now then, Mr. Durant, we want you to tell us everything you know about this. Tell us exactly what happened from the time you first saw Batterman yesterday until he left you last night at the opera."

DURANT, sitting on the edge of his bed, holding the whisky-glass in unsteady fingers, huskily cleared his throat and began:

"I arrived in Chicago from St. Louis yesterday morning, and about eleven o'clock I called on Batterman, at his downtown office to place an order with him. I'm in the sporting goods business and carry a line of firearms. We lunched together at his club, and when he proposed taking in a show that evening and asked me what I'd like to see I told him I'd always wanted to hear Galli-Curci, and he got two main-floor seats for *Rigoletto*. I left him about two o'clock, and didn't see him again until about seven last night, when we dined at his home. He seemed unusually happy—"

"One moment!" interrupted Quinn. "Was he in the same sort of spirits at lunch?"

"No. On the contrary, he seemed to be worrying about something. But his happiness at dinner was so pronounced—"

"Then, presumably, from the time you left him at two o'clock until you saw him again at seven, something happened that elated him?"

"Undoubtedly!" exclaimed Durant, nervously pouring another drink of whisky. "And that's the very thing that is still mystifying me. Batterman's jubilation was so pronounced that I couldn't help speaking of it, and when I asked him what caused it he said, 'Henry, old man, I've discovered something that's going to startle the world! Also, it's going to make a huge fortune for yours truly.' He wouldn't tell me what this thing was. There seemed to be a good deal of mystery about it.

"He couldn't stop talking about it, however, even during the opera; and when the curtain was down on the first act he said, 'Henry, if you don't mind my running away for a while, I may let you in on this secret tonight—maybe within the next two hours. It means I'll miss the rest of the show, but it'll also mean ten million dollars for me!' And he laughed from sheer joy. Then he left me, saying he'd be back by the time the last act was over and we'd go somewhere for supper—and that was the last I saw of him."

Durant paused to light another cigarette, inhaled copiously, and then went on in his agitated way:

"After the second act I strolled outside for a smoke, and met Batterman's chauffeur, who told me the car was missing. I told him not to worry about that; but when Batterman failed to return after the last act I began to grow uneasy. I waited for him at the Auditorium until past midnight, and finally took a taxi to this hotel.

"This morning I telephoned his home, and the housekeeper told me he hadn't returned, but had probably spent the night at his club. I then tried his club, but he hadn't been there. I was thinking of calling up the police when you men came."

"Haven't you any idea, at all," asked Quinn, "what could have caused him to leave the opera last night and go to this abandoned shanty?"

"Not the slightest. If I only had! The whole thing is a horrible riddle."

Durant sat down again, gesturing helplessly.

"Can you think of any reason," Cahill asked him, "why any person would want to take Batterman's life?"

"Good heavens, no! I don't believe Lewis Batterman had an enemy on earth."

And young Porter added: "There wasn't a more popular man in town. He had friends everywhere. Everybody liked him."

QUINN took something from his vest pocket. "You're familiar with firearms, Mr. Durant—do you know who made this?" And he held out, between thumb and finger, the blood-red shell.

Durant, beholding the object, started violently and leapt to his feet.

"Where'd that come from?" he demanded wildly. "How'd you get hold of that?"

"It was found," said Quinn, "in Batterman's glove, and the glove was found in his hat near his body."

"Let me see it!" Durant switched on an electric reading-lamp, and, with mounting excitement, quickly inspected the shell beneath the light. "It's the same one!" he muttered, patently amazed. Then he swung round to Quinn. "Did you also find a steel bullet?" he asked—"a cone-shaped bullet with a sharp point?"

Quinn took the steel bullet from his pocket and handed it to him.

Durant, his perturbation increasing, examined it excitedly, studied the grooves, fitted it to the shell, held it close to the light, eyeing it from different angles. Finally he asked:

"You're sure this is the bullet that killed him? You're sure there's no mistake about this?"

"It was found beneath his body," said Quinn, "and the shell was found just where I told you. And now, if you don't mind, we'd like to hear what you know about them."

Durant, bewildered, was again inspecting the red shell and steel cartridge.

"I know this much about them," he said—"both were made, secretly, by Batterman himself!"

CHAPTER VI

QUINN spoke in a lowered tone to Cahill, who nodded understandingly and led Porter and Merrill from the room. . . . Alone with Durant, he locked the door, put the key in his pocket, and confronted the sporting goods merchant.

"You understand, Mr. Durant, that this cartridge is probably our most important clue, and if you withhold any knowledge of it—"

"Why should I?" burst out the excitable little man. "God knows I'm as anxious as you to find the murderer! But what I can't understand is how that cartridge could have been used to kill the man who made it. The thing is incomprehensible."

"That," said Quinn, "is exactly what I want you to explain. Why is it incomprehensible? You say Batterman made this cartridge secretly. Why? Tell me everything you know about it."

Durant, moving restlessly about the room, stopped abruptly in front of the detective.

"I don't believe I can explain the thing adequately," he said, "unless I start at the beginning and tell you something of Batterman's career. . . . I've known Lewis Batterman," he continued, when Quinn told him to proceed, "for more than fifteen years. In the early part of 1913 he and a man named Daggett formed the partnership of Batterman & Daggett, and began manufacturing small firearms, gunpowder and shells in a rather ambitious way.

"Batterman was a shrewd business man, but the business didn't prosper as it should, probably because of the hard times that year. Daggett was an impractical sort, a born inventor, always experimenting with explosives—quite a contrast to his hard-headed partner.

"They managed to struggle through the first year, but in the summer of 1914 it looked as if they would have to close up. Their credit was exhausted, their goods wouldn't sell, they were up against it.

"It was about this time, or maybe a little earlier, that Daggett—still going ahead with his experiments, regardless of wretched business conditions—invented a noiseless gunpowder. In great triumph he proved to Batterman that his invention was all he claimed for it—absolutely smokeless and noiseless.

"Batterman immediately saw the possibilities of the thing, but knew, of course, it was impossible for them to start manufacturing it then. Daggett, however, couldn't see it that way. He'd spent months in his laboratory, working tirelessly on his experiments, and he wanted some monetary return.

"The upshot was that Batterman bought Daggett's interest in the firm and all rights to his gunpowder formula. The consideration was \$2,500. Batterman borrowed the money from Mason Rawleigh, who is now president of the Third National Bank of this city.

"That was in July of 1914. A few weeks later the World War began, and Batterman at once realized what this would mean to him.

"He obtained financial backing from Rawleigh, reorganized the firm under the name of Batterman Firearms Co., and was among the first to begin making munitions for the Allies.

"You probably know what followed. Batterman, like many others, became immensely wealthy almost overnight. He was overwhelmed with war contracts. His fortune shot up dizzily. As if by magic, the war changed him from a potential bankrupt into a multimillionaire."

"What became of Daggett?" asked Quinn.

"Batterman traced him to New York, and found he'd sailed for France. It was Batterman's intention to place him in charge of the new firm's laboratories, and thus utilize the man's inventive genius. He subsequently learned he'd joined the Foreign Legion; and still later—in the autumn of 1916—he heard that Daggett had been killed in action."

"And now what about this?" Quinn motioned to the cartridge on the table.

"I'm coming to that. When the purchasing agents from France and Great Britain saw demonstrations of the noiseless powder they gave Batterman orders for tremendous quantities of the stuff. It was later decided that the powder should be placed only in shells of bright red hue,

and that the bullets for these shells should be made of steel, grooved like this and sharply pointed—in other words, exactly this sort of cartridge."

"Why these peculiar specifications?"

"In the first place," explained Durant, "the noiseless shells were to be used only for special purposes and by certain branches of the allied forces—such as the Secret Service and the intelligence department—and it was essential that they have some peculiar form or color that would readily distinguish them from all other shells.

"Batterman sold vast quantities of these noiseless red shells to England, France and Italy, and, during 1917, to the United States. Because of the higher price paid for them, and the proportionately greater profit, he soon devoted practically all of his plant to their manufacture. And it does seem ironical," Durant bitterly added, "that his life should be taken by the very thing that chiefly made his fortune!"

"You haven't told me yet," reminded Quinn, "why it seemed incomprehensible to you that this cartridge should be used."

"The utmost secrecy was observed in making them. Only a few of Batterman's intimate friends, myself among them, knew about it. And all his contracts with the allied purchasing agents specified that their manufacture must cease with the termination of the war, and all shells on hand destroyed. Since the Armistice there has been, to my knowledge, only two of those shells in Chicago."

"And who had those?"

"Batterman himself had them! Kept them locked in a secret drawer of his office. That's why I can't understand—Suppose he *could* have killed himself?"

"No," said Quinn. "Now get your clothes on. I want you to come along to headquarters."

WHILE the little man shed his pajamas and hurried into street attire, Quinn sat thoughtfully studying the red shell, his brows knitted, his face denoting men-

tal concentration. A deep-brooding abstraction claimed him.

He was markedly silent on the trip downtown; nor did his preoccupation diminish when he and Cahill (after leaving the trio—Durant, Merrill and Porter—with Chief Galloway) were setting forth again to untangle the remaining threads of the mystery.

"What's on your mind, Steve?" asked Cahill.

"I was wondering," said Quinn, absently, "if there was a moon last night."

CHAPTER VII

CAHILL, accustomed to his partner's eccentricities, answered in a matter-of-fact way: "Sure! I saw it shining when I went to bed."

"Then that explains it! No matches, no electric lights, no gas, nor oil—Batterman was killed by moonlight!"

"Well, what of it?" laughed the unimaginative Cahill. "What I wanta know is who killed him—and why! We'll hop over to the Auditorium, Steve, and check up on what these three guys say—"

"No," objected Quinn. "We'll go to his office first. We've got to learn what he did, or what happened to him, between two o'clock yesterday afternoon and seven o'clock last night. And I want to have the safe in his office opened."

Cahill good-naturedly acquiesced, and they straightway went to the downtown offices of the Batterman Firearms Co. No attempt was being made to do business here today. The news of Batterman's tragic death has upset the daily routine, and the employees were standing about in groups, excitedly talking in hushed voices.

THE OFFICE MANAGER was found, surrounded by avid newspaper men, and gladly fled from their interrogations to accompany the detectives to Batterman's private office, locking the door, at Quinn's request, to protect them from interruption.

"Mr. Batterman," he said, in response

to a question from Quinn, "went to lunch about noon yesterday, with one of our customers from St. Louis, a Mr. Durant. He returned a little after two, and a few minutes later he went out again. He didn't say where he was going, but merely mentioned he'd be back in half an hour or so. He came back about three o'clock, and stayed here until—"

"How did he act when he came back?"

"Now that you remind me of it," said the manager, surprised, "he seemed unusually elated. I particularly noticed it I remember, because, when he went to lunch, he appeared to be troubled over something. But what's that got to do with his death?"

"Did he tell you what had caused him to feel so elated?"

"He didn't even intimate what it was. However, he did tell me he had stumbled upon a wonderful discovery—something that would make the Batterman Company renowned throughout the world and add untold millions to his wealth. I asked him what the discovery was, and he promised to tell me all about it this morning. Said he couldn't talk further about it then, but would know everything before the night was over. He was fairly bubbling over with joy. I never saw him so delighted. That's why it was such a shock to me when I learned, a few minutes ago, he'd been found dead—"

"How late did he stay here yesterday?"

"He was still here when I left, about five o'clock."

"Do you know if he saw anybody, at any time yesterday, who might be suspected of this crime?"

"Absolutely nobody. I'm well acquainted with every person who entered this office during the day."

"Are you acquainted with Nathaniel Porter?" asked Cahill.

"I know him by sight."

"Wasn't he here yesterday afternoon?"

The manager knitted his brows, then shook his head. "No. I saw him here two days ago. But not yesterday."

"Think hard now," persisted Cahill. "Are you sure he didn't slip in here yesterday afternoon about a quarter past three?"

"I'm quite positive he didn't," the manager maintained. "I saw everybody who called on Mr. Batterman. Mr. Porter was not among them."

"Bring in your switchboard girl."

THE SWITCHBOARD GIRL being summoned, gave from memory the names of several persons (and these names also were known to the office manager) who had telephoned her employer yesterday; but she could remember no call from young "Nat" Porter.

"Now, then," said Quinn, when the girl had gone, "can you tell us exactly what Mr. Batterman did when he returned from lunch?"

"Yes," said the manager, after a moment's thought, "he came in alone, with his hat and overcoat on, and immediately went to the office safe. He was in the vault for perhaps five minutes; then he came out, still wearing his coat and hat, and started for the elevator, saying he'd be back in thirty minutes. He didn't enter this office. Our safe is in the outer office."

"Do you know what he took from the safe?"

"No."

"But you *do* know he had a secret drawer in that safe? A drawer that contained two of his noiseless shells?"

The manager started, sharply surprised. "How'd you know about that?"

Quinn, disregarding the question, asked: "Do you know how to find this drawer?"

"Yes; I know where it is. But I can't understand how you—"

"We want you to open that drawer for us."

"I'm afraid that'll be impossible. In the first place, I haven't the key—"

"Break it open!"

"And, for another thing, nobody except Mr. Batterman has ever been allowed to touch it."

"Break it open!" repeated Quinn, rising authoritatively. "What we find there—or *don't* find there—may have considerable to do in discovering the person who killed your employer."

The bewildered manager, somewhat uncertain what to do, yet clearly impressed by Quinn's words, led them to a safe in an outer room, opened the massive door, lighted a portable electric bulb and showed them a tiny steel panel, cunningly concealed in the deep recess of the vault. He looped his finger through a metal ring on the panel, and found it was locked. At Quinn's behest, he broke the lock with a chisel and forced the door open, disclosing a small, plush-lined compartment, no larger than a match-box. Then he uttered a startled ejaculation.

The drawer was empty!

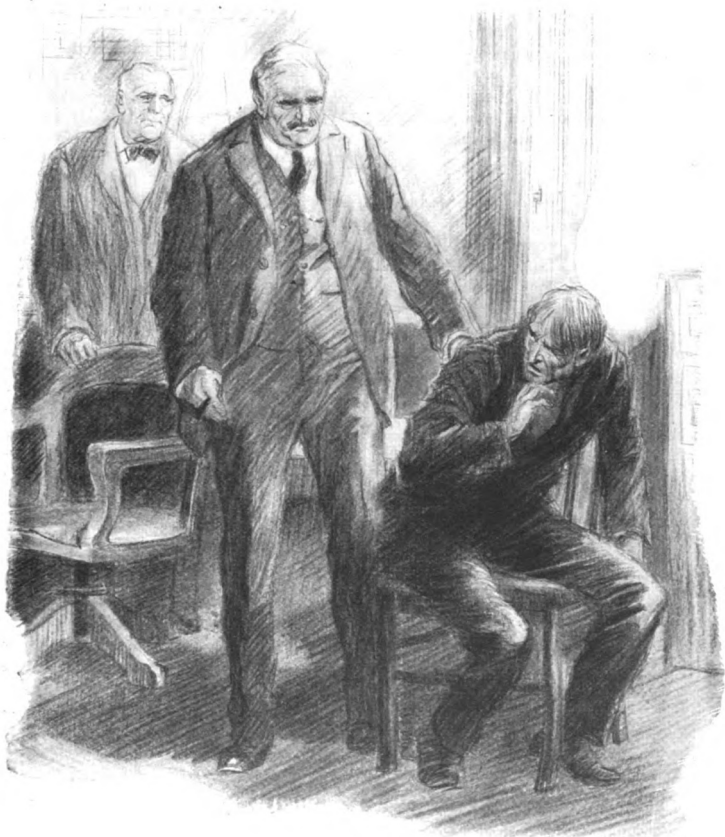
CHAPTER VIII

HE COULD OFFER no explanation of why Batterman had removed the shells, which had been locked in the secret drawer since the signing of the Armistice; nor could Batterman's secretary or any member of the firm, shed any light on the riddle. All were blankly confounded.

After questioning a dozen or more different persons, in the office building and elsewhere, the detectives accounted for every minute of Batterman's time from 9:30 o'clock yesterday morning, when he reached his office, until 2:15, when he returned from lunch, and from 3 o'clock in the afternoon, when he returned from his mysterious errand, until 5:30 p. m., when he started home in his limousine.

But they couldn't account for the forty-five minutes between 2:15 and 3. They could find nobody who had seen him during that period, nor could they discover where he had gone, or what had happened, in that short space of time to fill him with triumphant joy.

And this, it seemed, was the crux of the situation. When those forty-five minutes were explained, Quinn potentially be-



GARRETT
SERVIC

"The man's pinched face twisted convulsively, and he lifted his trembling hands as if to ward off a physical blow."

lieved, the thickening mystery would dissolve. But their further investigation only darkened it. At the Auditorium they found several persons who had seen Batterman at the opera last night, and all remembered he had been in jovial mood, as though rejoicing over splendid news. And finally they found a man—a hanger-on of the opera company—who said he had seen him enter his car and drive away, alone.

"The last I saw of him," said this man, "he was going south on Michigan Avenue."

They returned to the tumble-down shanty, and again questioned those in the immediate neighborhood; but no person had been seen to enter it last night, nobody had been seen leaving, and no sound had been heard. They located the real estate agent who had charge of the property, and learned it was owned by a Roy Amon, who lived in Gary, Indiana.

"That shack hasn't been rented," the agent told them, "for more than a year. It's such a rotten old rat-hole that even the hunkies won't live in it. Mr. Amon's planning to tear it down and put up a flat as soon as building conditions are right."

They went back over the trail, carefully investigating Batterman's characteristics, his daily habits, his mode of living, his business and social life, his friends, associates and acquaintances. He was known everywhere, they found, as a "free spender," an all-round good fellow, lavishing money and friendship.

They also found that his wife and daughter had social aspirations, which his quickly-made fortune had not entirely satisfied. Even in Chicago there were many fashionable homes that the newly-rich Battermans could not enter. And this, somehow, reminded Cahill of Porter, the "wealthy young society man."

CHIEF GALLOWAY, they discovered, had "gouged" nothing of importance from young Porter; but the first question put by Cahill brought an interesting revelation:

"You saw Lewis Batterman yesterday afternoon?"

"Yes; I saw him about fifteen minutes to three."

Quinn and Cahill exchanged quick glances. At last they were beginning to account for the significant forty-five minutes!

"Where did you see him?" asked Quinn.

"I met him on the street. On Clark Street near Madison."

"Was he alone?"

"Yes; and he seemed excessively happy. I was on my way to his office at the time—I had an appointment with him—and we stopped and chatted for several minutes. Then we parted."

"What did you chat about?"

Porter hesitated.

"A little business matter," he said at last—"the thing I was to see him about."

"Well, what was this thing?" insisted Cahill.

Porter's nervousness increased. Indubitably, he was desirous of hiding the purport of his talk with Batterman.

"I was trying to interest him in some bonds," he said, "of an issue I am floating."

Although it was apparent that Porter was not telling the truth, Chief Galloway asked:

"And did you interest him?"

"I don't know exactly. He promised to see me this morning about it."

WHILE the questioning went on, a careful check was made on the young man's life, and particularly on his recent activities; and it was discovered that his financial affairs, for all his pretension of affluence, were none too flourishing. Also, it was determined that he had not been in his office yesterday from one o'clock until three, that he had been a guest at a fashionable box party at last night's opera, and had left the Auditorium between the first and second acts.

Confronted with this last bit of damaging evidence, Porter paled perceptibly and reluctantly admitted:

"I did leave the opera after the first act, but—"

"Why did you leave? And where did you go?"

"Good Lord! man," cried Porter, "it had nothing to do with Batterman! Why do you keep insinuating—"

"Where did you go when you left the opera?"

"I had a sick headache—made my apologies to my hostess and went home."

Chief Galloway reached for his telephone. "We'll ask your servant about that," he said.

The young man gestured despairingly. "No use asking him. He wasn't home last night."

Cahill, standing over him, said:

"We all know you're lying to us, Porter, just as you lied about your deal with Batterman. You told us this morning it was a 'personal matter,' and a few minutes ago you said it was business. Now tell us the truth about it. What did you say to Batterman—and what did he say to you—when you met him yesterday about three o'clock?"

Porter was staring at the floor, his fingers fidgeting with the arms of his chair. Following a lengthy silence:

"The fact is," he said, "I've been devilishly hard up of late. I thought perhaps Batterman would help me. That's what I saw him about yesterday. We spoke of it again at the opera last night, and he said he'd call at my office this morning."

"Why didn't you tell us this at first?"

Porter looked up with a wry smile. "Pride, I suppose. But I see now I should have told you."

"Any strings to this proposed loan?" asked Quinn.

"Well—yes. Batterman has bought everything for his family except a good social position. He had an idea I could help him get that. I promised to do whatever I could."

"You seemed pretty scared this morning," remarked Cahill, "when you learned he was dead—with your hat supplying a clue to his death."

Porter laughed mirthlessly.

"I was scared," he bitterly confessed, "but not because of the hat. When a man sees his last hope of rescue snatched from him he's not inclined to feel cheerful about it. . . . As for the hat, I admit that gave me a jolt, too, but—you also found Jake Peabody's coat. That seems to let us both out. Jake couldn't have been in that shanty any more than I."

After several hours of merciless grilling—and after young Porter had tangled himself in a web of contradictory statements—he was told he might go. But, unknown to him, he was kept under constant surveillance by two of Chief Galloway's best men, who were ordered to place him under arrest as soon as he made the expected false step that would convict him of Batterman's murder.

News of Jacob Peabody, received from the Detroit police, further complicated the puzzle. Peabody's status in Detroit was analogous to Porter's in Chicago—a young architect, dashing, good-looking, of excellent family and social position, though hard pressed for money—and he had left for Chicago, yesterday morning, and hadn't returned!

His servant claimed that the cast-off overcoat had been given to the Salvation Army last winter, and the Detroit police were now trying to verify this. The police had also discovered, while investigating Peabody's private affairs, that he had gone to Chicago in response to a telegram from Lewis Batterman!

Meanwhile, Chicago was being combed for the person, or persons, who had left the hat and overcoat in the shanty where Batterman was killed.

"Maybe it was Porter and maybe it was Peabody, and maybe it wasn't either. But one thing's sure," said Cahill, with conviction, "when we find who it was we'll know who bumped off Batterman."

QUINN nodded absently. Quinn's mind was busied on other, more abstruse, features of the case—the noiseless red shells, Batterman's unexplained

reason for taking them from their hiding place, his mysterious departure with them, and the unknown happening that had thrilled him with joy and enticed him from the wealth and splendor of the opera to a violent death in a miserable hovel. These, Quinn somehow believed, were more important than the question of who wore the overcoat and hat. Certainly, to one of Quinn's imagination, they were far more fascinating.

The search went relentlessly on. In the neighborhood of Porter's apartment a watch was kept for the Hebrew who, according to the servant, had bought the discarded hat. Second-hand clothing stores, throughout the city, were visited. The garments were photographed for all the Chicago newspapers, which were "playing up" the "story" in a sensational manner, featuring it across the first pages. The papers described them in minute detail. Nothing was left undone that might apprehend the person who wore them. Porter was watched. Peabody could not be found. The police, however, were working on the theory that a third man was implicated and this was the man they wanted.

And while the hunt was at its height, —while the city was being assiduously combed in an effort to find this unknown person—the man who had worn the overcoat and hat, and left them in the shanty, walked deliberately into the detective bureau and voluntarily surrendered.

CHAPTER IX

HE WAS a trampish man of indeterminate age, gaunt, hollow-eyed, unshaved and unclean, blue from the cold and shivering, clad in wretched rags—a pitiful derelict.

Furtively, as one who fears pursuit, he shuffled across the floor to the wire cage, where sat Desk Sergeant Richard Flanagan. He ran his tongue between his lips and said in a husky whisper:

"I wanta see the chief."

"What about?" asked Flanagan, glancing up casually from his blotter.

From his tattered coat the tramp drew a soiled copy of a morning newspaper. "I wanta see 'im about that," he said, and tremblingly pointed a grimy finger to a three-column cut of the hat and overcoat.

Flanagan suddenly eyed the tramp with interest. "And what do *you* know about that?" he demanded.

"Well, I—I'm the guy that *wore* them things. I left 'em in the shack where they found the dead guy. If you'll just lemme see the chief—"

But Flanagan was already off his stool, and in another moment was "hustling" the "stew bum" into Chief Galloway's private office.

"So you've decided to 'fess up," the chief smiled genially. "That's good! You're going to tell us now why you killed him, and all about it—eh?"

The man's pinched face twisted convulsively, and he lifted his trembling hands as if to ward off a physical blow.

"I *didn't* kill 'im!" he rasped, feverishly licking his dry lips. "I *swear* I didn't!" He sank shudderingly into a chair, shivering violently.

The chief said to Flanagan in a quiet voice: "Tell Quinn and Cahill I want to see them. And fetch a can of hot coffee quick!"

The steaming coffee steadied the nerves of the starving man, and he readily answered the questions of his three interrogators.

"My name," he told them, "is Simon Garvy. I'm a common laborer, but I been outa work nearly all winter, on my uppers—"

"We can see you have," commented the chief. "Now tell us what you know about this killing. Tell us where you got that coat and hat, why you went to this shack in South Chicago, and what happened there."

"Well, I bought the benny, 'bout five weeks ago, off'n a guy in Detroit. I give 'im six bits for it—"

"Who was the guy?" asked Cahill.

"I dunno. I met 'im in a flop. A young sort o' guy. He was on 'is uppers, and sold me his benny. Then I come to Chicago, lookin' for work, and 'bout two weeks ago I bought the lid off'n a Jew in Canal Street. I give 'im two bits. He runs a second-hand joint near the Union Station. If you think I'm lyin' I'll take you there, and he'll tell yous—"

"What'd you do next?" interrupted Quinn.

"I kept lookin' for a job, and couldn't find none, but here a few days ago I heard they needed men in South Chicago, and I trailed out there, and it was all a pipe dream. No men wanted. I was on my uppers right—no jack, no work, nothin' to eat, no place to bunk. I was moonin' 'round, wonderin' what I'd better do next, when I passes this here shanty. Thinks I: 'Here's a place to bunk, anyway,' and I goes in—"

"Did you enter by the front, or rear?"

"I goes through the front door and looks through the rooms, and I seen they wasn't nobody there—just an empty old shack that nobody but a bum like me would live in."

"What hour was it then?" asked Quinn.

"It musta been nine o'clock," said Garvy, "or maybe a little later. The moon was shinin' through the windows and the front room was lit up, bright as day. I goes to the back room, and curls up in a corner under my benny and tries to forget my troubles. Pretty soon I was sleepin', and I dunno how long it was before I woke up—"

"What awoke you?" barked Chief Galoway.

"I dunno what it was, Chief, but when I woke up I heered sounds in the next room—sounds like somebody gaspin' and chokin'—and, thinks I: 'That's strange! They wasn't nobody here when I come in.' Then I gets up, quiet, and tiptoes to the door, and then—"

"Well, what happened then?" asked the chief, as Garvy paused.

"Well, I seen this guy layin' there. He

was layin' on 'is back, and the moon was shinin' on 'is open-front shirt, and he was groanin' like he was ready to croak. I was feelin' pretty skeered—I dunno why—but I walks into the room and says to 'im: 'What's happened, friend? Who hurt you?'

"He tries to lift 'imself, but can't make it, and when I stoop down to help 'im he grabs my arm, his eyes gettin' glassy, and says to me in a whistlin', gaspin' sort o' voice:

"*'Rawleigh! Get Mason Rawleigh!'*" Then 'is voice dies out in a sort o' gurgle, and I see he's croaked."

As Garvy uttered the name of Rawleigh, Quinn sat up with a sudden jerk, tingling with a new thrill. Mason Rawleigh was the man who had enabled Batterman to manufacture the noiseless red shells!

In another moment Cahill remembered something—the penciled line on the memorandum pad upon "Nat" Porter's desk:

"Mason Rawleigh—9:30."

"It was just about 9:30," he quickly thought, "that Batterman was killed!"

CHAPTER X

ARE YOU SURE, Simon," the chief asked, "he said Mason Rawleigh? You're sure you've made no mistake about that?"

Simon Garvy nodded emphatically, stoutly maintaining: "'Get Mason Rawleigh!—them was 'is dying words to me. I ain't liable to forget 'em."

"What else did he say to you?"

"That's all he says—'Get Mason Rawleigh!' Then he croaked."

"Do you know who Mason Rawleigh is?"

Garvy shook his gaunt head. "Never heard of 'im before. But 'is name's been buzzin' in my bean, almost drivin' me nuts, ever since that awful night."

"Then why," asked the chief persuasively, "have you waited so long to tell me this?"

Garvy looked up piteously, his face

haggard, his under lip quivering. "I been hidin', Chief. I was afeared if I come here and told you what I knew you'd say I croaked that guy. But when I seen them pitchers in the peger, and read you was lookin' for me, thinks I: 'I better give myself up before the bulls pinch me. If they find me hidin' they'll swear I bumped 'im off.' So that's why I come here to tell you all I know about it."

"But you haven't told me yet why you left your hat and coat in the shanty."

"Well, I was usin' my benny for a blanket, like I told you, and my lid for a pillow, and when I first got up I left 'em layin' in the corner. And when this guy croaks I beat it fast, and run maybe two blocks before I realize I'd left my lid and benny behind, and I was too skeered to go back and get 'em."

"Did you see a clock anywhere?" asked Quinn. "Any idea what time it was?"

"I seen one in a Polish saloon, where I tried to bum a drink. It was half past ten."

"That was how long after you'd left the shanty?"

"Not more'n twenty minutes."

"So the man was killed, to the best of your knowledge, at a few minutes after ten?"

"Yes, sir."

"Now think hard, Simon," coaxed the chief—"didn't you hear any other voice in the shanty that night, no sounds of a struggle, or a revolver shot, or of anybody coming or going?"

"All in God's world I heered, Chief, was this guy gaspin' and chokin'. I didn't hear nothin' else."

"And you saw nobody near the shanty when you ran away?"

"No; they wasn't nobody there, nor nowhere around."

Cahill, obeying a sudden "hunch," asked, with disconcerting bluntness:

"You've seen Mason Rawleigh, haven't you? And you tried to shake him down, didn't you? And when he wouldn't kick in, you decided to squeal on him. Ain't that right? Answer me!"

"I tell you I don't even know this guy Rawleigh," whined the tramp, his face twitching. "I tell you I never even heered of 'im before."

"Don't you know that Mason Rawleigh is president of the Third National Bank?"

"I don't know nothin' about 'im," whimpered Garvy.

"And don't you know that Mason Rawleigh couldn't have killed this man you're telling us about?"

"I'm only tellin' yous—"

"And don't you know that *we* know you're lying to us?"

"I ain't lyin'—" began Garvy, breathing noisily; and then, all at once, he seemed to shrink within himself and crumpled down in his chair like a deflated bag, while his face, beneath its dark smudge of beard, turned the color of dough.

CHIEF GALLOWAY, seeing his famished condition, locked him in another room and ordered a hot meal for him. Then he returned to Quinn and Cahill.

"This bird," he said, "may be having a hop dream—I don't know. It's a crazy, cock-eyed story he tells. All the same, you two chase over to the Third National and have a talk with Rawleigh. If his answers don't satisfy you, bring him here to me."

"While we're gone, Chief," suggested Cahill, "you might bring 'Nat' Porter in and ask him what he and Rawleigh were doin' at 9:30 on the night that Batterman was bumped off. He had a date with Rawleigh at that hour."

CHAPTER XI

AT THE president's office in the Third National Bank the detectives were informed by an alert young woman that Mr. Rawleigh had not been to the bank today.

"He phoned about ten," she said, "that he was not coming down. You'll probably find him at his home."

Another young woman—this time a

maid in cap and apron—met them at the door of Rawleigh's town house in Astor Street.

"He's not here," said she. "He's at the bank."

"What time did he go to the bank?" asked Quinn.

"More than two hours ago—about 9:30, I guess it was."

"How did he go?"

"He went in his car as usual," said the maid, beginning to wax suspicious. "If you men want to see him you'd better go to the bank." She started to close the door.

"Is Mrs. Rawleigh here?"

"Yes; she's here, but she's not receiving callers today."

"Tell her," said Cahill, blocking the closing door with his foot, "that two men from the police would like to see her."

This produced a prompt effect. Palpably alarmed, the maid sped to an upper floor and summoned her mistress, a thin little woman of kindly mien, who came to the door inquiringly. Quinn, observing her narrowly, noted that despite her puzzled air (assumably caused by the maid's announcement) there yet quivered in her eyes a sort of eager elation.

"I'm sure," she said, "you'll find my husband at his office. He left here hours ago. He surely ought to be there now. Was there something in particular you wanted to see him about?"

"We just wanta ask him a few questions," said Cahill, "about the Batterman murder."

"I know he'll gladly do all he can to help you. He was inexpressibly shocked by Mr. Batterman's tragic death. He and Mr. Batterman, as perhaps you know, were very old and intimate friends."

Quinn, still watching her face, quietly asked at this point:

"Was Mr. Rawleigh in good humor when he left home this morning?"

"He was in the most buoyant spirit!" she exclaimed, her eyes eagerly shining. "He was, in fact, almost singing with joy. And the last thing he said, as he left, was

that he would have wonderful news when he returned—something that would make us both very happy."

She paused abruptly, a sudden anxiety in her eyes.

"Do you suppose anything *could* have happened? Perhaps I'd better telephone the bank—"

"Please don't!" begged Quinn. "It's all right. Nothing's happened. We'll find him at the bank, all right."

He lifted his hat and thanked her; then, beckoning Cahill, he started for Rawleigh's office. But at the next corner he turned, and, with Cahill following, hurried back through the alley to Rawleigh's garage.

Quinn, mentally, was now atremble with excitement. In the back of his mind there was gradually forming a fantastic idea that might unravel this mystery—or lead them deeper into its meshes.

CHAPTER XII

"I 'M TELLIN' YA," insisted Rawleigh's chauffeur, under the detectives' fire of questions. "I took the boss to the bank this mornin' same as always."

"And I'm telling *you*," snapped Quinn, "you're lying! If you don't kick in with the truth, we'll take you to the station. Now then—where'd your boss go this mornin'?"

Considerably agitated, the chauffeur rolled and lit a cigarette.

"All right, then," he said at last, "he *didn't* go to the bank, after all. But he told me—"

"Where'd he go?" interrupted Quinn.

"He went to the Northwestern depot. And he told me if I peached I'd lose my job—"

Quinn, with a swift gesture to the motor cars in the garage, again interrupted: "Trot out one of these machines in a hurry! Quick! Your boss's life may depend on your speed."

Three minutes later, racing to the railroad station in a gleaming sedan, Quinn sitting beside the chauffeur, plied him

with rapid questions, which the man as rapidly answered:

"Yes; the boss seemed tickled pink this mornin'—singin' like a lark. . . . No; I dunno what made 'im get that way. He's usually grouchy. But he promised me a raise if I didn't tell nobody where he'd gone, and that's why I hated to tell yous guys— . . . No; I don't know *exactly* where he went. I left 'im at the depot, and that's all I know."

The detectives, however, soon found that Rawleigh (who was known to the station attendants) had bought a ticket to Lake Forest this morning and had taken the 10:20 train for that fashionable suburb. The next train would leave in fifteen minutes, and they employed the interim in questioning those who had seen the banker. All were agreed that he had exhibited conspicuous joy. A "red cap" was discovered who jubilantly displayed a two-dollar bill that Rawleigh had given to him.

"He didn't gimme no baggage to tote," grinned the darky, "but when I touch my cap and say, 'Fine day, Mistah Rawleigh,' he smile and gimme dis two-case note! Yassuh; he sho' was feelin' s'lubrious!" . . .

In the smoking car of the Lake Forest train Cahill bit the end from a thick cigar and gave voice to his pent-up surprise:

"Who'd 'a' thought that panhandler was spillin' the truth! It's hard to believe, even now, that Mason Rawleigh pulled this job; but—there it is! He bumped Batterman off, probably with 'Nat' Porter's help, and he thinks he'll get away with it."

QUINN nodded absently. He wasn't thinking of what the "panhandler" had said. He was thinking of what Durant had told him, and mentally groping for the link that would connect this with what he'd heard about Rawleigh *after* leaving headquarters.

"Crude work, Steve," Cahill went on, not noticing Quinn's abstraction. "Speaks to everybody he sees at the station, tells

'em where he's going. It's a wonder he didn't hire a brass band! And what, d'you suppose," asked Cahill, scowling through the cigar smoke, "was he so damned happy about?"

"I don't know—yet," murmured Quinn; and added to himself: "But I will know pretty soon."

Quinn had an idea—cloudy as yet—of what caused Rawleigh's happiness, and he believed the cause was fundamentally the same as that which had sent Batterman rejoicing to his death. But he was disinclined to share this idea with his matter-of-fact, methodical partner. The idea was too hazy, too bizarre. And too many of his extravagant notions had been exploded by the practical Cahill. This time, however, he felt he was going to have his innings.

CHAPTER XIII

QUINN sprang from his seat, as the train slowed down for the Lake Forest station, and, leaping from the coach before it attained a full stop, hurried across the platform, with Cahill close behind, and began hastily interrogating a group of rustic chauffeurs in the automobile parking space.

"Why, yes," drawled one, "I seen Mr. Rawleigh here 'bout two hours ago. He hired Dick Sullivan's bus and drove off thataway"—pointing toward the east. "They hain't come back yit. Mr. Rawleigh 'peared in an all-fired hurry to git somewhere—"

"We're in a hurry, too," said Quinn. "Have you a car for hire?"

"You betcha! Good car, too. Where you wanta go?"

"Go the same way that Sullivan went. And make it snappy!"

The yokel soon had his flivver churning; and in another moment the three were whizzing along the winding road that led, circuitously, to Lake Michigan.

"Don't you know where Mr. Rawleigh was going?" Cahill asked.

"I didn't hear 'im say. He 'peared to

be mighty glad 'bout somethin' and left in a big rush, like I told you. I reckon, maybe, he went to 'is home. He's got a big country place, over near the lake—"

"Drive there," ordered Quinn. "Meanwhile, peel your eye for Sullivan."

They encountered no trace of Sullivan's car; and when they turned into the broad driveway of Rawleigh's magnificent summer estate they found the house boarded up for the winter, with only the caretaker in charge.

"Mr. Rawleigh," said this man, "hasn't been here for more'n eight weeks."

"Have you had any word from him to-day?"

"No; and I ain't expectin' none. He never comes out here in the winter time."

From the caretaker's lodge Quinn telephoned to Sullivan's home, and was told by his wife that he hadn't returned since morning. Quinn and Cahill then departed, instructing their driver to proceed slowly through all the surrounding roads, while they scanned the country in every direction for some sign of the missing banker.

After more than thirty minutes of this—as they stopped at a dirt road which branched off from the main highway—the driver suddenly exclaimed:

"There's Dick now!" And he pointed to a man, thirty yards away, striding up and down the crossroad and violently swinging his arms to stimulate bodily warmth.

In a twinkling the detectives were out of the car and running toward the man, who came forward to meet them, blowing on his hands and rubbing his ears.

"Sure, I brought Mr. Rawleigh here," he said in response to their questions. "I brought him in that there car," and he gestured to a dingy automobile standing at the roadside. "He told me to wait here till he got back, no matter how long it took, and I been waitin' so long I'm darned near froze. But he said he'd pay me well for my time—"

"Which way did he go?" broke in Quinn. "Quick!"

Sullivan pointed across a frozen field, east of the road. "He went that way. The last I saw of him was in that clump of scrub trees yonder. Then he disappeared, and I ain't seen him since. I guess I oughta followed him, but he gave me strict orders to wait—"

SULLIVAN abandoned the sentence, and, after a momentary hesitation, fled after the detectives, who had vaulted the fence and were sprinting across the field.

Quinn, in the lead, was first to reach the dwarfed trees, and, plowing ahead through the underbrush, searching the small woods as he ran, he emerged to a clearing on a cragged bluff overlooking ice-bound Lake Michigan.

It was a bleak and lonely spot, swept by the wintry blasts from the lake; and the whirling snow, which had begun to fall, seemed to accentuate its frigid desolation.

Stepping to the edge of the bluff, he discerned on the beach below a crude frame cabin, evidently used by fishermen in the summer, but now clearly deserted. He pointed this out to Cahill.

"We'd better have a look in there, Burt."

"Hell of a place for a guy to hide," commented Cahill, sourly eyeing the hut. "He'd freeze to death. Still, if you think he's there—"

"I'm pretty sure he is." Quinn was already descending the precipitous cliff.

Cahill followed, and after him came Sullivan and the other jehu. With Quinn again leading, the four hurried along the snow-swept beach; and as they approached the weather-beaten cabin Quinn, perhaps, was the only one who was prepared for what they found there.

The cabin door stood open, hanging askew from one rusty hinge and creaking dismally in the wind; and when Quinn reached it he stepped quickly inside and stood for a moment, just within the threshold, staring at the body of an elderly man, well-groomed, stylishly clad in

costly apparel, who lay on the floor, quite dead. He was lying on his back, his arms outspread, his clothing drenched with blood—and it came to Quinn that Batterman was found in exactly this same attitude.

The others were now crowding through the doorway, and Sullivan was heard to gasp in a horrified whisper:

"It's Mr. Rawleigh!"

Quinn's eyes were swiftly searching the room, and presently he saw what he sought—the dead man's hat lying upside down in a dusty corner. A pair of new kid gloves, neatly folded, protruded from the crown.

In three strides Quinn reached the hat, picked up the gloves, felt the fingers . . . And a moment later he held in his palm the second blood-red shell!

CHAPTER XIV

QUINN hastily compared the last shell with the first, which he still carried in his pocket, and found they were identical. Then, taking prompt charge of the situation, he whirled round to the others and issued quick orders:

"Rush to the nearest telephone"—this to the driver of the second car—"and tell your chief of police what's happened here. Tell him to put every man he's got on the case—swear in deputies if necessary—and watch all outgoing trains and automobiles. Then get the coroner here in a hurry. When you've done that, come back here." Then to Cahill:

"We've a chance in a hundred, Bert, of catching this bird, or picking up his trail, if we work fast. You and Sullivan take the water front; I'll go along the bluff."

An hour's sedulous search, however, revealed no trace of the murderer; and the snow, increasing in volume, had obliterated his footprints.

WHEN the three, abandoning their fruitless quest, returned to the cabin the coroner had arrived; and his examination soon disclosed that the circum-

stances of Rawleigh's death corresponded, in every detail, with those of Batterman's murder.

Like Batterman, he had been killed with a steel bullet, which had struck him near the heart, passed through his body, and now was found on the floor beneath his back. Also, as in the Batterman case, it was clear that robbery was not the motive. Nothing, apparently, had been stolen. His pocketbook, containing \$230 in cash, his expensive gold watch, a pearl scarfpin and other valuables, all were found intact.

And then, from an upper pocket of the dead banker's vest, the coroner drew a slip of paper on which was written: "Nat Porter—9:30."

The cabin, consisting of a single room and a small alcove, used for a kitchen, was strewn with all manner of refuse—old fishing tackle, tin cans, broken dishes, a battered derby hat, bottles and pans and other rubbish—and a careful inspection of the litter on the floor denoted that no struggle had preceded the killing. Everything was thickly coated with dust. Nothing had been disturbed.

The cabin had last been occupied, according to the coroner, by a happy-go-lucky Swede known as "Vic" Olson, who earned a somewhat uncertain living by catching fish and peddling them to the wealthy residents of Lake Forest.

"To the best of my knowledge," the coroner added, "Vic hasn't been here since last September. He's pretty well known around town—a worthless sort of fellow. He only stayed here during the summer months, loafing and fishing—"

"Where does he spend his winters?" asked Cahill.

"In Chicago, I think, doing odd jobs. You'd probably find him in some lodging-house."

While Cahill went to telephone his chief and advise a prompt search for Olson, Quinn and the coroner thoroughly ransacked the miserable hut, seeking some clue among its contents that might explain the tragedy here. But they could

discover none; nor could anything be found, in all the trash scattered about, that might conceivably connect the itinerant fisherman with the death of Mason Rawleigh.

THE SEARCH finished, the coroner sat down on the edge of a wooden bunk, which had served as Olson's bed, and stared thoughtfully at the banker's dead body, which, following his post-mortem examination, he had replaced in the exact spot where it had been found.

"There's something mighty singular about this," he remarked. "Look at the position of that body now. Does that suggest murder to you? No sign of a scrap, no violence, no disturbance whatever. The man lies there as if he'd calmly stretched himself on his back and deliberately fired the bullet through his body. In a word, it looks like suicide."

"But where," asked Quinn, "is the weapon? And how, if the man killed himself, could he extract the empty shell from his gun, carefully place it in a finger of his glove, and put the glove in his hat, eight feet away? You say he died a few seconds after he was shot. It follows, then, that these things were done *after* he was dead."

The coroner shook his head in perplexity. "That is a puzzling thing, sure enough. I can't quite understand that. Still—" He suddenly turned round to Sullivan, who was standing in the cabin doorway. "When you last saw Mr. Rawleigh alive did you notice anything unusual in his manner?"

"Yes," said Sullivan promptly. "He acted like—well, he acted like *I* would act if somebody left me a million dollars. Bubblin' over with joy."

More than ever mystified, the coroner persisted:

"You say you waited for him up there in the row for nearly two hours—didn't you grow suspicious when he failed to return?"

"Well, yes; but he gave me strict orders to wait right there, no matter how long

he was gone, and that's why I didn't follow him to see what had happened. I wasn't going to disobey orders, particularly as he'd promised to pay me well for my time."

"And while you were waiting didn't you see anybody in the neighborhood, hear any shot, or notice anything at all out of the ordinary?"

"Not a thing," declared Sullivan. "It was still as a graveyard all around here—not a soul in sight, and not a sound. The first person I seen, after Mr. Rawleigh left me, was this officer here, runnin' toward me with his mate."

The coroner looked back to Quinn, and spread his hands in hopeless bewilderment.

"This *is* a mystery and no mistake! I never heard of a case quite like it. Here we have a well-to-do banker—a multi-millionaire—who leaves his comfortable home in the city and comes 'way out here to this lonely, God-forsaken spot on a blustering winter day, and walks straight to his death in this filthy hut! And does it all deliberately. Not only that—he does it with eager delight, like a man expecting some wonderful adventure! It's beyond me, I must admit! Can you make anything of it, Mr. Quinn?"

QUINN vouchsafed no answer. He was, in fact, "making" a good deal of it, but he was not yet ready to reveal his thoughts.

Later—when Rawleigh's body had been removed to an undertaking establishment, and the caretakers of many of the Lake Forest estates, and two score other persons, had been questioned to no profitable end, and the detectives having "cleaned up" on every possible angle of the case, were Chicago bound through the winter's night—Cahill likewise sought in vain to get Quinn's view of the mystery:

"Well, Steve, old scout," he said, as they settled themselves in a smoking-car seat, "we're up against a tough proposition. It's just about got me buffaloed. Too many nutty features in this! It

makes me dizzy when I think of 'em. I'm pretty sure that the guy who bumped off Batterman is the same who croaked Rawleigh. But who is he? And why did he do the jobs, and how? It looks like 'Nat' Porter; and yet . . . How'd he get those swells in those rotten ratholes—make 'em come there as though they were goin' to a weddin', instead of their own funerals? And why does he stick those red cartridge shells in their gloves, and put the gloves in their hats?"

"I'm thinking a lot about it," was Quinn's noncommittal reply; and he relapsed into a profound silence that remained practically unbroken during the rest of the journey.

AT HEADQUARTERS another surprise awaited them: "Nat" Porter had unexpectedly departed for Detroit at 9:30 this morning. The object of his trip was unknown; but the two detectives, "trailing him," had arrested him at the home of Jacob Peabody and were now bringing him back to Chicago.

Cahill grew excited over this; but Quinn remained unperturbed.

Upon the bewildering mystery Quinn now was quietly concentrating every atom of his analytic brain. And still that fantastic notion, which had been lurking there since noon, persisted. As the night wore on, and he continued to center his mind on the mesh of riddles, this hazy idea grew nebulous and began to assume concrete shape. And early next morning, when he called at the town house of Rawleigh, and later at Batterman's home, the idea stood forth, clean-cut and clear, revealing the identity of the person who had fired the blood-red shells.

CHAPTER XV

AT THE RAWLEIGH HOME Quinn had a lengthy and confidential talk with Mrs. Rawleigh, who, though nearly prostrated with grief, recognized the necessity of aiding the hunt for her husband's murderer.

Quinn's investigation here was chiefly devoted to the banker's affiliation with Lewis K. Batterman; and he learned that the twenty-five hundred dollars which Batterman had borrowed in July, 1914, to buy his partner's interest and all rights to his invention, had been a "personal loan," made largely because of friendship. And later, after the outbreak of the war, Rawleigh had advanced additional capital to enable Batterman to start manufacturing the noiseless red shells; and this, also, had been a "personal matter"—a private investment in which the bank had no part.

In exchange for his money he had taken considerable stock in the reorganized Batterman Firearms Company, and this stock (which he still held at the time of his death) had since multiplied many times in value. Rawleigh's financial assistance, then—amounting, altogether, to less than twenty-five thousand dollars—had brought him a fortune of more than a million. And this fortune, as Quinn discovered, was based mainly on the invention of the noiseless gunpowder contained in the red shells.

With close attention to details, Quinn went carefully through the dead banker's private papers, letters, records and other memoranda, which his widow brought from his desk and safe. And he found therein no trace of unpleasantness or friction between Rawleigh and Batterman. The friendship of these two, he discerned, extended over a period of some fifteen years; and their business relation, since 1914, had, apparently, been most amicable.

A hastily scrawled letter, written with lead pencil and signed merely "Ned," attracted Quinn's attention.

"Ned is my son—our only child," explained Mrs. Rawleigh, her tears starting afresh at sight of the scribbled note. "We haven't seen him, or heard from him, for nearly three years. He joined the Marines in 1917, and when he came back from overseas he seemed dissatisfied with home life. I suppose it seemed too tame to him, after all the excitement he'd had.

Anyway, he soon left home, without telling us where he was going." From a table drawer she took a kodak "snapshot" of a lad in uniform and handed it to the detective. "That's his last picture," she said, applying a handkerchief to her eyes.

"Yes, I remember now," said Quinn, regarding the photograph, "when you reported his disappearance to the police. And you never found any trace of him?"

"None. We employed a detective agency, offered rewards, searched everywhere—all to no avail. Mr. Rawleigh was heartbroken about it."

"I'll take this along with me," he said, pocketing the photograph. "Maybe we can renew the search for him."

A little later, sitting at a desk in Rawleigh's study, with the mass of papers before him, he casually asked:

"Where was your husband, Mrs. Rawleigh, on the night that Batterman was killed?"

"Why—let me see—he wasn't home that night."

"Do you know where he was?"

"He was in St. Louis. He left that afternoon, and didn't return until the following evening."

"Do you know where he stayed in St. Louis?"

She named a hotel; then, evidently puzzled by this new turn in Quinn's investigation, asked:

"Why? Has that any significance?"

"None in particular, I think," said Quinn, and smiling reassuringly, waved the matter away as though it were of no further consequence, and directed his interrogation into another channel:

"Have you any idea, Mrs. Rawleigh, why your husband was so joyous yesterday morning, just before his death?"

SHE SHOOK HER HEAD hopelessly, again pressing a handkerchief to her eyes, now red and swollen from weeping.

"That's the thing that bewilders me so! Why he should have been so happy before going to that horrid place where he

was killed—no, I simply can't understand it. It's all a horrible mystery."

"Didn't you ask him why he was so elated?"

"Yes; but he wouldn't give me a definite answer."

"What *did* he say? What were his exact words?"

"As nearly as I can remember," she replied, after a moment's hesitation, "he said: 'I've received some wonderful news—something that will make us both extremely happy. I'll tell you all about it when I get back.' Then he kissed me good-by, and went away—and that was the last I saw of him a-alive." She wept afresh.

. . . A little later, as Quinn left the house (with young Rawleigh's photograph in his pocket) and started for the mansion in Sheridan Road, he was thinking of the similarity between Rawleigh's last words and those of Batterman. Both men, before being murdered, had uttered practically the same jubilant thought. A strange analogy, indeed. But Quinn, keenly probing the thing with his mind, was beginning to see the reason for it.

CHAPTER XVI

MRS. BATTERMAN was a large, florid woman, somewhat overdressed and wearing a profusion of diamonds. She met him in the gilt reception hall of her glittering palace. She had just returned from Palm Beach with her daughter, and was palpitating with nervous excitement.

Her mien, however—unlike that of Mrs. Rawleigh—bespoke a thirst for vengeance rather than grief. Striding heavily about the ornate room, her eyes flashing, she exclaimed in a rumbling voice of passion:

"Get the dirty rat that killed my husband, and I'll give you twenty-five thousand dollars! Spot cash! I mean what I say. I'll deposit the money today in any bank you name, and tell 'em to pay it to you as soon as you've caught this cowardly skunk—"

"I intend to catch him," said Quinn, interrupting, "and I believe I can if you'll help me. First, I want to see your husband's private papers—particularly any that bear on his relationship with Mason Rawleigh—and I want you to tell me all you know of this relationship."

"I can tell you this much about it," she said, leading the way up the broad staircase—"my husband never would have got as far as he did if it hadn't been for Mr. Rawleigh. At the same time, if it hadn't been for my husband, Mr. Rawleigh never would have made the money he did. It worked both ways, you see."

"Well, here we are," she announced, and preceded him into a second-floor room, furnished with office equipment. "My husband often worked here at night after getting home from downtown. Many's the time he and Mr. Rawleigh came here to talk over business matters. You're welcome to examine anything you find here."

While Quinn removed the contents from the drawers of a mahogany desk, she brought more data from a filing-cabinet and a small steel safe beside it, volubly talking the while. Presently from the profusion of papers, heaped on the desk, he drew an old photograph and studied it intently.

IT WAS A "full-face" portrait of a man in the early thirties. Except for his eyes, deep-set beneath heavy brows, the man's countenance was devoid of any striking characteristic. But these eyes, somehow, distinguished his face in a peculiarly compelling manner. They were the eyes of a dreamer, yet they denoted rare intellect as well; and the bushy black brows, uniting at the apex of his nose, seemed to emphasize their brooding expression.

"Whose picture is this?" asked Quinn.

Mrs. Batterman, who was taking more documents from the filing-cabinet, looked over her fleshy shoulder at the photograph, which Quinn held up.

"That's Mr. Daggett," she said. "He

was my husband's business partner back in 1913."

"Did you know him?"

"Only slightly. He used to have dinner with us, occasionally—we were living, then, in a South Side flat—but he wasn't very sociable. Never had much to say. He was always wrapped up in some invention or other."

"Dead now, isn't he?" asked Quinn, still studying the photograph.

"Yes. He was killed in the war, my husband learned."

Quinn laid the photograph aside and returned his attention to the pile of papers.

And in particular he examined those which concerned the early days of Batterman's business life—the lean, precarious days, when he, handicapped in a sense by the impractical Daggett, was desperately struggling to ward off financial ruin. All these he placed in a separate heap, together with several foreign letters from Daggett the *Légionnaire*; and finally—after more than three hours' steady work—he wrapped them up with the photograph, and announced that his investigation was finished.

"Don't forget what I told you about that twenty-five thousand dollars," said Mrs. Batterman in parting. "You'll get it just as soon as you arrest this skulking hyena."

IT WAS NEVER Quinn's wont to boast of what he intended doing—and he was, ordinarily, averse to talking of his exploits—but in the present instance, so confident of success was he, he felt justified in saying:

"Within forty-eight hours, if all goes well, I will have my hands on the murderer of your husband and Mr. Rawleigh."

Mrs. Batterman was thrilled. "Wonderful! But how will you get him? Where will you look for him?"

"I'm not going to look for him," said Quinn. "I'm going to make him look for me."

CHAPTER XVII

QUINN on his way back to headquarters called on Durant at the North Beach Hotel and went keenly over their previous talk, point by point. He then visited Batterman's downtown office, where he unearthed some additional records bearing on the early partnership of Batterman & Daggett and the subsequent dissolution wrought by Mason Rawleigh's money.

Reaching headquarters, he made a detailed report to his chief, who promptly telegraphed the St. Louis police to ascertain if Mason Rawleigh of Chicago was registered at the hotel, mentioned by Mrs. Rawleigh, or any other St. Louis hotel, on the night of Batterman's death.

The police replied that on the night in question a man, registered as "Mason Rawleigh, Chicago," had been at the hotel named, but they were unable to state positively whether it was really Mason Rawleigh, or some person masquerading as him. They were pursuing their investigation, they said, in an effort to determine whether or not the Chicago banker had actually been in St. Louis on that night. Quinn, meanwhile, was again questioning Simon Garvy, the tramp, who was still being held at the bureau. But no amount of interrogation could change Garvy's original story. To all queries on what Batterman had said to him he substantially repeated his statement yesterday morning:

"When I says to 'im, 'Who hurt you friend?' he whispers to me in a gaspin' voice, '*Rawleigh! Get Mason Rawleigh!*' Them was his dying words. I'll never forget 'em as long as I live!"

As the vagabond was led from the room, Chief Galloway turned to Quinn and Cahill, who were in his office, and asked slowly, wonderingly:

"D'you suppose Rawleigh *did* kill him, after all? If so, why? And why was Rawleigh killed yesterday in exactly the same way and under similar circumstances? And *who* killed him? Not Por-

ter, because Porter was in Detroit. But there's one thing sure," he added grimly, "when I get Porter back here—and he'll be here any minute now—I'm going to hold him! Meanwhile, we've got to learn where Rawleigh was when Batterman was killed, and we've got to keep after that Swede fisherman."

AT THIS JUNCTURE young Porter, haggard of face, was led into the room between his captives. In response to the questions, rained upon him, he said he had gone to Detroit "on a matter of business," and had "dropped out casually" to Peabody's home, not knowing that Peabody was in Chicago, and he explained the memorandum, "Rawleigh—9:30," by saying he had an appointment with the banker at that hour.

"But it was in the *morning!*" he protested, glaring at the accusing faces around him. "It wasn't that night! I saw him in the *morning*—twelve hours before Batterman was slain!"

"What did you see Rawleigh about?" asked the chief.

"I wanted credit at his bank. He turned me down. So I went to Batterman. Can't you see," he cried, flinging his hand wide in a passionate gesture, "that I haven't the slightest idea why either of these men were killed?"

He was locked up nevertheless; and later in the day his friend, Peabody—discovered hiding in a South-side hotel—was similarly questioned and "held on suspicion," despite the young architect's violent protestation of innocence.

"It's true I was keeping under cover," he admitted, "but only because I was trying to avoid publicity. Who wants to be mixed up in a mess like this? Batterman wired me to come to Chicago, and I came. He wanted me to design a summer home for him. When I got here I found he'd been murdered. That's all I can tell you."

"You'll tell us more before we're through with you!" growled Chief Galloway.

IN THIS questioning, however—and in the questioning of “Nat” Porter—Quinn took scarcely more than a tepid interest. He had, he believed, something in his mind infinitely more important—in fine, the real solution of the mystery. And, alone with his chief, with the two red shells on the desk between them, he undertook to answer, one by one, all its baffling points:

What sinister thing had caused these shells to emerge from their secret hiding place, where they had been safely locked and guarded since November, 1918, and inflict sudden death on the two men who had grown rich on their manufacture?

Why had these two men been killed?

Why had they been killed in wretched hovels—a squalid contrast to the luxury in which they lived?

Who had killed them?

Having answered those questions—and the answers withstood the severest scrutiny—Quinn answered the last and most important one of all:

“How could the murderer be caught?”

In minute detail he outlined his plan—not for running the murderer down, but for making the murderer *come to him*—and when he had finished his chief sat back, pondering the thing in thoughtful silence.

“Well, Steve,” he said at last, smiling indulgently, “you’ve had some queer ideas in your time, but this one beats ‘em all! Your scheme for trapping this person you mention sounds to me like an Arabian night’s adventure. Still, it’s no more so than the case itself. I doubt if it’ll work, but certainly no harm can be done by trying it. So go to it, and good luck to you!”

CHAPTER XVIII

WITHOUT delay, Quinn baited and set his trap. . . . At a State Street department store he bought an expensive leather traveling bag upon which he had stenciled the initials, “J. W. R.” In the man’s haberdashery section

he purchased such articles—all of the best material—as a man would need for a week’s journey, and these, together with a box of excellent cigars, he placed in his bag.

He then drove in a taxicab to a fashionable hotel in Michigan Avenue and engaged a costly room, registering as James W. Randall of Newark, New Jersey. Upon the room clerk and other attendants he cunningly left the impression that he was a man of considerable wealth, who had just arrived in Chicago on an errand of great importance. This impression was heightened when he emerged from his room, twenty minutes later, and sought the hotel stenographer and handed her a sheet of stationery on which he had written 100 words.

“I want ten copies of that,” he said, “and I want it copied exactly as I’ve written it.”

The young woman, busily typing, discerned that James W. Randall was preparing to establish in New Jersey a five-million-dollar plant for the manufacture of explosives.

He examined the typewritten sheets she gave him, paid her twice her usual fee, and called a taxicab and went, in turn, to each of the Chicago daily newspapers. He left one of the sheets at the business office of every paper, with orders that the copy thereon be published immediately, without alteration, in a quarter-page display advertisement.

THE FIRST of the advertisements appeared in the morning newspapers of the following day, and before nine o’clock that morning Quinn’s hotel room was besieged by a heterogeneous crowd of men, all eager to see “Mr. Randall.” Clad in silk pajamas and brocaded bathrobe, with an elaborate breakfast on the table beside him, Quinn sat at the desk in his room, his back to the window, and interviewed each man separately.

Most of them were manifestly unqualified to fill the requirements set forth in his advertisement, and these were dis-



" 'We'd better have a look in there, Burt.' "

missed after a brief interrogation. The few of desirable qualifications were questioned at length; and Quinn wrote down their names and addresses, and other data concerning them, and said they'd hear from him later on.

Throughout the morning he was visited intermittently; but when the afternoon papers appeared on the streets he had a steady and unbroken flow of callers. The rush reached its height about two o'clock. Quinn, who was admitting to his room only one man at a time, opened the door for the latest applicant to leave and swept his gaze over the group of men waiting outside in the corridor.

His keen eyes fastened themselves on a man, haggard of face and poorly clad, who stood apart from the others, holding a folded newspaper in his right hand. The empty sleeve of his coat denoted he had lost an arm, and his face indicated a woeful lack of bodily vigor.

"I'll see you next," said Quinn, and beckoned to him to enter.

As the man sidled into the room, Quinn closed the door and quietly locked it, and motioned to a chair facing the south window.

"Sit here," he said.

THE MAN sat down; and the afternoon sunshine, pouring through the window, fell upon his countenance and mercilessly revealed its worn lineaments.

"I've come in response to your ad—" he began, with a glance at the folded newspaper.

"I know. I see you've lost an arm," remarked Quinn, sitting opposite and facing him. "In service?"

"Four years of it. I enlisted early in the game—September of 'fourteen. Rough luck, mostly. Gas. Shell shock. A bullet through here"—he tapped his right chest—"almost everything!"

"On our side, of course?"

"Yes," briefly. "And now about this: You say here you want a man, preferably an ex-service man, familiar with explosives, of inventive skill rather than

business ability, and that you're ready to pay any salary in reason. This, I take it, is bona fide? No strings tied to it?"

"Absolutely none. The right man," said Quinn, offering the box of cigars to his visitor, "can practically name his own salary—anything under \$30,000. But he *must* be the right man."

"I've reason to believe, Mr. Randall, that I'm the man you want."

"I hope so. Meanwhile—I haven't the pleasure of knowing your name."

"Appleton—Wilbur J. Appleton."

"What makes you think, Mr. Appleton, that you're the man I'm looking for?"

"Chiefly my success in formulating new explosives."

"Can't you be more specific? Mention a few of your successful experiments."

The man was silent. With slow deliberation, he bit the end from a cigar, carefully lit it and smoked in thoughtful silence for the better part of a minute.

Quinn, without appearing to do so, was keenly studying the face of his caller in the pitiless glare of the sun—the heavy black brows, unbroken at the nose, the deep-set, brooding eyes, which bespoke creative fancy, and illuminated, in a striking way, the sallow countenance.

"If you don't mind," the man said at last, "I'd rather not talk about my past. But if you'll only give me a chance to show you what I can do—"

"I'm afraid not," said Quinn, with businesslike crispness. "This is a big undertaking, and before I engage a man I must know something definite about his qualifications. If you can't tell me something about yourself—your past experience and achievements—I'm afraid we can't do business." He rose, glancing busily at his watch.

Another pause.

"All right, then! I invented noiseless gunpowder."

Quinn simulated sharp surprise. "What! The powder made secretly by Lewis Batterman?"

The man nodded. "Yes. The same powder. I invented it."

"Well, this is something!" Quinn resumed his chair, hitching it forward.

THE MAN answered Quinn's questions monosyllabically, nervously chewing his cigar, clearly regretting having spoken. Quinn, however, affecting not to notice this, rose briskly, with another glance at his watch, and cordially announced:

"It seems, Mr. Appleton, you're just the man we're looking for. I want you to meet my partner, Cahill. His office is in La Salle Street. If we hurry, we'll catch him before he leaves."

Seizing his hat and overcoat, Quinn conducted his caller through the group of men still waiting outside the door, and descended with him to the hotel lobby and led him outside to a taxicab. He directed the chauffeur in a lowered tone; and the cab bore them north in Michigan Avenue, turned west, then north again, and stopped at the aged building in La Salle Street which houses the Chicago Detective Bureau.

As they entered the lower hall, the man uneasily asked:

"What sort of place is this?" And tried to draw back.

But Quinn had a tight grip on his right arm. "It's all right," he said. "We'll find him in here." And he half dragged, half pushed his prisoner into the office of Chief Galloway.

The chief looked up from his desk, inquiringly.

"Hello! What have we here?"

"This," said Quinn, shoving his prisoner forward, "is Andrew Daggett, the man who murdered Mason Rawleigh and Lewis K. Batterman."

CHAPTER XIX

DAGGETT slumped into the nearest chair, his face ashen, the fingers of his right hand reaching tremblingly toward his hip pocket. But Quinn was quicker than he—and in another moment he laid on the chief's desk a .45-caliber army revolver.

"That's the gun he killed 'em with," he remarked.

"Well, Daggett," said the chief pleasantly, picking up the revolver, "what have you to say for yourself?"

Daggett, cowering in his chair, became aware he was still nervously chewing the cigar that Quinn had given to him; and with a shudder of disgust he spat it out and ground it beneath his heel. Then, his sunken eyes blazing with wrath, he turned on Quinn, and for upward of ten minutes there flowed from his lips an amazing stream of vile profanity.

When this angry upflare had burnt itself out, the chief said affably:

"Well, now that you've got that off your chest, are you ready to confess?"

"Confess nothing! I don't know what you're talking about. I don't even know those men. Never heard of them, even. I reached Chicago only this morning—first time I've ever been here—and I haven't seen a newspaper—"

"You've got one in your pocket now," said Quinn, pointing to the folded newspaper in a pocket of his coat. "It's the same one in which you read my advertisement."

Daggett flinched. But he doggedly maintained:

"I don't know anything about it." And he sought refuge in silence.

Finally, after more than two hours of this futile "grilling," Quinn (who had reserved his trump card for the last) took charge of the prisoner.

"I know that you did this thing, Daggett," he said, standing over the crumpled figure in the chair. "I also know *why* you did it. Do you want me to tell you *why*?"

DAGGETT made no answer. His eyes downcast, he fingered a button on his ragged coat. Although his taciturnity remained unbroken, he had begun to weaken under the terrific bombardment of questions.

Quinn, perceiving his advantage, quickly pressed it:

"I'll tell you why you did it, Daggett. When you got back from France, where Batterman supposed you had died, you found him and Rawleigh living in luxury, rolling in wealth—wealth they had made from your invention. You were down and out—homeless, friendless, a ragged bum—shot through the chest, your left arm gone, a wreck of the man you once had been. And you couldn't help thinking, as you tramped the streets, that while you were over there, suffering all the tortures of hell, your former partner had remained safely at home and grown rich on your misfortune. Isn't that right, Daggett?"

Quinn paused, but Daggett refused to speak. Quinn continued:

"That thought ate into your soul, while you walked the streets in destitution, cold and hungry and miserable. And at last you decided to even the score. You planned the whole thing deliberately.

"And in each case you removed from your gun, and left behind in your victim's glove, the red shell that had taken his life. A poetic touch, Daggett, but it's proved your undoing. It was the red shell that made me first suspect you. Are you ready now, Daggett, to tell us the rest?"

WITHOUT lifting his gaze from the floor, Daggett, following another pause, answered jerkily, as though the words were being prodded from the depths of his being:

"I met him outside his office that morning.

"He was interested right away. He knew what I could do. Wanted to know what my invention was. But I wouldn't tell him—then. Instead I begged him, as a personal favor, to let me have two of the noiseless shells. Told him I wanted 'em as souvenirs.

"He balked at that—said he had only two—but he finally agreed.

"Well, I didn't call back. Instead I hung around the neighborhood, and about twelve o'clock I saw him start for lunch with one of his St. Louis customers, a man named Durant. I trailed them to the Union League Club. They didn't see me. I waited outside the club till they came out, and when Batterman started back to his office, alone, I tackled him again and told him I'd show him my invention if he'd give me the shells.

"After some further argument, he told me to come along to his office and get them. I said I was ashamed to go there in these rags, and asked him to bring them to me. I said I would meet him in the east wing of the County Building.

"He brought them to me there. Then I told him I'd invented a new explosive that could be made at one-tenth the cost of gunpowder, and yet contain far greater force, and was willing to sell him all rights for one thousand dollars cash.

"His eyes sparkled greedily. He thought he saw another chance to make a fortune out of me.

"I told him I'd fitted up a laboratory in a cheap neighborhood out south, and gave him the address of this shanty, which I'd selected the day before. He promised to meet me there that night and examine my invention.

"Well, he came that night," said Daggett, "and I was waiting for him there in the dark. And . . . that was all."

"What about Rawleigh?" Quinn asked.

"Rawleigh was easier still. I knew about his runaway son, so I went to Lake Forest and sent him an anonymous note, saying his son was in a cabin there, burning with fever and crying for home. I told him how to find the cabin, and he followed my directions and found it. . . .

"And that was all," said Daggett.



His Character

"What kind of a man is Brown?"

"Well, if someone would offer him a position as wine taster for the government, he'd want to know what the salary was."

Wild Stuff

There was a young lady, Miss Shilder,
Who married a fellow named Wilder,
Then the stork came one day—
Left twins, now folks say
They're growing—yes, Wilder and Wilder.

Rum-Rum!

(Customers get 50-50 by simple password, "Yum-yum," in Bronx.—*News Note.*)

Scene, Bronx

Synopsis

A druggist's password.....Yum-yum
It costs you quite a.....Sum-sum
It makes you deaf and.....Dumb-dumb
Detective calls it.....Rum-rum
Telephone goes.....Ting-ting!
Ambulance goes.....Ding-ding!
Druggist goes.....Sing-Sing!

Saying It with Flowers

Miss Ouldgirl: The manager said I was well preserved, and then I found my discharge notice in my pay envelope!

Miss Younger: Probably he just meant that you were canned and wanted to say it nicely!

The Spring Maiden

Now the spring has touched the grasses

And the trees,

And the lissome city lassies

With the breeze.

You yourself, my dearest Stella

Love to linger out of doors,

With your gold-tipped umbrella

To protect you, when it pours.

You have left your winter mufti

For a coat of lighter kind,

And your tresses, fair and tufty,

Go a-straying in the wind.

You have lately felt electric

Round the knees,

And are quite enthusiastic

At the tees!

Soon the bee with haste a-humming

Round your nose;

Soon will lovers keep a-coming

To your toes!

If you do not care to love them,

They will never be denied

Till you casually shove them

(Speaking candidly) aside!

Now the tennis fiend is sowing

Seeds of longing in you, dear;

And you'll soon be off a-rowing,

For the merry month is here.

Though the current may be heady,

As it flows,

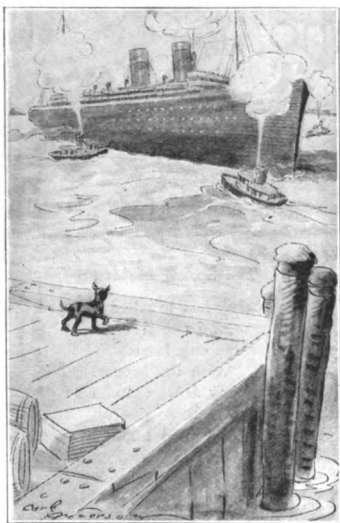
You, of course, are pretty steady,

I suppose!

(But you know these facts already,

So I'll close!)

La Touche Hancock.



Drawn for Wayside Tales by Carl T. Anderson

Pup: That comes of being popular! They are all whistling so I can't tell which one has the first claim on me!

Preferred It

Music enthusiast: Didn't you think the barcarole the best thing at Mrs. Harmony's musical afternoon?

Mrs. Nuriche: I didn't take any of the rolls, but I liked the chicken salad.

Gift

You gave your songs to Mirabelle,
Your laughter to Aline,
You gathered white wood-violets
When trees wore Corot green.

You gather white wood-violets
With pale Penelope—
You gave your joy to them, and saved
Sorrow and tears for me. . . .

You gave your joy to them, and saved
Your tears—How could you know
That I should rather bear your grief
Than see you smile and . . . go.

Power Dalton.

Memories of Chilkoot

I can feel the hard old tumpline on my forehead as I listen

To the mushing of the sledges as the dog-pack snarls and strains;

I can feel my snow-shoes sliding on the crust with sun a-glisten

Breaking trail across the northland where we sought the yellow grains—

Yellow grains of precious metal that we found among the gravel

Where we thawed the frozen creekbed with a fire of stunted boughs!

Oh the pressure of the tumpline on my forehead as I travel

Takes me back to old Alaska where the hardy reindeer browse.

There are cabins by the roadside where the wood-piles must not lower—

Cabins full of man- and dog-smell but as elegant as Heaven!

For there's shelter and there's comfort for the weary northward goer,

Place to cook the sour-dough biscuit that is innocent of leaven.

There is sleep that rests completely, sleep that's dreamless and refreshing;

There is waking at the dawning with the lust to strive anew!

Thus the mental straw of Chilkoot once again my mind is threshing—

Tumpline, pressing on my forehead, I can credit this to you!

Strickland Gillilan.

The Pay Run

Mix: It certainly pays to do right in the long run!

Fix: Yes, but it is such a long run!

Isn't Worth It

"At's a wuthless man I's got, Miss Jenny."

"Why don't you get rid of him? Sue him for divorce."

"Divo'ce? You say a divo'ce? W'y, chile, a divo'ce ud cost me fifty dollahs, an' Ah ain't got no money to waste on that niggah."

The Right Bear

"No," wrote the Sunday editor to the young man who had submitted a bear story, "bear stories are out of date. We want more spicy matter."

"But," rejoined the young man, in his reply, "this is just what you want—it's about a cinnamon bear."

Easy

"George, you should get married," advised the Married Man. "It is wonderful to have a home waiting for you when you return at night, there is ecstasy in caring for a garden and a lawn, you can raise a dog from a pup, children are adorable and no trouble at all, a wife is an inspiration, and even if she does get suspicious, you can always talk her out of it."

"I could if I could lie like you can," said the Bachelor, thoughtfully.

A Drama of the See

Astigmatism's all to blame
That I'm the fish 'twas netted,
Although I own it was a catch
That I have ne'er regretted.

The waves, you see, that caused it all
Were in Milady's tresses.
And how my glasses and her net
Entwined—I'll leave to guesses.

Astigmatism, I repeat,
Caused my spectacular defeat.
Bernard L. Wells

Denial

'Twas on the wild and woolly waste
A gnu by accusations hurt,
To prove his innocence made haste,
And show he was no ardent flirt.

A model of propriety,
He struggled in suspicion's mesh;
And said his friends should plainly see,
He might be gnu, but never fresh.



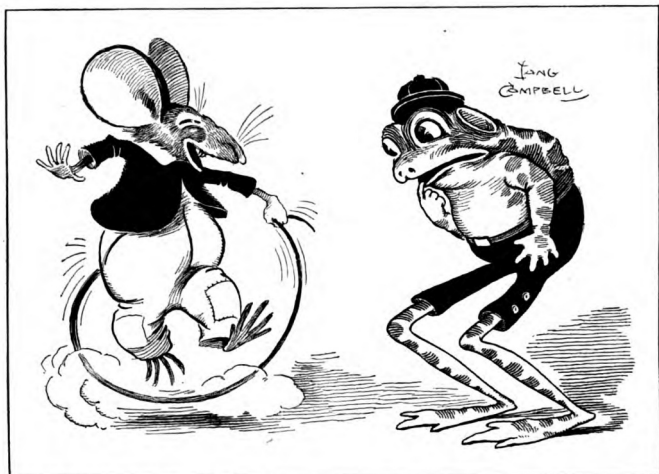
Drawn for Wayside Tales by John I. Wagner

Suited to a "T"!

The Paint Dealer's Sunset

Canary Yellow clouds drift down the sky,
To merge with massive banks of Lawn
Chair Green;
Flake White, a splendid cloud ship passes
by,
While in the burning west afar is seen
Ribbands of Antwerp Blue that trail
and lean
Across wide seas of Indian Red, to stack
In ever rising hills across the screen,
While vapor looms in Locomotive Black

And there are lofty peaks in Vandyke
Brown,
That lift above terrain in Road Cart
Red;
The moments pass and I scan floating
down,
Isles of Coach Painter's Green; the day
has sped,
And twilight steals across in Prussian
Blue,
So with this sunset sonnet I am through.
Thomas J. Murray.



Drawn for Wayside Tales by Lang Campbell

"Betcha can't jump the rope like this, Froggy!"

Certainly

"A man should love——"

"Yes, go on——"

"A man should love his wife even if she does get fat for he promises to love her through thick and thin."

Watchful Waiting

"Wee" Askem: How do you manage to grab so many beautiful girls at the beach every summer?

Hugh Tellem: System, my boy! When I don't see what I want I bask for it.

Prin Temps Punning

What flowers lift their queenly heads,
From fresh, moist, earthy garden beds,
Where springtime's sylvan slipper treads?
Tulips!

And what may these bright blossoms be,
That bloom anew each time I see
The smile that warmly welcomes me?
Two lips!

Sophie E. Redford.

Salesmanship

Patron: Are you sure that this paste is imported from France?

Tactful clerk: Why, madam, you surely have heard of the French paste tree!

Poor Girl!

Charming Jill ran up a hill
For one dress more'n she ought'er.
When in that gown she skipped the town,
The sheriff, darn him! caught her.

Modern Mother Goose to Friend Husband

A hobby, a hubby, a nine-o'clock dubby,
You monomaniac mutt!
You used to putter about the house,
But now you only putt!

Quin A. Ryan.

Lost Out

Darke: Mable gave me the mitten last night.

Greene: Then you're a little ahead.

Darke: No; I forgot my hat.

Head and Shoulders

The young generation will never get sense,

Much as we labor to make them;

Old heads on new shoulders—a stunt too immense—

While flappers continue to shake them.

Physiognomy, Except—

With the “truths in our faces”

I gladly fall in,

But no woman ever

Has had a “weak chin!”

Just Made for Him

Sarah Leah seemed just made for Homer Alfred. She covered her face with cold cream, she dusted it with powder, she applied her rouge, she used more powder, she shaved her eye brows, she touched her lashes, she hennaed her hair, and she crowded her feet and her body into coverings of the shape and size decreed by fashion.

Yes, she was made for Homer Alfred.

The Champion Nuisance

Would he who offices with me might go commit *felo de se*? He goes at night to see a show where chorus-flappers stand arow to do their little steps and sing, while bum comedians blithely spring (with limber lips and brazen tongue) gags that would make the Sphinx seem young! Next morning when I fain would toil, and gather wampum for my moil, this bimbo lets a yip scape his mouth with ribaldry agape, and then proceeds to tell quite badly those “jokes” to which I’d hearkened sadly when I was younger far than now—some day I’ll crown that simp, I vow! He tells me all he can remember of wheezes grayer than December—wheezes I hadn’t heard of lately; and then he roars immoderately. He even feels that I also should catch the spirit of a show which he had seen and I had not—I swear that baby should be shot!

Strickland Gillilan.



Drawn for Wayside Tales by W. P. Trent, Jr.

She: But Jack, are you sure you love me for what I am?

He: Yes, dear!

She: Would you love me if I were penny-less?

He: Then you would not be what you are.

The Fight

I had a fight with a candle last night.

It stood not the ghost of a show.

The struggle was brief and it soon came to grief,

For I put it out with one blow!

Likely So

Dobbs: Ah, how do you like this home brew? Fine eh? I made the stuff out of my own head from an original recipe.

Hobbs: I don't believe I'll drink any—it might be wood alcohol.

Nothing to Show

He paid five thou. for a motor cart,

And then had an awful fit,

For he found, when he tried on the road to start,

He'd nothing to chauffeur it!



Drawn for Wayside Tales by Marshall D. Smith

Jones: I told the aeroplane man I'd give him \$5.00 to give me a ride.
 Bones: Did he take you up?

The Styles

Jones: A New York store advertises that its evening gowns are modestly priced.

Bones: Well—that's something!

Why Not?

"Marie is so modest she puts her pet dog out of the room while she is changing her gowns."

"Of course—he is a Pekingese."

Triangle-worms

All that "early bird" nonsense would fill up a book

A volume like Dumas or Dickens,

But any old Dad, with a plump pocket book,

Looks an early worm to spring chickens!

The Crhyme Wave

Hill: Scribbler has sold his poem at last!

Dale: Did he?

Hill: No—not a ditty; I said a poem.

Natural Question

Kriss: The doctor has granted me a new lease of life.

Kross: That's fine. Will you be able to meet the rent?

An Admission

Reformer: Is it not a fact that most modern dances are suggestive of the devil?

Jazz hound: Imp possible!

What is Your Occupation?



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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.**

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I can't draw an original?"***

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FEDERAL SCHOOL NEWS

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ILLUSTRATING AND CARTOONING

EDITED BY

CHAS L. BARTHOLOMEW

Chas L. Bartholomew



RUSSELL BEHMER

RUSSELL BEHMER, of Emporia, Kans., worked in a theater after school hours and did his first art work on the posters out in front. Since then, he has been specializing on store advertising, taking care of a score of window backgrounds with cards and cut-out silhouettes, and is now working on a series of book illustrations for a collection of war stories soon to be published. In a

recent letter he says, "I want to take this opportunity to express my keen appreciation of the course, and the capable men back of it."

THOMAS CHALMERS, clerk in the Atlantic City post office, made three posters for the Christmas rush publicity, and received a letter of commendation from the late First Assistant Postmaster General at Washington for the quality of the work.



T. G. WEBSTER

T. G. WEBSTER, of the Mercantile Corporation, Dayton, O., is getting started in advertising work thru one of the largest concerns in the city. Speaking of published work which he recently submitted, he says, "This standard of work has been made possible by your excellent course, and also your patience with a slow student."

NORMAN FULLER, after a varied experience as a miner, forest ranger, and college student, has entered the art department of the Rocky Mountain News, at Denver. His work consists of general layouts and special sketches for this widely known daily. In doing this he turned down other offers, as he wished to make his start in his home state.



NORMAN FULLER

FRANCISCO ICASIANO, Manila, P. I., got a position as cartoonist on the Philippines Herald, leading Philippine daily at Manila, right after sending in his first lesson. He draws three cartoons a week for the Herald and one for the Citizen, a weekly. "How wonderful is your course of instruction," he says. "You can always count on me as one of your boosters."

JOSEPH J. PRESTLER of Chicago has been elected president of the "Bell Cartoon Club" composed of employees of the Bell Telephone Company, who are interested in cartooning. His photo and several cartoons appeared in a recent number of the Bell Telephone News. He says that "the fact that I remain home every evening to work on my drawing is due, I believe, to the interesting way in which the Federal course is written."



JOSEPH J. PRESTLER

HENRY J. SCHROEDER recently took first honor in a cartoon contest sponsored by the New Orleans Item, with a disarmament cartoon, winning out over 113 contestants for the place.

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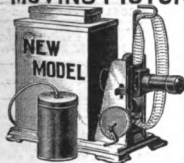
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October 1st, 1921.
Rooster School,
214 So. Franklin St.,
Chicago, Ill. 3.

First Hawaiian Conservatory of Music.

Int.—
I shall certainly be very glad to recommend your course whenever the chance is mine to do so. Mr. W. R. Johnston has not phoned me yet, and if he does not phone in a day or so, I will write him. Am sending a letter to Miss Helen Slavik today which I think may help to secure her enrollment, and I shall be glad at any time to write a personal letter to anyone whom you may suggest.

Your former student,
W. L. Weber.

Vinton, Iowa, 10-7.

Dear Sir:—
Received picks and first lesson September 29th. Sure was surprised how much I learned first lesson. Wishing you the best of success with your course, I am
Respectfully yours,
Van Wright,
Mfr. Western Union, Vinton, Ia.

Our improved method of teaching is so **simple, plain and easy** that you begin on a piece with your first lesson. **In half an hour you can play it.** Thousands of successful students prove this to be true.

ONLY 4 MOTIONS We have reduced the necessary motions you learn to only four, and you acquire these in a very few minutes. Then it is only a matter of a little practice to acquire the weird, fascinating, tremolos, staccatos, slurs and other effects that make this instrument so delightful. **The Hawaiian Guitar plays any kind of music,** both the melody and the accompaniment.

FREE Just think of it. 52 lessons on this wonderful guitar. You get a beautiful large sized genuine Hawaiian Guitar absolutely free as soon as you enroll for the lessons. All the necessary picks, the steel playing bar and 52 pieces of music are included without cost to you.

Special Arrangements for Lessons if You Have Your Own Guitar

Play Any Music

In half an hour after you get the free Hawaiian Guitar and the first lesson, you can play Hawaiian Melodies.

In a very short time after a little practice you can play any kind of music as well as Hawaiian, both the melody and accompaniment.

[TEAR OUT COUPON]



Tear Off and Mail Today

First Hawaiian Conservatory of Music, Inc.
233 Broadway (Woolworth Bldg.), New York City
Please send me full information about your 52 lessons and FREE GUITAR OFFER.

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

TOWN.....STATE.....

Print name and address clearly

Actual photo
of one of
our rebuilt
Underwood
Typewriters.



And It's Yours

Standard Underwood

Rebuilt like new. Every typewriter is factory rebuilt by typewriter experts. New enamel - new nickeling - new lettering new platen - new key rings - new parts wherever needed - making it impossible for you to tell it from a brand new Underwood. An up-to-date machine with two color ribbon, back spacer, stencil device, automatic ribbon reverse, tabulator, etc. In addition, we furnish FREE, water-proof cover and a special Tough Typewriter Instruction Book. You can learn to operate the Underwood in one day.

From factory to you

Yes, only \$3 brings you this genuine Rebuilt Standard Visible Writing Underwood direct from our factory, and then only small monthly payments while you are using it makes it yours; or, if convenient pay cash. Either way, there is a big, very much worth-while saving, too. Genuine new Under-

wood parts wherever the wear comes - genuine standard four row, single shift keyboard - thoroughly tested - guaranteed for 5 years.

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You don't even have to scrimp and save to pay cash. Instead, you pay only a little each month in amounts so conveniently small that you will hardly

notice them, while all the time you are paying, you will be enjoying the use of and the profits from the machine.

10 Days' Free Trial

Remember, you don't even have to buy the machine until you get it and have used it on 10 days' free trial so that you can see for yourself how new it is and how well it writes. You must be satisfied or else the entire transaction will not cost you a single penny.

FREE TRIAL COUPON

Typewriter Emporium Shipman-Ward Mfg. Co.

2124 Shipman Bldg., Montrose and Ravenswood Aves., Chicago, Ill.

Send by return mail Bargain Offer No. 2124 of a Standard Visible Writing Underwood. This is not an order and does not obligate me to buy.

Name.....

Street or R. F. D. No.....

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Now is the time when every dollar saved counts. Let us save you many dollars. Don't delay. Get this wonderful easy payment bargain offer now, so you can send for and be sure of getting your Underwood at a big saving—and our easy terms or for cash.

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