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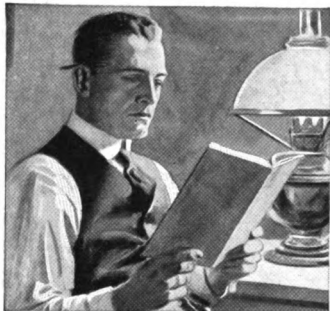


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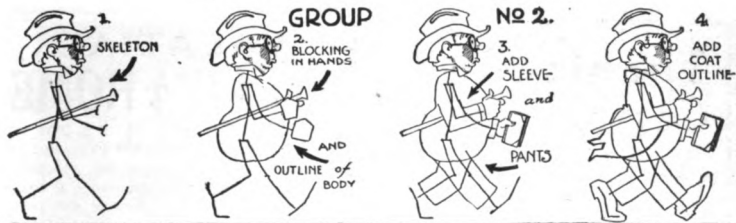
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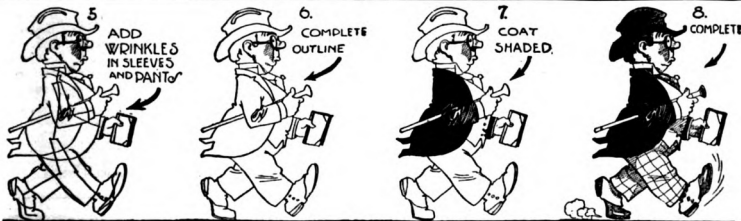
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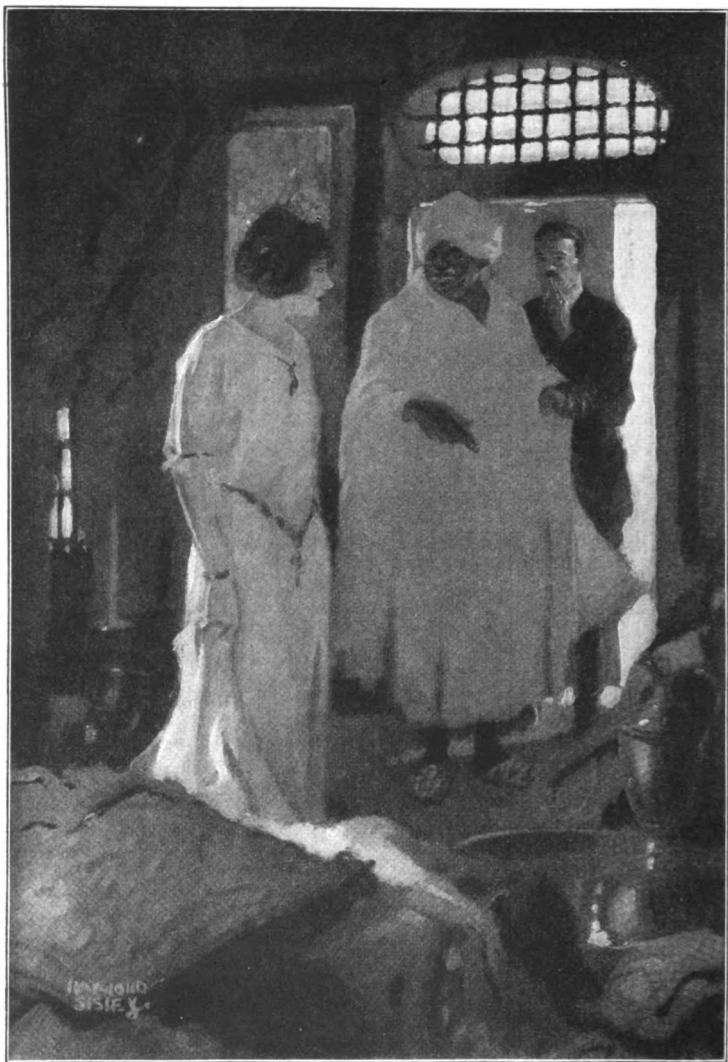
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"She arose—started to speak—but saw his finger rise quickly to his lips."

# WAYSIDE TALES

PUBLISHED MONTHLY AT 6 N. MICHIGAN AVE., CHICAGO

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Volume 21

MAY, 1922

Number 5

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## THE WEREWOLF

*The First Installment of a Two-Part Story  
of Love and Adventure in the Orient*

By Will Levington Comfort

Illustrations by Raymond Sisley

A STRANGE VOICE sounded in the administrator's office at Tiavara: ". . . I never knew it to fail. It's the last ounce that wins. Tennis or billiards or fifty-mile battle front—all the same. If you can hold on long enough, the opposition's bound to break. Then you can't lose!"

It was Willard Hessler, Bradshaw's new assistant. Stories of the young man's whip-hand in a pinch—his wordless but contagious courage—had preceded his arrival at Tiavara. Bradshaw, who was the administrator, had called together the little foreign set on the Island to meet the stranger. Miss Carruthers was late, and had halted at the ante-room door, when Hessler's voice reached her. Apparently he had finished talking, so she entered.

The office itself was all dim shadows to Margaret's eyes after the torrid light outside. Suddenly she realized that Willard Hessler was looking at her, hard and straight, looking into her eyes. Her look

did not move from him, while one of Bradshaw's house servants showed her a seat. Hessler's look was not a stare, nothing of effrontery in it. As he turned his glance back to his new chief, Miss Carruthers did a queer thing. She rose from the chair the servant had shown her and moved to another—no reason in the world. . . .

The Island of Tiavara, a mere point on the speckled map of Oceanica, was a tiny world in itself. Many ships went past between the Molucca Passages and Manila and Honkong, but not one in a thousand stopped. Mainly those on the decks squinted their eyes at the thin, low, fume heat-clouds, or the thin, white cloud-hangings upon the height of land. Margaret's father, General Carruthers, whose military record began in the Sioux wars and ended actively in the Philippines, had recently been given garrison control of Tiavara, with two or three sleep-shot battalions of regulars, although Bradshaw

the civil administrator was over him in authority.

Before taking his present post, General Carruthers had worked out an idea for Americanizing Moros faster than the home papers thought equitable. The process proved painful, and a big noise was started about abused Islanders. Carruthers had to be put out of the way; in fact, he was "given his life sentence to Tiavara," as it was editorially placed. There was enough left in the old fire-eater, however, to wake up Bradshaw and break the somnolence of the settlement. It was severely but softly commented upon just now that General Carruthers had not attended Bradshaw's tea-party, designed formally to introduce the new assistant, Willard Hessler.

MARGARET sought her father before dinner to ask if he had forgotten the appointment. He was pacing the black turf at the side of the bungalow, though the day was ending in a fury of heat.

"White skinned young man?" he demanded. "The kind that won't tan?"

"He's a little tanned," she managed.

"Red in his hair?"

"I didn't notice—really. It looked just brown."

"Brown," he repeated scornfully. "Bradshaw had his shades drawn tight, or you'd have seen more than brown. Either that or he's not the Willard Hessler I knew, or the son of the same. . . . Blue eyes?"

"Yes, I noticed that," she answered.

"Same breed," the old man went on scornfully. "White face, blue eyes, and hair like a painted rock."

She saw his hatred, and something else. Her father never forgot an enemy, and was proud of the fact. Alone that night, she found herself repeating:

" . . . white face, blue eyes, and hair like a painted rock."

He had not seemed like that to her. There was something vivid and half-hidden in the face she had seen, as Hes-

ler had spoken his few sentences about the last ounce that wins. She recalled that he had scarcely spoken again that afternoon. From Bradshaw and Mrs. Bradshaw, she had heard a tiresome mass of exploits in which Willard Hessler figured. He appeared to have had a way with him, even at his university—something about him which made others talk. Apparently here was one of the *still* action men who let others do their talking for them.

The roomful at Bradshaw's had seemed to get something out of it all, as they listened to a sickening story of Hessler's fractured leg in a football game, and his insistence, "with a kind of smiling ferocity," not to be put out, and how the game was won. Also Bradshaw told of the young man's rapid climb through military commissions in the Holy Land—a name that mounted and loomed and steadied, and gathered power through three full years . . . talk of bullets curving around him, of his always bringing in his men; how his men loved him; how they were not only ready to follow, but would go where he sent them, or stay where they were put.

MOSTLY there was a smell of the sea in Tiavara, blowing around the little capes from the west. Even the equatorial sunlight was bearable for half of the year, because of this friendly wind; but there was a summer season deadly still for the most part, and deadly hot. One rarely saw an unshaded face during these monotonous weeks. It was helmet or broad straw, awning or over-hanging roof, forever between each human head and the light. One wearied of looking along the silent sun-traced street or at the tepid, restless sea.

The sun went down beyond the little low capes with something of the nature of a disturbance—no serene closing about the days, nothing in the nature of a benediction, but a fiery warning of swift return.

Now and then the wind would turn around and bring the rock-heated air

from the body of the Island, or a storm of hill sand to cover the single cobble-paved street of the town, even the ocean-fronts. Open windy water in front; the sleeping mountains behind, a sleep dangerously like death, except when the wind awoke to fume and blow.

A few piles of ancient masonry, one row of modern stuccos, with peeling tints—such was the town supposed to be the last resting place of General Carruthers. Tiavara was not only the name of the Island, but the name of this single, open port where the foreigners lived—also the name of the better known tribe of natives. The other Island inhabitants, under the leadership of Kieveleh Bhon, were called the Miniatavs and were mountain-bred. Their chief town was a hundred and fifty miles from Tiavara, among inaccessible table-lands staring northward over the Pacific, and only one white man had been able to worm his way into their midst and remain.

NONE of the foreign set at Tiavara had seen this adventurer, but the friendly Tiavarans had brought in tales around which a peculiar glamor formed. It was hinted that he was of startling and unforgettable appearance; that he hated all white men and had sought Kieveleh Bhon because the policy of that crafty Malay was to protect his people against any and all intrusions of civilization.

Margaret Carruthers had a picture in her mind of these two, black and white, ensconced in a palace somewhere up there on the height of land, working smoothly enough together, but each fanning the other's hatred against the outer world. There was something of romance about it to her, especially because it was all so small and comprehensible. The hill country of the Miniatavs was cut off from that of the Tiavarans by the rugged nature of the land. The only road that led from Tiavara up to Suspelson, Kieveleh Bhon's chief town, wound through an easily protected pass; and though Suspelson overlooked the sea, it was protected from any

deep-draft ships by the miles of yellow sea-shallows that fringed the coast.

It was all so easy to visualize. The Tiavarans were frankly afraid of the Miniatavs. They had long been kept contrite by raids, to which there was no possible reprisal. The coming of white men to the Island was welcomed by the Tiavarans, but General Carruthers was under orders from Manila not to "start anything." What irked the old man-handler most of all was that Kieveleh Bhon and his white henchman seemed to be aware of the fact that he was under a pull.

MARGARET'S acquaintance with Willard Hessler prospered slowly. They occasionally sailed together for an afternoon in the government cutter, manned by four or five Tiavarans, or walked along the shore. He shared her romantic interest in the little rock-tight nation of mountaineers, but had little hope of their being able to retain their integrity.

"Too much riches up in those hills," he remarked.

"Flocks of sheep?"

"More than that. Kieveleh Bhon has a gold mine or something of the kind. I heard about it both in Manila and Hong Kong. It may not be a gold mine exactly, but riches of some sort. An Englishman in Hong Kong told me that the Werewolf knew what he was doing in getting into Kieveleh Bhon's good graces."

"Did they call him that in Hong Kong," she asked. "I thought that was my father's name for the white man with Kieveleh Bhon."

"He's known in Hong Kong," Hessler said. "They say he's an Irish nobleman. I don't know how he got his name, unless it is because of his looks. The way it came to me was that there was something that suggests a Russian wolf-hound in his face. Noble and all that, but that you can't miss the likeness; at least, you can't forget it, if you see it once. Rather fascinating—worth taking a chance to look him over—wouldn't you say?"

Margaret Carruthers began to understand why Willard Hessler cared to take an insignificant civil post in remote Tiavara.

## II

MARGARET was at breakfast with her father, shortly after Willard Hessler's coming, on the morning that word came in of a Tiavaran pack-train stolen, several of their drivers murdered by Kieveleh Bhon's mountaineers. General Carruthers was having difficulty in making words express his irritation.

"I'd give an eye and a hand and a tooth to get that yellow-backed hound," he finally managed.

Margaret looked up at him.

"To get what?" she asked.

"That white renegade up there. He's making all the trouble, but only trouble because my hands are tied. Why, I could take this outfit of doughboys and clean up the whole Miniata stronghold. Kieveleh Bhon and the Werewolf—I'd beat their heads together! . . . But I'm only asking to get that white man just now."

"You're not enjoying your breakfast," Margaret said.

He jumped and fell to, but his mind quickly roved again from waffles, to which he had adhered with almost unbroken allegiance for thirty-five years.

The General ranted further.

"But what do you want?" Margaret asked presently. "It really isn't our affair. It's the Island. It's Eastern. It's of the ages."

"You don't—you don't know why we're here?"

She shook her head.

The General breathed audibly.

"Kerosene," he said, as one in whom patience had completed her perfect work. "Straight kerosene. The kind we used to put in lamps out of a tin or a crock. Do you think the Original Thirteen is represented here—simply to enjoy sea-bathing and to spring our social graces? Nothing like that, Margy. Crude, fruity

kerosene. Vats of it under Kieveleh Bhon's mountains. Detroit expects to run her buggies with it. We'll see about that. Anyway Kieveleh Bhon is coming to the end of his tether. Just about the end, I should say, for that Mohammedan, and his white hound, and his harem, and all the little harem-ees."

THE YOUNG WOMAN was eating an orange. Her eyes slowly raised from the little gilded plate. They were quite as steady as before, but not so wide. Her father had noted a recent change in Margaret's eyes; not so much a matter of lids, as a matter of light. He was uneasy. He had seen her as a little girl again just now—eyes of such sincerity that everything he had done or was about to do, looked tainted under their gaze. She had always been able to unhorse him with a look.

Margaret spoke presently:

"If you should come to this Island as a tourist, just looking around at men and things—wanting nothing for yourself—you might see a wonderful old black man in Kieveleh Bhon, one who has fought for his people to hold them together. There's gold in Kieveleh Bhon's mountains, or perhaps it's only oil. But certainly he wants to keep it for his people."

He opened his mouth.

"Listen to me now—*now!*" he said. "I've seen this coming on. I know where you get all this. It's"—and he laid his finger upon a cold brown waffle rim—"it's from Willard Hessler!"

CERTAIN TRUTH in what he said made her dread the unexpected turn of her father's mind. He had never given her credit for having an idea outside her own world, and had closed in the boundaries of this world of hers to suit himself. He was becoming silent now before her eyes. This meant danger. She recalled certain men who had encountered his silent enmity in times past. The General always did the unexpected thing and was slow to stop. . . .

That evening she met Willard Hessler. They walked down by the sea, passing a little warehouse at the edge of the town, where some resins, fragrant as frankincense, were stored.

"You've kept it from me—why he hated your father," she said. "I've got to know now."

"It was way back in the American Indian stuff," Hessler answered. "Purdy McUrsel, your father's secretary, remembers. Not a bad sort, old Purdy. We've actually become friends, but it's doing him harm, I'm afraid, to be seen with me. My father and yours were young officers together, but my father got interested in the Apaches. He felt they were getting the worst end of a deal, a land deal. He withdrew from the aggressive against them. It cost him his commission and your father's friendship."

"It's the same now," she whispered. "It's the same thing all over again, isn't it? He wants to take away Kieveleh Bhon's kerosene."

Willard Hessler laughed. They turned back through the shadows to breathe the aromatic gums in the little warehouse again.

"You mustn't go against my father," she finally said. "You'll have to work with him, his way—if you are to be comfortable. He'll fight you, otherwise. Why he'd fight me—"

"One might not stay comfortable and pay his price," Willard Hessler remarked.

She felt his lean elbow as they climbed up toward the empty hills. She wanted him to say something like that, though she felt desolate now.

"But he'll get you. He always does. He never stops. I see it coming—his old hate joining the new. He hates you for influencing my mind."

"One can't run away," he answered. "It's all right. One has only to keep his own bill of health clean."

She couldn't answer. The world and all its empty windy hills seemed to be slipping in between them. . . . That was the night he laughingly showed her the

little brass tag he wore—"Private Willard Hessler," it read, and it had been given to him on the first day after entering the service at the bottom.

MARGARET did not see Willard Hessler the next day. She had arranged to see him in the evening, but though she went to their place of meeting, Willard Hessler didn't come. He had left no message. She looked for her father when she returned home, but his secretary, Purdy McUrsel, told her that the General was with Bradshaw at the latter's house. That night she didn't sleep well. The world seemed pressing hard between her and all that was new and dear.

The following afternoon, in Bradshaw's gardens for tea, Margaret heard Mrs. Bradshaw saying to house guests:

"... His views do not matter just now. My husband knows his value well. There is no one who could do this thing like Willard Hessler—"

"How long will it take?" one asked.

"No one can tell that. A very delicate and difficult mission."

"Wasn't his sending very sudden?"

"These things are never announced beforehand, dear," Mrs. Bradshaw explained, beneficently. . . .

Willard Hessler sent away on a mission! To Margaret, a voice within said, "It cannot be," so plainly that she thought others must hear. Then she heard one of the young women add to Mrs. Bradshaw:

"It must be quite best, if your husband has chosen. One of the first things I ever heard of Mr. Bradshaw was that he never chose the wrong man for a mission."

"Quite the best, my dear," Mrs. Bradshaw answered, "though I should be the last to tell him so."

MARGARET escaped. On the way home she found it hard not to run. Alone in her room she stood still for a long time, then found her lips repeating:

"... white face, blue eyes, and hair like a painted rock."

For an instant she seemed to see him in the shadows again, down by the sea, hard by the warehouse of frankincense. A sentence of his came back:

"One has only to keep his own bill of health clean."

It was late in the afternoon when she sought Purdy McUrsel.

"Not a bad sort, old Purdy. We get along——" Willard Hessler had said.

McUrsel was dried and faded, a little man. One would think he had never been other than a clerk; and yet the larger part of his life had been spent in active outdoor life. Nothing of the open had touched him; only General Carruthers appeared really to have touched him. He had been swept into the rugged turgid ideas of the sterner character; secretary now, but servant still.

"There has been no letter," she said, breathlessly. "Tell me, Purdy, where they have sent Willard Hessler."

"It is not for me to say, Miss Carruthers. Your father——"

"Do you mean that you do not know where Willard Hessler has gone?"

"I did not say that. Your father——"

"I came to ask *you*, not my father."

"But Miss Carruthers, you would not have me—why, it never even occurred to anyone to ask me——"

"It's time someone did. There is no one else to help me."

The old face was white. McUrsel looked frightened, as if the tall young woman might actually force the truth in spite of him.

"Why do you come to me?"

"Willard Hessler spoke to me about you, as his real friend here in Tiavara."

The dim gray eyes looked wide and proud for a moment, then filled with strange sorrow.

"I have had no friend."

Then as if he had said too much, McUrsel added in a lighter tone:

"But we'll miss him around the old town, Miss Carruthers."

"Will Mr. Hessler be gone long?"

She thought his eyes turned back wearily.

"That is something I cannot answer."

"You say my father knows about all of this?"

"I would not go so far as that, but it is certain he is in a position to find out."

"Won't you help me?"

He shook his head. . . . She thought of going to Bradshaw, himself—Bradshaw who was only a master of little ceremonies—whom her father called "a master at doing nothing gracefully." Bradshaw would laugh in his empty way at her—a laugh meant to be jovial. Mrs. Bradshaw would be awed at the gravity of her presumption. . . .

"You have one chance now to be human, Purdy McUrsel. Once in your life. You're not going to fail. Something is wrong. Willard Hessler would not go away without a word to me——"

She backed away as she spoke, hardly knowing what she said. At the door she heard Purdy McUrsel's husky voice:

"Don't go, don't go that way!"

He looked half like a boy and half like an ancient wizard in the shadow. He glanced about furtively, as he stood before her, then stared into her eyes.

"God help me, I can't let you go like this!"

Some miracle seemed touching the cold old mind. He continued to stare into her eyes.

"I've seen you two together," he added incoherently.

THE OLD MAN'S DISTRESS was excruciating in the next few minutes, his words jumbled, but the secret came forth that Willard Hessler meant much to him; that the younger man had brought him a new zest in life, since his coming to Tiavara—some new thing, some new way; that two or three walks "in the cool of the day" had opened some of the pent chambers in an old man's heart. Then she began to understand that Willard Hessler had been sent alone

with a message to Kieveleh Bhon; that Bradshaw had been prevailed upon to permit this by her father.

"What's the message about?"

"I can't tell that."

"Will it mean Willard Hessler's death, this going alone?"

"Kieveleh Bhon hates all foreigners, but Willard has a way with him."

"But my father, and certainly Mr. Bradshaw, would not send him to his death!"

"Only as a general might sacrifice a man or a company for the greater good."

The little ledger man did not look into her eyes as he said the last. She could see her father's hatred working out—the old hatred for Willard's father and the new for himself.

"But there is no greater good from this sacrifice."

"It seemed to the General——" he began.

Her voice shook, as she interrupted:

"He went away very hastily——"

McUrsel bowed.

"Not even a letter or a message to me! Was the need of haste so great as that?"

McUrsel had become the clerk again.

"The need appeared very urgent. He merely called *au revoir* to me on the way out, and I may say—I may safely say—we have been close together."

Even in the dusk she saw the flush on the old man's cheek.

### III

A LITTLE LATER that evening, Margaret went down to the water-front and looked out over the nearly empty little harbor. Her eyes fixed upon the government cutter provided for the use of Americans and manned by native sailors. She had taken the run of events in her own hands, but now, at almost the first step, she needed help, a man's help. Hurrying back, she found Purdy McUrsel at supper alone in his quarters.

"I want you to come with me," she said.

Ten minutes later the two were at the water-front.

"I'm sailing tonight—yes, alone!" she said. "You don't need to know where I'm going, but I need your word for the sailors to clear. The Tiavarans might not take my word."

He shook his head.

"I have quarreled with your father," he said, oddly, as one grown very old.

"You've tied to him right or wrong. That had to be broken. You owe something to others—to your friend Willard Hessler, to yourself! . . . You need know nothing except that I am sailing—a night's sail. The natives will take me—if you say the word."

A Tiavaran held up his paddle under a torch at the foot of the stonework. The woman signaled and caught Purdy McUrsel's arm, drawing him forward.

"You intend to go—to try to go to him?" he asked hoarsely, as they went forward.

"It doesn't—I mean, you don't have to know! You can help me better not knowing. It is not too strange that I should ask to sail in the moonlight—alone."

They boarded the cutter from the canoe. Purdy McUrsel glanced at her imploringly. The Tiavaran skipper appeared, a fat native with a few English words. He looked from McUrsel's face to her own, as if something of all the malignant humor of the Asiatic underworld was in his beady eyes. She heard Purdy McUrsel try to speak again.

She wanted him to say the cutter was for her use—now—tonight; that she was to give the orders, that she was to be the only passenger. Instead she heard:

"We're going for a sail—Miss Caruthers and I—yes, now—quite so."

She challenged his decision, but to no effect. She was both sorry and glad. It actually frightened her to think of Purdy McUrsel going against the will of her father. He had appeared to collapse after giving orders for the cutter to be put under way. She saw him sitting far for-

ward now, and the face of him as he left her—had been like white doom. She wanted the air and the night, but could not go forward to McUrsel.

The skipper opened the trap-door and pointed to the tiny cabin below. There she sat presently, in all the hopeless fury of her purpose, her hands flat upon the red baize table-cover, the smell of new leather cushions blended with the smell of garlic from the galley.

ALL SHE KNEW was that she meant to reach Suspelson, Kieveleh Bhon's mountain city on the cliffs above the sea, where Willard Hessler had been sent by the inland trail more than twenty-four hours before. No plan, except to be near the man whom her father sought to destroy. Hessler's relation to the world at large, and the under dog in particular, represented to her heart the only character and purpose fit to serve. Back of this was a strange tender thing in her breast that made her run to help him in his hour of danger. Yet she was becoming as much afraid of Willard Hessler's being shocked and grieved by her coming, as she was afraid of anything in the nature of peril connected with the journey itself.

Her lips tightened at the thought of her father trumping up a message to destroy the messenger. On the other hand, she knew Willard Hessler had wanted to go.

Of course, he would accept the part of messenger. Would he be angry with her if she succeeded in reaching him? Could he ever be angry with her? Would he think she was thrusting herself upon him? Would her coming complicate his reception by Kieveleh Bhon or his getaway from the mountain chief? Why had he left without some word of speech or writing?

THE CUTTER had passed the harbor mouth. The cabin was tilted now, and stayed so, as the craft caught the steady push of the western wind. The

little trap-door to the deck lifted. She heard voices, and the slap of spray against the oilskins of the native at the wheel just above. The wet, briny sweetness came down to her lips with a refreshing zest that made the moment keen. The spray swept over the deck again. Now there was a bare native foot, a flapping trouser leg, then wet oilskins, as the Tiavaran skipper crushed his way down into the little cabin and made mysterious sounds and signals under the shelter of a wide smile.

A low door opened to the galley. The native cook appeared, bent almost double. Rice from an iron pot, a thin fish stew, and a steaming pan of green tea. Margaret sat at the far end of the little table, not in the least critical. The Tiavaran was not happy in his supper. He did his best to eat as he fancied the habit of "Europeans," but hands and knees, he was different. He felt this deep within.

"We go Suspelson?" he asked, rinsing his chowder dish with hot tea.

She nodded.

"We go Kieveleh Bhon?" he continued, from behind the steaming bowl.

"Yes."

"General send?" he mused with beady eyes.

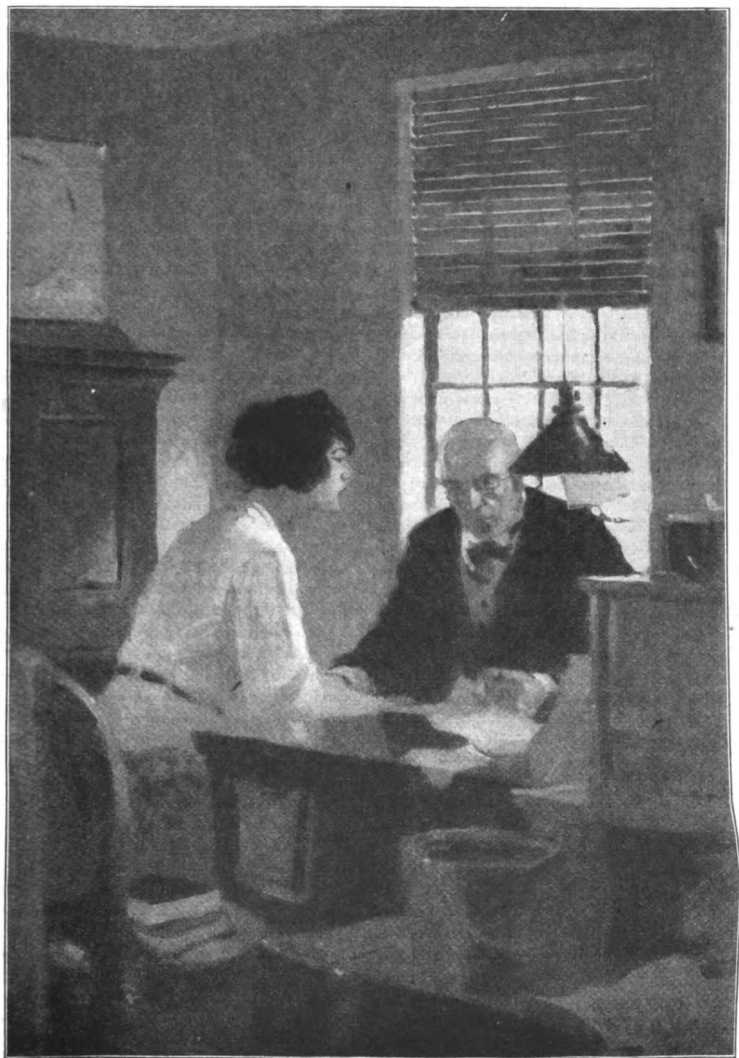
He did not notice apparently that she failed to answer this. He sat down the bowl and placed his right forefinger under his left ear, holding it close and firm. The finger began to move downward, pressing into the throat at the same time. It passed slowly and resolutely under the chin, coming to pause at last snugly under the right ear. He shook with laughter, but suddenly stopped open-mouthed, staring at her because she did not appear to understand.

"Kieveleh Bhon——" he began performing the ceremony again.

Now she watched in grizzly fascination, for understanding had come.

"Kieveleh Bhon——" he repeated with rising inflection.

She nodded furiously lest he would make the sign of the throat-cut again,



"'You have one chance now to be human, Purdy McUrsel. Once in your life you're not going to fail.'"

intent in making himself understood. His eyes gleamed with the newest sort of realistic delight, as they rested upon the case-knife beside his plate. This he picked up for further demonstration.

"I see—I know!" she said hastily.

"Kieveleh Bhon—" he insisted. "Kieveleh Bhon—sailor man no sail home!"

Yet he seemed happy about it, at least in the diversity of his supper conversation. She was huddling back against the cushions at the end of the cabin, as his bare foot went clingly upon the ladder-rungs to the deck. The trap door grated across and rattled into place. The servant came to take away the wooden tray. Purdy McUrsel appeared.

"We might turn back now," he said. "Our evening's sail could easily be explained—if we turned back now, Miss Carruthers."

Nothing could have strengthened her more.

"You insisted on coming. I'm sorry for you—but there's no turning back."

Life seemed to go out of him, as he pulled down one of the side berths for her to be more comfortable.

"A dozen or fifteen hours at best, it will take," he said.

She was strangely glad for his presence that moment—something innately fine in him that she had known from a child. . . . In and out, snatches of sleep—the rest of the night was like a delirium. The wind must have slackened toward morning, for the steady progress of the cutter gave way to a weaving course of sudden changes as she tacked.

IT WAS NEARLY NOON before they reached the yellow water in front of the towering gray cliffs of Suspelson. Purdy McUrsel stood silently near. The skipper, the cabin man and three native sailors all crowded the cutter's tiny deck and waist—blanched lips and brown faces flecked with gray. They had never before seen Suspelson, the city of the enemy. The skipper had ordered the anchor dropped considerable distance out. Mar-

garet now urged him to draw nearer shore.

He appeared to obey, but the hook was overside again, before the cutter had nosed her way in a hundred feet. She did not persist, but asked him to put overside a small boat. He looked horrified and turned away from her with fumbling hands. Pity smote her heart that instant. She had brought these Tiavarans here, and was by no means sure of their fate any more than of her own. They had obeyed and, through the night at least, had looked to her and Purdy McUrsel for protection.

A native craft had put out and was making toward them. Four Miniatavs paddled, and so steadily that a tall figure, darkly-garbed full length, stood motionless toward the stern all the way. Moments of silence dragged by. The torrid sun stared down from its meridian point upon the shallows of the anchorage. The woodwork of the cutter was blistering from the heat of noon, yet the standing figure in the small boat appeared actually to be garbed in black woolen cloth. At first it had looked like a black gown, but as the craft drew near they saw it was an overcoat, a European great-coat, fashioned for some giant who had ordered it to his ankles.

The gray withered face was held up in the sunlight; the whites of the eyes looked sightless in the glare. The gray beard, sparse at best, was thicker on one side than the other, and crowning the old skull were gleaming black tresses in endless braids and weaves.

The white-flecked eyes held hers for a second, then McUrsel's, and then the Tiavaran skipper's. The native boat slid so softly against the cutter that the ancient, standing, was in no wise disturbed. Now there was a tone from his lips—words she did not understand—but the Tiavaran bowed in hasty energetic acquiescence. More low tones from the old man and eager, respectful answers from the skipper.

It appeared that the ancient Miniata-

wished to talk with the two foreigners below in the cabin of the cutter. The skipper led the way down under the blistering planks. It was the latter's small store of English words that tortuously bridged the gap in the crawling minutes that followed. Margaret Carruthers presently felt that she was meshed and tangled in words—words that rolled like the endless wash of the sea, words of English and Tiavaran and Miniataw, slow and smileless words, all utterly devoid of sense. The ancient exacted with a pincer-like patience a vast minutia of questions.

MARGARET CARRUTHERS' mind was leveled and exhausted, her body burned with thirst and revolt. After nearly an hour's inquisition the old torturer gravely arose. On deck once more, he pointed with reverence to a blocky crown of stonework at the summit of the highest cliffs, and for the first time, she heard the native utterance of the name "Kieveleh Bhon."

The ancient now called his small boat to the cutter's side, and, descending, held up his scrawny hand for Margaret to take her place beside him. Purdy McUrsel drew near to follow, but the skipper caught his arm. Also she saw the negative in the Miniataw's eyes now so near her own. A surge of terror arose to her throat, but she forced it back.

"It's quite all right, Purdy——"

The small boat was pushed off. She saw Purdy McUrsel's face, back of the thick brown arm of the skipper—queerly, for an instant, like a boa under his chin.

"Quite as I would have it," she called. "Don't be afraid for me, and thank you so much for coming! Tell Father I made you come."

#### IV

FOR A MOMENT, alone, her heart sank, mockery coming back from the words she had called to Purdy McUrsel. Then, suddenly, a latent reservoir of her own strength opened, like the

second wind which refreshes a tired runner. The nature of the adventure augmented, but she had something like courage to face it. Close to shore the shadow of the great brown cliffs fell upon the water. The narrow, shaded town, almost touching the water, and laid tight against the low rolling pedestals of the cliffs, had an utterly alien and forbidding look. There was something spectral in the silent way the few townsfolk gathered around the small boat—a total lack of laughter in all faces, lack of innocence in their curiosity.

The four oarsmen were left behind. A pair of flashing brown ponies waited, but the *carometa*, which Margaret was bade to enter, was scarred and dingy. The ancient bowed placidly to the driver and followed her into the diminutive seat. Then up from the waterfront, a steep and winding way, sometimes through deep shadows and cool, windless defiles.

The *carometa* creaked dismally, its steel-bound wheels grinding upon stones, its whole framework racked in the ruts and strained by the grade. The trail wound back toward the sea as the summit was reached. The ponies lathered, but required no touch of the whip. They were halted in the burning noonday at a great stone gate, almost at the edge of the bluffs.

Within was the perfume of flowering trees, hum of winged things in a vivid air, far drone of voices as the ponies halted again—then a running forward of white-coated male servants.

Margaret's mind knew but one question just then:

"Is he here? Can Willard Hessler be here?"

She was afraid to see him, but had a deeper fear that she might not see him ever again! A low stone door with square lintel opened an arm's length at the right, even as the door of the *carometa* was pulled back by a servant standing behind. The ancient kept his seat at her left, but beckoned her forth to the dark hall.

The huge figure of a man, excessively

fat and gowned full-length, appeared in the shadows. His voice was like the squeak of a small creature, high-pitched. She drew back, a bit horrified, but the hand of the ancient shoved her gently from behind.

From somewhere within the passage sounded women's laughter. A queer odor of perfumed sweetmeats hung in the air of the halls. The ancient was not following. The door of a broad low room was unlocked and she was beckoned to enter alone.

Presently a serving-maid brought a large lacquered tray with several stone jugs of essential oils—jasmine, lily and rose, unsealed—queer little tongs and brushes, powders and pastes. These were placed in order upon exquisite rug pieces—small as prayer-rugs—with piles of scented clothes and skins. Then a bed was brought—many flat pads and pallets, the top ones made of silk and filled with softest down. The little serving creature worked steadily, but seemed to have a full afternoon's task ahead. She turned often and laughed emptily over her shoulder at the white woman.

The hideous gowned one came panting in with a huge urn of tepid water for her bath. He looked her over now with a curious calm, as one would appraise merchandise in expert but impersonal fashion. He squeaked a little like a mammoth talking doll, and went out. Then for hours she was alone, except for the serving maid, whose bare feet rustled softly on the dark wooden floors, and whose brown hands polished forever on and on.

MARGARET lay in a kind of exhaustion, distantly frightened at many possibilities. She didn't sleep. One apprehension was that the torturer, the ancient, might come and ask questions again. . . . Her eyes opened at the voice at the outer door, which had not been opened since she came. The soft carpeted tread of the gowned one, already become hatefully familiar, sounded from the opposite way, at the inner door.

The latter entered, crossed the room to open the other. In the pallor of dusk—she thought it an apparition—Willard Hessler standing there!

She arose—started to speak—but saw his finger rise quickly to his lips, as he stepped for a second between her and the vast creature of the halls.

The gowned one left them; even the serving maid had vanished. Willard Hessler came forward. Something that had been with her since their last moment together—deserted her now. Her hands lifted toward him; then reached as if to touch the walls, though she stood in the center of the room. She felt very small and tired and needful, as if she could ask anything of him. She was silent, though she wanted to cry out:

"Oh, why did you go away without a message—without a letter!"

Now she saw Willard Hessler, as men saw him—the man afield, the man who laughed and worked in the midst of every stress and danger, "whom bullets curved around"; the man who laughingly held himself still against any hammering chaos of events and knew this holding was invincible. He bowed distantly, questioningly, as if meeting a country-woman, though a stranger—ready to help, but curious for the next emergency.

Then something within arose to play the game with him, and she sensed that the natives had brought them together at this moment in the hope that their meeting would betray his actual mission and hers. Doubtless he was a prisoner like herself. Far back in his eyes, as his face turned to the darkening window, she saw the play of his smile.

"I am an American," she said, queerly conscious now of someone listening from the hall side. "I'm very glad to see—a countryman—at least, an European."

SHE caught his approval and drew two cushions to the centre of the room. They talked as strangers, yet a brightness was about them. The last tinges of gray died out of the barred windows; the serv-

ing maid brought candles. It was astonishing now how she caught his purpose without words, even with words to the contrary. The brooding terror had nothing to do with herself in those moments. It was for him, though her danger was equal, in a sense more deadly than his own.

She forgot that men had called Willard Hessler unwhippable in a pinch. She wanted to care for him.

"But how did you happen to find your way to Suspelson?" he asked.

"By ship. I have long been interested in Kieveleh Bohn," she answered. "I have heard that he takes good care of his people. I thought if that were true, an American woman would be safe. . . . And why did you come?"

"I brought a message to Kieveleh Bohn from the Americans at Tiavara."

"A message of good will?"

"My message was sealed," he said slowly. "I was merely a carrier."

"Are you soon to return?"

"That I cannot tell."

MOMENTS PASSED. The soft carpeted tread of the gowned one was heard again in the hall. Almost her hand went out to the American as he arose that moment. Her eyes had filled with darkness. . . . They were taking him away: Now she heard his voice saying steadily:

"... It's the last ounce that wins! If you can sit tight long enough, the other side's bound to break. . . ."

## V

THE DOOR had closed quickly upon him, but not before she saw him joined by native servants on either side. This outer door opened to the main grounds. Now she was alone in the candlelight, but conscious of someone still listening or watching in the hall.

It might have been only her nerves, she thought, but she felt there was no privacy for her, even within the four

walls; that eyes were continually upon her movements from the hall side.

Step by step through the night, agony overcame her courage. She felt it go in spite of her sternest effort, and watched for morning with a fury of need; yet the calm grey stole softly through the barred windows without bringing her a ray of hope. She had reached a life-time crisis. Even the figure of Willard Hessler was receding. Her mind distorted the meaning of the distance of his manner and the coldness of their parting in this room.

The terrible patience of all native movements and attitudes around her was worse than open enmity.

The hours mounted to noon and beyond. Arrays of food were twice served on the floor, foods strange and delicate and abundant, but their sight frightened her. Water, baths, empty laughter and the eternal little nothings of the maid's hands; high mid-day, age-long afternoon to dusk again—and always she was conscious of someone listening outside, even of eyes upon her through the inner walls.

. . . Sound of steps outside. It was the same as before: a voice at the outer door and the soft, heavy tread of the mammoth housecreature in the hall behind—the latter hurrying in and crossing her room to open. Now the candle-light struck the ashen face of a leaning but towering stranger who laughed. Margaret Carruthers knew a different fear. The white man came forward, both hands out, as if he had known her always!

"Don't run away. Don't be frightened at me!"

He touched her shoulders. She was at the far end of the room, but he followed. The gowned one was slipping out into the hall, making cries as he passed. She heard the lock turn. It was like a call throughout her being—a summons to stand, to the last ounce! Her hands went out between his two arms, pressing him from her, pressing with rigid fingers against his throat. His figure seemed stretched out. His face was deadly pale

and wasted, eyes burning with laughter like a madness. In the white length of his face she saw the Russian wolf-hound look.

"You ought to be glad I came. I thought you'd be dying for a playmate by this time—"

Years ago, an afternoon in her father's house when he held a post in Washington, a young army officer, flamed with drugs and drink, had found her alone. He had come to her like this. It flashed back now, an instantaneous picture. She had been little more than a child. The man, like this one, had been disrupted enough to think she was glad for his coming; that she only played in running from him.

"Sit down!"

SHE HEARD her own words, but in her mind she was listening for her father's step. She had heard it that day. The awful white face of him, as he came between her and the officer, seemed held before her now.

"Sit down!" she repeated.

"Of course, I'll sit down," he laughed, drawing back. "Did I frighten you?"

"Yes."

"Why, I thought—thought you'd be glad for a playmate away up here!"

"You frightened me," she said again, trying to impress the point while his mind was open to it.

"Maybe you'd like the old man better."

She wondered vaguely if he meant the ancient with the hairy crown.

"The old man?"

He laughed, looking at her sideways, and added in a quick whisper which she had to strain to catch:

"Kieveleh Bhon."

"I haven't seen him——"

"You'd have seen him, if it hadn't been for me. You'd have seen him, all right, last night."

He sat down by the brazier, drawing a second cushion beside him and holding out his hand to her.

She sat opposite, the brazier between.

"I see you're not lonesome enough yet,"

he remarked sullenly. "I should have waited longer. The trouble is, K. B. isn't a good waiter."

He wasn't more than thirty-five, but ravaged by his tastes and tempers. She saw in him the swift ruin of a certain splendor; a rakish tip to his shoulders and fling to his head that gave her the inkling to what had doubtless been a spoiled but fascinating boy.

"I have heard of him taking good care of his people," she said, speaking of Kieveleh Bhon.

"He takes care of his people, all right. Also he has ways and uses all his own for pretty little spies from Tiavara. Oh, I say, you don't know where you are, I'm afraid?"

"No."

"Solomon had it on him," he chuckled, picking up a coal from the brazier with the little brass tongs to light a cigarette which he held out to her.

She shook her head.

"Maybe you'd like to light your own cigarette. We have our peculiarities here up in the mountains."

"I don't want a cigarette. You were telling me something."

He stopped to think, suddenly avoiding her eyes in shame, because he had forgotten the trend of his thoughts.

"About where I am," she added.

"K. B. hasn't a thousand like Solomon, but quite a little party—quite a bevy, you might say—but all brown ones—not a real white one in his collection. Some authority I had to have among the Miniatavs, to keep him from collecting you when you sailed in. Pretty sweet, you looked to him. He has an eye for the brown ones—none better. So you don't know where you are?"

She shook her head.

"Come on, little playmate. . . . You didn't see me come in the inner door, did you?" he added.

"I don't understand."

"They wouldn't let even me pass your inner door——"

He pointed to the hallway. "No man

under ninety ever gets in there, except K. B. himself. You're back of his purdah now—Kieveleh Bhon's seraglio, and that one who let me in is the Big Squeak in charge."

FOR SEVERAL SECONDS her eyes were shut. Her first thought was of Willard Hessler coming here last night and finding her in a harem. He would not have failed to understand. It would be more hideous for him than a woman could think.

"And you kept him from—you kept me safe last night?" she said at last.

"Just that."

"Why?"

For a second he tried to hold her eyes, but there was something in them not altogether brazen or fallen that prevented. His long arm reached across the brazier and caught her wrist. He held up her hand in the light, blended of candle-rays and the redder glow from the fire.

"You might not think it, but I know a thoroughbred when I see one. I know a woman's hand when I see one. I know so much about a woman's hand that I can lose myself in it and forget to look farther."

His long narrow head was bowed over it now. Terrible pity mingled with her fear, for this long-waisted figure, half in robes of the East and half in linens of the western world. This could be no other than The Werewolf. He seemed dying for beauty and dying of hatred for himself. His long brown hair was thin over his temples and brow. There was a fineness all through in the modeling of his head, softening of decadence here and there, but so subtle that one did not know where fineness ended and decadence began.

"I saw it yesterday," he went on, still looking down.

She did not take her hand away, partly not to anger him and partly because she had sensed a better thing than at first in his present whim.

"It rested upon the window ledge of the

old *carometa*. I didn't look farther then; I didn't care to look farther. Did anyone ever tell you before?"

"Not as you do."

"No one could."

He laughed quietly, but it made her think of the serving maid's empty laughter.

"I used to paint them," he went on. "I'd get so lost in a hand that I'd forget the rest—a hand or a foot. One in a million, a woman's foot takes me over. You can tell it by the step, the way she uses it. Every little bone and tendon, with a leap in it. Beauty and use always go together. Yes, it was the hand upon the window ledge that caught me yesterday. Then I saw it against the door; then raised against your face. . . . It's quite as I thought. I didn't need to look close. I got it all in a glance. But I love to look close. A thing has to be as lovely as this to move as your hand moved; to rest as it rested on the window ledge. I serve that sort of thing."

Wine was brought and the sickness returned to her.

"But how did you get here—an Englishman, an artist?"

"An Englishman," he said in a sullen tone. "What put that in your head?"

"The way you speak."

His head flung back.

"I thought all that put away," he laughed. "That damned university stuff—I thought it worn off by now. Not English, by a whole lot. My father was a Greek, but my mother was a Tyrone woman, with blue eyes and black hair, and she never loved anyone but me."

MARGARET CARRUTHERS breathed deeper for a moment. The memory of the Irish woman might be called to help her.

"Has she been gone long?"

"God, yes," he muttered. "Long enough for me to get like this. . . . You see we were always together, always comrades. We asked no more. She was so close—I say she was so close—that I didn't know

how lovely she was until she went—how lovely to me, how terrible to all others! There was only place for me in the glorious heart of her. Yes, gone long. Pretty near as long without her, as we were together. I was seventeen when she went."

He was drinking wine like water. He grew the more deadly pale as he drank—the tortured soul in his eyes passing out in the glare of desire.

"So you liked old K. B.—what you heard of him?" he was saying. "You said that before. You said that to the other."

Now she knew her interview with Willard Hessler had been overheard.

"From the outside he seems to be caring for his people," she said. "Trying to keep out the influences that would hurt his people——"

He leaned over the brazier, opening the drafts under the coals with a long brass pin. He spoke very softly, an art about it:

"What you're talking about is my job. Old K. B. thinks Tiavara is his enemy. I'm showing him a whole lot better than that. Only a white man knows a white man."

"You hate your own people?"

His jaw dropped a little—his eyes hard as a serpent's. The pitiful phase, the spoiled-boy phase, was gone from him so utterly that she wondered she had ever taken hope from it, or from the amazing thing in his memory which his mother had seemed to become.

"Hate," he repeated. "If I knew a stronger word, a dirtier word, I wouldn't call it hate. . . . Listen, this is the last stand for me. I die here."

It was a picture to stay always in her memory—the huge, half-broken figure bending toward her.

"I die here," he repeated. "Sometimes on pretty mornings, I think I'll die making a tight and decent little native state up here in the mountains—something to stand a little longer than usual against the rottenness of the outer world.

"I watch them tending their sheep in the passes, washing their sheep in the

mountain rivers, shearing their sheep on the stony banks and the women laughing and talking together as they wash their clothes in the long shadows of the mountains. I say I'll keep them tight and happy—keep off the little tainted Tiavara's and the black-deep taints of the white men—keep them free from the taints I am dying of.

"But all that's a little dream. It's only a whelp to the hatred—a helpless pup compared to the hatred. Hatred is the wolf. Hatred for the white man is *me!* Why, I'm made of that."

His hatred had held the continuity of thoughts. His head rocked before her now and she heard the loose laughter again.

"I'm getting drunk," he muttered. "They'll laugh last. A man has to rule himself to hate well, even to rule a little mountain state. Only a madman—drunk now, drunk a thousand nights. But, God, what a lovely hand! Let me touch it again."

HE ROSE in his tipping fashion, holding to her fingers delicately so that she arose with him. He seemed endlessly elongated for an instant and rickety like a mechanical toy. Now he bowed.

"And so they sent a woman with a hand like this," she heard him mutter. "They knew how to get me—sent a man inland, a woman by sea—a woman with a passport like this. I'll play a bit. I'll draw cards and play——"

His fingers loosened upon hers. He stepped back unsteadily, flung up his head.

"I'll play, but what's *he* to you?"

"Who?"

"The man who came in from behind?"

"What do you mean?"

He laughed.

"Never mind. It's a delicate question—but how did old man Carruthers dare to take a chance like this—with his own little girl? . . . Don't answer, my dear. It might be used against you. . . . I'll draw cards and play a hand or two—a

hand, it is—if only to keep old K. B. from getting into the game. All the hands he knows, so far, are little brown ones!”

## VI

THE SITUATION re-formed in a series of flashes in the night. She had not fooled anyone. Kievelch Bhon doubtless had spies at work below in Tiavara—but if not, information about her and Willard Hessler might have been had from the skipper and sailors of the cutter.

There was a moment, as she fell asleep in fear that night, that she seemed closer than ever before to Willard Hessler. They seemed standing together in a brilliant light—a core of white-hot light, like the point in an incandescent lamp where two carbons meet. Her mind did not register anything that passed between them in that moment of half-dream, but her heart suffered. So close to him was she in this suffering, that she had to stop and remember in the moments afterward that no word of *belonging* had passed between them, no word of *together*.

LATE in the morning the Werewolf came again. She saw him in the sunlight of the door, as the house creature let him in. She saw the outer sunlit world beyond him, the greens and the turfy browns and the hot craggy hills. He seemed an enemy to the light, like a fabric woven of miseries and shadows; inimical to the light, but very pitiful. As before, the gowned one escaped. The white man followed her around the room, looking deeply into her eyes, the deadly pale face staring into hers.

“You didn’t sleep,” he said. “You’re burned out a bit today.”

It was as if he had meant to say something else, but in her presence, could not.

“Burned out a bit. A hard night for the little playmate. Too bad about that.”

He was unsteady, diminished, from last

night; yet he had not been drinking this day. As moments passed, it was more impressed upon her that he was not speaking the thing in his mind. She was less afraid.

He started to the outer door, but turned and came close again, saying:

“Old K. B. wants you—that is, he’s got his eye on us. Better be fine to me, little thoroughbred—”

“I want to—oh, let me!”

His eyes closed, head tilted back. When he looked down she saw more pain instead of less.

“I don’t know if I can stand it, yet,” he muttered, adding incoherently after a second or two: “*They’re giving me a chance; they’re giving me a last, big chance!* . . . What I came to say is, you’d better be nice to me, whether you like it or not. If old K. B. sees we are not getting on together, sees you turn away from me—no saying positively that he’ll keep off—

“I’m off—but not far!”

He was gone.

A little later, the ancient appeared at the inner door, the ancient with the hairy crown, for the first time since he had brought her here. He took from the spacious pocket of the great coat, a little object, still concealed, from which hung a long thin leather thong. This he now held between his scrawny palms, watching her with the patience that pained. She was staring at his hands now, fascinated by something which the leather thong suggested.

She felt the old man’s eyes. His right hand lifted from the other and she saw the military tag of identification such as soldiers wear, the one Willard Hessler had treasured laughingly from his first days of war. It was held up now for her to see. “Willard Hessler, Private,” it read, and his regiment and corps. She was bowed a minute in a rush of unutterable torture, then she felt the ancient’s eyes burning into her brain.



## The CREDIT OF THE FORCE

The Story by K. R. G. Browne

PROFESSOR Henry Meiklejohn Rudd leaned back in his chair and regarded his cigar with the affectionate smile of one who has eaten well—eaten well and expensively.

"My dear Allison," said he, "I must really express my gratitude for a supremely excellent lunch. I feel a new man."

His host grinned amiably and nodded. "There you are! Just what I'm always telling you. You ought to see life a bit more, Rudd. In fact, a whole lot more. You're so wrapped up in your infernal angles or test-tubes, or whatever they are, that a perfectly ordinary meal like this looks like a state banquet to you."

"Since you mentioned it," admitted the Professor, blushing slightly, "I must confess that you are not far wrong."

"Now look here, Rudd. This has got to stop. It's perfectly absurd, at your

Illustrations by  
Irwin Myers

age, to shut yourself up like a hermit with sleeping-sickness. You're only thirty-six and you get about as much amusement out of existence

as a deaf-mute in an asylum. You've got plenty of money. Why don't you go about occasionally and enjoy yourself?"

"I've never felt the inclination," returned the culprit meekly.

"Ever thought of getting married?" demanded the ruthless Allison. The Professor started visibly.

"Er—since you ask—well, yes. But it came to nothing."

In a mood of expansion induced by the superb quality of the port, the Professor unbent yet further.

"She was an artist, and proposed to continue her work after marriage. I opposed the suggestion. So the—er—the affair lapsed."

His host surveyed him thoughtfully.

"I suppose it's too late to do anything about that now," he observed, with manifest regret. "It's a pity, because you're quite a decent-looking nut, really, Rudd, if you'd only wear a real tie."

The Professor, indeed, betrayed few outward and visible signs of his walk in life. Tall and well-built, possessed of a full supply of hair, his appearance suggested rather the rising captain of industry than the unsociable savant. Except, of course, that rising captains of industry with any regard for the fitness of things do not wear ready-made ties.

"It saves such a lot of time," pleaded the Professor. "You see—"

"Great Scott!" interrupted Allison.

He sat abruptly upright in his chair; his eye gleamed upon his guest, who shrank away a trifle nervously.

"I've got the very thing for you!"

"Oh!"—without enthusiasm.

"Speaking of artists reminded me. You remember Murgatroyd, who was up at Merton with us? He's quite a large noise, now, with a studio in The Village, and so forth. I had a letter from him the other day asking me to a party he's giving on his birthday. Today, that is. I'm to bring any one else I can rake in. It's a fancy-dress affair, and we're all going on afterwards to that big show at the Music Hall. You're coming along, too! He'll be no end glad to see you again."

The Professor recoiled as if suddenly confronted by a python.

"My dear Allison! Really—"

"No use arguing. You're coming. I won't let you degenerate into a mere animated blackboard without making at least an effort to save you. You're getting absolutely fossilized, Rudd. I'll come along with you this afternoon and get you fitted out with a costume. I should think you'd look pretty good as Henry the Eighth . . ."

intellectual countenance sat an expression of unmitigated gloom. He hung up his hat, entered the sitting-room, and ripped the string from his burden in the manner of a murderer dismembering the corpse. There rolled forth upon the table a pair of blue serge trousers, a blue serge coat and a policeman's helmet. The Professor shuddered.

The full horror of his position was only now growing apparent to him. He stood irrevocably committed to appear at Murgatroyd's studio clad in the doubtless tasteful but, for him, excessively bizarre garb of a metropolitan policeman. The choice of such a costume had not been his; it had been forced upon him by the fact that of a limited selection the only other disguise at all suited to his figure had been that of a scrub woman. Of two evils he had accepted the lesser. Curiously enough, it had seemed quite a good idea at the time, but now that his brain was clear and active he wished heartily that he had never met Allison. But for his ignorance of the latter's whereabouts the Professor would have telephoned to cancel the engagement. In the circumstances he supposed that he must bite the bullet and see the affair through, the more so since in a moment of supreme folly he had arranged to meet Allison, who proposed to array himself as a tramp, and with him make a dramatic entry upon the revels via Murgatroyd's window. That, too, had seemed quite an amusing idea at the time; such was not the case now.

However, he had given his word and must abide by it.

The Professor sighed heavily, wrapped up the costume, flung it into a chair and departed with a leaden step to deliver a lecture upon one of the less-known ramifications of the Higher Mathematics.

TWO HOURS later Professor Henry Meiklejohn Rudd let himself into his flat. Beneath his arm he bore an immense brown-paper parcel, and upon his

NINE O'CLOCK in the evening found the Professor, slipped and at his ease, recumbent in an arm-chair and immersed in a book. As the hour struck he glanced at the clock, stared at it vaguely

for an instant, and sprang to his feet with a startled gasp.

Allison! He had arranged to meet Allison in The Village—wherever that might be—at nine-fifteen; in his absorption all remembrance of the appointment and of the ordeal to come had fled from him.

With an effort he pulled himself together, donned his shoes, snatched up his parcel, grabbed his hat and rushed from the flat. Three minutes later a taxi was bearing him toward The Village.

As they turned into Sixth Avenue there came to the unhappy reveler one of those flashes of inspiration common to all men of genius. He would change his clothes in the cab! Thus much delay and consequent annoyance to Allison and Murgatroyd would be avoided, and he himself would encompass the first part of the ordeal in privacy. Forthwith he set about it.

Almost at once he discovered that the costume fitted even more imperfectly than he had feared. The trousers had apparently originally been fashioned for The World's Smallest Man in a travelling show. They clasped the Professor as a second skin and came to an early end immediately below his calves. The coat, on the contrary, had been planned on nobler lines. It hung flapping about him like a large sack; the sleeves had the advantage of his arms to an extent of at least two inches. The cap, as if to restore the balance, sided with the trousers and sat uneasily upon his distinguished brow, swaying alarmingly to the jolting of the taxi. The Professor, surveying himself in two-inch strips in the mirror before him, could feel no elation at his appearance. He felt, and suspected that he looked, a complete and utter fool.

It was as he transferred his personal belonging to the coat that he came upon the mustache. It was a very large and drooping mustache, of a kind seen only upon walruses and socialist leaders, and from its presence in a coat pocket he deducted it to be an integral factor in his disguise. Gingerly he attached it to

his lip and peered at it in the glass. The result surprised him. The mustache combined with the helmet to lend to their wearer a vague but undeniable air of rakishness; the effect was to suggest that here was one addicted to secret drinking, or some similar underhand vice.

THE PROFESSOR hesitated, raised a hand, and was about to remove the excrescence, when there arose without a loud yell; the taxi swerved disconcertingly, rocked, staggered and came to rest with a rending crash. There followed a brief period of silence, which was shattered by a sustained and vitriolic flow of language calculated to cause concern in an asbestos factory.

The Professor, rising dizzily from the floor, adjusted his helmet and, acting upon some impulse of self-preservation, opened the door and gained the road.

It appeared that the taxi, in a praiseworthy endeavor to avert a head-on collision with a motor-truck, had come into violent contact with a lamp-standard. Of the two, the lamp-standard had suffered least. The taxi-driver, plainly a man of blunt, though ready speech, was now engaged in sketching for the truck driver's benefit, a brief but telling résumé of that gentleman's appearance, manners and antecedents. By ones and twos from the darkness appeared the nucleus of a promising crowd.

"— yer eyes!" said the taxi driver. "Look at me car!"

He spun round, perceived the Professor in his make-up and started.

"Officer," he said, gloatingly, "I gives this bird in charge. Run me down deliberate. Wouldn't get outa me way. Look at me car!"

As the Professor, foggily grappling with the situation, strove in vain to speak, a thought seemed to strike the cabman. He strode forward, jerked open the door of the taxi, and peered within.

"Ain't hurt, are yer?" he asked. "Why, blast me, he's gone!"

The crowd, realizing that its life had

not been lived in vain, surged happily nearer.

"'Oo's gawn?" asked one, with a thirst for knowledge.

"Me fare!" said the cabman feebly. "Clean gone, an' he owin' me four bits! He musta beat it around the corner. The dirty——"

He gazed again into the cab and gave vent to a shrill yelp of amazement.

"Why, strike me pink, he's left his clothes be'ind!"

From the crowd arose a heartfelt wail of pure joy; this was the Life.

HERE, perhaps, a little sympathy for the Professor would not be out of place. The shock of the accident had caused him temporarily to forget his peculiar appearance, and the sudden realization that all those present regarded him as a genuine, dyed-in-the-wool representative of the Law had upon him the effect of a severe blow in the region of the diaphragm.

He groped desperately for adequate speech, but it eluded him. Dimly he perceived that now was obviously the moment to step briskly forward, reveal his identity and in a dignified manner claim his clothes, but he could not move; his imagination boggled at the prospect of explanation before this grinning, blood-thirsty crowd. He felt mentally paralysed, and knew only an intense desire to depart from this ghastly situation at a high rate of speed. He glanced about him with the feverish glare of a hunted rabbit.

At this junction Providence, possibly feeling that it is unwise to try mortal man too high, created a diversion. As the taxi driver, in the fashion of an inexperienced conjuror, produced from the cab a pair of grey tweed trousers, there arose upon the fringe of the crowd a hubbub and a commotion. The concourse heaved and rippled like a lake disturbed by a torpedo, and from its midst issued a loud and angry voice.

"Let me through!" bellowed the Voice.

"Where's that infernal policeman? Let me through, confound you!"

The crowd swayed again and parted suddenly, erupting at the Professor's feet a short, elderly citizen in a derby hat and white spats. The newcomer's circular countenance wore the apoplectic aspect of one struggling with some strong emotion; his eye gleamed and he breathed in audible gasps. He was not alone, but dragged after him by the arm a shabby, undersized individual, whose outstanding characteristics were an immense checked muffler and a three days' growth of beard. The shabby man, who seemed of a retiring nature, was wriggling and twisting ceaselessly in the effort to break free. Yes, it would be fate!

"Officer!" panted White Spats, "this man has stolen my watch! I caught him at it!"

The Professor gaped at him blankly, incapable of response, foggily resentful that he should have been selected by Fate to suffer these repeated blows.

"D'you hear?" bellowed White Spats. "He's got my watch! I give him in charge!"

"Are—are you sure?" asked the Professor feebly—at the moment he could think of no more apposite remark. White Spats bounded in the air and his face deepened ominously in tint.

"Sure?" he yelled hoarsely. "Sure? Damme, what d'you mean? Of course I'm sure, man!"

THIS WAS TOO MUCH for the crowd. Hardly able to believe its good fortune in coming upon two such diverting episodes in one evening, it uttered a joyous, applausive noise and surged closer in its determination to miss nothing that went forward. The Professor was prodded violently and no doubt accidentally in the back; White Spats, fighting valiantly to retain his equilibrium, was compelled by force of circumstances to release his prisoner. The latter was not slow to take advantage of the turn of events. On the instant he swerved

away and dived into the press. In a moment he had disappeared from view.

The Professor, slowly regaining the use of his faculties, was aware of hope.

"Stand back!" he shouted, as authoritatively as he knew how, "I want that man! Let me pass at once!"

Without a moment's hesitation he broke into a brisk run. To his horror, the crowd let forth a yell of approval and started in his wake; plainly it was of a mind to see this thing through while the night was young.

Panting with emotion and lack of breath, the Professor quickened his steps. He desired only to lose his followers with the utmost thoroughness and despatch, and to that end he raced down a dark turning, swerved across the road and plunged into a gloomy alley. There he halted and listened, poised for flight. The crowd, hampered by its size and an excess of enthusiasm, lost the trail, appeared to hesitate and finally departed in full cry in another direction, hoping for the best.

As the sound of its passing died away the Professor heaved a tremulous sigh and mopped his brow. Taking it all in all, he felt that this was not one of the more enjoyable evenings.

Thereupon, he set out rapidly down the street, and had progressed for some little distance in utter solitude when he observed ahead, in the dim light of a lamp, a small gathering of people. It seemed a peculiar gathering, inasmuch as it swayed gently back and forth, emitting the while strange and unintelligible cries.

The Professor groaned aloud and stopped. To his over-wrought brain it seemed that New York's entire population had chosen to spend the evening by gathering itself deliberately into crowds for his confusion and embarrassment. In a panic he turned to retreat, but had gone only a few yards when he became aware of hurried steps and of one who hailed him urgently.

"Here, officer! Yer wanted down there!"

THE PROFESSOR wavered irresolutely to a halt as there appeared at his side the figure of an immense female. She was clad chiefly in a shawl and appeared scant of breath. This vision addressed him in a voice strongly suggestive of alcohol and reminiscent of Mile End, near the Thames.

"My Bill's got drink in 'im an' 'e's treatin' 'Arry Walter suthin' crool. Yer gotta stop it afore there's murder done! I knows Bill. I can't do nuthin'. Bin watchin' fer a cop these ten minutes parst."

The Professor's first instinct was to depart thence without delay; indeed, he had taken an involuntary step forward when the voice of the lady arrested his progress.

"Lor!" she said, scathingly. "'Y'ain't scared, are yer? An' you a cop! Lumme, y'ain't goin' ter mizzle orf an' let 'Arry Walters get 'isself knocked silly 'cos yer afraid o' Bill? Why, Bill's that canned 'e's 'ittin' 'isself 'arf the time! But the other 'arf 'e's 'ittin' 'Arry all right, an' none of them decorative loafers dahn there'll lend a 'and ter stop 'im."

The Professor flushed and drew himself up. It was not fear that counselled retreat, but a not unnatural distaste for any more of these public brawls; he felt that he had had his share. At the lady's words, however, the matter presented itself in a new light. He began to realize that, for the credit of the Force of which he was a temporary and unwilling member, he must take some action.

"Don't talk nonsense, madam!" he said, sharply, and thrusting past the astonished dame made his way at a brisk, professional trot towards the scene of hostilities.

HERE the slight sensation caused by his appearance parted the assembly and allowed him a view of the contestants. These consisted of a very large, very drunk gentleman, presumably Bill, who wore a very small derby hat and a very tight coat, and was giving his undivided attention to the congenial task of



"'Good gracious!' interrupted Miss Aitken. 'Murgatroyd? Why, that's next door!'"

battering a very small but equally drunk individual into a passable imitation of a hospital case.

Mr. Walters, though without doubt having an extremely uncomfortable time, was doing his best. Discarding all absurd scruples, he had fixed his teeth in Bill's left ear and hung therefrom with bull-dog tenacity. Beyond adding new verve to his interjected remarks, this manoeuvre had no effect upon Bill; he was not in the mood to concern himself with trifles.

The Professor stepped forward, summoned all his resolution, and cleared his throat.

"Stop that!" he commanded.

Neither Bill nor Mr. Walters appeared to hear him; they continued to revolve slowly upon their axis. Incautiously the Professor moved nearer to the war zone. Bill's strong right arm, seeking the face of Mr. Walters, emerged unexpectedly from the turmoil and impinged heartily upon the Professor's nose. The unfortunate gentleman gasped and staggered back, weeping. But only for a moment.

It is often the smallest happening that has the widest result, and Bill's chance blow accomplished what can only be described as a minor miracle. It caused the abrupt demise of Professor Henry Meikeljohn Rudd, and the immediate resurrection, phoenix-like, from his ashes of H. M. Rudd, Esq., Harvard winner in his undergraduate days of about all the letters his alma mater had to offer in athletics.

He strode forward, gripped Bill with one hand and Mr. Walters with the other, and tore them apart. Mr. Walters reeled away into the crowd and was seen no more. The stouter Bill, however, was not the man to brook idle interference with his simple pleasures. He swayed for an instant uncertainly, uttered a savage snarl and sprang at the Professor with immense gusto.

The latter side-stepped neatly and hit his assistant scientifically upon the angle of his jaw as he shot past. Bill, checked

in mid-career, rose into the air and came to earth with a crash upon the small of his back; thereafter his interest in the proceedings was infinitesimal. The audience, with one exception, shrank away, muttering their awe. The exception was the large, beshawled lady who occupied the uncomfortable position of spouse to Bill.

Now she burst from the crowd and stood before the Professor, looking colossal in her wrath.

"'Ere!" she demanded hoarsely. "Wotcher doin'? Knockin' 'im abaht thet way! 'Oo *arst* yer to knock 'im abaht? Wot's 'e done *ter you*? Can't yer stop 'im peaceable 'ithout knockin' 'ell outa 'im? Fine sorta cop *you are*!"

The Professor, still under the influence of his atavistic mood, glared at her angrily.

"Shut up!" he said fiercely.

Suddenly he started and stared past her to where the crowd, advancing again, had left a gap in its circumference. In the circle of light cast by the lamp, and in the act of taking cover behind a larger citizen, was a shabby, undersized man, whose outstanding characteristics were an immense checked muffler and a three days' growth of beard. The Professor's expression changed to that of an exhausted traveller in a desert who sees water in the distance. With a low howl of joy he hurled himself forward.

THE FUGITIVE, gaining a gloomy alley, darted down it and turned sharply to the left. Behind him, and gaining steadily, thundered the Professor. He was consumed with determination to catch the shabby man—not merely for his own satisfaction but for the credit of the Force whose prestige must be upheld.

The quarry, glancing round and perceiving the Professor barely a dozen yards behind, stopped suddenly, whirled on his heel and dived through a narrow archway. The Professor, checking himself just in time, sprang after him and found himself in a square courtyard sur-

rounded by low buildings. Of the shabby man there was no sign visible.

The Professor halted and listened intently. Faintly his ear caught the sound of rapid breathing and instantly he leaped at it. He struck the shabby man almost at once with terrific force, and together they grovelled in the dust, the Professor on top. The shabby man, however, was apparently constructed of steel wire and India rubber and fought like a fiend. The Professor, clutching grimly, was rolled back and forth and round about, now on top, now beneath. Finally, with a thud that echoed round the courtyard, they crashed against what seemed to be a door and the shabby man, temporarily dazed, lay still.

As the Professor gathered himself together there came from within the sound of rapid steps. The door was flung open and there appeared the figure of a girl, outlined against the bright light behind her.

"What on earth—?" she said wonderingly.

The Professor, still grasping the shabby man, rose stiffly to his feet. His enthusiasm was abating rapidly and he felt remarkably tired.

"I must apologize—," he began, and then started convulsively. "Why, Annette—I mean Miss Aitken!"

"Harry—Professor Rudd!"

THERE FOLLOWED a brief but pregnant pause. The shabby man, recovered from his fall, chose this moment to execute an eel-like wriggle and a backward spring. In a flash he was gone and the sound of his running feet died away on the night.

"Oh, damn!" said the Professor wearily.

"But—but what—" said Miss Aitken, faintly. The Professor leaned against the doorpost and groped about vainly for his cap.

"You live here, then?" he asked.

"I've had a studio here ever since—for a long time now. But do come in. You look as if you've been in some awful accident! Why are you dressed like that?"

The Professor, stumbling thankfully into the little hall, caught sight of himself in a mirror and gasped. Dusty, dishevelled and torn, his appearance was one to strike fear into the stoutest heart. His nose was swelling generously and his mustache hung at an idiotic angle across his face. He removed it with embarrassed haste.

"It's a long story—tell you all of it later," he said. "But I was going to a fancy-dress affair at Murgatroyd's studio, and—"

GOOD GRACIOUS!" interrupted Miss Aitken. "Murgatroyd? Why, that's next door! But, Harry, the party is tomorrow, not today. I know, because I'm going myself. You must have made a mistake."

For a brief space the Professor gazed at her in silent stupefaction; then abruptly he threw back his head and laughed—a hollow, mirthless laugh.

"Tomorrow, is it? I must speak to Allison about that."

Then his face grew serious again. He hesitated.

"Anyway, some good has come of it all—at least, I hope it has. I was an awful fool, Annette, my dear. I've thought so for a long time, but I could never raise the courage to come and tell you so. But now—"

Miss Aitken smiled, stepped past him and closed the door.

"When you've had a rest and something to eat," she said gently, "we—we might talk about it, perhaps. Now go into the studio."

"At present you're a perfect disgrace to the Force!"



*"No impulse, no mad fancy . . . had prompted his action."*

# REFLECTED RADIANCE

By The Pinkertons

Illustrations by Elmer Young

**D**ELIBERATELY, and with a clear comprehension of the possible consequences, Hugh Milburn thrust the loaded canoe out into the current above the falls. As it disappeared and he pictured its inevitable destruction he knew that by one simple but purposeful movement of his arm he and his wife

had been stranded in the center of the most desolate and inhospitable region on the continent; that Edith, fresh from the southland, and a stranger to privation and toil, had been plunged into a brutal, primitive struggle for existence; that both of them had been brought face to face with death itself.

No impulse, no mad fancy, no feeling of hatred or of resentment—not even a desire for death—had prompted his action. The decision had come only after days and nights of searching for another way out. Sincere in his belief that he was right, he had imperiled Edith's life that she might live more gloriously.

Three years before Hugh had returned from one of his long northern expeditions with that vision of complete matehood which comes to lonely men who have looked often into lonely, distant campfires. The moment he saw Edith his vague dreams became a compelling reality and he accepted as simply as a primitive the urge to matehood.

In that meeting he wished for the first time to tell a woman of the land he loved, and unaccountably he was able to express the vague emotions and desires which had driven him on. She had listened without speaking, and yet—he had felt that her spirit went with him over the illimitable barren grounds, that it had bowed with equal reverence before their vastness and their mystery, that it had thrilled with his to their illusive glory.

Then, in the reality of their journey together, had come disillusionment. Once they had left civilization behind, he began to sense that the unison of spirit he had glimpsed was lacking; that there was no thrill to the mystery of the North, no eagerness to accept its challenge. Before coming she had seen it through his eyes. Her own discovered only the monotony and the dreariness.

Patiently and hopefully he explained the obstacles, the hazards and the rewards. But in spite of his crusader's zeal she clung to her own interpretation of the North; she found his efforts "childish," the thrill of being first "a bit of vanity," the glory of conquering a new land "mere tinsel."

In an attempt to sting her to a realization of what the North can give if it is met defiantly he sent back their canoe-man; told her they had been deserted, and

took her on alone—hoping for a merging of spirit in their common struggle. Yet, because he had insisted that they continue despite the odds, she had seen herself only as a submissive "victim of his pride."

IT WAS NOT that Hugh Milburn had sought to make of his wife a primitive woman of the open. The expedition, planned as a honeymoon but twice postponed, was to have been his last. The unknown waterway they were to explore was merely incidental to his greater design. It was the future, their life together, of which he thought. He had seen them fighting side by side, drawn closer by the struggle, battling confidently despite any odds, and at last achieving a oneness as well as life, a perfect understanding and trust as well as love, matehood rather than marriage, the ideal rather than the commonplace.

Not because he was losing her, but because she was losing the glory of life he had visioned for her, did he take this last desperate step. The moment the canoe disappeared over the falls he turned to where she was climbing the bank. She had not seen him thrust it into the current after he had removed two carefully arranged packs.

"What happened?" she asked.

"Everything . . ."

His emotion was not feigned. The predicament he had brought about had suddenly become too real and too appalling.

"You mean it is the end?"

The calmness with which she accepted the situation maddened him.

"If it is we let it be," he answered savagely. "Men who have faced less than we do have perished. Others have fought against greater odds and won."

"I see," she said quietly.

EDITH paused for a moment, and then with a fierceness and scorn he had never believed possible of her she burst forth:

"And why? Because of your stubbornness and vanity. Because you wouldn't turn back when Joe left us, when we could have insured safety. Because you were intent only on seeing this river which no white man had ever seen, and which will never do a white man any good. Because you wanted to conquer a desolate, useless waste; deck yourself with baubles; draw lines on blank spaces that may as well remain blank; because you would sacrifice me, my comfort, my illusions, my love, even my life, merely to achieve futility."

"But once you didn't think so," Hugh retorted bitterly. "I remember when you thrilled to the glory and the challenge of it."

"But glory and challenge are such easy words to thrill to."

Her anger vanished suddenly, and there was a certain wistful tenderness in her manner when she continued:

"We should have left it so, Hugh. Perhaps that is why men have learned to establish homes, havens of ignorance for their mates. That is where the woman belongs—waiting, unquestioning, content to greet the returning victor. For you were that to me—a hero, an explorer, a man who had conquered a country."

He stared a moment and then asked with dry lips:

"And now?"

"Now it has all been translated into petty things, and I resent the reality of their pettiness," she answered, drearily.

Even in that moment, when he saw the death of their love more certain than the end of their physical existence, the courage which had made possible his last desperate expedient drove him to a self-revelation he had not planned.

"Pettiness!" he cried. "You and I in a universe of our own! Struggling to win life and all that it can hold for us! Crowding a lifetime into two weeks! Fighting hell to gain heaven! Giving an hour of agony for a year of bliss! That petty! If it is, all life is petty. Love is petty. It's futile, a mockery, a delusion.

... But that can't be true. I know it's not. I won't let it be!

"Edith, you have something glorious before you, and you kick it away. You have an opportunity to live vividly, to gain that which will last for all time. Don't you see why I brought you? I didn't care for what we found here, but for what we would take away with us. I wasn't looking for a new river or a new land, but for the door to heaven—and not for myself, but for you."

He paused. The emotion which had driven him to such unaccustomed rhetoric suddenly forsook him when he saw a slightly troubled and openly questioning expression in Edith's eyes. He would not have been disheartened only because she did not understand, but her lips curved slightly and imparted some of their scorn to her words when she said:

"At least you seem to have succeeded in leading me to the door. Only I would have preferred to select my own purgatory."

HUGH saw she had not even glimpsed his meaning. As had become her habit in the past weeks she had withdrawn within a cold, glittering, impenetrable shell.

There was a ruthlessness in the half jesting, half scornful comment which told how completely her spirit had eluded him, and how thoroughly she had accepted the pain of disillusionment.

He did not answer. To go on would only drive her farther from him at the very moment when the prospect of death should be drawing them closer together. For the present he saw that only one thing remained, the saving of her life, and he began his task.

That morning he had made up two small packs of absolutely essential equipment, and these he had removed from the canoe before sending it adrift. Now, suddenly remembering that he must continue the deception, he climbed the rocky bank, passed Edith and hurried down stream. When he reached the boiling

whirlpool below the falls, one glance told how well his plan had succeeded.

"Did you save anything?" Edith asked, as she came up beside him and saw what had happened.

She was still calm, still with a trace of scorn, and Hugh was maddened afresh, the more so because he had begun to reproach himself.

"A little," he retorted. "What I had taken out before the canoe got away. The tent, part of the bedding, the rifle, some ammunition and food for about five days."

"And what must we do?"

"Do! We must give the best there is in us if we're to get out of this. We're a hundred miles airline from Hudson Bay, where the boat from Fort Churchill will be waiting for us. What with rivers and lakes, and no one knows what other obstacles, we've got 150 miles of cross country work if we're lucky. At the best it will take fifteen days . . . and we have grub for five."

Because everything was so vivid in his own mind he had sought to tell only the truth, but when he saw how unmoved she was by the situation he had outlined he was driven to sting her to some emotion, even if it were open hatred and denunciation.

"Do you find anything 'absurdly easy' or 'petty' or 'futile' in that?" he demanded. "We'll have to fight every minute if we're to live."

"Can you do it?"

"I am as brave as any other woman," she answered, shortly.

The effect of that simple sentence was to loosen Hugh's last grip upon the ideal he had glimpsed in solitary campfires and which had become a reality when he first saw Edith. He had always thought of her as being superlative in everything, and he had been confident that she would not only meet such a situation as no other woman could, but that from their mutual grappling with it would spring the concrete existence of that rare, absolute oneness he had desired for them both.

PRACTICAL and materialistic as their actions may be, explorers are essentially idealists. It is the dream of the unknown, the vision of new worlds, the El Dorados, the fountains of youth, that not only attract but inspire, that lift the spirit above famine and mutiny, desertion and repeated failure.

Hugh Milburn was an explorer, but even his idealism could not lead him on in pursuit of an *ignis fatuus*, or to vain striving for a goal which had proved itself a mirage. He knew he could do nothing more to pierce the shell with which Edith had surrounded herself. He did not hope even to save anything from the wreckage of his desires. There remained only the task of attaining continued physical existence, a desperate, uninspired effort to insure life.

And such it became for them both in the days that followed. As if it had been waiting for this moment of defenselessness, the vast, empty, unappeasable land sprang at them with stunning ferocity. A gale whipped the short summer away and brought the relentless winter. Shelterless, fuelless; exhausted by the constant struggle through rain-drenching days and by nights of misery in damp, ice-coated blankets; disheartened by countless detours and a futile search for game; weakened because of their sparing use of the meager stock of food—they struggled eastward in silence and apathy, and with a fatal submissiveness.

In those first few days Hugh Milburn, stripped of illusions and numbed because of the unaccustomed nakedness of his spirit, lacked even the instinctive, purely animal urge, to thwart death. Perhaps courage itself is an illusion, for without those phantasms of the soul there can be no courage, no desire for battle, no goal to beckon. Life's deserts are crossed only because of the lure of the mirage.

In the past Hugh had met similar situations with that buoyant courage born of youth and dreams, with that dauntlessness inspired by the challenge of circumstance or the sullen threat of grim deso-

lation. He had seen men exalted by danger and spurred by privation. He had known that rare welding of spirit by peril and sacrifice and common toil, and the North had given him imperishable friendships.

The very beauty of these had inspired his effort to bring sublimation to Edith's and his love. He had believed that the North would do for them what it had done for men, that it would forge a perfect matchhood as it had forged rare comradeship. Now that his dream had vanished, his spirit died. All goals dissolved and nothing beckoned.

Only his love remained. Futile as he knew it to be, it was there with its full capacity for devotion and sacrifice.

FOUR DAYS after the loss of the canoe it brought renewed anguish of spirit when he saw that Edith was weakening. Her haggard face, the painful movement of her legs and the shoulders, stooped beneath her pack, released a flood of tenderness and compelled bitter remorse.

"We're bound to find some willows soon," he said, when darkness halted them.

"Then we can have some hot tea, a bannock and bacon."

Edith did not answer. She had released her pack of blankets and was sitting on it, a wet, weary, disconsolate figure.

"And the sun must shine sometime," Hugh continued, in an effort to be cheerful. "Then we can get dried out and warm."

Still she made no comment. Her body seemed to droop a little more, as if even his words had been an added burden, and more than ever he realized how little they had been drawn together by the common peril. It was as if each were alone there in the midst of the barren grounds, neither giving the other aid or comfort.

But his compassion and remorse only became greater. In a fresh torrent of

tenderness he stooped and lifted her to her feet.

"Stand here just a moment," he said. "I'll make things as comfortable as I can right away."

He suddenly crushed her to him, but his kiss was gentle.

"We're going to get out of this," he whispered passionately. "We must!"

"Perhaps," she answered, dully.

HUGH released her and stepped back quickly. Again one of Edith's simple statements had been all-revealing, had explained his disillusionment. Not only was she not fighting, but she had no desire to fight. The spirit he had wished to weld with his own had never existed.

In a flash he saw the difference between them. He had believed that he loved the harshness and the desolation of the North. Now he saw that it was the battle with the North, and not the North itself, which had drawn him; he saw that men journeyed into the unknown for the strife it afforded. No matter what they accomplished, what they discovered, they emerged empty handed. For them victory had come with the fighting, not with the final triumph.

Hugh saw, too, that Edith had been right—that men had acted wisely when they had built havens of ignorance for their mates; that women should remain at home, unquestioning, to greet the returning victors; that the fighting is for the men, the victory a bauble they take home to their women. He had been blind to expect Edith to depart from the instinctive attitude of her sex.

His resentment at her attitude dissolved before the realization of his own fallacy.

He saw now that he had been unfair to hold her responsible for the dispelling of his illusions. Life, not she, had been the cause, for it is never the individual but life itself which shatters its own magic mirror.

When Hugh wakened the next morning there was a vast emptiness in his soul,

for even an illusion, ethereal though it may be, leaves a void. He knew, too, that his own blindness and speciousness, the illogic born of those dreams by lonely campfires, had not only failed to attain the ideal he had sought, but had ruined the reality as well.

But there was a concrete thing to be done.

He could at least make a supreme effort to save Edith's life. He not only felt that he must do this, but to escape the wreckage of his spirit he plunged eagerly into what was tangible.

In his desire to have her share in the struggle he had divided the physical tasks. That fifth morning he made up one pack and lifted it to his shoulders.

"Thank you, Hugh," Edith said, gratefully, when they started.

The day before her remark would have pushed her farther from him. Now it drew her closer. Robbed of his vision of peerdorn, Hugh reverted to the instinctive attitude of his own sex. Not only because of his remorse that he had deliberately brought this unavailing wretchedness to her, but because he now wished to shield her as much as possible, he was glad to assume all the burden.

THE EFFECT upon both was immediate. Even as Hugh found himself strangely strengthened, Edith seemed to emerge from her shell.

"Are you sure you can carry all that?" she asked, solicitously, after they had walked steadily for two hours.

"There is nothing much left," he answered, lightly.

He went on a few steps and then exclaimed fervently:

"Why, honey girl, I could carry you, too, if necessary."

For the first time in weeks she voluntarily reached out and pressed his arm.

"It won't be necessary, dear," she said softly.

"Why, you have made it easier for me already."

In the days that followed they needed

the comfort of this new understanding. Despite Hugh's optimistic predictions, the sun did not shine, nor did they find willows.

One bitter gale blew itself out only to make way for another. Rain ceased only that snow might fall. Day after day they traveled through a vast emptiness. Night after night they shivered in wet blankets.

On several occasions Hugh caught fish by casting a spoon hook in rapids in the river, but not once did they see caribou. Lack of fuel prevented their converting the raw flour into digestible food, and they subsisted meagerly on raw fish and raw bacon.

Each day they became weaker. Each night ended a shorter distance of travel. Yet their growing physical weakness was not so dismaying to Hugh as their slow progress. Tributaries of the main river, lakes large and small, great boulder-strewn areas and ice-coated hummocks in swampy stretches, compelled endless detours and a creeping, yet exhausting, pace.

Then, at the end of ten days, they had not traveled half the distance to the coast.

HUGH met the situation as best he could. His knowledge of barren ground travel saved them many miles and much useless effort. Outwardly he was cheerful and confident, and yet despair had come, and in his more dispassionate moments he admitted to himself that their plight was hopeless.

Such admissions always drove him to a renewed frenzy of exertion and an increased sacrifice of self. Cunningly he arranged the scanty meals so that he could return most of his own portion to the pack.

He traveled extra miles each day in a fruitless search for game. Never did he begrudge strength or effort. When pain and weakness threatened to conquer, an increasingly virulent relentlessness spurred him forward.



"She faced the North, glaring at that vast emptiness about her. . . . 'Do your worst!' she shouted. 'You can't have him. He's mine!'"

LATE in the afternoon of the twelfth day, when both were so weak from hunger and lack of rest that their progress was not only snail-like but pure torture of both body and spirit, Hugh saw from a low ridge a willow-lined stream two or three miles ahead. It meant fuel, drier clothes and blankets, a pot of strong tea, a bannock from the last of the flour.

Staggering from weakness, his mind becoming as unstable as his legs, he drove steadily on long after darkness had come. Snow had fallen in the forenoon and now, with the night, the cold struck down and sheathed the slushy, dripping moss and rocks with ice. Walking was not only difficult, but dangerous—yet that willow-lined stream had become a commanding goal, and Hugh stopped only to make certain that Edith was still on her feet.

Tottering and slipping, he started down the last gentle slope. His muscles no longer responded quickly. His pack was unendurably heavy.

"We'll have a fire soon," he muttered. "Can you make it?"

"I'm all right," Edith answered. "Go on."

As Hugh started, his right foot slipped and wedged between two rocks. His left went out from under him. The heavy pack sent him lunging forward. An agonizing flash of pain shot through his right ankle. It darted up his leg to his body, numbing as it went—it passed on to his brain and overwhelmed it.

Yet when he recovered consciousness the pain seemed to have so cleared his mind that it grasped instantly the one stunning, immutable fact—neither he nor Edith could expect anything but death—and a death due to his own folly.

THE ANGUISH of his spirit was so much greater than that of his body that Hugh started to rise. He found that his pack had been removed, and that the blankets and tent were wrapped about him. As he lifted himself to a sitting position he saw Edith coming up the slope.

"Where are you hurt?" she asked, as she knelt beside him.

"I'm done for!" he cried. "There is only one thing for you to do. You must go on alone, now, while you have the chance. Take all the food, a blanket, the rifle. Stick to the river. You won't get lost. The boat from Churchill will be waiting for—"

"Hugh!" she interrupted. "Are you mad?"

"No, not mad! Not now. But I was. I—Edith!"

He stopped, shrinking from what he had been about to say.

"Don't try to talk," Edith soothed. "I'll get you down to the creek. I have some fuel. The tea water is heating now. I'll carry the things down and then help you."

"No!" he protested fiercely. "Don't waste an ounce of strength on me. You'll need it all to get out."

"Don't be absurd. I can't go and leave you."

"But you must! . . . Now!"

"You are not yourself," she said, gently, as she pressed him back onto the blankets. "We'll talk about it after you have had some tea."

He did not reply but as she started to rise he grasped one of her hands and clung to it fiercely.

"Edith!" he cried. "You must go! I did this, all of it. Joe Staples didn't quit. I sent him back. The canoe didn't get away. I pushed it over the falls."

The tight grip of Edith's fingers was relaxed. He heard a slight gasp but she did not speak.

"That is why you must go on," he continued, "why you must not waste a moment or a bit of strength on me."

"But why, Hugh?" she demanded. "Why did you do such a horrible thing? Did you want to have us die? Did—"

"No! No!" he interrupted, and the words expressed the torment of his soul. "Not to die, but to live! Not to take our lives, but to give us a life, a marvelous life!"

HE STOPPED, suddenly realizing that she must think he was raving, that she could never understand—and yet he knew that he must explain, that he could not have her leave with the belief that she had been sacrificed to a mad whim. His very desperation gave him strength, but though he began with a calmness that attested his sanity, his emotions soon compelled an impassioned exposition.

For in that instant, when death was at hand, when hope was gone, Hugh Milburn's illusions surged back to regenerate his empty soul. They possessed him as they never had done before; they swayed him more strongly than when he had deliberately placed Edith's life in peril; they swept him out of his environment, out of the barren grounds, up into that spaceless universe of youth and ideals, of trust and attainable perfection, of rhapsody and romance.

Remorse and contrition were his, but he was also possessed of an exaltation that demanded and gave an interpretation of the pure idealism which had shaped his life. He went back to the lonely campfires and the mate he had glimpsed in them. He rushed on to their first meeting and its instant foredoomed urge to matehood. He told of his plan to enrich and cement and then swept over the present and pictured with a fiery, despairing ardor of the vanquished the sublimity of that oneness which had been his lodestar.

HUGH forgot that he talked of illusions, that life had shivered its own magic mirror, that Edith's attitude had been instinctive, and therefore just, that fighting is for the men, the spoils for the women. He did not even know that he was exemplifying a truth, demolishing a misconception, proving that to man alone come the romance and the dreams of life, and that to woman, because of an age-old, inherent, disenchanting wisdom, there can come only the reflected radiance.

Before he had finished, a storm swept

out of the darkness and engulfed them. He knew Edith was still there, for he clung passionately to her hands, but he could not see her face, could not catch that single, fleeting expression of pain that comes to every woman in that moment when she buries hope of romance.

Neither was he to know, as men are never to know, that in the same moment another inherent feminine quality was to enter the situation—that, denied the substance, Edith had accepted the shell, that henceforth she would give gladly and abundantly that which could not be given to her.

It was not that she did not wish what Hugh had planned for her. She only knew it had come too late, that for her the bloom of matehood had passed, that there remained only a vast tenderness and compassion. Yet so strong and so all-embracing was this it deceived even herself. Full in the glare of the reflected romance of his soul, she accepted it as her own, and, in a passion of adoration, she threw herself upon him.

"Hugh! Hugh!" she cried. "Mine! Mine!"

"Then you see?" he cried. "You know you must go on—now, while there is a chance!"

"And leave you here?" she demanded with an ardor he had never known her to display. "Leave you to think you had failed me, when you haven't? What would I go on to? Do you think I want a lifetime filled with one memory, the sole thought that you lay here and died while I went on to safety?"

"But why should we both die?"

"It isn't death I am thinking of!" she cried fiercely. "I am thinking of you while you still live. You have laid yourself bare for me. I see you as I never did before, and—as never before you are my hero."

She suddenly released his hand and sprang to her feet.

"But you won't die!" she screamed. "You won't! This country can't do such a thing. This cursed land isn't going to

gloat over you. I won't let it. I'll beat it. I'll beat its storms, and its cold, and its distances!

"It can't take you from me!"

HER VOICE was shrill with anger. She faced the North, glaring at the vast emptiness about her, and, as if in mockery, the wind continued to shriek and moan.

"Do your worst!" she shouted. "You can't have him. He's mine!"

Hugh, lying at her feet, believing weakness and hysteria possessed her, had turned away his head, only to whirl back at that final cry. There had been nothing weak or hysterical about it. She was virulent, but with an unyielding anger, with an intense hatred, with the fierceness of disputed possession. At last she had been aroused to fight.

"You must get to the boat!" she whispered fiercely, next morning, after she had swathed his ankle tenderly in strips of blanket.

"In no other way is life possible for me."

He did not hesitate. Appalling as the task was, terrific as the struggle must be, he responded at once to the command of love, and began to drag himself up the slope. It was slow, torturing, discouraging progress. He was weak from hunger and exposure. His body was chilled by the slush through which he dragged it. Each time he drew his useless leg over the rough ground he clenched his teeth to restrain a cry of agony, and his forehead was beaded with sweat.

Yet he kept on. Always he was weak. Constantly his body cried out for rest. The pain in his ankle increased. But to his soul had returned the illusions and the deathless hope they induced, and before his eyes Edith was fighting as he had dreamed she would fight—fiercely and yet buoyantly, desperately, and yet with an inspiring confidence.

All day she toiled, carrying their meager equipment far in advance, that she

might have time to fish in the rapids. She made three trips to his one slow journey, weighing herself with willow twigs that he might have a cup of tea. And whenever she passed him, whenever she stopped to make a dreary camp on the frozen plain, he caught her wonderful smile.

Yet three days after his injury even her own courage wavered. Hugh had succumbed to weakness, pain and exposure.

Starvation had tightened its grip, and she, too, was near exhaustion. But when they stopped that night her tenderness for him surmounted her intense weariness of body.

As she wrapped the damp blankets around him, her attitude was not so much that of a mother caring for her child as of a tigress protecting its cub. The gale drove a flurry of snow about them and she glanced up, her eyes flashing hatred.

"You can't have him!" she burst forth in savage defiance. "You can't. I'll beat you yet!"

She glared about her. Darkness was coming quickly. The gale roared across the vast, empty prairie, driving snow before it.

The cold was bitter, numbing. The barren grounds were at their worst, implacable, terrifying. But, as if in scorn of the savagery of the land, she looked down at Hugh and smiled.

Her courage was rewarded next morning when several caribou came over the crest of a roll in the prairie just as she had burst from the frozen blankets.

"Hugh!" she whispered. "The rifle! Quick!"

He got quickly to his feet.

The deer had smelled them and were staring curiously when Hugh rolled out with his weapon. He took quick aim, fired, and the leader, a huge bull, dropped. The others turned in panic, but one more fell before they disappeared.

"You got them!" Edith cried as she leaped to her feet. "This country can't beat us!"

**D**AY AFTER DAY Hugh dragged himself eastward. Times without number Edith passed him, walking ahead with a load of meat, dropping it, hurrying back for another. She became a very demon of driving energy. She had fought stubbornly before. Now she fought aggressively. Dogged determination had spurred her in the past. Now certainty drove her on. She became jealous of each waking moment. She never rested, and she derived a certain fierce joy from each mile gained, from each day of life lived in defiance of the desolate land.

But the sinister North only waited until the meat was gone, until again starvation had gripped them, until the full fury of winter had descended, until they had lost all reckoning of time.

Even then Edith did not despair. She was thin and haggard, grimed and disheveled, and yet not once did the fire leave her eyes. From dawn to dark she seemed to draw upon hidden, unsuspected sources of energy. She coveted each foot of distance, each second of time; and morning and night she cursed the barren grounds and cried her defiance.

Three weeks after his injury Hugh was able to hobble by using his rifle as a cane. Only the remnants of the tent and blankets and a little ammunition remained for Edith to carry, and she linked an arm in one of his and helped him on. Once he shot a young wolf. Twice she caught fish in the river. Often they went two or three days at a time without a mouthful of food, and yet they never ceased to struggle so long as daylight lasted.

**I**T WAS THUS that they came at last to the coast of Hudson Bay. Ghosts of their former selves, little more than skeletons, raw and red and battered, hang-

ing onto each other for support, dying as they walked, they made their way to the top of a long, low ridge.

At the crest they stopped. Before them, gray and sullen, as empty and as desolate as the land they had traversed, lay the great inland sea.

"The boat has gone!" Hugh whispered.

"No!" Edith cried. "But it's leaving. Over there across the bay. See the sail. Quick! We can't fail now!"

"Stop them!"

Frantically he drew the rifle from its case and emptied it as quickly as he could slide the bolt. Edith stood beside him, watching the distant, dancing patch of white against the gray water. They were so weak they swayed, and each placed an arm about the other.

Breathless, silent, they stood there as the slow moments dragged. Eternity succeeded eternity. Their bodies became rigid. Then Hugh's suddenly relaxed.

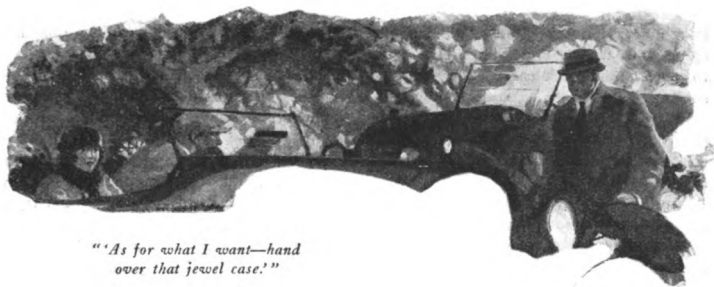
"They heard!" he cried. "They're turning back!"

He whirled to face her, transported by the dazzling glory of the moment.

"Edith!" he cried. "We! . . . Together! . . . Alone! . . . We did it!"

She did not turn at once to meet his eyes. Because of the age-old, disenchanting wisdom of women she had already accepted the paler glory of reflected radiance, but now, with the illusory power which is also theirs, she made of the transplendancy of his ardor the semblance of reality for herself and was content.

**W**HEN HER EYES met his there was a light in them he had never seen before and he, too, accepted the shell as the substance. For both the mirage was again shimmering above the distant stretches of life's desert.



*"As for what I want—hand  
over that jewel case."*

# O. HENRY WAS RIGHT

By S. Gordon Gurwit

Illustrations by Garrett Price

**T**HE TROUBLE with you fellows," grinned Jimmy Stuart, police reporter for the Morning Star, "is that you have no imagination. After a crime is committed, you run out and try to apprehend the criminal, and by that time he has mixed with the millions of others in this city, and it's a million-to-one shot whether you get him or not. Usually, he leaves no clues, if he has brains.

"The only sure way to catch a criminal is *before* he commits a crime—or while he's at it."

"Now, why didn't I think of that!" replied Bob Robinson, chief of detectives, with elaborate sarcasm. "How simple it is, too! We'll have to have the crooks' union pass a new law. Hereafter, I'll have each one drop me a card, telling me when and where they're going to commit the next crime—and all I'll have to do will be to send a couple of my men over and arrest them.

"How perfectly simple, to be sure! I suppose you'd like to go along and get the story and some pretty pictures? It's a wonderful idea—"

"All right, chief!" interrupted Jimmy, laughing, "You win! But I still insist that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure—trite, but true! You don't get what I mean, chief. I mean that *likely* crimes can be prevented—if you use imagination.

"There are some crimes that can be figured ahead—"

"Huh!" grunted the chief. "Imagination! Can't get away from your trade, can you, Jimmy? Why, every jewelry store in the city should be watched according to your idea, as a potential center for a future robbery! I'd have to have eight or nine thousand watchers, wouldn't I?

"Why, Jimmy, you talk just like a fish—or a newspaper reporter! Imagination! Say, youngster—if you're so darned clever, and if your imagination is working right now, suppose you try it?

"There's that Vanaster Hotel robbery that has not been cleaned up yet. Get busy! A clever crook planted that and got away with it—so far. He'll probably try to do another job soon if we don't get him. Well, go ahead and use your

imagination, Jimmy! Go ahead and imagine who did it, and where he's going to appear next. It's easy!" he wound up, smiling.

"Why, Jimmy, what is a little thing like that to a chap with a sixty-horsepower imagination, hitting on all six all the time?"

"As for me, I'll trace those finger prints he left on the empty jewel case!"

"And suppose," answered Jimmy, "that the crook is one whose finger prints are not on file? But what then, chief? You'll be rather out of luck, eh?"

"You make me sick!" exclaimed the chief.

"But come—hand me that menu—I want some pie."

THEY were sitting in the little café across the street from police and detective headquarters, and Jimmy had joined the chief at his table. While they were at their lunch, Jimmy had badgered the chief gently, because the jewel robbery at the Vanaster Hotel still remained a mystery, and the criminal remained at large.

He liked Bob Robinson, and his friendly teasing was not offensive to the chief, who also liked the bright, clean-cut young police reporter.

"Well?" asked the chief, his shrewd eyes twinkling. "How about your imagination? Is it working, or has it gone on strike?"

"It's working, chief."

"Well, why not give it a little workout?"

"Tell you what I'll do, chief," challenged Jimmy suddenly: "I'll prove to you that imagination counts. I'll bet you the best dinner we can buy at the Ritz—loser pays—that I nip some crime in the bud—and march the criminal into your office—with the goods!"

"You're on!" agreed the chief. "When does this take place?"

"That I can't say," answered Jimmy. "But within four weeks, we'll say. There's something happening all the time. But

give me some time to—use my imagination."

The chief laughed. "Go ahead," he invited. "But don't get hurt. You know, some crooks have a nasty habit of carrying guns—"

"This," said Jimmy gravely, holding up his left hand, "is six months in the hospital. And this," holding up his right fist, "is sudden death!"

The chief disregarded him grandly. "I'll make you buy that meal, too, young man," he grumbled, as he arose, took his hat off the hook, and prepared to go back to his office. "Better take plenty of money with you when we go to the Ritz—I'm a hearty eater!"

IT HAD all begun as a joke, but when the chief told the story to the other reporters who "covered police" for the various dailies, he added several humorous embellishments as to what he intended to order at the Ritz dinner when he won it. Jimmy began to think seriously.

He cast about him searchingly for some manner in which he could make good his boast, and finally, his active, racing faculties suggested a possible—but slim—opportunity.

That night, he dropped into the office of his friend, Butler Carson, Sunday editor of the Star.

"Hullo, old stick-in-the-mud!" he greeted. "Come in to see the feature section for Sunday. Off the press yet?"

Butler Carson, a thin, studious-looking young man, who wore glasses, regarded him gravely. "Tonight being Friday, sweetheart," he answered evenly, "the bull-dog edition has been on its way for some time. Feature sections are over there—on the chair—help yourself. What's wrong, dear? Memory failing you, or are you smoking Turkish atrocities?"

Jimmy laughed and helped himself to one of the multi-colored "feature sections." He sat down, lit a cigarette, threw the package to Butler—who absently took one and put the rest in his

pocket—and began to look through the ornate, special feature articles.

When he came to the fifth page, his eyes opened wide, and an exclamation escaped his lips. "Ah hah!" he said.

Butler turned his grave face to survey him.

"What," he asked, in his dry voice, "do you see that gives you the 'Ah-hahs'?"

"This full page about the Tillford ball and their home, Butler. Is it on the level? Is this an interview—or just copy?"

"Young man," began Butler, gravely, "on this paper we do no faking, I'll have you understand—except, perhaps, in the police reports—"

"No, I mean it. Is this ball coming off, Butler, as here advertised?"

"Sure is," answered Butler. "Thinking of going? I wrote that story myself. The Tillford ball is going to be one of the biggest social affairs of the season. Read it and weep, Jimmy—you'll learn something about writing. It's some story. It sparkles with wit—"

Jimmy rose.

"If you're going to insult me," he said, "gimme back my cigarettes!"

Butler sheepishly produced them, and Jimmy, laughing, made his way to his own desk to read the article.

There was a large picture of the Tillford's marble country home, the extensive deer park; a picture of Mrs. Tillford, wearing her pearls and diamond dog-collar, in which there blazed the famous six diamonds known as the "Stars of Africa," surrounded by hundreds of smaller gems. There was a picture, too, of Miss Jerry Tillford, showing her in action on the tennis court of the fashionable young ladies' school she attended; also a picture of Hilton Tillford, Jr., the young heir, playing polo at Palm Beach; and last, but not least, a small picture of Hilton Tillford, the famous financier.

Then the article went on to show the famous ball-room, the grounds, the conservatory, and talked glowingly of the ball that was to take place in two weeks.

Lord and Lady Tyne-Sussex and Vicomte Suizzuis would be present, also a formidable list of domestic celebrities would be house guests. Comment was made on the wonderful Tillford jewels, which were expected to be on display the night of the ball.

It was a typical full-page, Sunday feature article, and it spread a blatant story for the delectation of the beloved bourgeois "circulation."

Jimmy sat gazing down on Park Row after reading it through, his eyes dreamy, a slight smile on his lips.

"Maybe I'm a dreamer," he told himself. "Maybe my imagination runs away with me, but—"

He lit a cigarette, puffing slowly and thoughtfully.

"That story will be out Sunday," he told himself. "Well, we'll see."

THE following Monday morning, he phoned the office of Hilton Tillford, and inquired when that gentleman could be seen. A courteous secretary informed him that Mr. Tillford would not be in his office until three o'clock in the afternoon.

At three-thirty, he ascended in the elevator of the Tillford building to the tenth floor, where Hilton Tillford had his sumptuous suite of offices. As he reached for the knob of the door that led into the reception room, it swung open, and a young woman came out.

Jimmy had one glance at a very pretty face, an ultra-modish figure, and a whiff of Oriental perfume, and she passed him and entered an elevator.

"Pippin!" Jimmy told himself.

A faint frown nestled between his eyes. Where had he seen her before? The pretty face was, somehow, familiar.

An office boy took his card, and a few minutes later he was talking to Mr. Tillford's suave secretary.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Stuart," said the secretary, "but Mr. Tillford cannot be interviewed."

"I won't take up much of his time," smiled Jimmy. "I just want a few words

for the Star about Mrs. Tillford's jewels. I'd like an opportunity of getting a photograph of them—if that's not asking too much."

The secretary smiled.

"I'll tell you the same thing I told a very charming young contemporary of yours a few minutes ago: Mr. Tillford doesn't like publicity, and he was quite put out about that article in last Sunday's Star—the way it was handled."

"Contemporary?" questioned Jimmy.

"You must have seen her go out as you came in? Miss—ah—" he reached for her card and found it, "—Miss Ethel Holcomb, of the Breeze?"

"To be sure!" exclaimed Jimmy. "I had just a glimpse of her going out. Can't I see him for just a moment? Perhaps he'll let me run out to his home and get a photo of Mrs. Tillford's jewels? The public, you know, is very much interested—"

"There's not a chance," smiled the secretary. "Mr. Tillford is not in the habit of keeping the family jewels at his country home. They are in the vault at the Tillford National Bank, and he wouldn't get them out for anybody to take photographs of. And listen, old man, there's not a chance of seeing him, or of converting him to your plan, so forget it. You're just wasting time."

"Oh, well," smiled Jimmy, "if that's the case, I'll be going. Thanks!" He saluted and walked out.

Next, he went up into Harlem and went to see a friend who kept a garage.

"I want a fast tin can, Charlie, that I can use whenever I want it. Have you such an animal you can loan me at any time?"

"Have I?" asked the garage man, his eyes sparkling with the motor maniac's enthusiasm. "Have I? I'll tell the whole wide world I have! Say, Jimmy, I've got a little can that can show ninety on the speedometer. That's her, over there—that low, yellow bird."

It was not an impressive car.

"What's the matter with the speedom-

eter?" queried Jimmy innocently, too innocently.

"Try her out sometime, and you'll find out," said the garage man. "Got a big date on?"

Jimmy smiled. "Maybe," he answered. "I'll give that sewing machine a whirl, Charlie, and if I like it, I'll buy it. Thanks no, not today. I'll let you know when I want it."

**M**R. CARL ABUBUS STIMSON was forty-five years old, a bit bald, immaculate, and florid of countenance. He lived alone in a comfortable bachelor apartment—The Sheffield Arms—on West Eighty-seventh, as befitted the head bookkeeper of Hunt & Co. He was a modest and respectable citizen, who earned a respectable salary, and lived a fairly blameless life. From eight-thirty in the morning until five in the afternoon he juggled mathematics; then he went home, had his dinner in the little café on Amsterdam Avenue, and then—

Carl had a few passions and some delusions.

One of the passions was his newly acquired sixty-horse-power Wizzer. He loved the car as a father loves his first-born. It was Carl's first car.

And one of his delusions was that everything O. Henry wrote about the girls-of-the-great-metropolis was true. Led astray by the skillfully penned stories of the famous writer, he cherished a secret hope that some day—in a romantic way—he would meet—Her!

He would know her, too, never fear about that! His heart would tell him. Maybe he'd rescue her from wolfish gentlemen who were trying to lead her astray. Or perhaps she'd be some beautiful, modest little shop girl, who would cling to his ample neck and call him her hero. After business hours he was constantly on the *qui vive*, waiting for The Adventure to happen. But, sad to say, in the forty-five years of his life, nothing had as yet occurred.

True, there had been two women. In

one case, before he could make up his mind, she'd moved out of town; in the other case, she married before his procrastinating disposition got around to the point of asking her to share his lot. So he was still a bachelor, fancy-free, heart-whole and—waiting.

He had a sulky feeling that he was an undiscovered hero and adventurer; a devilish sort of fellow who had never been beckoned by the capricious finger of romance or adventure. He felt capable of swaggering heroically through anything if he but had the opportunity. But nothing exciting ever happened, and he was still waiting hopefully.

You can see that he was a constitutional optimist, and on this beautiful July morning he simply bubbled over with the sheer joy of living.

THE CAR was running beautifully; the weather was perfect, and he had a three weeks' vacation due him. He had never felt better in his life, and as he sped along the country road there was not a single fly in his ointment; no rift within the sound lute of his being. He even did not regret, for once, that the seat at his side was vacant.

He was close to some fashionable New Jersey suburbs, yet the pretty road ran through delightful country. It was not a beaten highway that led to country clubs or resorts, but a rustic, well kept road. He had never traveled it before.

The wind smote him with a delicious aroma of growing things; the summer heat lay not too heavily upon the fertile country. The quiet purr of the motor and his swift, silent flight intoxicated him.

He fell to thinking of the girl he had met several times in the past two weeks at the garage where he kept his car. Her car had been next to his, and this morning, for the first time, they had chatted frankly for a few minutes, without embarrassment, like well-bred people. They had exchanged a few items of motor lore, and she had recommended this road to him as "pretty country" and good going.

She had left before him, and he had watched with admiration as she handled her big roadster alone. He wished he knew who she was.

She was very lovely, and, he judged, of a vivacious, electric, untamable temper. Very interesting type. She had a voice, too, mellow, sweet, far-reaching, and her form was as lithe as a serpent's.

He made up his mind to try the road she had recommended. Perhaps she'd take it, too, and he'd meet her again.

Again a too vivid imagination began to weave romance. He thought of sensational rescues from burning buildings, sinking ships, with himself as the hero and she as the heroine. . . . Hello! The speedometer was up to forty-one, and, he was sailing now through a beautiful patch of fine woods. The road was perfect.

He recalled, vaguely, that there was a very wealthy man who lived somewhere in the neighborhood, who had a famous white marble palace. What was his name? Tillford? Yes, that was it, Tillford. He recalled reading about it now.

Rounding a sudden little curve, he pulled his car to a sharp halt and stared bewildered at the picture that confronted him.

Off the road, on the grass, stood the girl who had talked to him in the garage that morning. Her car stood beside her. Her appearance was forlorn and her eyes full of tears. An occasional sob came from her.

CARL was out of his car in a moment. Talk about thrilling adventure! Here it was!

"What's wrong?" he asked hastily. "Please don't cry. Tell me what it is. I'll help you. Car break down?"

The girl lifted two pretty amber eyes to his; the tears were standing on the dark lashes.

"He held me up!" she wailed, choking a sob. "He took my whole c-case and d-did something to my c-car so it won't run and w-w-went away—"

"Who? What did he take?"

"The robber." She ignored his question. "Oh!" she cried, "if you have any nerve or pluck you'll help me get them back!"

It was sudden, but had he not been waiting forty-five years for this moment? He snapped into instant attention.

"You bet I will!" he said. "I don't know what you lost—but I'll help you get it back."

The girl stopped crying long enough to appraise him fleetingly. Apparently, he passed muster.

"How fast can your car go?" she asked suddenly.

Carl's eyes snapped.

"I've had her up to sixty-nine, but I know she'll turn seventy-five in a pinch."

"Fine!" exclaimed the girl, her brown eyes lighting. "It's faster than mine, and anyway, he did something to mine so it won't run. We'll use your car."

"Tell me," he said firmly, "what it's all about. I'm glad to help you—you know that!—in any way I can—but what's it all about? Tell me the details."

"Are you afraid to take a little risk without—without knowing?" asked the girl coldly.

Carl colored warmly.

"What do you want me to do? I can't guess, you know!"

She relented slightly.

"Please don't be angry," she murmured. "I don't know what to do or—anything. A man just held me up here and made me give him my jewel case with all the diamonds. They are one of the most expensive collections in America."

A thrill raced through Carl at the words. Here was adventure—extraordinary adventure—right under his nose!

"Hurry!" urged the girl. "He's only got a few minutes' start. We can catch him in your car—and I'll tell you anything you want to know as we go."

They hurriedly climbed into his car and were under way in a few seconds.

"The best thing to do," he said, "is to phone ahead to the police. They'll head

him off and we'll catch up to him and get your jewels. This is a police matter, you know."

She flashed a look of contempt upon him. It stung like a verbal rebuke. He flushed.

"Are you afraid?" she asked, touching a raw spot.

"No, I'm not!" he flared. "It isn't that, but——"

He stopped when he saw her expression.

"What in the world possessed you to carry such valuable jewels around with you—and while you were alone, too! You were taking terrible chances."

She glanced appealingly at him.

"Please!" she said. "Please don't scold me."

"I'm miserable enough now. Daddy asked me to stop at the bank and get them because he went out of town, and mother wanted to wear them tomorrow at the reception. How should I dream that I was being watched?"

Her lip quivered suddenly.

"There—there!" he said, reassuringly.

"Don't cry—I'll do what I can. Do you live around here?"

"I'm Miss Tillford," she nodded. "I live about seven miles from here."

"Oh!"

He glanced at her with sudden, vivid interest. A beauty and an heiress, too! The gods were kind today!

"So your father is the man who owns the famous deer park, Miss Tillford."

The vivid feature story came back to him now.

She nodded.

"Please go a little faster," she urged. "He might get away, and if he did—I'd just die!"

"I suppose," remarked Carl grimly, stepping harder on the accelerator, "the fellow is armed. What chance will we have? Not one in a——"

"I have a—pistol," she said, producing a small, business-like automatic.

He flashed a glance at it; then looked at her.

"Why in the name of Pete didn't you use it?" he cried.

"I—I—forgot!"

Her eyes dropped, shamed.

"I forgot I—I had it. I was so excited, so frightened, I—I—didn't know what to do."

The sight of the pistol caused a frown on Carl's face. This was a serious business.

"At that," he said, "we ought to call up your father——"

"He's in Boston," she interjected, "and won't be home till tomorrow."

"Then we should call the police!" he went on stubbornly, "and have 'em head the fellow off."

"Please!" she pleaded, turning her wonderful eyes full upon him, and laying a soft, hesitating hand upon his arm.

It thrilled him. Adventure was calling. He determined to see it through.

"Don't you see?" She was pleading now. "Dad would never forgive me if he knew I lost the jewels. Then, it would make me look like such a fool, and I don't want it to get in the papers—Dad hates publicity. If Dad knew, I'd—just—die!" A sob sounded in her throat. "Dad would never let me go out alone again, and—Oh!—ever so many unpleasant things would happen to me! Won't you *please* try to get them back for me yourself—and I'll—I'll—do anything for you in return . . . and I'll . . . never forget. . . ." Her great eyes looked longingly, adoringly, into his.

"All right!" he gritted savagely. "Hand me that cannon of yours and I'll see what I can do by myself."

"Faster!" breathed the girl. "You're only doing forty-one!"

The engine began to hum. Forty-five—fifty—fifty-five miles an hour.

"Can't go any faster on this road," said Carl, as the car swayed and bounced.

THE GIRL was white and tense. She was gripping his left arm unconsciously, and he smiled as he noted her brilliant beauty. At last! A real adven-

ture! He breathed deeply. The saline taste of excitement intoxicated him. This was living! O. Henry was right!

"There!" breathed the girl, pointing to the road ahead. "There he goes!"

Ahead of them he saw a low roadster. Every pulse racing, his heart pumping furiously, he sent the accelerator down to the floor boards. The car leaped forward. The girl clutched him. Fifty-five—fifty-seven—sixty miles an hour. The car ahead had just entered a piece of heavy woods, and the race was over. They overtook it rapidly and Carl sounded his horn loudly.

The car ahead swerved and politely took the right hand side of the road to let them get by. Carl had a brief glimpse of a heavy, saturnine face that looked at him with anger and annoyance. He raced ahead, stopped and thrust his car across the road. Perforce, the man in back stopped, too, a half audible oath coming to Carl's ears.

"Hey! what d'ye think you're doing?" called the man in the car, angrily; then he saw the pistol in Carl's hand, and a look of hopeless resignation crossed his face. "What a fool I was to take a chance!" he said bitterly.

"You sure were—are!" cheerfully agreed Carl, keeping the gun pointed. "Climb out!" he ordered.

The saturnine faced man climbed out and stood regarding Carl and the girl as if he could vastly enjoy murdering both of them.

"What do you want?" he barked shortly. "Are you aware that this is a serious crime?"

"Very," agreed Carl, still cheerful. "As for what I want—hand over that jewel case. Come now!—no funny work or I'm liable to get nervous and hand you a few lead pills——"

"You won't get away with this!" snarled the thick-set man, interrupting. "I'll get you for this——"

"You talk like a bucket full of ashes!" interjected Carl, brightly. "I'm running this party. Come on now, hand 'em over

and be quick about it—or do you want me to shoot you first and take 'em away from you?"

The thick-set one paled.

"Don't shoot," he said, in a surly voice. "I'll give them up. Oh, what a fool I was——"

"I agree with you, sir," chortled Carl. "Thought you were pretty wise and slick, didn't you?"

He glanced at the girl. She was white as a sheet and trembling. Poor little thing! he thought. She was still horribly frightened. Any girl would be frightened who had gone through this experience.

"Don't be afraid," he said to her, in a soothing voice. "I've got him where he can't do any more harm."

Turning to the man again, he directed:

"Hand that jewel case to the young lady, you old reprobate, and don't make any suspicious move, or I'll——"

He wiggled his pistol slightly, with deadly significance.

"I'd like to kick your head off!" snarled the thick-set man, as the girl advanced and extended her hand.

He eyed them both with vivid hatred. A choleric red stained his face, but a look at the menacing pistol decided him. He retained his self-possession, produced a long jewel case and handed it to the girl.

She glanced swiftly at the contents and turned to Carl.

"It's—it's all here," she said. "Now let's get away from here. Take me away, please."

"If I had a gun, you fat little toad, you wouldn't get away with this so easy!" snarled the man.

"Awfully careless of you to forget it," chided the excited Carl. "You lack experience. I suppose you left it home on the piano, eh? You'll know better next time—if there will be any next time," he finished darkly.

The girl was watching him in admiration, and he couldn't resist a bit of strutting. Why, it was easy being a hero! For the first time in his life he was occu-

pying the center of the stage in a real, exciting adventure—an adventure that was just like a page out of O. Henry—and he grew bold and confident, and determined to push it further. The one fact that he forgot was that O. Henry was the master of the unexpected ending.

"Pl-ease!" pleaded the girl. "I'm—I'm afraid of him! Please take me away!"

But Carl was now quivering with excitement. Why not arrest the crook? Why not bring him in at the point of a gun? It was stirring! The affair would probably get out anyhow. There would be a Sunday feature of it—he could see it—the drawings of the two automobiles, the girl, the burly crook, and he, calm and serene, gun in hand dominating the scene. . . . It was wonderful. . . . He turned to the girl.

"We'll take him to the next town," he cried, "and lock him up!"

"Yes, I'll bet you will!" snapped the man sarcastically. "I suppose you'll take me right up to the police station, won't you? Yes! You will—not!"

"No—no! Pl-ease!" gasped the girl. "I'm terribly afraid of him—I couldn't ride in the car if he was in it! Take me back to my car and I'll try again to get it started. Or, you go ahead with him, and I'll wait here for you until you come back for me."

THEY had not noticed that another long, rakish car had come silently around a bend in the road from the same direction they had traveled. They had all been too excited. Now, as the brakes shrieked suddenly, they noted it for the first time and saw a young, pleasant-faced man get out, approach them, send a puzzled look at the cars and to each of them; then, in a pleasant voice he said:

"Hello! What's wrong? Broke down?"

"Broke—hell!" cried the thick-set man savagely. "These bandits have attacked me!"

"Well, of all the nerve!" cried the girl shrilly. "You old—bluff!"

"You—she devil!"



"'All right,' he said, 'I'll take a chance. I have no business doing this—I'm committing a technical crime myself by letting you go, but—it's summer . . . and you are young . . . and pretty. Give me the jewels, Fay.'"

"Behave yourself!" cried Carl, waving his pistol. "Remember you're addressing a lady!"

The thick-set one spluttered with rage. "Damn you, you bunion-faced ape——" he began, but the waving pistol silenced him.

"That'll be enough from you!" snapped Carl grandly.

He turned to the new arrival and explained: "I'm arresting this man for a serious——"

"*Pl-e-ase!*" broke in the girl. "I'm scared to death of him! I couldn't *dream* of riding in the same car—I'm frightened——" her voice broke piteously.

The tall newcomer unexpectedly came to the rescue.

"If that's the case," he said to Carl, while he smiled to the girl, "you take your man in your car and I'll give the young lady a lift in mine—if she's willing."

The young lady glanced at him swiftly. He was very good-looking, and there was no mistaking the admiration in his eyes.

"That—that will be much better," she said, looking at Carl.

Carl nodded his acquiescence to this plan, and the thick-set one was forced to climb in beside him while the girl entered the newcomer's car.

"Go ahead," called the newcomer to Carl. "I'll follow in a few minutes—just as soon as I run this other car to one side sufficiently to let me pass without knocking off my fenders."

Carl let in his clutch and followed the winding road to the next town. He entered it thirty minutes later. He had not looked back because he was driving with his left hand; his right still clutched the pistol which covered the prisoner at his side.

**A**RRIVED at the police station, he looked back, but there was no sign of the other car. He concluded that it must have been slightly delayed and marched his prisoner inside.

His prisoner was struggling with some species of emotion, for his mouth twisted

with unuttered incoherencies that seemed to choke him.

"Well?" said the red-faced sergeant of police, surveying the pair with professional interest. "What's the charge, officer?"

Carl swelled imposingly. The sergeant took him for a detective. It somehow flattered his ego.

"Highway robbery, chief," he began. "I captured him red-handed——"

"Highway—hell!" cried the thick-set man, suddenly finding his voice. "Why, you pie-faced, pot-bellied, knock-kneed, blithering——"

"Hello!" exclaimed the sergeant, leaning forward suddenly with surprised recognition. "Why, it's Mr. Tillford! What's the matter, sir? What's happened to you, sir?"

"Mr.—Tillford?" repeated Carl blankly, his jaw dropping.

He was not a rapid thinker, although he had a vivid imagination. His mind just now was working slowly, but light began to dawn upon him little by little, and suddenly he sat down, his knees refusing their function of supporting him.

"——and they held me up," Mr. Tillford was shouting, "right out in the open road. He and a girl—the squash-eyed, lop-sided, fat little——"

He paused for breath, his face scarlet with passion.

Carl wiped his forehead.

"I can explain——" he began, weakly.

"Yaah!" sneered the sergeant. "They can *all* explain! We'll give you a chance to tell it to the judge! Lock him up, Brown!"

"But the girl—his accomplice—has my jewels!" cried Mr. Tillford wildly. "Send out search parties—intercept her—*do* something! Offer five thousand dollars reward!"

The sergeant issued swift orders. The telephone was put into instant service, and a car was made ready to take the trail, with New York Headquarters enlisted.

"Don't worry, sir," soothed the sergeant. "We'll do everything possible.

We'll get the jewels back—she can't get away. New York's been notified."

PLEASE," said the girl, turning to the young man. "Couldn't we go back a mile or two and get my car? I'm sure it's only some small thing gone wrong, and then we could go on to Plattsville. *Flee—ease!*"

The young man smiled in acquiescence.

"Certainly!" he replied, anxious to please the glowing little beauty. "Anything you say, Miss—Miss—"

"Tillford," she supplied, looking at him with amorous eyes, calculated to reduce him to immediate adoration.

"Miss Tillford," he repeated. "Perhaps I can help you fix your car up—if it's only a small matter."

"Please go a little faster," she begged. "I'm so upset! I'd like to get through with it all and go home."

The car suddenly shot out with great speed, and in a few minutes they were beside her abandoned roadster.

The young man lifted the hood when the starter failed to get any response from the engine, and an exclamation left his lips.

"Why, it's only one of the wires—it's off the magneto. I'll fix it in a jiffy!"

He did. The engine started at once.

"That's a pretty fast car you have, isn't it?" he asked, looking at the massive, six-cylinder engine.

She shot him a direct look.

"Fairly so," she answered, and started to enter.

"One moment, Fay," he said, in a suddenly different voice. "I think you'd better give me the jewels."

The blood left her face. She grew pale as death, her eyes contracting with sheer terror.

"Who—who are you?" she whispered, through blanched lips.

"I?" he replied lightly. "I? Oh, I'm just a gentleman with a little imagination. I saw you last Monday, coming out of Tillford's office. You did just what I thought you ought to do. You found out

that the jewels were in a vault in New York, and would have to be brought to the Tillford country home by someone, if they were to be worn tonight by his wife. And, of course, Tillford was the logical man to carry such valuable jewels. You knew he always drove his roadster alone, because you watched him—as I did. And you took a chance that there would be no one along with him and luck favored you, because Tillford was fool enough to be careless. That fool secretary fell for your reporter stuff, but I called the Breeze office, and they gave you away. Then I remembered seeing you at detective headquarters when you were mixed up in that Leyton robbery, several months ago, and I knew you were Fay Miners.

The rest was easy. I hung around the road today and watched you vamp that modern Don Quixote. Clever stuff, Fay, and a perfectly timed and executed piece of work—but, other people also have some—imagination—"

His voice trailed away as he saw the burning misery, the mortal anguish, in her face. She was young and very lovely, and her look hurt him. Chivalrous to a degree, his manhood rebelled against the act he had so carefully planned. She looked so like a wild forest animal, driven to helpless despair. He stood holding the wheel of her car, looking absently at the smiling country.

"What—what," she whispered fearfully, "are you going to do with me?"

"Why," he answered, his eyes sweeping her keenly, "I really had an idea, a little while ago, that I'd like to kiss you—"

She took a step forward, her eyes wide, stamped, reckless.

"Let me—go!" she implored, with a little breathless, hysterical sob. Her whole frame trembled. "Only let—me—go—and I'll do your bidding—whatever it is—"

EGOTIST though he unconsciously was, indifferent to rebuke or any exterior influences or conditions, he yet felt ashamed and guilty before the mute reproach he had seen in her eyes.

"No," he said, looking back at the landscape with unseeing eyes, "I did not mean that. I know now—you're not that kind. I beg your pardon. Fay . . . if I let you go, will you leave the city and promise never to come back?"

She nodded, wide-eyed, scarcely comprehending.

"Somehow," he went on heavily, slowly, "I can't arrest you . . . you are so young and so pretty, and I hate to think of sending you up the river . . . to be shut up for years in a prison. You have all of life before you—if you'd only go straight! Promise me you'll go away and start new—clean—straight—and I'll let you go."

She nodded, striving to stifle the sobs that came suddenly.

"I—promise," she whispered. "I—will—so help me—God!"

He nodded approvingly.

"All right," he said, "I'll take a chance. I have no business doing this—I'm committing a technical crime myself by letting you go, but—it's summer . . . and you are young . . . and pretty. Give me the jewels, Fay."

She handed him the case without a word.

He opened it and looked through its sparkling contents.

"You give me your word of honor you're not holding anything out?" he asked, eyeing her sternly.

"Oh—!" she began, a flush mounting her cheeks.

"All right!" he hastily interjected. "Go on your way. Remember, the crooked path is a losing game. You were bound to be caught sooner or later; then you *would* have gone up the river! Play straight! Better go up the road a mile and take that short cut to Hessville, then to Brandon. It's a rough road, but the others will be watched. When you get to Brandon, lose the car and catch the boat. There'll be a lot of summer resorters, and you can lose yourself in the crowd. I think you can make it. Have you any money? Sure? All right, be on

your way—there's not a second to lose. Good-bye and—good luck!"

She was frightened and sobbing as her car sped away.

Jimmy stood for several seconds in rapt silence.

"Oh, well," he sighed finally, "I suppose, 'I'll have to buy the dinner—but it's worth it!'"

He wondered whether he should go to Plattsville and effect Carl's release and return the jewels. Tillford had seen him go away with the girl, and there might arise many complications and necessary explanations if he turned up without her; so, instead, he decided to go straight to detective headquarters in New York.

**A**N HOUR LATER, thanks to the speed of his car, he entered the chief's office and grinned cheerfully.

"Hello, chief!" he greeted. "Anything new?"

"Plenty!" snapped the chief. "Tell you about it later. Can't talk to you now, Jimmy, I'm too busy."

A smile spread over Jimmy's face. "Working on the Tillford case?" he asked innocently.

The chief whirled.

"Now, how in blue blazes did you know that? It just came in—not an hour ago, and I've kept it quiet. How did you know?"

"Imagination," grinned Jimmy maliciously.

The chief grunted.

"You're either an awful liar, Jimmy, or you have a wonderful imagination! But it's not for publication. Tillford wants it kept quiet, see? So lay off. Somebody held him up on a country road a little while ago and took the Tillford jewels from him—worth heaven knows what!"

"I've got 'em," said Jimmy simply.

"I know you've got 'em," said the chief, with kindly commiseration, "but no one will notice it. Yours is not a serious case, Jimmy. You'll recover."

"I mean the Tillford jewels, chief," said Jimmy, laying the case upon the table.

The chief's jaw dropped, literally. He reached for the case, opened it, and stared at the glittering collection with amazed incredulity; then he turned to Jimmy again.

"Tell me!" he commanded.

And Jimmy told, simply, quietly, just what had happened, and what he had done.

"And the girl?" snapped the chief.

"I—just couldn't, Chief," stammered Jimmy. "She's young—and she was badly frightened. She promised she'd turn straight, and I let her go. I think she's cured.

"Anyway, she will never come here again, so she won't bother you. It's better to reform 'em, if you can, than to shut 'em up in prison. Why, it tricked me out of a wonderful scoop! Just because I let her go, I can't write the story! And now, I guess you'd better phone Tillford you've got the jewels, and tell that sergeant to let that 'hero' go. The poor chap fell like a ton of brick—he swallowed, hook, line and sinker!"

The chief picked up the telephone, effected Carl's release, and talked for several minutes with Mr. Tillford.

"I'll send them out to you by special messenger, Mr. Tillford," he said. "Oh, yes, we work fast in this office! . . . What? . . . Yes, one of my specials did the work . . . yes, sir . . . yes, he was the young fellow who picked up the girl on the road! . . . No, unfortunately she got away . . . but we have the jewels. . . . What? . . . Make it out to James Stuart, and mail it to him care of the Star! . . . Yes, he knew all along what was happening! . . . Not at all! . . . Thanks! . . . Good-bye!"

He swung around to Jimmy.

"Well," he said, "you win! And there's also a little matter of the five thousand reward that Tillford offered—which I think you'll find in Monday's mail at your office!"

Jimmy's eyes opened wide.

"No!" he exclaimed. "Honest, Chief? Well, I'm eternally switched! Well, if that's the case, I buy the dinner at the Ritz!"

"I'll tell the world you will!" said the chief firmly. "And believe me, I'll eat!"

THAT NIGHT a sadly chastened and disillusioned Carl Abubus Stimson ate his solitary dinner without tasting the food.

One of his life-long illusions was shattered beyond any hope of repair.

After dinner, he concluded to spend the evening quietly in his rooms, reading. He had no desire for company of any kind tonight.

Pausing at his favorite bookstore to replenish his stock, he was met by a green and ambitious clerk.

"Something, sir?"

"Yes," absently. "Anything new that's good?"

"Well, sir," began the clerk, "we've just received some elegant sets of O. Henry—"

"O. Henry! Ye gods! cried Carl, coming out of his abstraction like a man whose nerve is suddenly punctured by a dentist's probe. "No! No!"

The clerk was petrified with astonishment at the sudden violence.

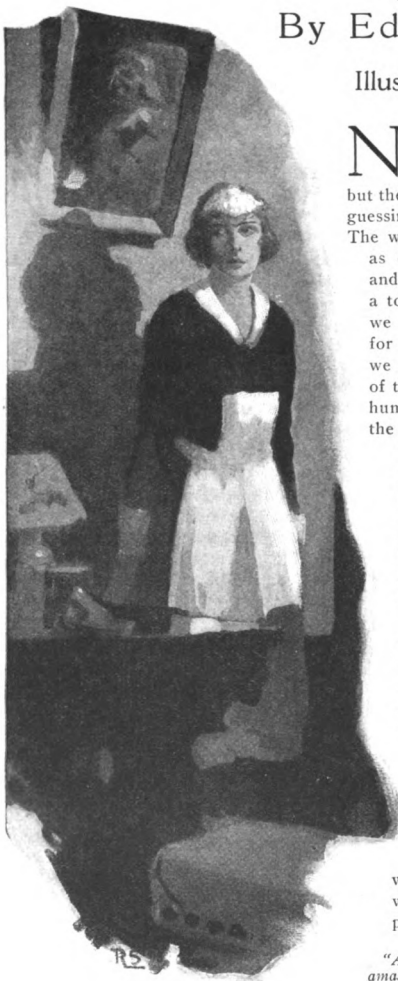
"I—I—beg your pardon," continued Carl, a moment later, horrified at his outbreak.

"Have you anything new in—in—a—astronomy? Or—or natural history?"

# "GRAY LADY" DRIVE

By Eden Philpotts

Illustrated by Raymond Sisley



NOT A DOUBT but what we know more than our fathers, and look clearer upon life in some respects; but there's a good few things that find us still guessing and wondering same as they did. The ways of Providence are as dark to me as ever they were to my grandfather; and, come to think upon it, nought puts a tougher strain on faith than life. But we can't make no laws nor regulations for Providence; we can only hope that we shall find ourselves on the right side of the account, for there's no question of human justice to the problem. Neither the good man, nor yet the rascal knows where he stands, or what he's got to expect. In fact, life's a gamble, and to see either a saint or a rogue get what he deserves is a rare event. And yet, in my opinion, Providence be on the side of the angels oft enough, and 'tis certain sure I ain't got no quarrel with it.

I was one born to hate the petty and mean manner of life to which most of us be called; and yet I never felt no need to throw in my lot with other discontented spirits. I never listened to the tub-thumpers, nor felt any better for hearing sharp chaps shout to the masses to turn upon the classes and fling down the state. Being a game-keeper, I had the wit to see that nature was just the same all through and the world was always to the strong and always will be. The pattern runs through the piece, and man's ways are only nature's ways over again, with the world divided into the few strong

*"A fair maid . . . amazingly pretty, and tall, and slim."*

creatures on one side and the herds of the weak things on the other.

And sometimes the herds band together and their united strength is too much for the strong; but oftener the strong make good against the humble and meek and have 'em at their mercy.

In youth I weren't a very agreeable sort of man and didn't neighbor kindly with the people. I know it; for I thought that I belonged to the strong, silent kind and hoped some day an opportunity would come for me to show my parts. I'd stare at myself, when I was shaving, and see a hard-faced, grim looking chap, with eyes like flint and a square jaw and character written on nose and chin and brow; and I'd say, "Wait another year till you turn five-and-twenty, Joe Black, and then drop this work and clear out of England, and try your luck as a free man in the far West."

And then what happened? Why, life laughed at me, and just as I was getting my ideas in order and planning to leave England and emigrate and launch out on a big scale as a settler, or trapper, or some such work, with only Nature for a master and my fate in my own hands—then everything was changed and I found there weren't nothing fine nor wonderful about me at all. In a word, I went down, like a nine-pin, afore a fine girl!

When Nance Mason came to Eylesbarrow Manor as a parlor-maid, she followed her step-father; and he was the new butler. Old Warner Worth, butler to squire's father before him, popped off quite sudden and was found in the cellar with a bottle of the very best clutched to his shirt front; and then came Arthur Pritchard, a long nosed, sly jackdaw of a man that everybody hated from the first, including Sir William himself. But he hadn't been there a fortnight when they wanted a new second parlor-maid, and Pritchard got the housekeeper to engage his step-daughter—Nance, by name. And his affection for Nance and his pride in her was the best thing about Arthur's crooked character. A fair maid she was, with a

wonderful pink and white skin, and eyes that looked blue if the sky was blue, and grey if the sky was grey.

Amazing pretty and tall and slim, and a voice like a bell, so clear and cheerful. She soon proved as popular as her step-father was the reverse; for she had a frank, large-hearted and kindly way with her. She'd always do a bit of work for another girl and never stand on her dignity, nor nothing like that; and though not the glad eye sort, she was so friendly and fond of company that she had nine young men out of every ten in love with her afore they'd known her a week. And that was not because she wanted 'em, but because they couldn't help wanting her.

Well, I laughed in my sour way when all three of the Eylesbarrow footmen offered for her after she'd been there a month; and then came my down-fall, and chancing to meet her and drink tea with her and her step-father at the head keeper's cottage, if I didn't find myself the target of a lot of new, queer sensations, and afore I knew it, I'd fallen in love with the creature! She told me she had no use for indoor men and would no doubt take some outdoor chap if ever she found the right one; but even so it might not have gone any further, for already I was considering the chances of my career and nothing but a very real affection and regard for my master had kept me at Eylesbarrow the last six months.

SIR WILLIAM WESTAWAY, who was a young man, not more'n two or three years older than myself, touched me on the spot and I did always admire him something tremendous; and, what's more, I suited him right well. He liked me, and he told me more'n once that as soon as Peters, the head keeper, was up home seventy, he meant to pension him and let me have first place. We was similar in our natures—Sir William and me—and we saw things much the same, though he was master and I was man. But he was a wonderful human sort of customer and

that friendly I hesitated to tell him I wanted to leave Eylesbarrow and go to a bigger life. And now he was engaged to be married himself, and here was I moonstruck on a maiden and all my ideas upside down. But, as I say, nought would have come of it if something much more wonderful hadn't happened than my falling in love with Nance.

That only put me alongside a score of other men and didn't make me feel any better pleased with myself I will swear; but then something fell out that was quite another story and I discovered an amazing secret that changed the face of the world for me. In fact, you may say I began to live for the first time in my life. And it was nobody more important than Nelly Burt, the kitchen-maid, who opened my eyes. Taking up a brace of pheasants one day, Nelly got talking and went out of earshot with me in the yard. She was full of Nance Mason and told me the greatest news that ever filled my ear-hole.

"For all you're such a clever man, Joe, and can see in the dark," she said, "'tis a pity I should think you can't see in the daylight, too. And if you hold off much longer, you may say 'good-bye' to her—Nance Mason, I mean. She'd kill me if she thought I'd told you—she don't know I know it for that matter. But we share the same bed-chamber—me and her—and I've heard her name your name in her sleep; what more do any fool of a man want than that?"

SO THERE IT WAS—the thing more wonderful than me loving Nance. For she loved me; and when I made that shattering discovery, I didn't waste no more time you may be certain sure.

I never trusted her step-father from the first and I soon found that Nance didn't neither. In truth she liked him far less than he cared for her; but he'd got powers over her till she was of age, and for all his faults, he did set a great store by her and was proud of her beauty and very wishful to advance her in the world.

And when I went afore the man a month later, after I'd got "yes" from the maid, what astonished me most was the high and mighty view he took of his step-daughter's future. He wouldn't hear me for an instant. If a black-beetle had offered to marry Nance, Arthur couldn't have treated the insect with greater contempt than he treated me.

"I know I'm not fit to black her boots," I told Arthur Pritchard. "No more is any man living; but I'm strong and clever and straight; and I've got a good character and be down for head keeper when Peters is seventy year old; and you can count on me to be a faithful husband and make your fine girl so happy as I know how."

"My poor fellow, you don't know your company," answered Arthur, with his sideways jackdaw look at me. "There's much hidden from your understanding, Joe Black, and I don't blame you for that; but things aren't always what they seem, and I may tell you that a time's coming when my daughter, Nance, will be able to look a darned sight higher than a head game-keeper for a husband. So a nod's as good as a wink, Joe. Don't let me hear no more of it, else I may have to take a line you wouldn't like."

I stared at the man and he smiled at me and little guessed how near I was to smashing his face in. To be called "my poor fellow"; to be told I'd got no understanding—and all in the hatefullest voice by a darned butler! 'Twas a mystery, and what made it more mysterious still was Nance; for she openly confessed that her step-father puzzled her just as much as he puzzled me.

"He's full of something," she said, when I told her in secret how he'd turned me down. "He was quite different afore he came here, but now there's things in his head that never was in it. He talks the awfulest nonsense when I go walking along with him, and he says the tide has turned at last and that he's going to be a rich man and I'm going to be a lady, and so on. If I didn't know how hard

and cunning he can be and how cute he is, I should reckon he was getting bats in the belfry."

It was after Pritchard had been six months at Eylesbarrow these things happened; and so it stood, that I wanted to marry Nance and that she wanted to marry me; but her step-father refused to sanction any such plan. Then we had a row—me and him—and then we had another row, and what I couldn't forgive was the way he treated me—like the dirt under his feet. The thing sounds nought put down in words; but it soon grew into a pretty serious matter both for me and Pritchard; because I found his insolence and scorn wake something in me that frightened me above a bit. And first I turned from this strange temptation; but presently I got used to it and it didn't fright me no more.

Everybody hated Arthur, for the hound had one of them cold, insulting natures that treat their fellow creatures as though they belonged to a different and lower creation. Only Sir William didn't appear to see it, and no doubt Arthur was an amazing good man at his own job; but then still stranger things came to our ears, and we heard from the footmen, on a day in early November, how Arthur was taking a high hand with Sir William himself! That put the cap on it you may say, because if there was one thing the master had no use for it was impertinence from his people. He always showed civility and courtesy to the least stable-boy, and expected the same himself.

THE WESTWAYS, it was said, went good and bad by turns, and Sir William's father, so they told, had been a very warm member and done a many doubtful, if not lawless, deeds in his time; but Sir William belonged to the good sort and he'd paid his father's debts and squared an enemy or two with big money for the honor of the name. It was believed that Sir George had left his son a poor man; but things looked better now, and Sir William was engaged to a lord's

daughter—a maiden with tons of money—her father being one of the new lords, with enough stuff to buy honors in the open market.

And now there came a bit of change over Sir William and he grew less light-hearted than of old, and shorter and less friendly with the folk. Nobody noticed it more than me, for I was thrown a good bit up against him in the shooting season. He always liked me to load for him and carry his second gun, and he'd make a lot of me as I've told you, so when he fell silent and was sharp in his manners, I took it to heart a bit. Because I'd got my own troubles just then and had found it all I could do once or twice to keep my hands off Arthur Pritchard.

The beastly man seemed to have brought a gloom to Eylesbarrow, somehow, though always as cocky and cheerful as a starling himself; but he made nought but enemies with his high-handed ways and so we all breathed again when Tom Mitchel, the footman, repeated that the butler had been trying his high and mighty manner on Sir William; because that surely meant he'd be fired right away and the place well rid of him. But still Arthur stopped on, and he'd got a fair down on me now, so that from just being unfriendly, we grew to bitter enemies. He dared me to speak to Nance presently and then I lost my temper and gave him a whister-poop on the jaw and knocked him down.

I was much to blame, being the younger and the stronger man; but his maddening insolence proved too great for my temper on that occasion.

He got up, dusted himself and gave me notice to quit!

"You clear out of Eylesbarrow this day month," he said.

"You blue-faced ape!" I roared. "Who be the likes of you to sack the likes of me? Have you ever heard of your master, Sir William?"

"Be that as it will," he answered. "You do what I say; and if you don't give notice, you'll get it, Joe Black."

And sure enough, inside a week my master told me we'd better part!

"Don't argue it, Joe," he said. "I'm sorry to lose you, but I'd sooner lose you than my peace of mind. Pritchard's right. You've got rather too spacious ideas for Eylesbarrow."

"'Tis him have got spacious ideas," I said; "I'll go, Sir William," I said; "but 'tis a hard thing, and that poisonous trash you've made your butler—"

"There—there—Joe, not another word," he answered. Then he looked me up and down as if he was going to speak; but he didn't and I went my way. And after that I must own up that the Devil got into me, and I gave him so hearty a welcome as ever he received from any ill-used man smarting under grievances. I didn't stop to worry, nor yet to wonder. I only stopped to consider Arthur Pritchard, and what he'd done to me, and how he'd queered my pitch, put a spoke in my grand love affair, treated me like muck and finally got me put out, just when I'd changed my mind about going abroad and meant for to settle down and follow Peters, as head keeper at Eylesbarrow, along with Nance, for the term of my natural life.

WELL, I weren't the sort to lie down under these shameful wrongs and I figured it out that here was two monstrous things—the loss of Nance, who loved me and wanted nobody else, and the loss of my billet and Sir William's friendship. And whether that was to be regained I couldn't be sure; but it was dead certain that no power of man would lose me Nance. I thought ferocious and steady, and I soon felt that there was only one way to cut the knot. Something had to go and that something weren't my love for the girl, nor yet, if I could help it, my job at Eylesbarrow. But the thing that had to go was the step-father of Nance, and having heard the general opinion of the man and finding that every living creature, Nance included, appeared to think that he'd be a

long sight better under ground than on top of it, I began to consider the chances of putting him there.

And my hard character came to throw its light upon the subject, for I was terrible careful and looked at it very thoroughly from all points of view before I did anything that couldn't be undone. In two years Nance would be of age and free to marry as she pleased; but in less than two years her father had as good as told her she'd be a rich woman and lifted, along with him, into a very different life from that of a servant. But I wasn't going to wait two years and Nance didn't want to wait two months.

Then again but three weeks now separated me from leaving Eylesbarrow, and once gone, I knew it was very unlikely I should ever come back; whereas if Arthur went, then I firmly believed that Sir William would soon withdraw and bid me stop. So it all came to Arthur going, and once I found the idea of doing the man it had no terrors for me, I quickly began to build upon it and examine the best ways and means.

It so happened that to snuff out Pritchard was as easy as shooting an owl in the dimpsy, for he was a dimpsy bird himself and always took his own exercise between tea and dinner in the dusk. He kept very regular ways and walked his four or five miles every evening, in fair weather or foul, along "Grey Lady" Drive, as it was called—a clearing in the covers a mile from the Manor. And knowing his habits and the beats of the other keepers, I understood exactly how to account for Arthur; and I also knew where to put him, so he wouldn't be seen again afore the Crack of Doom. But what I most wanted to know was what would come after; because I weren't at all wishful to be struck with remorse, or any other painful complaint when the deed was done.

Yet, know yourself as you may, no man can tell exactly how he'll feel on the subject of murder till he's tried it, and I had to decide whether the joy of wedding Nance and biding with her for life at

Eylesbarrow would do more than counterbalance any uneasiness I might feel about croaking Arthur Pritchard.

And I decided, him being such a cold-blooded, hateful pig of a man, that remorse was out of the question. I told myself that I might just so well expect remorse to follow shooting a carrion crow, or putting a charge of shot into a weasel.

And all the time that I was making up my mind, Pritchard, little knowing his peril, drove me forward and screwed me to the sticking-point and rubbed it in about my being dismissed from the Manor.

SO I SETTLED to fix him, and having done that much, turned over the best and safest way to do it. I'd have given a lot for a friend at that time to help me with the details; but of course, I had to work 'em out single-handed, and arranged everything with two objects. The first was that Arthur Pritchard should never be seen again, alive or dead, after I'd done with him, and the second was not to be mixed up with his disappearance in the mind of any man, woman or child.

Well, he played into my hands, for the man of method is always pretty easy to manage, and since he chose the old and lonely cut through the covers for his constitutional, I knew where to be busy. This part of the woods was all in my control, and neither Peters, nor either of the other two, ever put their noses into it except shooting days; so there I was, and the first thing I did on night duty was to dig a grave for Arthur. A big boulder lay in the thick five and twenty yards off the drive, and it overhung to the north.

So I worked there, and sank a four-foot pit eighteen inches across and six foot long. The leaf was falling fast in the midst of November, and there's no better time for digging holes in woodlands if you don't want other people to know what you're up to.

THE GRAVE MADE, I covered it with dead sticks and brush and leaves; and then came a rough, rainy evening between five and six, when Pritchard took his airing. And I stood by the green track behind an oak tree and waited to knock him on the head when he reached me. For I wasn't going to make a mess of Arthur. I merely meant to let the life out of him, hide him safe and snug, and then go my way, gun on shoulder. And there wasn't going to be no clues nor nothing foolish like that.

Just after an owl had gone across the drive, I saw a dim figure and there came along the butler, smoking his pipe and walking with his hands in his pockets very well content. I remember saying to myself that I must be careful not to leave his pipe lying about after I'd done my work; but next minute that happened to alter the face of the world for me and came between me and smashing up the Eighth Commandment.

For suddenly, a good fifty yards before he come to my oak tree, Arthur Pritchard passed another tree and from behind it there jumped out somebody else—a man, quick, alert and full of business. I stared and a terrible curious feeling woke in my mind that I was looking at myself; but as the two moved forward together, I soon saw who it was that had waited to have a word with my enemy.

Words ran high between them from the moment of their meeting, and I could tell by the voices that the one man was asking the other to listen to reason, while the other stuck to some plan he'd already made and didn't intend to budge from it. And the one was calm and insolent and more like a jackdaw than ever, and the other soon found himself in a proper hell of a temper.

Then happened the queer thing, and when the two stood within ten yards of me, that fell out I myself had thought to do, and I saw a hunting crop swung screeching across the air and the buck-horn handle land good and hard on Arthur's right-hand temple. It fell weighted

with passion, whereas the stick I'd got ready was weighted with lead; but the stroke came from a man beside himself with rage, while, if I'd been called to smite, no passion, but only skill and strength would have gone to the blow.

All that I had time to consider; and as Pritchard flung up his arms, rolled over and lay still as a log, I also saw that, so far as he was concerned, it was all one; though for us two living men, it meant the difference between manslaughter and murder. I could see easy enough that my master had never intended to do for Pritchard: it was the work of a moment's fury, and you had only got to look at Sir William after he'd struck, to see his horror at the complete job he'd made of it.

He knelt by Arthur and held him up and prayed for pardon and called upon him to speak and say he weren't dead for the love of God; but then he saw, despite the gloaming, that it was all over with the butler and he found himself left with a corpse on his hands.

WHAT was I going to do about it? I've sometimes been called to decide a question in a hurry, like all of us, and I've decided wrong quite as often as other people; but this time, I reckon, I done right, and if it was to happen again, I'd do the same.

I come straight out 'pon top of Sir William and I told him to fear nothing at all. He stared, but he was a clear-sighted man and he knew me very well and I could see that he was properly glad to hear my voice and find me beside him.

"Joe," he said, "I've murdered Pritchard!"

"Sir William," I answered, "you have not; but if you'd been here five minutes later, you'd have found him murdered, because I was waiting behind yonder tree to kill him myself. Look at that."

I showed him my leaded stick and he stared and panted, and it began to mizzle rain on us. A breath went through the boughs overhead and we heard the leaves rustling down.

Still Sir William couldn't speak and I went on.

"I know you, sir," I said, "and you know me. And I know you'd never have lifted your hand to this man, or any other, without you had a mighty good reason. And what your reason was be your business. You've killed him all right; but you've done manslaughter, not murder, because you didn't mean to kill him. But if I'd killed him, it would have been murder. And since I'd laid my plans very careful and you've laid none, if I may offer to advise you, Sir William, I'd say it would be your best course to make use of my arrangements and so save yourself a lot of future worry."

He didn't seem to follow all this for the minute; but he slowly began to grasp the amazing fact that I was in "Grey Lady" Drive to do in cold blood what he'd done in hot.

"Why were you going to kill him, Joe Black?" he asked me, and I told my gentleman.

"Because he wouldn't let me marry his step-daughter, Sir William. He was a beastly man and very generally hated, and, apart from wanting Nance Mason and her wanting me, and apart from his making you give me the sack, I felt to this chap same as I feel to a fitch or a fougart. He was a poisonous, dangerous creature and better dead. And I'm very glad he's gone, and I do hope you ban't going to feel too much put about for him."

SIR WILLIAM looked at me and began to pull himself together, while the darkness and rain came down together.

"I'll tell you some day, Joe, why I've done this," he said.

"I know there was a powerful good reason, Master, and that's enough for me," I answered; "and now, if you'll be guided, you'll slip it out of this, and show up somewhere, and keep your nerve, and ring for Pritchard as soon as you get home. You can very well leave the rest



"Look in his pockets and see if he's got a paper on him," said Master."

to me; because I'm only faced with what I expected and I've got everything ready."

Sir William hesitated.

"He's dead I suppose, Joe?"

"Oh, yes, Sir William, he'll never be no deader than what he is now. So I'll beg you get on your way. You be the tool of Providence, Sir William, and if you look at life from that point of view, you'll find that it clears up doubtful things in a wonderful manner."

He considered a moment, then, much to my satisfaction, did as I advised.

"I'm trusting you with my life, Joe," he said.

"And proud I am to think it, Sir William," I answered. "There'll be hue and cry tomorrow, and if you send word to the West Lodge that you want me for orders, I'll come along."

"Look in his pockets and see if he's got a paper on him," said Master, and I done so and found inside Arthur's coat a small blue envelope.

Torn in half between reason and conscience was Sir William Westaway at that moment. Then he turned and walked off without another word, and I had Arthur to myself.

I took off my coat and took off his. I wrapped his round his head, then carried him into the woods and soon got him underground and all level and suent about him. The leaves came down and the rain poured on 'em, and when I went that way next morning, to answer a message from the house, if it hadn't been for the boulder, I'd not have known where Pritchard slept myself.

A man or two from the house was wandering through "Grey Lady" Drive, and when I axed 'em pretty sharp what the mischief they was doing in the preserves, they broke it to me that Arthur Pritchard had gone for his walk as usual the night afore, and not come home again.

**I**N HALF AN HOUR I was along with Sir William, and felt very pleased to find he'd got himself in hand and was steady as a rock about it. He had a safe

opened and some amazing trinkets on a desk in front of him.

"Family heirlooms, Joe," he said. "And now I'm going to be a family man, I must have 'em polished up for my future missis. They're all out of fashion, since they was last worn thirty years ago, and they must be re-set and so on. My mother took them when she ran away from my father, else they wouldn't be here now."

"Arthur Pritchard's missing I hear, Sir William," I said; and he looked to see the door was fast home and then told me to sit down.

"It's like this, Joe," he began. "Pritchard came to me with a very good character, and he was all right as a butler, but I soon found he was all wrong as a man."

"Same as everybody else found, your honor," I said.

"He was not honest, for though he never stole anything like gold or silver, he stole what was far more valuable and looked into my private affairs behind my back. Whether he was merely inquisitive, or whether he pursued his enquiries for a reason, I can't say; but certain it is that he came across some family documents relating to my father, and so learned secrets of the most sacred character.

"Sir George was a bad hat, Joe, and it's no good pretending he wasn't. Though my own father, I'm bound to admit he did a great many outrageous things, and dragged our name in the mud deeper than even his grandfather before him. I needn't trouble you with his delinquencies, but Pritchard must have found my keys, when I was away from home for a week last August, and made a pretty careful examination of certain records and undertakings.

"One vital paper he purloined. It is a promise to make good by certain payments a large sum that my father secured under most disgraceful and dishonorable circumstances. The price of restitution is secrecy, and those who have suffered know that I am only concerned to do my

part. A black business altogether, and discovering particulars, Pritchard instantly perceived that if any such awful private chapter of our affairs came to public knowledge, it must put me in a position of extreme difficulty, if not personal disgrace.

"In a word he guessed, quite truly, that if Lord Westermaine knew the story, it was pretty certain he would refuse to let his daughter marry me, and so visit my father's sins on me. I should do the same if the positions were reversed, for the son of a man with my father's record, can hardly expect to find himself received with much friendship among honorable people. Happily, however, my father's record is largely secret. His sins are known to few; my friends are content to judge me by myself; my future wife's family need know nothing.

"Pritchard stole that paper and demanded blackmail. I offered the man five thousand pounds and he laughed at me and said that he must have twenty-five thousand.

"We have been at it, trying to come to terms, for months, and he has given me a pretty bad time I assure you. Yesterday I offered him fifteen thousand, which was the limit of my powers, and his only answer was to say his price had now reached thirty thousand. Then, for a fatal moment, I forgot myself, struck the man in a passion and destroyed him. The paper was the one he stole. That's the whole story."

"He got all he deserved; Sir William," I answered, "and I'm very well pleased to hear how well he deserved it, because that'll put you in a better appetite I dare say, and you won't feel too vexed when you look back. And now there's a few things to think of as you haven't turned your mind to I expect."

**I** POINTED to the golden jewels and glittering stones on his desk.

"If you was to give me something worth ten thousand quid or so, it would be wise."

He stared and stared and got so red as a beet.

"Good God! You don't mean——"

"No, Sir William, I do not," I answered, seeing the mistaken notion in his mind.

"I don't mean nothing at all like that. What I do mean is that if you can dispense with that diamond necklace, say, for a bit, it might be more useful to you out of sight than on her future ladyship's neck."

"Explain, Joe," he ordered me.

"It's like this," I said. "The police will be up along presently, and they'll want to know if there's any reason why Arthur Pritchard should have made a clean break and disappeared last night without a word to a soul, and without packing his kit bag afore he started. Well, your honor, if this here necklace was within his reach yesterday, that might be a very good reason."

"It wasn't," answered Sir William, who had an amazingly simple mind in some ways.

"No matter for that," I answered. "Perhaps if you was to think again, you may remember that the safe was open and you was called away a minute. Anyway, if you'll let me put it in my pocket, I'll wager nobody will ever see it again—not in this generation—unless it's yourself. And if the necklace be gone, or anything else worth big money you'd sooner say 'good-bye' to, then there's a reason why Arthur went on his way without giving you notice, or saying farewell to his step-daughter."

"Does she know anything about his plot against me?" he asked.

"She does not," I answered. "She's often wondered to me what her step-father meant when he talked of a fortune coming to him. She'd got no ideas about what he was after. It wasn't very like he'd give his games away to her, else she'd have told me. And as it's just a thing Arthur Pritchard would have done—to steal your diamonds—so she'll view it as a very good explanation of his departure."

Sir William picked up the necklace and handed it to me.

"You're thrown away as a game-keeper, Joe," he said. "You did ought to be at Scotland Yard. Give me a memorandum presently of just where you hide it. I needn't ask you to choose the right place. And as for you—if all goes right—you'll marry Nance, I suppose, inside a few months and then we'll talk about your future."

And that's all there ever was to it; because everything did go dead right. Sir William reported the loss of his diamonds, and I don't think the police ever supposed that Arthur Pritchard came to a bad end. They hunted very industrious, though not in "Grey Lady" Drive; but never a clue turned up to help 'em; and, in fulness of time, Sir William married the lord's daughter and I got Nance.

**A**ND THAT'S what I mean, when I say that Providence is a bit of a wonder. And it ain't always against us, but have a **knack** to see farther through a brick wall sometimes than we can, and so save us poor mortals from our own imaginings. Because, come to think of it in cold blood, it would have been a creepy thing for me to lay out Arthur and then to marry his step-daughter; though of course she'd never have known, and I'd never have fretted, seeing the manner of man he was. But I'm free to confess I was glad that I didn't have no blood on my hands, save that badgering poacher, Ned White, who shot me through the shoulder afore I laid him dead with the butt end of my gun. That was the year after my eldest son was born. And as for Sir William, I don't honestly think the memory of his misfortunes with Arthur did him overmuch harm.

Anyway, he was one of the good West-aways, and the life of the man will stand against that item in the Book, for the poor called him blessed and no living creature ever had a quarrel with him. All on the side of mercy and justice, and what's more, it looks as if the fatal custom

of a bad son following a good father in his family is going to break down in the next generation, for Sir William's eldest—he was six and twenty when my old master died—he promising to make such another as himself, and there's no vice in him, nor yet in his younger brother.

When he knew the end was in sight and he couldn't hope for much more life, Sir William sent for me, and I hobbled along, for rheumatism is my bitterest enemy now-a-days.

"Well, Joe, it may be any time now," he said. "So what about the diamonds?"

"They be where I put 'em forty-eight year ago last November, Sir William," I answered.

He fetched out the sealed envelope giving information of the hiding place, and I don't think he'd ever opened it!

"We acted a lie, Joe, and left a false stain on a dead man's character."

"And nobody one penny the worse, master," I answered.

He shook his head.

"We won't go into that. But what about it now?"

"Let sleeping dogs lie," I said.

"I'm burning papers," and I held this over the fire, then stopped.

"Your sons and your widow won't never miss it, and you well know I shall never touch it," I told him.

"I've got a better idea than that," he said. "There's a famine raging in India, Joe, and if the diamonds were sent to the Famine Fund, they'd be doing a long sight more good than ever they did do. Can you trust your son—the one engaged to work at Armstrong's works in Sheffield?"

"Trust him with my life, or yours, Sir William."

"Good. Then take this box and this wrapper, addressed to the offices of the Famine Fund, send all under cover to William Black, and bid him despatch the box to the Fund."

"No," I said. "He's a terrible smart man is William, like me; and he reads the papers; and when it's noised abroad that

a diamond necklace worth ten thousand have come in anonymous, I'll bet my life Bill may smell a rat. I'll do this, Master. I'll fetch the diamonds and you shall see 'em and wrap 'em up; and then I'll journey to London myself and drop 'em in the post-box of the Fund. Then no living soul will know where they come from."

He was pleased at that.

"You cute old devil, Joe!" he said, "did the Master—"

And it was so. I left the stones myself, and whatever the people thought about 'em, 'tis certain none ever guessed they were the string missing from Eylesbarrow eight-and-forty years afore.

## NOCTURNE

By Henry G. Moorehouse

**A**CROSS the city a solemn bell tolled midnight. It was uncommonly dark, and upon raising the window, the burglar paused to listen. No sound came from the room within. Quietly he thrust one leg over the sill, and a moment later was standing inside, taking his bearings. An obliging maid had, the week previous, acquainted him with the plan of the sleeping-chamber; consequently he knew that madame's dressing-table, containing the jewels and the gold toilette set, stood just to the left of the twin beds.

"Edgar—is that you?"

And of a sudden it smote his consciousness that he had heard that voice before. He could not, for the life of him, say where. . . .

"Yes, dear," he answered, affecting the voice of an average husband, slightly hoarse from contact with the night air.

There was a breathless silence; an instant that seemed a century—with either success or jail at the other end of it. Then, to his intense relief, he heard a sigh.

"Thank heaven," said the voice, more gently, "this time you're sober!"

A soft thud from the bedside.

"I won't need this old golf club I was waiting to greet you with . . ."

"No, dear! Go to sleep."

For several minutes he stood there, aware of an uneasy quaking in his knees.

Then tiptoeing to the dressing-table he silently collected the jewels and the gold toilette set, stowed them away in his pockets, and crept from the room.

On the bottom step he stopped abruptly. Somebody had opened the front door, and closed it again; and a heavy breath of spirituous liquors filled the air. Then the lower hallway was flooded with light, and burglar and errant husband blinked at each other in astonishment.

"Wha' the devil," began the husband.

"Not so loud!" The intruder held up a finger warningly. "I," he grinned, "am a burglar—doing an honest night's work."

"I'll call the police. I'll—"

"*Sh-h!*" Do you want your wife to hear? She's been waiting for you with a golf club."

"What?" wailed the husband.

"See here—if you go up quietly she won't waken. She's a sound sleeper."

"How—how do you know?"

"How do I know?" With a sudden bound the burglar reached the door and flung it open. "How do I know? Ah!" he leered back. "I remember many of Mabel's habits. You see—I used to be married to her myself!"

# THE GIFT OF THE DESERT

*The Fourth and Concluding 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 come to his Arizona ranch, to care for his wife through a protracted illness. In making the rounds of his ranch one day Meager is killed. A few days later Bob Meager, a depraved son of old Tom Meager's by his first wife, mysteriously appears and lays claim to the estate, and announces his purpose to make Deborah his wife. One night there arrives at the ranch a Judge Garrity, one of Bob's minions, 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. Later, Deborah strikes him with the butt of the gun and leaves him for dead. She leaves the room silently, determined to make a journey across the desert, when she comes upon "Daniel Kelleen," 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 few people. 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 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. Kelleen then draws the pair down the Gulch, when Deborah is pinioned by a giant-like creature and carried into a dark cavern. Later, she recovers from the swoon, to find her captor fallen asleep at the entrance. She 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. On the floor lies the body of a boy, shot to death. Up this opening Deborah escapes, first taking a gun from the boy's holster, only to find Kelleen at the opening, accusing Meager of trying to double cross him and leave him out of the Casebeer deal. Later, night having fallen, Deborah finds Kelleen alone at the edge of the Gulch, and upbraids him with being, not a secret service man, but a bandit in league with Meager. He denies this, telling her of a troop of cavalry camped in a defile to the south, waiting for word from him to advance. Just then he is shot by one of Meager's men and his body topples into the gulch. Deborah, who is unseen, finds a horse and strikes across the desert to fetch the troops, coming across a detachment just as day is breaking. Kelleen, meantime, has come to, enters the cave, and after a desperate battle, kills the giant, Gomez, only to hear, entering the cave—Meager and Sanchez. Installment four starts here:]

KELLEEN waited in an agony of suspense, his thought with the missing girl rather than on his own peril, or the nearness of those men groping blindly toward him in the darkness. That they were surprised, startled at not being greeted by Gomez, was

plainly evidenced from the first gruff utterance reaching his ears.

"Where the hell is the fellow?" Meager exclaimed angrily. "I told you I called him from up above, and got no answer. Now, by God, he isn't even down here."

"Oh, he's here all right. There was no

chance for his getting away without our knowing it. We had men about here all the time."

"Your men!" Meager laughed scornfully. "Those greasers; they would only be playthings for Manuel. Hell, man, you and your gang couldn't even keep your eyes on 'Frisco'!"

"I supposed you sent him," retorted Sanchez, with a Spanish oath. "I thought he was in with us. Why shouldn't I? He blew into the ranch along with the judge, an' you seemed damned glad to see him. You two been together before, so sure I took it he was in on this trick. Then the fellow rode into me next morning—"

"And threw sand in your eyes."

"He sure told one damn straight story, Bob. He seemed to know about all was goin' on. I'd heard a lot about him, knew he was a friend of you, and supposed heem all right."

"And spilled all you knew—damn a Mex, anyhow."

"Well, ain't he?"

"Ain't he what? He ain't nothin' just now. I did run with him a bit, of course, down below the line. But he wasn't invited into this game, and his being with Garrity was just an accident. At least I took it that way at first. Now I sorter reckon it maybe was all a put-up job. I ain't exactly made up my mind what the guy was up to—just suspected something was going on, and decided to butt in, I reckon. But, after he got out here snoopin' round, there wasn't nuthin' to do but put him out o' the way—specially after he stole my horse."

"I ain't so sure he stole the horse."

"What do yer mean?"

"Just what I told yer before, Bob. Yer're so bullheaded nobody can tell you nothing. I never did think that fellow ye shot was alone. He was talking to somebody when we crept up—I heard him."

"Talking to himself; you never saw nobody but him."

"No, I didn't; he was upon that rock against the sky, but there might have been somebody else out o' sight on the

ground. You was in such a damn hurry to get to Casebeer, you wouldn't do anything else."

"Course, I knew the 'Kid' was alone, an' after that tumble he took wouldn't bother no more. We had to get Casebeer's gang out of here before daylight."

"I don't know why. You haven't told me much, Bob. Why didn't you let the outfit go on? What did you want to unload the mules here for, and then send them back?"

"I didn't get any chance to tell yer. It was after you left last night that I got the dope. That's why I had to ride out here myself, by God, on my wedding night."

He laughed out loud.

"Say, Sanchez, there's some real girl, let me tell you. Thinks she's knocked me out; rapped me with a gun when I was drunk, and got away. Damned if she didn't, the little vixen. I've got to go back and show her what kind of a he-man I am when I'm sober."

"She got mad at you?"

"Rather that. I thought she was the soft sort, but she's a wildcat. Got me the first swipe, but she'll never find me so dead easy the next time. I'll teach her who's boss when I get this job out of the way. What was it you asked?"

"Why you stopped Casebeer?"

"That's what Garrity came to tell me. He'd got on to something. There's a leak somewhere. We couldn't get the stuff through tonight—a bunch of cavalry are up in Box Canyon."

"Hell! What brought 'em there?"

"The judge didn't know. He got it from somebody at the post. The outfit started south, but that's where they were bound."

"You don't suppose they know?"

"Sure not—only suspect that stuff is being run through along this trail. All we got to do is lie low awhile."

"No one has seen Gomez?"

"He hasn't put his head out of this hole. You haven't seen him yourself, Juan. Come on, he must be back in there

asleep somewhere, now likely. Keep one hand on the wall."

"Shall I strike a match, señor?"

"No, not here; wait till we turn the bend; then it will not show outside. Can't be long till daylight."

KELLEEN silently pressed into the rift of the rock, the dead man at his feet, could mark the passage of the two clearly by the scraping of feet as they groped their way along the stone floor. Following the opposite wall they would miss any contact with Gomez' body, and there was nothing he could do but stand, and let them pass. Twice he lifted his weapon, tempted to venture a shot through the darkness, but the risk was too great; moreover he had a wild desire to learn more, a suspicion that he was on the verge of a discovery—if something would only cause them to talk.

Already from the few words overheard he had arrived at one conclusion—the running of munitions into Mexico was a mere subterfuge, a side issue of no great importance compared with some other scheme they had in view. Kelleen could only guess at this, yet it certainly must center about Manuel Gomez. If this was the hide-out of that outlaw, the tunnel must contain treasure, the spoils of numerous robberies. The fellow was leader of a gang which had sacked cities, devastated churches, held citizens for ransom, terrorized whole provinces; there was no limit to the wealth he might have hidden away. If Meager and Sanchez were members of his gang, or if they had discovered this secret by accident, they might be playing now for big stakes. And Garrity! Surely Garrity would have a hand in any devilry which might be conceived. He was in position to warn them of any danger, to decide the proper moment in which to act. Dangerous as his position was, Kelleen, with these suspicions surging through his mind, could not resist the impulse to linger a few moments longer. His whole life had been adventure, and he took the chance on one more.

The two men had turned the sharp corner, the slight sound of their movements ceasing to reach his ears. Then the faint glow of a match reflected along the rock wall, the silence broken by Meager's voice.

"There's the lantern, Juan—in that niche, see? Here, turn up the wick."

The flame brightened suddenly, but the outer tunnel yet remained black. Only in the distance the light flickered along the walls, casting weird shadows. One of the men evidently held the lantern up, peering about curiously.

"He not here, señor; where the old devil go?"

"Damned if I know," anger in the gruff tone. "Something is wrong here. By God! Suppose he has skipped out?"

"How could he? We watch always. He not doubt you, señor?"

"Hell, of course not!"

"You know where the stuff is? He never go away without that."

"Sure not, Juan; but I don't know. The old devil was too smart to let that secret out. That was our job now—to make him tell. The judge says it's here, a hell of a lot of it, but nobody knows where. Once I get hands on him, he'll tell, or he'll die by inches—what's that out yonder?"

THEY MOVED forward with the light, and Kelleen, all fear swiftly lost in his intense interest, crept on to the curve in the tunnel, from which point he could see their dim shadows. Behind him, but unnoticed, daylight began to be visible through the mantle of vines concealing the entrance. The dark figure on the floor assumed vague outline. The two men in the lantern glow came to a halt, thrusting the light forward, peering at the object which had attracted them. The Mexican identified it first in a sudden cry.

"It's a body, a dead man," he exclaimed. "He has been killed—Manuel!"

Meager held back, the coward gripping him, but Sanchez bore the lantern for-

ward, desperate to learn the truth. His startled voice came down the passage.

"'Tis not Gomez," he cried, "and no face I ever saw before. Perhaps you know the man?"

Meager joined him, glancing uneasily about, and then stared down into the dead face. He seemed to have lost control of himself, and his lips refused utterance.

"You know him, señor?" Sanchez asked impatiently.

"No; but there has been a fight, or a murder—see, he has been shot; and in the back, by God! Gomez must have done this job. But what has become of the old devil? And who was this kid? What was he doing here? See if there is anything in his pockets, Juan. Give me the lantern."

He held it up, as the Mexican dropped to his knees, and began to rummage through the dead man's clothes. The increasing daylight of the desert found entrance far above, and stole down the narrow passage in a faint, ghastly glimmer, which only added to the ghastliness of the scene. The strain was too much for Meager's nerves, and he swore gruffly.

"What the hell makes you so slow? Anything there?"

"No, señor; some cartridges, a knife; no gun, it gone; no papers, only this scrap; see in his fingers, just like someone had torn the rest away—two, three words, that's all; they mean nothing so."

He straightened up slowly; then swiftly bent over, jerking the lantern from out Meager's hand and holding it close above the sand-strewn floor.

"What is it?"

"Caramba! You not see?—the footstep; the woman's shoe! How came it there? And here another; she go so up the passage?"

"She, you say?"

"Sure it was she; this man leave no such print; see, such a small shoe; it was a girl, a woman, and mark she crept up there. Holy Mother! I bet she steal your horse; I bet she creep out there an'

wait till you come. But what the hell she do down here, señor?"

MEAGER stood as though dazed, unable to collect his thoughts, staring first at those telltale footprints in the sand dust, and then about into the gloom of the tunnel. It was all mystery, only to be solved by the discovery of Manuel Gomez.

"Come on," he said fiercely; "bring the light. We'll search every inch of this damned hole."

Kelleen turned, his first impulse being to escape, to rush toward that dim glitter of light now plainly marking the cave entrance. Yet the futility of such an effort came to him instantly. They would hear him before he could take three steps; as he clambered up the rock, his body plainly outlined against the dawn, he would make a perfect target. There was a better way than that, and he whirled back to face them, as the two came cautiously forward, the glow of the lantern glimmering like a red star. The hand with the weapon in it fell to a level, and he fired, the glass flickering into a thousand pieces, the light instantly extinguished.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### In on a New Game

KELLEEN'S plan of action had formed swiftly in his mind. He had a glimmering of what this conspiracy meant, but must learn more. Only one method was possible—a confession from Bob Meager. The real secret of this tunnel was in his possession, now that Manuel Gomez was dead. Sanchez was only a pawn in the game, trusted in a measure, but possessing only a dim suspicion of the real value of the stakes being played for. Meager, coward, villain as he was, had the brains and cunning to conceive; the Mexican the desperate courage to execute. Sanchez dead would do no harm, but, at present,

Meager alive would prove a value. He must be made to talk.

It was a cool, deliberate proposition which flashed before him. He would fight it out right there, where he was. There were only two of them fronting him—Meager he held in utmost contempt; the other was dangerous, yet no more than an ordinary Mexican outlaw, to be shot down without remorse.

The advantages in this encounter were altogether on his side. He knew them, where they were; they possessed no knowledge of his exact position, who he was, or whether they faced one opponent or a dozen. They had been taken completely by surprise, startled by the sudden attack, confused in the darkness. Peering forth from the shelter of the sharp rock edge behind which he crouched, Kelleen was unable to distinguish the figures of the two men—yet, behind where they must be hidden in the gloom, the gray daylight filtered down through that narrow opening leading up to the desert above, and faintly tinged the rock walls. If they moved, if they attempted to retreat, concealment was impossible. He had them absolutely at his mercy.

THE SILENCE was intense after that first startled second. There was no movement, not even the sound of breathing audible. The two stood motionless, crouched back against the wall, peering into the blackness from whence that tongue of flame had leaped into their very faces, yet revealing nothing. They could neither think nor act. Who had fired—Manuel Gomez? Some enemy who had trapped them? Were they facing one man, or a dozen? Into what had they blindly walked? Confident of his own safety, realizing that he had the whip hand, Kelleen smiled grimly, every nerve tense, his revolver poised. The situation pleased him.

"Drop your guns, both of you!" he commanded sternly. "Quick now! I've got you against the light."

"Who the hell——"

"Stop that! Drop them, or I shoot something besides a lantern. It's a hair trigger I'm playing with."

He heard both weapons fall to the floor, Meager cursing impotently, but the Mexican silent. Kelleen laughed.

"Kick them away from you—that's right! Not bad fellows when properly handled, I see. Now up with your hands, and back against the wall there."

He could not see the fellows, not so much as an outline of them, yet knew they obeyed the order. It was a bluff which worked because they half believed themselves silhouetted against that distant gray bar of light far down the passage, targets not to be easily missed. That cool, stern voice, unfamiliar in the echoing tunnel, meant business, rasped like a steel file on Meager's nerves.

"By God! Who are you?" he snarled savagely. "What the hell do you want?"

"The first is of no importance, Meager," returned Kelleen with emphasis. "But I'll answer the latter question. Unbuckle your belt. Go on; I know what you're doing. Yes; take it off. I've got you boys covered; make one false move, and you'll sure taste lead. Now throw that belt about the Mexican—sure I know who you both are; I came here gunning for you two guys—around his arms—now, damn you, draw it tight! Yes—that's exactly what I mean—strap them to his body—"

JUST WHAT HAPPENED is not clear. Kelleen could not see; he dare not take a step closer to make sure. The chances are that Sanchez had two guns at his waist. He had discarded one, but the other yet remained. Not certain that he was not outlined against the background of light, he dare not attempt to draw; but now, his hands lowered, as Meager drew the belt about his arms, desperate, bitter with hate, his fingers must have gripped the butt. With one convulsive effort he fired in the direction of the voice. The bullet struck the side

wall, sent a splinter of rock tearing into Kelleen's cheek, yet, even as he staggered back, half blinded in the flame, he had glimpse of the maddened Mexican running blindly down the passage. An instant the fellow stood out clear, his head thrust forward, his arms still held by the belt clasp; then Kelleen pulled trigger, and the runner sprawled out, flat and motionless, into the very center of that little pool of gray daylight.

It was the swift work of an instant, then darkness, and Meager's huge bulk crushed Kelleen against the wall in one mad effort to kill. For a moment the smaller man, taken completely by surprise, struggled helplessly to escape the strangle hold of those clutching fingers. The revolver dropped from his hand, and he was forced resistlessly backward, strangled, unable to tear loose that vice-like grip. As the two fell, however, Meager's head struck the rock, the sharp blow so dazing him as to permit Kelleen an instant of relief, a long, fresh breath, the release of one arm. Underneath him, pressing against his hip, lay the gun he had been forced to drop. With desperate effort he gained possession of the weapon, thrusting the muzzle savagely into Meager's side.

"Damn you!" he choked. "Feel that! Get up, or I'll blow a hole clear through you. You dirty brute, to kill you would be a pleasure. Get clear up! Do you know me now?"

THE FELLOW, thoroughly cowed, shrinking back with the point of the revolver still pressing hard against his rib, stuttered, but made no reply. The widening radius of daylight gave Kelleen the outlines of his bulky figure, but features were invisible.

"What, not yet? I'm the 'Frisco Kid'! First you thought you'd double-cross me; then you decided murder would do the job best. Well, Meager, neither plan worked. I'm on to your game, and I'm very much alive. Now I've got you. Like to make a guess why I don't kill you?"

"You—you want me to squeal first."

"Oh, you'll squeal all right; I've got the thumbscrews to make you talk. You've partly guessed the reason. You know the secret of this hole, and I reckon you are the only one who does. That Mexican partner of yours has got, his. Gomez is lying out there with a knife thrust in him—you bet, I know who the devil is—you are the only one of the gang left alive, Bob, and I've got a gun at your heart. Now answer my questions, and answer them damn quick. Have you got your voice back, you big, skulking coward?"

Meager growled something to which the other paid no heed.

"So this was the ape-man's hang-out, was it?"

"Yes."

"How did you catch on?"

"I—I knew him down in Mexico."

"Yes, sure you did; you were with his gang of cut-throats once. I've heard about that—but he never told you of this place?"

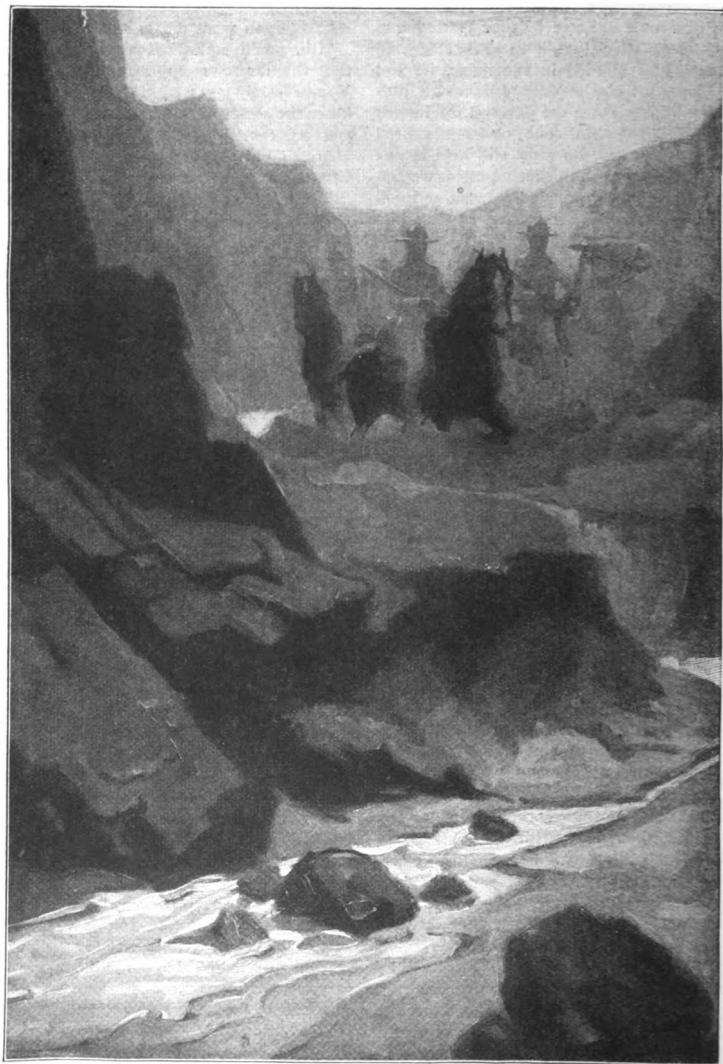
Meager hesitated, and Kelleen's gun pushed harder.

"You better spit it out, Bob; I'd sure love to shoot."

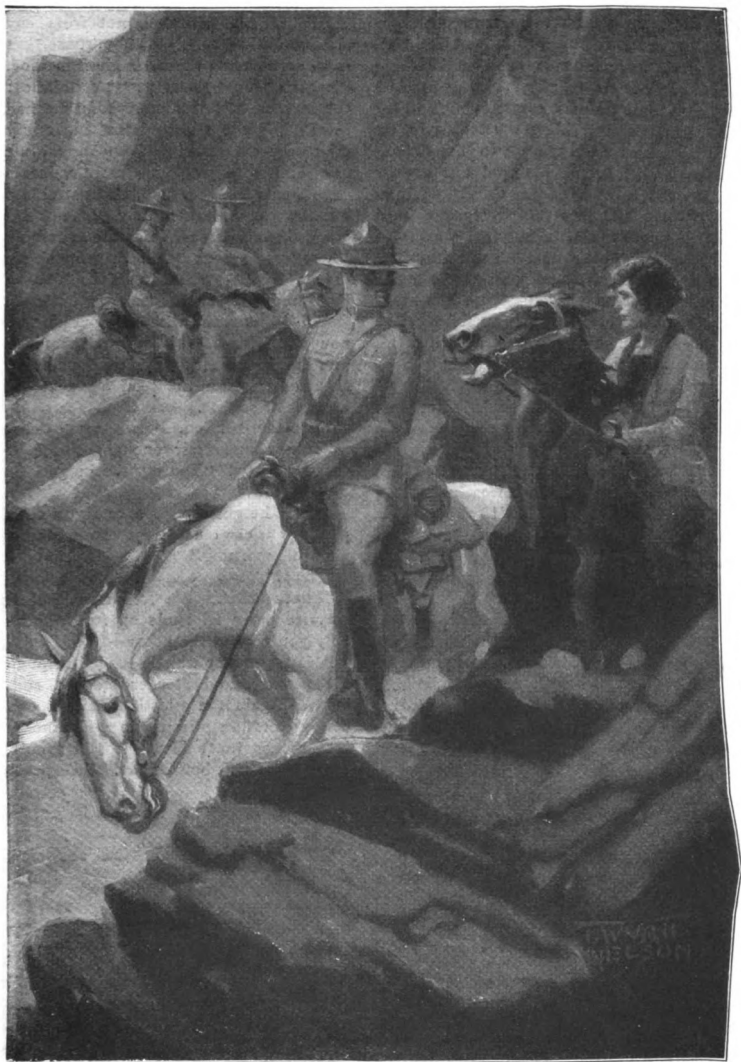
"Well, damn you, what's the difference? Garrity told me the fellow was hiding in here somewhere. Manuel used to come to him when he needed stuff, but he never was able to track him—he was too damn smart for the judge. That was what I came up here for, and mostly the reason why I grabbed the ranch, see? Garrity fixed things, because he knew Manuel had a hell of a lot o' spoils stored away. We wanted a free hand. When I come up I fired every American, and took on Mexicans I knew. We run just cattle enough so as to get an excuse for exploring the desert. We knew the damn slippery cuss was hid around here somewhere, but couldn't get on to his hole."

"Well, go on."

"Seems he wasn't doin' anything any more, just hidin' out; none of his gang with him. It had got so hot for the old



"Deborah begged for haste, but the officer remained adamant, and, at last, in



despair, utterly wearied, her mind in a chaos, she rode on listlessly beside him."

devil he was afraid to show his nose above ground; thirty thousand for him, dead or alive, you know—that last raid had got the U. S. after him as well as Mexico, and he was smart enough to lay out here until it blew over. Maybe we never would have got on to him if Sanchez hadn't struck his trail one day by accident over beyond Silver Springs. That led him into this valley, and then he got lost again. After that we kept a watch. It didn't do no good for some time; the old fox was too sly. So finally Garrity put up a meeting with him—they had some secret signal arranged between 'em—and in that way we traced out this cave and got him cornered."

"Cave! It's a tunnel, ain't it?"

"I don't know what it is. I've only been here once before—in the dark. What's your idea?"

"That Manuel found 'Alvara's Lost Mine'—it's got all the earmarks."

"The—the 'Lost Mine'! Then—then it's worth millions! You—you can't mean it."

"It's only a guess; let's chuck that now, and finish up with Gomez."

"Yes, but wait!" exclaimed Meager eagerly, suddenly seeing a chance for himself. "There ain't no use of you making any gunplay with me, Kid. What's the matter with us bein' pardners? There's only three of us know about this—you, Garrity, an' me. Hell! there must be money enough here to make us all rich; Gomez has got a devil of a lot hid away somewhere, and, good God! if this is the 'Lost Mine'—"

"Yes, but why pick on me?"

"Well, ain't that what you wanted a while ago? I reckon you ain't no better than we are. Do you want to hog it all? What is the sense of our fighting like two dogs, and tryin' to kill each other, when there must be enough here to make us all rich? Nobody else will ever know about it if we keep quiet. All we need do is bury these guys ourselves, get the loot out of the way, and then we got the mine. Hell, it's a cinch!"

KELLEN hesitated, not from any doubt as to his own purpose, but in an endeavor to choose the best method. Meager's plan opened new possibilities; the man must know more than he had revealed, while Garrity was apparently even deeper versed in the mystery. Just now both men would be more valuable alive than dead. He couldn't trust either, not for an instant; they were cold-blooded, treacherous, desperate criminals. There was no honesty in this proposition, only a cunning effort to throw him off his guard. If the chance ever came he would be murdered without a qualm. But now they proposed being partners with him in consummating this crime; he was to associate with them on equal terms, learn their secrets.

He made decision.

"That sounds fair enough, Bob," he replied quietly. "You say the judge is in on this, too?"

"Sure; he got the dope, and you can't play any tricks on Garrity. He's coming here this morning."

"Here?"

"That's what. We had a nice little surprise party all made up for Manuel, only you cooked the goose—"

A low, peculiar whistle echoed through the passage, and Meager stopped suddenly. Again the whistle sounded, evidently from the entrance to the tunnel.

"I reckon that's him," he said grimly. "Now what is it between us, 'Kid'—peace or war?"

Kellen thrust his revolver back into his belt.

"I'll play the game," he answered, sharply.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### Face to Face

WITH eyes long accustomed to the darkness the two men could perceive shadowy objects in the outer passage, where little shafts of daylight penetrated through the tangle of

concealed foliage. The walls of the tunnel were gray-tinged and larger objects—one perhaps the dead body of Manuel Gomez—shapeless, and grotesque, littered the floor. Meager, evidently feeling full of confidence in this new alliance, moved forward, while Kelleen followed, still suspicious and alert for any treachery. If Garrity came here alone he would take the chance; if not, then he would fight the battle out there in the tunnel, asking no quarter and giving none. Meager stopped, his huge bulk almost blotting out the light.

"That you, Con?" he asked anxiously.

A head pushed through the vines, but cautiously.

"Who the hell else would it be?" exclaimed an exasperated voice. "What's going on here? Nobody on watch; I didn't want to come poking in, liable to get shot. Where the devil is Manuel?"

"Come inside and I'll explain; just drop over that ledge; it's only a foot or two to the floor. You came alone?"

The fellow did not answer, but no one followed as he clambered across the barrier of rock. Apparently he could perceive nothing when once within, except the dim, shapeless figures awaiting him.

"Two of you, eh! Damn, but it's dark in here! That you, Manuel?"

"Manuel is dead," explained Meager briefly. "He's been killed."

"Dead! Killed!"

The judge pressed his body back against the rock.

"What do you mean, Bob? Then who is this other fellow—Sanchez?"

Kelleen took the matter into his own hands.

"I'm the 'Frisco Kid,'" he announced calmly, yet with one hand resting on his gun. "You know me, and that it is all right. I'm in on the deal, that's the only difference."

"In on the deal?"

"Yes; I'll make the story short, and the sooner we get it straight the better. Bob here can correct me if I go wrong. I got onto this cave awhile back—been hiding

out in the desert myself, you know—and so finally spotted old Gomez. Of course I didn't realize then that you guys were in the game. All I guessed was that I'd stumbled onto Manuel's hide-out, and that he probably had a bunch of loot stored away. So I started in to play a lone hand. That was all natural enough, wasn't it?"

"Maybe so," growled Garrity, but still keenly suspicious. "Go on."

"Tonight there was a gang out there running through a pack train of contraband."

"It didn't go through, did it?"

"No; they unloaded, stored it away there at the head of the valley, and went back; but they were working on the job most all night. I got close enough to see who they were, and hear them talk. Jem Casebeer was running the outfit, but Bob here, and the Mexican, Sanchez, seemed to be bossing the affair."

"What in hell has that got to do with Manuel?"

"Just this. I was looking for a chance to get in here without getting my head blown off. Long about midnight I thought I got a glimpse of old Gomez sneaking along in the shadow of the cliff, like he was trying to find out also what was going on. So, as soon as I could, I struck out to explore. I got in here all right, but must have got the dope wrong, for the cuss was laying for me. We had a fight in the dark, and finally I got him with a knife. That's his body lying over there."

Garrity drew in a deep breath.

"I—I can't see."

"Well, it's there anyhow, next to that side wall. I thought I was all right after that, but before I could go on, Meager and the Mexican came in on me through those vines. I laid low, and let them go by. It was darker than hell in here then, and they naturally talked some while they were feeling their way along the wall. They never saw the body, or me, but I heard enough to put me wise to what they were after."

"What did you hear?"

"How you guys got onto this outfit, and what you proposed to do—you'd double-crossed me all right. So I lay still.

"A bit later, back in there, after they'd made a light, and, while they were rubbering at another dead one—"

"What?"

"Some fellow who had got his—no one of us knew him—only he had been shot in the back of the head. Well, while they were rubbering at him, I got the drop on the two, shot out their light, and lined them back against the wall. I wasn't going to do any killing, understand; all I wanted was my share. But the Mex must have hid a gun in the dark, for all of a sudden the fellow took a snapshot at me from the hip, and ducked. It missed, and, as he ran straight into the light, coming down that passage back there, I got him. He went down on his face, and then Bob here and I mixed, until he saw a light, and blubbered out a decent proposition that caused me to let him up."

"What kind of a proposition?"

"A fair disposition of the spoils—three ways."

"Three ways! He told you about me, then?"

"Sure he did; I knew anyhow. That's fair enough, isn't it?"

"Hell! I don't know whether it is or not."

"Now, see here, Garrity," broke in Meager, gruffly. "It don't look to me as if there was anything else we could do. The 'Kid' got onto this himself. We both know he's all right, and, under these conditions, he ought to have his share. Hell, if he don't, I reckon we won't any of us get any. Besides, there's only the three of us left—Manuel and Sanchez are both dead. And say, do you know what 'Frisco' says he believes this damn tunnel is?"

"This tunnel? The cave you mean?"

"Sure—he says it's 'Alvara's Lost Mine'—and man, if it is, then maybe it's worth millions."

GARRITY made no response. Kelleen could not discern the expression of the man's face, but was suspicious that his hand rested threateningly on the butt of a revolver. The fellow was treacherous, unscrupulous, miserly even in crime, capable of any act to assure his gain. There was only one safe way of dealing with him—the way of force, the heavy hand. Yet he would make one more endeavor.

"Well, Judge," Kelleen said quietly, "how do you like this plan?"

"I'm damned if I see why I should divide up with you. We were in here first, and, by your own confession, you've killed Manuel and Sanchez. I don't see any claims you've got."

"Then I'll try and make you see it," the voice like ice, the black barrel of his gun resting in the crook of his left arm. "Now, listen, both of you—lift your arms, Garrity! I'd prefer to settle this little matter peacefully between us, but if it is going to be war, I've got the drop. So, Judge, it is up to you. Either I'm in on this deal, a full partner, or else I'm in on it alone. Take your choice, and be damn quick about it."

"You mean—what is it you mean?"

"You are rather dull this morning, Garrity. I haven't much of a reputation for wasting words, have I? No doubt you have heard the 'Frisco Kid' knows how to shoot when needed? What more explanation do you want? I'm in on this deal, or you are a dead one—that's all. Now say which it is."

No man could have doubted the deadliness of Kelleen's meaning. Garrity knew the border code far too well to hesitate.

"Of course you're in. I—I only wanted to understand."

"You've got it clear enough now, but we'll play safe. Your friend Meager here is unarmed, and you will be far better off without the gun—throw it over into that corner."

"And leave you free to murder us both—"

"Sure, if I decide it's best. Only I don't

usually do business that way. You have heard plenty of stories about me, but no one ever said I shot a man treacherously. If you two play square there is no danger; but this is a case of two pitted against one; either one of you would cut a throat for a five-dollar bill. I'll give you a minute—throw away that gun!"

HE STOOD fronting them both, the two between him and the stronger light. His face was emotionless, but the voice speaking was crisp and hard. The two knew him only as a desperado, a border renegade, a man whose willingness to kill had been proved. There remained no choice. Garrity, growling forth an oath, flung his revolver into the dark corner savagely.

"Frisk him, Bob; I'm taking no chances this time—a knife, hey! Rather an ugly tool, Garrity—do all judges carry them? Yes, throw it over there along with the gun. Are you sure that is all? . . . Now, Garrity, turn about is fair play; try your hand on Meager—stripped clean, is he? Better feel inside his shirt; imagine he is a prisoner in your court. . . . Good! Now, I reckon we are in fair shape to discuss business together. First, gents, let me say this—I haven't the slightest objection in the world to killing both of you on general principles. I know your style, and I'm going to make the present situation perfectly clear. Both of you are damn rascals, capable of any dirty deviltry. You'd kill me in a minute if you only had a chance. I don't propose to give you that chance, for I know what my life is worth, and mean to protect it. I happen to need you just now alive, and, if you obey my orders, and answer my questions, you'll go away from here alive. If you don't, you'll be buried here—do you get that?"

They stared at him, without a word, Garrity sputtering, but totally unable to articulate.

"I see you do; so let's begin. Which one of you has been here before? . . . What's that, Meager?—Oh, the judge has.

All right then, Garrity, tell me all about it."

"By God! you can't—"

"Oh, but I can; in fact, it is not necessary that I have your information. I can search this hole over your dead body, only I would rather do it my own way, for reasons I'll explain. Do you want them?"

"You mean to kill us anyhow after you find the loot."

"No doubt that's your idea. That is what you would do, and you have me ticketed in the same class. Well, that doesn't happen to be my plan at all. In the first place, you've got me labeled wrong. I'm not really after the loot; I'm after you. Do you get that, Garrity? Meager here is just a common thief; he's a brute, and therefore dangerous, but a damn, sneaking coward. All I care particularly about him is to save a woman—"

"What woman?" the surprised question burst from the other fellow's lips, before he could restrain it.

"Deborah Meredith; the woman you forced into marriage with you. But Garrity here has been the evil genius of this border for the last ten years. There is no crime he hasn't had a finger in. But no one could catch him red-handed. Now I've got you both."

The eyes of the prisoners met; then both stared helplessly into the mouth of the leveled revolver.

"Who the hell are you?" burst forth Garrity, his face beaded with perspiration.

"My name is Kelleen, a captain of U. S. cavalry; I've been after you for three months."

## CHAPTER XXIX

### The Spoils of Crime

GOOD GOD! Then you're not the 'Frisco Kid'?"

"I'm all the 'Kid' there ever was," Kelleen admitted, carelessly. "That party was simply manufactured to order; here is where he ends his desperate ca-

reer. I would have kept the secret awhile longer if I could, but perhaps it is just as well.

"Now you and I understand each other, Garrity, and the very best thing you can do will be to answer my questions."

"You haven't the power to make me."

"Oh, yes I have, Judge—right here. I know exactly what you thought of me before; that I was an outlaw, with a price set on my head; that you could kill me if necessary, and no questions would ever be asked, or you could have me arrested later, and taken care of in that way. You have treated others by that formula, I believe. But it won't work this time—do you see? The case has turned about; I am the officer of the law; I can kill you and go free. I've not only got the drop, my man, but there are cavalymen over at Box Canyon—you know that—and they will be up here looking for me pretty soon.

"So, either dead or alive, you fellows take my orders. I want to get this thing straight. Meager says you've been in here before; is that right?"

"Yes—once."

"With Gomez?"

"No; when I knew he was away."

"Trying to find out what he had hidden away here, I suppose. Well, what did you discover?"

"Nothing; not a thing more than you've seen."

"But now you come back. You believe there is treasure here, fruit of robbery, of crime, and you come sneaking back after it—you, Meager, and Sanchez—how did you plan to get it?"

Garrity stood silent and sullen.

"You don't need to answer, for I know. Meager told that. You intended to torture the old devil until he confessed where it was concealed. You can't do that now because he is dead, and his secret died with him. There is only one way left, and that is to search. This is why I need you, Garrity, for I believe you know a lot more than you are confessing just yet."

KELLEN paused, turning over in his mind what he had better attempt. He felt a profound contempt for his prisoners. Meager, while a physical giant, was mentally no more than a mere cowardly brute; Garrity might be truly dangerous—a sly, treacherous villain, but physically unable to cope with him for a moment, and now utterly cowed. While he remained armed, and they were weaponless, he certainly had nothing to fear.

His first intention had been to hold the fellows as prisoners, until the squad of troopers appeared; turn them over to the lieutenant in command, searching the cave later at his own leisure. But why wait? It might be an hour, two hours yet, before the soldiers arrived—and then there was Deborah. His thought leaped swiftly to the girl; what had happened to her during those long, dark hours? Where had she disappeared after he had been dashed from the rock?

She had evidently escaped discovery; he knew that; had wandered off into the desert doubtless, might be there still, lost in those leagues of sand, struggling for life. The vision called to him, yet he could not seek her until after his men came. These prisoners were far too important to be left unguarded. His duty as an officer held him as in a vise.

But he realized at that moment a decision that his heart was with Deborah Meredith. He must find her, rescue her, and—thank God!—there was sufficient time in which to accomplish this. The hours since they became parted were not sufficient to expose the girl to any great peril; even if she were still wandering aimlessly on the desert the opportunity to find her, to save her life, yet remained. Perhaps, after all, he might serve her best where he was, driving these men to full confession; then, with the troopers there to aid him, he would search that sand waste from end to end. It was all he could do; but he would never be content merely to sit there in semi-darkness on guard. His jaw set with determination.

"When did you first learn that Gomez was hiding out in this neighborhood, Garrity?" he questioned suddenly.

"Six months ago. I saw him in Nogales."

"Privately?"

"Yes; we had some deals together before."

"Paid you for protection, did he? What did he want this time?"

"Provisions. I was to get him out grub at night; leave it at a certain spot. That was all."

"He didn't tell you where he was hiding out?"

"No, but he had plenty of money. I didn't get much information out of him; he never did trust anybody. The authorities had run him pretty close, I reckon; anyhow, he was all alone, not one of his gang left. When I couldn't find out anything more, I got Meager to come up here."

"After the older Meager was killed?"

"Sure; that gave us a chance."

"I see; the papers were all in your possession; not above doctoring them, were you?"

"What the hell is that to you?"

"Not a great deal to me, perhaps, but of some importance to a couple of women I know—one of them a friend of mine. Old Tom Meager left an invalid widow, whom you fellows have, I believe, robbed systematically, and then there is the girl Bob forced into marriage. You didn't suppose I knew about all this, I imagine? . . . Well, I'm going to get to the very bottom of it before we are through. But just now I want to use the two of you. We'll find out between us just what Manuel did have hidden away in this hole. Line up there against the wall; face about the other way! Now listen; I've got both guns, my own and the one Garrity threw away; they are cocked and within three feet of your backs. I can't possibly miss you, and if you make one move, except as I tell you, I'm going to let drive. Are you ready?"

"Ready for what?"

"To do as I order. All right, then; there is plenty of light for me to see you by at this distance. Move forward slowly—Garrity, you keep your hand on the wall, and you, Meager, take hold of Garrity's sleeve; now don't forget; if you do it's sure fatal. Go on slow, a step at a time."

THEY CAME to the curve in the side wall. Beyond this was a zone of darkness, even this late in the day, but far down the passage the little stream of light from off the desert above enabled Kelleen to keep in view the outlines of his captives. If there was really a secret room in this tunnel he had located its most probable position in his own mind, and had fixed upon the first point to explore.

"Move on," he said sternly, as the two hesitated to advance. "I'll tell you when to stop. Pick up that lantern, Meager; it hasn't any glass, but will do, if we need a light."

They circled the bodies of the two dead men lying in the pool of radiance which fell on them from above. Sanchez, huddled up like a dog, rested with his face against the rock floor, but the other stared upward, every ghastly feature revealed. Garrity gave one glance, and turned his eyes away.

"Ever see that boy before, Judge?"

"Believe I did, once. Copied a map off this country in my office; said he was hunting a claim."

"Tell you his name?"

"No; I wasn't interested."

"All right, then; one of you light the wick in that lantern. No, I'd rather have you take it, Meager; get back farther out of the draught. Now hold it up, and we'll find out where this passage leads. Walk closer together."

They advanced again some ten or twelve steps down an opening scarcely wide enough for the two to pass abreast, Kelleen's gaze wandering from the backs of the prisoners to the gray walls on either side. The light flickered, yet re-

vealed no opening, until they came to the very end, and fronted the solid rock. Even then, for an instant, Kelleen failed to perceive the narrow cleft to the left beside Meager, but the latter, excited by the discovery, thrust the sputtering lantern forward, holding it at arm's length, above a rough stone slab which half barred the way.

"Hell's fire! Look there!" he cried excitedly, almost dropping the light.

GARRITY craned his neck to see, both men so wild at the sudden discovery as to lose all thought of everything else. Even Kelleen, revolver in hand, and fully awake to the danger of his position, pushed forward far enough to gain a partial glimpse within. Meager started to climb over, but the judge stood motionless, breathing hard, his hands gripped on the stone, his eyes glaring about the oddly shaped room, probably originally a cavern formed by water, but enlarged by the efforts of men. The whole apartment might have measured fifteen by ten feet, barely high enough to stand erect in, the walls varicolored and sparkling in the rays of the uplifted lantern. At the farther extremity lay a pile of débris, scattered rock, and powdered stone, as though resting just as they fell after an explosion, the entire end almost totally covered. Protruding from this pile, clearly revealed, now that Meager had found footing inside, and held the blazing wick higher, was the white, ghastly skeleton of a man, his bones still covered with bits of ragged cloth. Caught by a falling rock, he had been pinned there helpless until he died.

The three men scarcely saw all this, or gave it a thought, for there, immediately in front, and all about them, unarranged, scattered in heaps, lying where they had been thrown carelessly over that outer barrier of rock, rested the miscellaneous spoils of a thousand robberies; the sack of churches and towns; jewels torn from women's hands, silver and gold; rich booty of crime from midnight raids, and

the burning of cities—the hidden treasures of old Manuel Gomez. It was unbelievable, staggering. What suffering, what death, what cruelty and torture, did these things picture! And wealth—wealth! Who could even calculate its value? Blood-stained, crime-gotten, the fruits of fifty years of outlawry here was gathered, in one vast heap, wealth to make the mind of man helpless to grasp its value.

Garrity, digging his fingers frantically into the stone, unconscious of what he did, his eyes blazing with sudden, uncontrollable madness, dragged himself over the barrier. He had lost all reason, all fear; with a mad cry he gathered up into his arms all that he could grasp—golden crucifix, chaliced goblet, a great silver link glittering with pearls, a jeweled bodice blazing in the light—laughed like a fiend as he hugged them close, then staggered on in wild ecstasy, a string of oaths breaking from his lips. Something tripped him and he fell, his arms flung blindly out; a gripping hand struck the lantern from Meager's grasp, flinging it, still blazing, a half-dozen feet away. An instant there was silence, a mere flicker of light, which shot along the floor as though on a trail of powder—then a glare and roar, a blast of flame, a report, as if a thousand cannon had exploded; and utter darkness.

## CHAPTER XXX

### The Finding of Gomez

THE LITTLE SQUAD of cavalry moved up the creek bottom with much caution. The rangy young lieutenant, exercising his first independent command, was determined to neglect no precautions. Indeed, he was not quite satisfied in his own mind that he should yield to the anxious insistence of this girl who had so strangely appeared in his camp.

The girl was decidedly pretty, and she interested him, yet he was not altogether without suspicion. He had been given

strict orders, and her sudden arrival had disarranged all his previous plans.

At first he had been disinclined to advance at all, but the sergeant had sided in with the girl, and overcome his objections. The sergeant knew Captain Kelleen, and, because of twenty years' service, ventured to express himself rather freely. Lieutenant Carr, while inclined to resent this, nevertheless realized his own inexperience, and, finally, with reluctance, gave the necessary orders. But he did not purpose to take any unnecessary risks. If Kelleen was already dead there surely was no reason to hurry, as they could be of no assistance; perhaps this was all a ruse to lead him into a trap. The girl had admitted there were a number of men in the valley—how many she did not know—probably far outnumbering his small force. Carney, the sergeant, permitted him to have his own way, laughing a bit to himself, however, and so they jogged along slowly, a couple of scouts well in advance, with a vedette on either flank, watchful of the descent on either side.

Deborah begged for haste, but the officer remained adamant, and, at last, in despair, utterly wearied, her mind in a chaos, she rode on listlessly beside him. Kelleen must be dead; she dare not even dream anything else. She had heard the shot, seen the burst of flame, caught sight of his toppling body plunging over the edge of the cliff. The men who shot him had no doubt; they had fired to kill, believed they had killed; and gone away satisfied—Bob Meager and the Mexican.

She shivered at the memory of them. Her husband! That murderer her husband! He could claim her; would claim her if he lived; legally she belonged to him. The ceremony was sacrilege, a hideous mockery, yet it was legal, legal; it left her forever in the power of that brute. She shuddered at recollection of that scene in the ranchhouse, the leering, drunken faces, the sharp voice of Judge Garrity, the brutal grip with which Bob Meager held her, those hateful words

which bound her to such unspeakable shame.

And then—then the struggle to save herself; the hours of torture waiting for his coming, the broken door, the clutch of his hands, the hot, drunken breath on her face, the blow which set her free. Good God! could this all be true! The fresh night air, the escape through the black night, the meeting with Daniel Kelleen.

He had been a man, a real man; he had died for her. Unchecked, unnoticed, the tears welled into her eyes, and fell on the saddle pommel. She could see nothing but his face, realize nothing but that they were riding now to bring back his body. She had almost known before that she loved him, but now, in bereavement and despair, she comprehended that all the brightness and hope had gone from life. She yet lived, must continue to live—the wife of Bob Meager.

UNDER A HIGH, burning sun, reflected back into their faces from off the leagues of sand, the little party rode, steadily forward, seeing nothing but the drear desert. The strain and stillness left them silent, lolling wearily in the saddles. The lieutenant occasionally glanced aside at the girl, but he found no words to speak, she was such a pathetic figure. So he rode grimly on, and left her mercifully to her own thoughts.

It must have been nearly noon when the little cavalcade debouched from the bed of the stream, forced their jaded horses up the bank, and came to where the riders could look down into the half-concealed valley below. The advance scouts waited them here among the rocks, to point out the trail, curving downward through a ravine. They had discovered no signs of recent passage, no marks of hoofs; nor were there any signs of human presence in the lower valley.

The lieutenant studied the scene through his glasses, yet vaguely suspicious of some trick, consulted with the sergeant, and finally spoke to Deborah.

"This must be the place," he said, "but it seems deserted. Do you recognize anything?"

"Yes, although I have never been here before. The Casebeer outfit were yonder, just beyond that bend. I told you they were unloading the mules, and Captain Kelleen said they were going back, anxious to get away before daybreak."

"You think then they have already left?"

"Yes, long ago. If any people remain in the valley it will be Meager and some of the men with him. I explained all that to you."

The officer flushed.

"Yes, yes, I know, but it was my duty to be cautious. Could you guide us from here?"

She sat straight in the saddle, a new light in her eyes, as she pointed the directions.

"I can never forget. Straight ahead down there is where they were storing the things—a fire burned there by that big rock. You can see a wisp of smoke even now. This trail must lead direct. Over there," she hid her face for an instant in her hands as though to shut out the sight, "is the cliff over which Captain Kelleen fell, and just beyond, at the upper end of the valley is the cave I told you about. I—I am going down, whether you and your soldiers come or not. I—I must learn the truth."

SHE FORCED her horse forward, and the others followed, waiting for no command, the sergeant riding almost beside her in the narrow trail. They found the storehouse, back within the shadow of the great rock, so concealed by trees as to be invisible a few yards away. It was deserted, unguarded; and satisfied as to this fact, convinced by a hundred signs that the entire outfit had indeed returned the way they came, the lieutenant scattered his force to explore the upper valley.

His mood had changed from suspicion of this girl to faith in her strange story. Things were exactly as she had described.

Dismounted, their horses led behind them in readiness for any emergency, the squad advanced, the men with carbines in their hands. The sergeant kept close in against the southern cliff until he came to where Deborah pointed out the spot of Kelleen's fall. They found no body, no signs to indicate any such tragedy. Carney gazed about in perplexity.

"You are sure this is the place, Miss?" he asked doubtfully.

"Yes, Sergeant; we were on the rock up there, the one jutting out over the edge; there is no other spot like it."

His eyes, narrowed, surveyed the distance, marking every detail.

"Then it's likely he struck them trees, Miss, and there may be a ledge there that he lit on. I'm goin' up."

He fought his way from rock to rock, with difficulty finding foot and handhold, winding in and out of crevices, and using every shrub to aid his progress upward. Once or twice he paused, as though blocked, clinging to the face of the cliff like a fly, yet found a way, and went on. Those below watched breathlessly until the man finally crept over an outcropping ledge, imperceptible from where they stood, and disappeared. It seemed as though he was gone a long while. Deborah, hand pressed on her heart, never removed her eyes from the spot, or stirred. What had he found up there? Surely he must have discovered something—the dead, mangled body, no doubt. Then he appeared again, alone, standing up and gazing down at them. His voice as he hailed them below, sounded clear, exultant, a new ring in its tone.

"He ain't here, Miss, but, by God sir, I believe he's alive."

DEBORAH could not speak, could not utter a sound. Alive! Alive! Why that was impossible; her very heart seemed to stop beating! She could only stare up at the man dazed and helpless. It was the lieutenant who answered.

"You say he is alive, Carney?"

"Well, he sure left here alive, sir, and

on his own legs. I found the place where he come down, an' where he got on his feet again. There wasn't nobody else here helpin' him, an' he started off along this ledge—limpin' a bit, I should say, but goin' alone. Whatever happened since, sir, he certainly left here able to navigate. Maybe I better follow the trail?"

"Yes, go on, Sergeant."

Deborah's limbs trembled so she could scarcely walk for the first few steps. She clung gratefully to the lieutenant's arm, her gaze never deserting the man moving cautiously along the narrow ledge of rock high above them. Alive! Daniel Kelleen was alive! Nothing else mattered; nothing else had any place in her mind—through some strange miracle of God, Daniel Kelleen was alive! The sense of her surroundings came back as they advanced, the memory of it all quickening her perceptions, as strength returned. He was alive after his fall, able to walk—to plan. What would he most naturally do? To seek her then was impossible, and he had remembered that cave which she had described. He must have been seeking it; his trail led directly there. Her hands clasped tightly at the officer's sleeve.

"Have the sergeant hurry; please have him hurry! He doesn't need to trace Captain Kelleen's trail. I—I am sure I know where he was going."

"Where was that?"

"To the cave I had found, and told him about; it is there just beyond that mound. Why, look, Lieutenant, there are horses grazing yonder—they have found him already."

There were two animals in a little cove, hobbled, and nibbling at the short grass, but both saddled and bridled. They had the Meager ranch brand on their flanks, and the sergeant, joining the party below, easily followed the trail of two men on foot until they circled the mound of earth, and ascended the opposite side. Deborah pressed her way forward, too eager now to be longer held back, yet fully realizing the danger.

"Be careful here," she warned. "They

are certainly in there—two or three, at least, and they will shoot. Here, Sergeant, let me show you; I know the way."

THEY CREEPT UP, the three of them, the two men with weapons drawn, keeping close in under the partial protection of the cliff. Behind, four or five troopers followed, with carbines thrown forward. Nothing opposed their progress, the very mystery adding to the strain on their nerves. To Deborah it became almost unbearable—surely they must be there, just behind that leaf screen, Bob Meager and the Mexican, Sanchez; those were their horses—and that ape-man! Why were they so still? What caused them to hold back their fire? Could it be possible they were all back in the tunnel, with no guard set?

And Kelleen! What had happened to Kelleen?

They were already before the clinging vines; her hands trembled as she forced these aside, revealing the black vacancy behind. The startled sergeant pressed them farther back, staring bewildered into the void, his service revolver thrust forward, an oath breaking from his lips.

"By God, but this beats hell, sir. Damn it, but I'm goin' in!"

He went over the barrier of rock unmolested, unstopped, and recklessly Deborah followed. The lieutenant paused an instant.

"Jones, you and Calhoun follow us; the others remain out here. Keep your eyes open, lads."

The next moment he had also scrambled through the opening, and crouched down beside the trembling girl. Just ahead the two could dimly distinguish Carney, leaning forward, peering into the total darkness beyond.

"It's—it's perfectly level, the floor is," she whispered. "You can follow along the wall—I did."

They advanced together slowly, feeling their way, scarcely a sound breaking the silence. Suddenly the sergeant, slightly



"'But I want to talk,' he insisted. 'It keeps me from thinking; it makes me know it is all real—this blue sky, and you.'"

in advance, stopped, feeling at something on the floor with his feet; then he stooped over.

"By God, here's a dead man!"

"A dead man! Are you sure?"

"He's dead all right, sir. Where's the flash-light? We've got to find out what this means."

THE ROUND GLARE of light struck the sidewalls, swept over the still kneeling sergeant, glinting on his drawn weapon, and then touched the motionless body outstretched on the floor. At last it rested on the upturned face. The sergeant stared down as though he saw a ghost.

"By God!" he ejaculated at last, it's the old devil himself. What's that, Carney? You know him?"

"Know him! Why, sir, Lieutenant, it's Gomez, Manuel Gomez—there's fifty thousand dollars on him dead or alive. Well, he's dead all right."

"Gomez, the outlaw; but are you sure?"

"Sure," the sergeant rose to his feet and about. "Sure? Hell—begging your pardon, sir—why shouldn't I be sure? I've chased that old fox ever since I've been in the army, twenty years, sir. Twice we were after him down in old Mexico."

The boy lieutenant's face was white in the reflected light, but his lips were firmly set.

"Well, he's dead now," he said sternly, "and it is up to us to find out what all this means."

## CHAPTER XXXI

### The Message of Life

BUT LIEUTENANT, this ain't no cave, sir; it's a bloomin' mine," a voice spoke from behind, in a tone of surprise.

"What makes you think that, Calhoun?"

"'Cause it's been blasted out mostly,

sir, or else picked. I've been a miner myself and ought to know. Maybe there was a cave here once, but I tell yer, sir, these yere walls have been hand-worked, or I'm a piker."

"All right, we've got to explore the passage just the same. Come on, men."

He flashed the warning light ahead, as they advanced, taking his own place beside the sergeant, and compelling Deborah to remain behind with the two soldiers. As the passage curved to the right the leaders crept forward with extreme caution, to gain view of what lay hidden beyond, Carr reaching out his hand to send the flicker of light dancing down the narrowed tunnel. The flashing rays brought no response, awoke no sound of movement, and Carney ventured to protrude his head far enough around the protecting rock to gain view of what was beyond. The flash-light was no longer needed to reveal the scene. At the end of the passage, down through that slight opening leading to the desert above, streamed the glare of day, white and dazzling to his eyes after the pitch darkness in which he had been blindly feeling his way forward. It rested, a pool of light on the floor, and in its very center, every detail outlined, as in an etching, were two bodies, one face downward, curled in grotesque shape, the other lying at full length, features upturned to the low roof. Beyond these the flare of the flashlight, leaping across this narrow space of day, exhibited a jumbling mass of rock, blocking the passage from top to bottom.

THE STARTLED SERGEANT stared speechless—first at those motionless bodies, death pictured in each attitude; then beyond at a strange, ghastly, white face, on which the searchlight fantastically played. Suddenly something else reflected into his eyes, the sparkle of an uplifted revolver's polished tube.

"Who are you?" asked a hoarse voice sternly. "Stop there until you answer."

"My God, sir!" was the instant cry. "I'm Carney, Sergeant Carney, Captain. We've come here for you, sir."

The threatening revolver sank weakly, and Carney and the lieutenant, oblivious to all else, rushed forward, circling the two dead bodies in their eagerness to reach the one live man beyond, and helpless in that fall of rock. Deborah, left in the darkness behind, groped her way forward, dazed, speechless, only one fact echoing in her mind—he was alive, Daniel Kelleen was alive!

He lifted his head, and looked at them, trying to smile.

"God, but it is good to see you, Sergeant," he managed to say. "I—I thought you would never come. This darkness; those dead men out there, and—and I couldn't move. No, I don't believe I'm badly hurt; only just caught me, that's all—a single second more and I'd gone free."

His face lit up suddenly, his eyes brightening with recognition.

"You—you here, too, Deborah Meredith! Why—why I have been worrying about you; lying here in the dark I haven't thought of much else; I—I kept seeing you wandering alone out there in the desert."

She dropped to her knees, and drew his head into the comfort of her lap, her hand smoothing back his hair. There were tears in her eyes, and he saw them.

"No, I got away," she explained hastily. "They did not see me at all, and then God guided me to your men."

"I know part of it—Meager told me."

"Bob Meager?" her heart choked her. "He was really here with you then? What—what happened? Can you tell me? They will have those rocks dug away in a moment."

"Yes, yes, he was here, he and Garrity—the judge, you know. They—they are both in there now, buried under tons of rock. I—hardly know what did happen; it all came on us in a flash. There was a tunnel in here, a room, where old Alvara had been mining years and years

ago. He must have died there all alone, for I saw his skeleton on a pile of stone. Then those two went in—Meager and Garrity—with a broken lantern. I—I think one of them fell, and—and there must have been some powder left there—powder old Alvara had, maybe, a lot of it. I—I saw the flash, and jumped back—they are there yet, buried."

"Bob Meager is dead?"

"Crushed to a pulp."

His head sank back helplessly, and his eyes closed. Carney and Jones rolled the last stone from off the imprisoned limbs, but he lay insensible. The three soldiers bore him out through the black passage to the entrance, and, with the assistance of those others outside, lifted his body over the rock barrier, between the clinging vines into the sunlight. Deborah never left his side, and as they placed the body on the short turf, his head rested again on her arm. The sergeant knelt, and felt the outstretched limbs.

"Badly bruised, and perhaps crushed a bit," he said at last, "but I doubt if there is a bone broken. He'll be all right presently. One of you fellows bring a canteen. Now, miss, a little water will do the captain more good than anything else. What is it, Lieutenant?"

"We can hardly move him at present, Sergeant. He'll have to rest awhile before he can ride. Perhaps we better search those bodies back there, and dispose of them in some way."

"Very well, sir."

**T**HEY DISAPPEARED together, all but two troopers left on guard; below in the valley the troop horses grazed in the sunshine. Deborah, bathing the white face gently, waited with wildly beating heart. She was free—free! And Daniel Kelleen lived. There was nothing else in life to think about.

He slowly opened his eyes, and smiled up at her, as though her being there was the most natural thing in the world.

"The blue sky," he said, his voice trembling—"how beautiful it is. God!

but it is good to get out of that hole, with dead men everywhere."

"Yes," she replied, "but don't try to talk now; that is all over with."

"But I want to talk," he insisted. "It keeps me from thinking; it makes me know it is all real—this blue sky, and you."

"Then if you must, tell me what happened; it seems almost a miracle."

"It was a miracle, and I am not sure but you were God's messenger," he replied soberly.

Then, slowly, hesitatingly, prompted now and then by a question, he told his story, his voice growing stronger as he spoke. The guard sat on a rack a dozen feet away, their carbines between their knees, eyes on the deserted valley below.

"The paper you took from the boy's hand—what was it?"

"Only a map, very roughly drawn, and written in Spanish. I could make little out of it—see?"

She held it out before him, a yellow,

creased paper, looking a century old. He held it for a moment in his own hands, peering at the criss-cross lines.

"Perhaps it was one Alvara left," he said, slowly, "and the boy had found. He followed the rainbow to the end."

THEY WERE QUIET a long while; then his hand moved and touched her own. Her eyes, which had been on the valley, dropped to his face.

"This is not all, is it—just to be alive again?" he asked softly.

"I—I hardly know what you mean."

"Back there in the tunnel," he insisted, "when I first looked up into your eyes I read a message; I want to read it again."

"A message—are you sure?"

"Yes, dear, I am sure; it was a message of love."

She was no longer looking at him, and she caught her breath. Then their eyes met once more.

"It is the same message always, Daniel Kelleen," she said, simply.

(The End)

## WHO PAYS?

By Harry Irving Shumway

MY OLD FRIEND, Jack Dufresne, has surprised me.

He has become editor of a fiction magazine—and this is surprising because he has never been literary in the least. But he prints the most fascinating tales, absolutely top hole. Old magazine running night and day shifts—presses rolling thunderously on and on—all that sort of thing. Great success.

"Jack," I said on meeting him one afternoon in a café. "You are a winner. Success agrees with you, too. Always a handsome devil, you're better looking than ever."

"That's part of my success, confidentially, you understand," he said. "Hope

I'm not conceited but anyway, I'm laying it to that."

"Explain, dear boy," I said somewhat mystified. "What's the connection?"

"Well, you see my method of payment is unique," he explained. "I pay for my stories in a new—er—way."

"How?"

"I pay a kiss per word," he said, almost shyly. "Fact. As you perhaps know, all my writers are women."

I leaned back in my chair and gazed at him in astonishment. He had the grace to blush and then grinned.

"Well, dammit, it works," he said, after a pause. "Only trouble is—well, they all want to write serials."



*"Don't tell me where no poles is."*

# "CALL OUT MCSWEENY"

By Chess Nay

**D**RAKE, the Telephone Company's superintendent, angrily threw back the bedclothes and groped in the darkness for the noisy telephone. He tore the receiver from its hook, quieting the little bell and his heavy voice blurted hoarsely:

"Drake talking."

With rising inflection came the reply.

"Mr. Drake, this is the Market Exchange night man."

"Yes. . . . What's the trouble."

"Long distance lines going open one at a time. Looks like breaks other side

of Brunswick on the Chicago line."

**Marshall D. Smith** "Are the broken wires crossing others?"

"No, sir! One pair was crossed long enough to give me a location, but that's gone now."

"Probably the cold snapping them."

Drake remembered having told Murphy, the gang foreman, that he had pulled those wires too tight when repairing the line several months before—but then, he was always telling Murphy such things.

The test board man was speaking again.

"Shall I order out a gang, Mr. Drake?"

"One man can put up those wires. Get them back by eight a. m. Heavy traffic tomorrow."

"I'll send a man and car from Elizabeth."

"No! Call out McSweeney."

"All right, sir! . . . Good-bye."

The receiver snapped like a metal trap; there was a rustle of mattress; a twang of springs, and a quiet room.

**I**N A SLEEPY village of central Jersey an old-fashioned clock laboriously struck twelve and before its reverberation died the ancient telephone bell nearly jumped to attention as though responding to a midnight roll.

Mrs. McSweeney's angular body came up in bed like a patent mail box signal. She shook vigorously a sleeping form which, at a conservative estimate, took up four-fifths of the bed. It became necessary finally to employ vocal as well as mechanical persuasion.

"Pete! Pete! Can't you hear that noisy thing? It'll have the whole house awake. Get up!"

A black curly head with a pair of startled grey eyes appeared uncertainly above the covers at the head board.

"Can't a fellow sleep? What's the idea?"

"Sleep? If I slept as much as you, I'd rent a cemetery plot and make it permanent. Answer the telephone."

"Aw, have a heart, dear!"

And with a yawn like the muffled bray of a mule, Pete McSweeney, the best, and by some regarded as the toughest, line trouble shooter in Jersey, stumbled toward the vibrating little bell hammer.

The ringing stopped as his big hand flicked the receiver from place. A fog horn voice roared gratingly in the sensitive transmitter.

"W-e-l-l?"

In the night's stillness the words from the receiver could be distinctly heard in all corners of the room.

"It's Jenkins. The big boss said to call you out. Crank up your flivver and go

west on the Chicago line for wire breaks."

McSweeney was interested.

"Wire breaks! Why, poor fish, there ain't no wind and it ain't cold; I'm wearing my silk undershirt."

The voice continued after a tolerant pause, "It's the bottom arm. There's four out of five open. And listen, the boss says to get them up by eight o'clock."

"Sure, I'll stick 'em up with friction tape. Them's wires Murphy pulled. Thought he was tunin' a mandolin. How about tellin' me where to find 'em."

"Shows about fifteen-hundred pole, Pete, back of Hays' woods, on the private right-of-way."

"Don't tell me where no poles is. I known 'em better'n my own kids."

"Say, Pete?"

"Yah!"

"Be careful, old man, those wires are not touching ground."

"Huh!"

**T**HE CONNECTION was down now, and McSweeney started to pull on his work clothes. As he closed the front door with a bang and stalked across the creaky porch, Mrs. McSweeney's high pitched voice poured forth the burden of her soul.

"Why don't you get a job with a company that has regular hours for sleeping? The idea of sending out at midnight to put up wires. You'll die with pneumonia, and then, what'll me and the kids do? I guess we can get along, though. We've been living on prospects of promotion for eight years. Who ever heard of putting up wires at night?"

There probably was more, but Pete had bolted out of range.

**T**HE NIGHT MAN of the Company's garage put a sleepy face against a frosted pane seeking to discover whether the series of sledge hammer blows at the main door signaled friend or foe. His search for truth was rewarded by a familiar voice that rattled the loose sash.

"Hey, Bright Eyes, I ain't supposed to park out here."

With sliding of bolts the big doors caved inward before McSweeney's towering form.

The undersized garage man shrank and shivered in the rush of cold air. He looked up inquiringly as his big friend buckled on a tool belt heavy enough for a dry horse's trace. This operation ended, Pete bent forward and spoke loudly.

"Say, September Mern, put any gasoline in?"

The answer came with unexpected quickness through chattering teeth.

"Reckon I gave it milk?"

"All right, Jeff," responded McSweeney, "get out of the way. I can't be puncturin' no twenty-five dollar tire on you this evening."

As the car started with a banging exhaust across the oily garage floor the little man had the last word.

"Big Alligator, don't come back till it's time for a gentleman to be up."

THE ANSWER was two buzzes on what purported to be an electric automobile horn and McSweeney was gone in the night, a meteor with a trail of faint blue smoke.

On the Lincoln Highway the huge trunk-line poles were like lanky ghosts silhouetted against a clear, cold, star-spotted sky. The faint glistening of glass insulators suggested jeweled spangles decorating bony arms that reached for a noisy little road demon scurrying past and pointing glaring shafts of light ahead in quivering fingers.

At the edge of the extensive Hays estate the trunk line left the Highway to follow a tortuous course through Cranberry Swamp and the big woods held for a game reserve. McSweeney glanced at the silent stream of poles dipping into the valley fog and gave the gas lever a throw.

It would undoubtedly save time, going to the test pole at the center of the woods. He could then locate the trouble

one way or the other and eliminate halt the walking.

The little car stopped a good mile down the road, pulling up noisily by a familiar break in an ornamental fence. Throwing a dusty blanket over a boiling radiator, the trouble shooter strapped on a pair of pole climbers with businesslike spurs. Thrusting one hand through a bowline loop in the end of his hand line and tossing the furled rope over one shoulder, he picked up a testing box with some wire, squeezed through the opening and walked briskly along a path that led straight into the great woods.

Only after entering the dense portion of the forest was it necessary to secure a small flashlight from an inside pocket and occasionally shoot downward among the dead weeds and fern stalks a shaft of pale white light.

Some time after the brisk walking had warmed the trouble shooter's wind-chilled body, a wide lateral strip of sky broke across in front and there loomed over head the giant double-armed test pole. It was like meeting an old comrade and he felt rather than spoke, "Hello, Big Stick," laying a friendly hand on its weather beaten surface.

DEPOSITING wire and rope on the ground and with test box suspended from belt he prepared to climb the pole. With one spur caught lightly in the butt he glanced with a telephone man's appreciation down the line.

It was a noble lead with poles lined up like surveyors' sights along the middle of a clean right-of-way. The man was standing on a small rise and from this vantage point, even in the subdued starlight, it could be followed for some distance with the eye.

Probably a quarter of a mile away was a second elevation, above which the big forty-footers spread their arms across the Milky Way. The sight was beautiful, especially where the big star—it must be a planet—nestled among the protecting arms of the highest pole. The musings

of McSweeny ended with the mental observation.

"Well, this ain't puttin' up wires at night."

He was about to drive the climbing spur two inches or more into the chestnut wood when a faint twang and a slight grating sounded among the wires above most unexpectedly.

The big fellow stopped and stood listening. The sound had been faint but there was no mistaking the fact of its occurrence. He pressed the side of his head against the pole and could clearly hear a scraping sound. It see-sawed in a peculiarly familiar way and he realized with a start that not many poles away some one was pulling wire over the cross arms. At almost the same instant the big star on the distant rise moved a foot or two, went out, and appeared again.

The man swore quietly.

"Hell, no wonder they didn't test grounded. A bloomin' wire thief ain't lettin' no wires touch ground."

JUDGING by the time the plunderers had already been at work they were evidently executing an all night job, so the trouble shooter pondered a while. He was unarmed, so probably were they. Perhaps there was only one.

"A man's hard up to steal telephone wire. 'Tain't much of a guy."

While discussing the matter with himself, the distant light went out, shortly afterwards flashing around the base of the pole. The man had come down. In a few seconds, however, the star appeared once more among the crossarms—this time the pole next ahead.

"Fast work with a ladder," thought McSweeny, and the next time the light disappeared he again placed his ear to the pole. The man was using climbers and not a ladder. The sound of spurs could be heard.

There was the scraping of sliding wire, also. It meant two of them—at least two. The job was being engineered by an experienced lineman.

The trouble shooter's blood began to boil and his whispered flow of profanity would have made a seasoned trooper pale. The thief was a piker.

"That's the guy what yells loudest for his benefits," thought McSweeny and his jaw set. "Somebody oughta muss up that bird so he'd need sick benefits and hospital allowances, too."

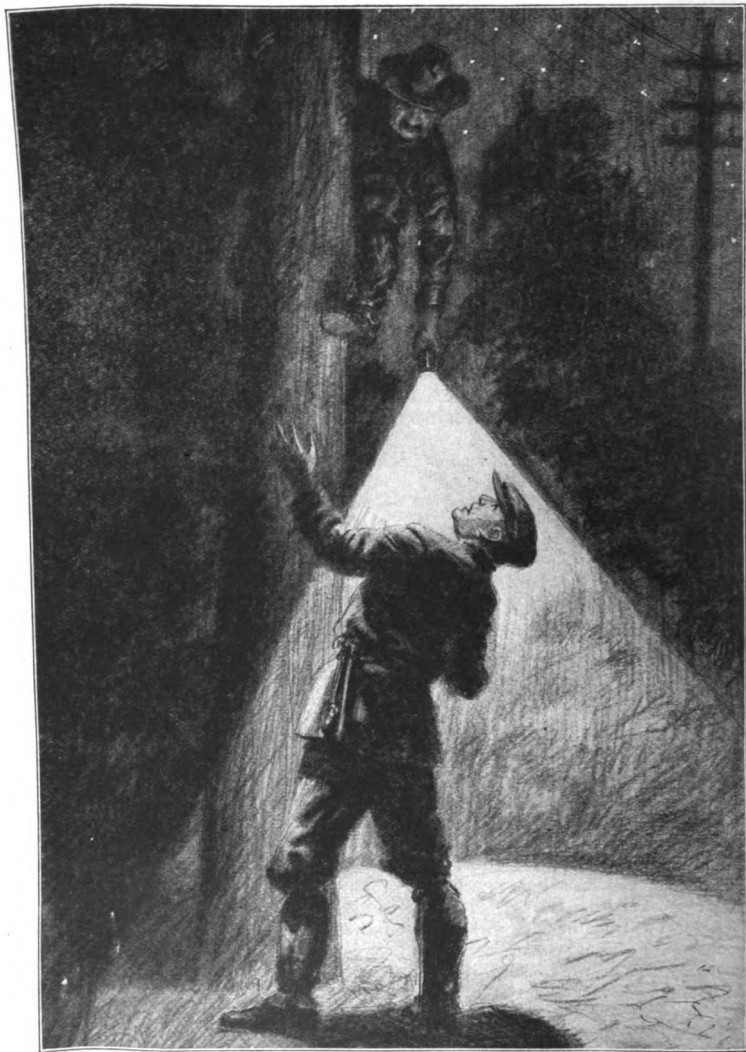
THIS TACIT PROPOSAL brought its logical answer. It was only too apparent that the great woods was not crowded with volunteers, so he decided to act. Noiselessly laying aside his traps, except hand line and a pair of heavy steel wire connectors, he started carefully along the edge of the right-of-way in the deep shadows of the trees. Moving quietly he arranged the handline of half-inch rope into a circular coil, placing his head and one bulging shoulder through it.

He could see the man with the light to be moving in the opposite direction. The fellow's partner, or partners, must be located this way, possibly two poles or four, so he crept forward with the stealthiness of a cat. If the approach was detected he must walk helplessly into a trap.

A thousand plans of attack crowded his alert mind. Frequently placing his head low he looked forward into the darkness hoping to see a human form disclosed before the stars. The jerking of wire became more distinct, and soon there could be seen the faint glow of a half-dead cigarette. Relief was in that sight, for at least he had something definite in the way of a location.

The wire was being drawn from the opposite direction, and the man must be facing that way. Crawling on the ground, he could see the fellow. There was no conversation, and but one form, barely ten feet away. The trouble shooter, selecting that moment when the shadow gave a jerk to free tangled wire, sprang forward like a panther.

The thief sensed his danger and turned, too late. His gaping mouth gave the be-



"He crashed his way to the pole and, peering into the night, was unexpectedly blinded by a light."

gining of a cry as a pair of heavy connectors came down with a sickening thud. The form went limp, slipping silently to the ground.

McSWEENEY wondered whether the fellow's skull had been crushed, as he quickly tied feet and gloved hands with pieces of copper wire. As soon as possible he started pulling down the hanging wire to forestall any suspicion of the other wire thief regarding his partner's fate.

The second man was several poles away and the intervening distance could not be covered while the fellow descended a pole. The man was an experienced climber—curiosity as to his identity was becoming acute.

On the stranger's next pole, waiting until probably half the wires had been untied, McSweeney slipped off towards the flashlight. Striving to get there before the fellow reached ground he ran stumbling over stumps and brush.

When hardly three-fourths of the necessary distance the light went out and, hearing thumps of spurs, McSweeney abandoned the shadows and boldly took to the open right-of-way.

He crashed his way to the pole and, peering into the night, was unexpectedly blinded by a light which, in contrast with the prevailing darkness, seemed more a searchlight beam than the pale rays from a pocket flash. A heavy object grazed his head, glancing from one huge shoulder into the bushes behind. He lunged towards the source of blinding glare in an effort to place himself on more equal footing with his unknown opponent.

The other fellow's advantage with the flashlight came near undoing the trouble shooter in the very beginning of the attack. There came a crashing blow squarely on the cheek bone that almost lifted the big fellow off the ground. Falling he grabbed frantically at the jumping light and one muscular hand closed on a forearm which brought to mind a hock of beef rather than a section of human

anatomy. The great fingers sank into the firm flesh like jaws of a vise, and McSweeney pulled down upon himself a bulk which more than matched his own.

IT WAS a fierce fight between giants, possibly slow in action, but great in force. As the locked bodies rolled over and over, dry brush cracked and small bushes broke. In the darkness, smashing blows landed where chance decreed. The cruel spurs made ugly lacerations in their legs.

The thief was the heavier man, with a tendency to stoutness, which, however, did not diminish the steam behind his blows. They occasionally broke apart, and at such an interval McSweeney landed a knee kick in the abdomen, reducing momentarily the intensity of his opponent's fighting. Pushing this slight advantage he embraced the man's chest with all the might of two gorilla-like arms.

For a while it seemed that this plan must be given up, as the heavier man punished his unprotected sides with short arm hooks. The jabs were broken, however, by rolling, and the bear hug began to tell. Human endurance reaches a limit, and the bulky wire thief soon was making frantic defensive efforts to break the crushing embrace. The fellow's breathing became labored, and McSweeney easily rolled him under where the weight of his body added to the pressure.

Finally the stranger gasped and his arms fell. The trouble shooter, approaching the limit of his own strength, held on for a few moments longer, then released.

Then turning the man on his face he quickly locked the fellow's arms and secured him with the handline.

McSweeney sat down limp with exhaustion. The two heaving chests, alternating inhalations and exhalations, like escaping steam, produced an effect weird and unreal in the silent night.

When somewhat recovered, McSweeney secured his flashlight and, rolling over the still heaving body, illuminated the

face. His resulting exclamation was of genuine surprise.

"Holy Jumper Wire, it's Murphy!"

After a pause he continued in jerks between breaths:

"Just put your buddy to sleep. Wired him up like a new exchange, but he wouldn't talk to me."

McSweeney continued with the joy of the conqueror:

"You poor piker! I told you booze and Peddicord's gambling joint would get you."

AT SEVEN A. M., Superintendent Drake's telephone summoned him in the midst of a morning shave. He wondered what had happened that Mansfield, his construction supervisor, should call at such an hour, and the man's voice came over the wire with a ring promising news.

"Mr. Drake, Trouble Shooter McSweeney was called out last night to restore circuits on the Chicago line. The breaks were in the big woods of the Hays Estate, and were caused by copper thieves. So much was down that one man couldn't handle the job, so the Wire Chief called me at three o'clock. I couldn't locate Murphy, but got out his men and took charge myself. We were loading material at the garage and—get this Mr. Drake—here comes that wild Irishman McSweeney driving in with the two wire thieves.

"One was Murphy, sir, lashed down in the bottom of the car. His face was like a fresh steak and he was passin' out curses to man, woman and child. The other bird was a bum from Peddicord's, still dizzy with a subway trench across his head.

"One of McSweeney's eyes was closed, and to steer he comes aimin' across the radiator cap with his good lamp. He was bleeding about the legs. Said he and

Murphy had been climbing up and down each other for practice. First thing he asked about was Jeff, the garage night man; wanted to know if the gentleman had a good night's rest.

"We got Doc Van Ness, the bone setter, to look 'em over and took a couple of rooms at the station house.

"McSweeney is some scarred up, but he went back to show us the breaks.

"Wires all working now, sir. Thought you'd like to know things were O.K."

THE LATHER on half of Drake's face had dried unnoticed, and as Mansfield finished he exclaimed:

"Well, I'll be —"

The usual expletive seemed inadequate, so the sentence remained unfinished, and before he could reply further Mr. Mansfield spoke again.

"Mr. Drake, what'll I do about Murphy's gang?"

Drake found his voice.

"For trouble shooting, Mansfield, that's the worst I ever heard."

"Yes, sir; wasn't just according to the standard specifications."

"About Murphy's gang, Mansfield, I've been thinking. How about McSweeney for that job?"

Mansfield's voice had a happy ring.

"That's all right with me, sir. I didn't like to say it but I had him in mind. He'll sure jazz up that gang and we can get some work done down here."

"All right, let me talk to McSweeney. I'll have to compliment him for last night, even if it was a foolhardy stunt."

"I'm sorry, sir, but he's gone for breakfast. Said he wanted to hear his wife recite a new piece she had learned, entitled, 'Putting up Wires at Night!' Some foolishness, I suppose, but it went over my head."

"All right, Mansfield, you tell Foreman McSweeney. Good-bye!"

# DISARMING AT BROAD GAP

By Alvah Milton Kerr

Illustrations by Elmer Young

WE SKATE TOGETHER as easily as two yellow-hammers flying—dip, dip, dip!" The tall youth, looking down at the girl, intoned the last three words laughingly, but in unison with their long, slightly rising and falling, and always swaying, strokes.

"It is almost like flying, isn't it?" she smiled. "It doesn't tire one at all."

They were floating along a glistening mirror of ice; moonlight in the mirror flowed under their feet; winter's breath, touched with a tang of cedar and fir, was in their nostrils; they were young; it was witchery. Each looked in the other's eyes, eyes aswim with the mysterious moonlight and the glow of that ever-new mystery which is older than the moonlight.

"Yes, the birds haven't got much on us," he chuckled. "I expect that this is about as fine as flying in an airplane."

"Oh, it must be much nicer," she said. "They just sit still in an airplane and do nothing. In skating there is the fun of doing something personal, of working one's—one's wings!"

He laughed. "That's so. Just the same, I'm going to try the sky-game one of these days, if I get the chance."

"You'd better not; they get killed, most of them."

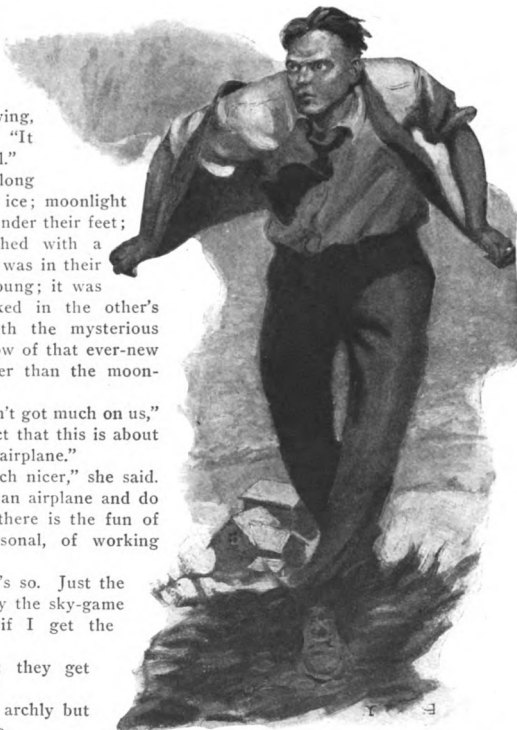
She glanced at him archly but with obvious solicitude.

"Better not try to go to heaven that way."

"This way, then? It is hard to beat, that's sure." They laughed together, the

red sap of youth and health flushing their cheeks.

About them spread a vast region of tumbled country, once set thick with a



*"Thank you, Mr. Stour," said Connor, stripping off his coat and shirt, and flinging them upon the snow."*

glory of pines, now largely furred over with a new growth of small conifers.

Beneath their feet wound the frozen Stour River, following the flexures of the Stour Valley northward to Lake Superior, forty miles away. Westward, through a serrate rampart called Long Ridge, lay an opening fittingly named Broad Gap, a wooded gateway leading into MacNair Valley, fifteen miles distant.

These valleys, the Stour and the MacNair, were deeply stamped with the story of the slaughter of the pines. Down the Stour River, and the Cloud River in MacNair Valley—sometimes as rafts of logs, sometimes as sawed lumber—the felled forests had gone to the Eastern and the prairied States.

The two rival families—the Stour and the MacNair—early fell afoul of each other at Broad Gap. Adam Stour and Hugh MacNair, grandfathers of the youth and maid floating on silvery blades through the moonlight, had fought over the ownership of the land and timbers of the Gap, both with their fists and in the courts. Hugh MacNair had secured most of the land, but old Adam Stour dugged a canal from the Stour River into Fir Creek, which ran through the Gap, and when he willed, sent his lumber into the Cloud River and so southward.

It was in those early bitter days that Nathan Stour and Craig MacNair, eldest sons of old Adam and old Hugh, slew each other in a pistol fight at the canal, leaving a quenchless fire of hatred in the Stour and MacNair blood through many years.

THE TOPOGRAPHY of the region, curiously, was part of the Stour-MacNair tragedy, for hatred in its every expression is tragedy. The valley in which the MacNairs were dominant came out of the west, and meeting the rampart of Long Ridge, turned southward, guiding the waters of Cloud River, not into Lake Superior, but, finally, into the Mississippi. Down this valley the second generation of the MacNairs built a railroad, partly for the conveyance of lumber, but more largely to serve iron mines,

which they had developed at Upper Bend, toward the north end of the valley.

As for the Stour Valley, that began eighty miles southeast, among the Turtle Hills, and bending northward, opened wide-mouthed upon Lake Superior at Pine Port. Throughout the length of this valley stretched a railway, built by the Stours, once busy with timber products, but, now that the forests were very nearly destroyed, sadly reduced in usefulness and revenue. But for a granite quarry toward the inner end of the valley, and a quarry of brownstone nearer the great lake, the road would have ceased to function. As it now was, debt lay heavily upon it, and the dreams of the Stours were not sweet.

Manifestly a short line of rails through Broad Gap, linking the two roads and valleys, would have been of superlative value to every interest. But hatred, snag-toothed and red-eyed, stood in the way. Stour and MacNair blood had been drunk by the soil of the Gap, soil that shovels must well nigh surely turn in building the connecting link. Citizens of both valleys cursed the senseless barrier, and the Stours and MacNairs cursed it, but could not get themselves over it—all save Donna Stour and Connor MacNair, of the third generation, who were secretly floating together on the ice of the Stour River in the moonlight, the barrier to them impalpable rot. Nature has a trick, by times, of thus using love in erasing blots.

THEY HAD KNOWN of each other, and of times had seen each other, since childhood, and always had been taught that, properly, each should despise the other. But it chanced that they were thrown together at the John Noble Academy, down at Long Lake, and the youth had found the girl new-minded and lovely and the girl had found the youth strong, forthright, and of advanced convictions. The spell that is more than common magic came upon them; the myopia of prejudice melted from their eyes and they saw as with a new dimension.

Connor MacNair had finished at the Academy and was taking a course in mining engineering.

Donna was in her final year down at Noble; they were now home for the winter holidays.

Each alternate evening Connor disappeared from the big MacNair house, over on the Cloud River, and came on racing skates through Broad Gap by way of Fir Creek and the Little Canal, and found Donna on the ice of the Stour. But the indirection and secrecy of it, alluring as was its object, was not wholly to their liking. Both of them hated hidden actions.

Connor himself had fought more than one bloody fight by reason of his open procedures. Now, as they came to the mouth of the Little Canal, they began to skate about each other in tiny circles, talking as they swayed in effortless, gliding ease.

"Donna, I am not coming day after tomorrow at night," said Connor, "but at three o'clock in the afternoon, and I am going up to your house and say my say to your father and mother like a man. Fine as it is to see you this way, this hiding-out business leaves a bad taste in my mouth."

He stopped with a hissing twist of his skates, and pulled off his cap, flung the reddish touse of hair back from his forehead with a sharp jerk of his head. His blue eyes were glinting darkly.

She paused and looked at his tall, supple figure admiringly.

"It is fun—sort of romantic—this way, but really, I do feel a little bit sheepish, slipping away from the crowd of skaters above the dam, or stealing out of the house to come down here to meet you. But Dad and Belden—they are awfully bitter against you folks. Mother doesn't feel quite that way. I told her about you, and she is not so much opposed to you, but—it frightens her to think what might happen if Dad and Belden should come to know about—us. Hadn't you better wait until next summer, after I graduate

and come home? It is going to make a lot of trouble, and—and—"

"And I've got to whip several people before I can have you—your brother Belden and, most likely, my brother Seth, and several of our male cousins—I might as well begin now. I feel pretty fit."

They laughed together, in their laughter a thread of ruefulness. She pulled off her mittens and knit wool cap, and unbuttoned her coat of fox fur.

"Whew!" she said, with a deep breath, "it makes me hot all over when I think of it! Maybe, Connor, you won't have to fight for me. I don't want you to. I know you are not afraid. I heard how you went into the cave on Black Cliff after the bear, and what you did to the wolf pack down the Cloud River, when they were trying to kill that poor deer. But—well, whipping our own folks! Belden, you know, is my brother and I care for him a lot, still—"

"Still, he ought to get out of the way, stand aside? Exactly. I am twenty-one and you are eighteen, you know."

He put a hand upon each of her shoulders and looked into her rosy face.

"You are an awfully pretty girl, Donna—most too pretty. But you've got oodles of common sense, and you know that hatred is utter rot, and that any one coming between us on account of it is likely to get the hatred knocked out of his head. Sounds rough, but I don't see any other way. Come on—it's only ninety-three—let's skate down the canal to Fir Creek."

**S**HOULDER to shoulder, and with hands locked together, they swung into the Gap. The stars were half-drowned in the pouring silver of the moon, the world lay asleep in wintry stillness, but to them, despite the future's portents, there were strains of music in the stillness and in the cold were subtle currents as of summer warmth.

When they came to Fir Creek, and a little hill called Cedar Point, around the north side of which the stream cut its

way, Donna drew back and stopped. At Cedar Point had fallen the shadow which never lifted—there Nathan Stour and Craig MacNair in the long ago had made end of each other. The little hill was a visible symbol of hatred and violence. Upon it and about it the frozen trees stood bleak in the ghostly snow.

"Somehow—it doesn't seem right for us to go by this place *together*. One of your family and one of mine have never done so, you know," said Donna.

"Isn't that on a level with not building a connecting railroad through the Gap here?" he replied, a little reproachfully. "I've hoped—should I ever get hold of the ribbons—to drive a cut-off through here, so our iron ore could be got out to Lake Superior, and to Chicago and Buffalo by water. It would almost cut our freight charges in two, and the extra business would help your Dad keep up his road. I've bucked my Old Man on this question. He and Seth won't have it; they just roar and want to throw me out of the office, Dad especially. What fools people can be over an idea, a superstition!"

She looked at him admiringly for a few moments, a larger light in her sparkling eyes. "I've quarreled with Dad and Belden over that, too. Mother believes in it, but Belden is worse than Dad. It is awful how prejudiced he is against—you folks. He says he would rather go bankrupt than to go into partnership with your people in building the cut-off line."

"Oh, he's a nut—talks like a crosscut saw!"

The silver of her laughter pealed musically in the gray silence. "I understand, I sympathize," she said.

"Well, the cut-off would save your father's railroad, which, I understand, is in a pretty dangerous condition financially. Gee, but I wish you folks could find iron ore in your valley! That would change everything—save your road. I've been tempted to come over and dig around and find it for your Dad. That would make me solid with him." They laughed to-

gether. "Seriously, the iron-bearing strata ought to lead through the range from our mines into your valley," he added. "It ought to lie near the surface *there*."

"So we thought, and prospected for it, but only found the quarry of brownstone. We ran a spur-track in to that from the main-line, but it didn't pay. People don't use brownstone as they used to, so we've given that up. The granite quarry at the upper end of the valley does better. That is working. Dad and Belden are a good deal worried, the timber is so exhausted and the valley isn't very much developed in agriculture. But listen to us! Aren't we romantic! Talking railroads and stone quarries here in the moonlight!"

She laughed again.

"Then let's do the romantic, daring thing—pass Cedar Point together!" he bantered.

"Do you think the MacNairs are braver than the Stours? They never were, they are not now!" she replied, and shot ahead of him down Fir Creek.

When he came up to her they were nearly a mile beyond the hateful barrier. Her face was whiter and she was panting, but she laughed as she turned to him. He caught her in his arms hilariously and they spun round and round upon their skates.

"Congratulations!" he cried, "You are a brick! Now I guess I had better take you home. They might be looking for you."

WHEN they rounded a jutting point at the edge of Hemlock, the Stour headquarters, the lights of the town were aglow on each side of the river, and from beyond the dam came the cries and laughter of many skaters. Upon the high western bank of the river stood a great wooden house with several of its windows alight. From a landing platform at the water's marge a long stair climbed toward this, the old Stour mansion. A man, grizzly and big, stood in the shadow upon the platform. He stirred and a growl came up from his throat as he saw

two slowly swaying figures pause out on the misty, moonlit ice.

"Remember, Donna," came a lifted voice, "that I shall not come at night, day after tomorrow, but at three in the afternoon, and say my say to your father and mother." Then one of the dim figures melted away.

A little later a verbal storm ascended the high flight of stairs from the river, Donna Stour in the midst of it. At the top of the steps she said a significant thing:

"Why, Dad, you don't need to shout, I can hear you. Yes, it was Connor MacNair. He and I are friends. We have been friends ever since we were born, though we really did not know it until of late. He is coming day after tomorrow to talk with you. You will have to listen."

Then the storm went onward toward the house, in its snortings and guttural thunders, and, most curiously, in the tempest went the voice of Donna Stour, singing softly and with apparent unconcern.

TRUE to his word, Connor MacNair came skating along Fir Creek two afternoons later. Sunshine beat golden-white on the snow. Odd stirrings were at the bottom of the young man's mind, not all of them gleeful, but he was whistling. When he came to Cedar Point, where the MacNair land ended and the Stour possessions began, a voice dropped down from the little height, ungraciously warning him back. The voice was harsh and rasping.

"Stop right where you are! Turn your face the other way and—skate!" the voice said.

Connor stopped and looked. On the top of Cedar Point, sitting upon a stump with a rifle across his knees was Belden Stour. The man arose and drew the rifle against his shoulder and covered Connor with its sights.

"I said skate!" were his grim words.

Into Connor McNair's eyes came

something that was very like blue flame.

"I happen to be skating east, not west," he said, with an odd laugh. "But I don't mind stopping to visit a few minutes."

He pulled at the levers of his skates, dropping the skates away from his feet.

"The hole in the end of that rifle-barrel of yours looks to me about the size of the mouth of a railroad tunnel, but I am coming up to see you, Belden," he went on, beginning to climb the little slope. "Of course, if you feel that you *must* shoot me, why, blaze away. But I happen to know that the Stours, both men and women, are brave people, and don't shoot folks that are unarmed."

"You go back to Upper Bend! You are not going on to Hemlock!" shouted Belden explosively.

"Oh, I don't know about that—it all depends upon whether I lick you, or get licked," laughed Connor. "I am coming up to see. Still, I'd feel surer about it if you put that gun down. I wouldn't have a ghost of a show if you used the gun, and the Stours always give the other fellow at least a ghost of a show. Nathan Stour, you know, waited until Craig MacNair was ready before he began shooting, when they killed each other here, forty years ago."

With a hot imprecation of rage, Belden flung the rifle from him and began throwing off his heavier garments.

"Thank you, Mr. Stour," said Connor, stripping off his coat and shirt and flinging them upon the snow. "Pretty cool costume for this winter weather. But never mind, we will soon get warmed up."

His eyes were dancing with strange fire.

CONNOR stood for a moment, a superb young figure, lithe, beautifully proportioned, curiously vital. Belden paused ten feet from him, a fraction of an inch less tall, more heavily muscled, a splendid specimen of young manhood. His eyes traveled angrily over Connor's finely balanced body, saw the erect, spirited set of the youth's head upon his strong neck, the tiny lines that much

laughter had left about his eyes, and the obvious panther-like suppleness that had made him the acknowledged champion skater of that portion of the north. Belden did not fancy the looks of him, but felt in his hatred and rage that he would crush him.

Connor's strangely bright eyes dwelt on Belden's intently.

"I shall not strike you a single blow, Mr. Stour, on account of anything between our families in the past," he said, "but just that your sister may be happy, and because you stand in the way of peace and the building of a connecting railroad through the Gap here. I suppose most of your tribe and my tribe have got to be licked before they will consent; the nonsense will have to be thrashed out of them. I don't know any other way. I am beginning with you."

"Well, you've cut yourself out a mighty big job!" snorted Belden, rolling up his sleeves.

"Exactly. But I've been thinking about it for four or five years. That prepares one."

The crown of the hill was mainly clear, save for two or three stumps and boulders and a wind-swept covering of snow. At the north it fell down sheer to the creek, with trees at the stream's edge.

"All set!" suddenly cried Connor, and stepped toward Belden. His foot struck against the rifle in the snow and he snatched it up and crushed its stalk across a boulder with a high-swung blow, then pitched the shattered thing over the rocky edge of the mimic cliff.

"That is another thing out of the way," he said.

Belden stared at him a moment in red-eyed fury, then with a roar leaped at him, striking.

THEY FOUGHT across the crown of the hill and around in a circle, silently, save for the dull thudding of blows and the sound of their panting. Nearly a half-hour went by, and still the shocking contest continued; then Belden

fell, stunned by a blow delivered straight between the eyes. Connor stood over him, laboring for breath, his features drawn and trickling crimson. Belden got up slowly and stood wavering, his face bloody, blackened, swollen. A terrifying sense of the innate hideousness of personal battle, of physical violence, swept the soul of Connor. This was Donna's brother! He backed away, but Belden leaped at him, snarling in animal fury. Connor met him with a cutting blow.

"Can't you get enough, you young beast?" he panted.

"Not until I've killed you!" grated Belden.

"And will that settle anything?"

"It will settle you!"

Connor said nothing, and again they fought across the crown of the hill and around in a circle in fearful intensity. Then to Connor MacNair the pleading face of Donna began to look at him from the disfigured features of Belden. He began to sway and shift, meeting the other's lunges reluctantly.

At that a crucial thing happened: Connor tripped backward over the boulder upon which he had splintered the rifle-stock. Instantly Belden plunged over the boulder to fall upon and crush him, but as Connor's back struck the earth his feet came up in instinctive self-defense, catching Belden amidships and hurling him onward like a catapult. Connor heard a cry and got to his feet, staggeringly. The brink of the little precipice was not five feet from him, and there was no Belden Stour!

Connor's boiling blood was swept with sudden cold. Here seemed for him the end of everything. He threw himself forward upon his breast and peered over the rocky marge. Belden, having plunged through the fir trees, lay huddled and senseless in the snow at the creek's edge, thirty feet below. In wild consternation Connor scrambled down the ragged wall and came panting to the fallen man. Anxiously he felt for Belden's pulse; it was beating heavily. The victor stood

up, at a loss what to do. How distorted and unnatural Belden looked! How repulsive were the fruits of violence! The truth smote through Connor that this which he had done was savagery and must breed savage results.

In abject self-detestation and pity he hurriedly patted snow upon Belden's bloody face, and finding some bits of loose ice, rubbed the man's limp wrists with the biting stuff.

After a time Belden came back to consciousness and Connor helped him to his feet.

The beaten man's right arm was broken. Battered and frightfully hurt, he wavered about, and Connor put an arm around his shoulders, steadying him.

"I guess I've had enough; I guess I'm whipped," muttered Belden thickly.

"Yes, I'll get our coats and fix you up a bit and help you toward home. You'll need a doctor," said Connor soothingly.

"Just the same, it's not finished. Some of the others will kill you for me."

"To be sure. That will be easy," laughed Connor bitterly.

And this was Donna's brother!

AFTER A TIME they moved slowly up the creek and came into the canal. Connor's right hand was guiding Belden; in his left he carried the shattered rifle. Then down the canal came Donna Stour, skating swiftly. Connor stopped in sheer terror, involuntarily gasping her name. That she should look upon him in his present bruised ugliness of person filled him with dismay; that she should face this beaten, staggering wreck of a man, her brother, frightened him.

Something sickening swept over him. He pushed his stained, swollen hands about his bruised lineaments quickly, as if hoping, somehow, to restore their natural comeliness. How shockingly repulsive he and Belden had become—for this beautiful girl to look upon, to choose between! How ugly and disorganizing were the effects of hatred and rage; how worse than futile!

As she came up to them, the girl's rosy face grew ashen and her lips crooned half-incoherent words of pity and astonishment. In her big eyes shone a wild light, something curiously mingling tenderness and ferocity.

"Oh, what have you done, what have you done?" she kept wailing.

Connor let go of Belden and stood apart, looking at her dumbly. She brushed her handkerchief about Belden's awful face, crooning his name. Self-pity smote the defeated man, sobs came from his battered mouth.

"I ought to have killed him," he wept, "but he broke my gun and threw me down Cedar Point! He—"

"Hush!" cried the girl angrily. "The Stours don't whimper; they die, but they don't turn baby! Come home with me!"

"I—well, you see, he got in the way, and I—" began Connor stumbly.

The girl swept him with a scornful glance. Her head went up proudly.

"Yes, I know," she said witheringly, "but he is my brother! I—"

She did not finish the sentence, only unloosed her skates and led Belden slowly up the canal, not once looking back.

Connor flung the shattered rifle upon the ice and turned to the west, in his heart a sudden sense of desolation. He had won, yet had lost something far more precious than victory. Well, he would get out of the region, he would go and see the world widely. There was aviation, the airplanes carrying mail from sea to sea. One ought to win some measure of forgetfulness, ease one's heart of disappointment, in such glorious work as that.

He had long been fancying himself flying, diving through clouds far above the heads of plodding people, doing things that only eagles dared. It was native to him, this spirit! But Donna! Oh, the sweetness of the thing that had come into his young heart! Was this wonderful thing to die like the flame of a candle guttering into blackness? He looked about him on the wintry world and could find no answer. To Donna his offense

must seem unforgivable. He had lost her. He had sought a solution through brutal force, and it had recoiled upon him in a stroke heavier than the sum of all his blows. Yes, he might as well go.

**I**T WAS AFTER MIDNIGHT when he crept shivering into his bed. He had hung about an air-vent in the ice of the Cloud River for a long time, bathing his swollen face and puffed, stiff knuckles. Toward morning weariness and the warmth of the woolen blankets coaxed him into slumber.

In the day that followed there was laughter and satisfaction among the MacNairs. A Stour had been defeated. But Connor was sad and silent. In his secret heart he was sorry for the Stours. But the Stours were not sorry—they were furious.

All but Donna. Torn with conflicting emotions, she wrote Connor a long, contradictory, enigmatic letter, and—burned it, weeping.

Connor did not write to Donna, or try to see her; his offense was a great brutal fact, and seemed to him incapable of explanation. He had terribly beaten her brother—what could be said? During the third night after the battle he disappeared. He had secretly sold a section of land which he owned, down the Cloud River. A week later there came a letter to his mother and father, mailed from a famous school of aviation near Chicago.

For the present, he was leaving the sickening situation behind, he said. People would say, no doubt, that he was afraid of the Stours and had run away. Let them; he did not care a hang. He was going to get acquainted with the heavens; he hoped the upper regions would not disappoint him, as had the lower. In this bitter wise his letter ran.

**T**HEN, time went by—months. Becoming efficient with the planes, Connor applied for service in the Air Mail. The next morning, ironically, a letter came from Donna Stour saying

that she had longed and hungered for him inexpressibly. The infamy of the fight at Cedar Point could not justly be laid to him; it belonged to Belden. Why did he, Connor, never come home?

It was the first letter Connor had received from her. Within the hour, from two thousand feet in the air, he looked eastward and saw Lake Michigan, a stupendous polished shield, gleaming under the sun. He had purchased the school's best biplane, in payment exhausting the better part of what remained from the sale of his land. He looked back at the lake but once, then set his face northwest. Nearly six hundred miles away lay the twin valleys of the Cloud and the Stour. He was making between eighty and ninety miles an hour. He hoped to see Donna before night.

**B**ENEATH HIM sank back an unrolling panorama of towns, farms, hills, forests, set in the browns and reds and golds of autumn. Small lakes burst into view like jewels that flashed and were gone, rivers were veins of silver that shrank and passed away, and the propeller of the strong biplane roared on steadily. He came down at a landing-field near the capital of the State and lunched and renewed his supply of gas and oil, then took to the air again. By two o'clock in the afternoon he was within the northern quarter of Wisconsin. Below him, far and wide, spread the undulating realm of the slaughtered pines.

Gliding along the sky, he began to encounter puffy winds and twisting, disturbed masses of vapor, while Lake Superior was yet more than a hundred miles away. A little later, he found the agitated cloud-streams were flowing rapidly toward the north, as if drawn by the suction of a storm-vortex that pressed in the direction of the great lake.

When he came to the Turtle Hills, from the springs and streams and many small lakes of which the Stour River drew its initial waters, he arose to a great altitude, and, looking northward,



"'That means steel rails through the Gap,' he said."

saw the vast region that held in its lap the Stour Valley and the valley of the MacNairs, drowned in an ocean of tossing clouds. The sunlight played upon the surface of this heaving, tumbling sea of vapors in a wild glory of many mingling colors, but deep beneath the pink and golden sea he knew that a tempest must be raging.

And far down in that tossing waste of gilded vapors were his people, and those Stours that hated him, and down there, too, was Donna!

Guiding landmarks and the contours of the hill-ranges were so obscured that he descended, and, finding a level meadow, landed. Inquiries at a farmhouse gave him a clearer knowledge of directions, but rain was falling, heavy and lashing, and he waited impatiently under shelter through two hours for it to abate. Slowly it slackened at last to a drizzle and he took flight, ascending above the rolling, dissolving clouds. Up there he came again into sunlight, and far away to the north saw a long crevice of turquoise blue which he knew was Lake Superior.

When he thought himself above the inner tip of Stour Valley he coasted downward through the scattering clouds, and found the air clear next to the surface of the earth. No rain was now falling, but below him he saw that every gully and rivulet was a roaring torrent from the recent downpour. The wind, too, had been destructive. Trees here and there lay uprooted, and he could distinguish along the railroad track telegraph poles lying flat or leaning to right or left drunkenly.

THEN, from his altitude he saw, two or three miles ahead of him, the sheds and works of the Stours' upper quarries. To make sure he took a field glass from a pocket of the fuselage and looked again. Yes, it was the upper quarries, and as he looked he saw a startling and extraordinary thing, a train of flat-cars, loaded with granite blocks and headed by a box car, lunge suddenly

from a side-track through an automatic switch onto the main line, and race away down the valley in the direction of Lake Superior.

Connor could not know, from his distance, what cause lay behind the perilous happening, but the facts were that, negligently, the brakes were not set on the side-tracked cars, and the flood-eaten earth beneath the north end of the siding and the switch suddenly sank a few inches, precipitating the train down upon the main line.

Connor caught a glimpse of men running about in helpless consternation at the quarries, then the full horror of the thing swept upon him. The train was rushing down the valley to deal death and havoc to whomever and whatever it might meet. His tired fingers tightened on the power-control of the plane as the realization thrilled through him, and over him ran a cold prickle as of terror. Here was something in the Stour Valley that he had not dreamed of coming to see.

He turned the airplane earthward and swept after the flying train. In fifteen minutes he was not two hundred feet above the reeling runaway. Looking down he saw them clearly, fourteen flat-cars loaded with heavy stone, driving a box-car ahead of them in the headlong hurl of a tremendous weight. All the way down the valley to Lake Superior, over sixty miles distant, the track followed a naturally falling grade; the cars flooded toward the lower level like rushing water; at some point before them surely lay destruction.

But Connor could not know of that which lay in the box-car—four cases of dynamite—whose power stood ready to rend and split the very hills. It had not been unloaded and put in the sunken vault for explosives at the quarries. Had he known of it would he have done the wild, strange deed that followed? Perhaps only the more eagerly, for the human soul, in its highest moments, holds the fate of the body as something trivial.

Now he looked down upon the rushing

cars, linked in a single unbridled battering-ram, with an overmastering impulse somehow to stop or control them. Somewhere down the valley surely there must be a train or trains, approaching. Why did not someone turn a switch at one of the stations and throw the awful runaway in upon a siding? This query was a kind of wild shout in his mind. It must be that the telephone and telegraph wires of the valley were broken and down at many places, that the first knowledge any stationman could have of the true situation was when the runaway thundered past.

This was true. Of the few trains run by the Stour Short Line, one at this hour was on the extreme southern end of the track, two were upon sidings awaiting orders which they could not procure, and one, a passenger train, had left Pine Port, coming up the valley. On this passenger train (oh, the curious ironies of fate!) were Garven Stour and Belden. They were returning homeward, discouraged and sour, from a fruitless visit to the banks of Duluth in the interest of their hard-pressed line.

They were riding up the valley all unaware of the menacing thing that had come out from the switch of the upper quarries and was rolling down to meet them. Had the road's telegraph wires been intact they could have known, for hundreds of human ears heard, and hundreds of eyes saw, the wheeled thunderbolt roar through the little towns of the inner valley. It looked to be a day of doom.

CONNOR leaned from the cockpit and glanced back. Upon a wagon-road that followed the winding river down the long valley he saw several automobiles, a mile or more rearward, tearing forward, and beyond those were two hatless horsemen riding furiously in pursuit. But he knew that such means of speed could never head the flying train.

Already it had covered twenty miles of track, and, driven down the never-ceas-

ing grade by its great weight, was going like the wind. Only the good biplane, sliding upon a road of buoyant air as upon ethereal oil, could match the runaway's speed and pass beyond the train. It flashed upon Connor MacNair that his was the task to outride the thundering menace and gain a switch somewhere and turn it.

But he did not know the Stour line in detail, only in its larger aspects—the upper quarries, the larger villages, Hemlock, where Donna lived, the brownstone quarry fourteen miles beyond Hemlock, and Pine Port, where the Stour River debouched into Lake Superior.

Could he make Hemlock so much in advance of the runaway that he could alight and throw a switch? It might be, but inevitably there must be a destructive wreck were the flying train thrown in upon siding where there were other cars; in the hideous hurl and crash of things human lives might be lost.

Then his thoughts flew to the brownstone quarry, down beyond Hemlock. That was the place for the saving deed! No stone had been excavated there for some time, a switch and spur-track branched from the main line, following a narrow valley between the tumbled hills to the quarry. No one would be employed at the excavation; there would be a wreck of the runaway, but no peril to human lives.

Could he reach the quarry track in time, he would throw this gigantic ram into the hills and let it splinter itself against the rocks. The plan and all that it implied was as a blazing vision in his brain, a picture somehow created in a single moment, as from a drop of liquid fire.

HE WAS a half-mile ahead of the rushing monster now. He saw it coming after him like a racing snake, and opened the throttle wider. Hundreds of people in the Stour Valley that day stared and exclaimed in frightened wonder at what they saw. He swept down the valley

not more than a hundred feet above the trees and housetops, looking intently ahead in momentary expectation that an approaching train would burst upon his sight. To him there was no sound whatever, save the overwhelming roar of the plane's propeller.

Then he sped around a long bend and came where the valley widened, and before him, a half-dozen miles distant, lay the town of Hemlock. He knew, for the river broadened definitely at the Stour dam, where the waters could at any time be turned into the canal and led on through Fir Creek and down past his own home to the Cloud.

Donna must be there somewhere ahead of him! His blood thrilled to faster pulsing.

Could he land in the Hemlock railroad yards? Not hastily and almost at random in all that medley of things, not without utter wreck. He saw this. He must reach the quarry-spur where there was more open ground. Then, as he looked from his height in the air, he saw the smoldering azure of Lake Superior's waters far down ahead of him, forty miles away, and the next moment caught a glimpse of the blue wood-smoke of a locomotive far down the valley. His heart gripped tight as he saw the slanting sunlight break through the clouds and glint against the engine's polished jacket, and caught the vague outline of passenger coaches. He looked back; the destroyer seemed hardly a mile away! Something very like a prayer crossed the lips of Connor MacNair.

He drew from the burring motor its every ounce of power, and cut across all curves of river and track, making straight for the lower quarry-spur. As he swept across the housetops of Hemlock, with propeller roaring a mighty song of thunder, the streets were quickly set with open-mouthed faces. He cut close above the Stour mansion, so straight and close that he could have thrown his cap upon the roof. He saw Donna through one flashing moment. She was rushing down

the steps of the front porch, her hands curved above her eyes as she looked upward.

Then he was gone.

**A**NOTHER MILE and he was beyond the mouth of the canal, body and soul straining toward the quarry track. If he could but reach the switch ten minutes ahead of the runaway! But he knew that the minutes to spare could not be more than four or five. Then, too, the switch rails might be spiked! If so, the train coming up the valley must surely be torn into fragments, and those who sat in the coaches drink the instant, bitter cup of death.

Another mile and another mile! He looked back. He could see the speeding terror only in outline, behind it a trailing vortex of whirling particles. It had clashed and roared its way through Hemlock, leaving in its wake panic and dismay.

Donna had heard its sudden-breaking storm of noise as it tore through the switches and down the track, not two blocks away. There was sudden terror in the Stour home. She ran all the way to the dispatcher's office at the station, white, panting, distraught. She found wild consternation there. No, the wires were down and the dispatcher could not tell if her father and brother were on the train that must have left Pine Port on schedule, thirty-seven minutes ago.

The dispatcher had ordered an engine and coach made ready to take aid and physicians down the road when the—

the—  
Donna looked at him terrified. Could she go? Yes, the merciful help of women would be needed if that fearful thing struck the passenger train! Donna wrung her hands together and, as with Connor, prayer moved her lips.

**A**ND CONNOR? He was approaching the quarry track. There it was, with an old-fashioned target-switch, visible from his altitude nearly a mile away. He throttled down the motor instantly;

going at his dizzying speed, to alight promised annihilation. Two or three miles beyond the quarry switch he glimpsed the on-coming passenger train. In the front coach of it sat Garven Stour and Belden, gloomily discussing their financial needs.

Almost at that moment the engineer of the train looking ahead from the cab window, saw Connor's plane. To the engineer, uncommon as was the fact, it was but an airplane and had no particular meaning. The destroyer, hurling down the valley to meet and shatter his train, he could not see.

Then Connor MacNair, white from anxiety and the perils of the flying moments, swept down toward a plot of open ground near the quarry-spur. The landing, to him, must cost him his life, but he resolutely turned the plane earthward. He passed through the top of a tree, shearing its branches off with the propeller blades as with whirling knives, then in a moment the machine's wheels struck the earth, and gravel and dirt shot rearward like hissing smoke.

The biplane was being torn to pieces. Connor rose in the cockpit and jumped. He came down upon the earth full-length and with numbing violence. He got to his feet, bleeding at mouth and nose, and about him all things were green-hued and turning as upon a center. He saw the plane pitching and careening, and heard it crash and splinter. Then he saw and heard it no more, for he was fiercely leaping toward the switch.

Nothing seemed of natural color or shape to him, yet everything, curiously, seemed terrifyingly clear, a fact etched upon his mind as by burning lightning.

CONNOR flung his cap and goggles from him and came lunging to the switch. The rails were not spiked, but a brass padlock held the safety pin in the old-time switch quadrant. Instantly, he seized a heavy stone and crushed the lock and drew the iron pin. Then he flung himself against the lever, but the rusty

switch-rails stuck. Again and again he drove his breast cruelly and with all his weight and power against the lever. Fraction by fraction of an inch, the rails went over on the rusty iron guides.

Then he felt himself falling. He was upon his knees, his head was swaying, his fingers were slipping from the lever, which was wet with blood, and again a green darkness was gathering down upon him.

"Oh, God . . . God!" he was crying.

Then through the dimness engulfing him came the hoarse bellow of an engine, long and faint, from somewhere down the valley, and with the next breath the approaching thunder of the runaway. As if thrilled from crown to toe by an electric shock, he got to his feet, and, drawing back, plunged upon the lever.

Again and once again he struck it with the full weight of his thrown body, then the contact rails went over. Panting and dizzy, he got the holding-pin in place and reeled back and fell, but rose to his knees and, gasping and staring, beheld the marvel.

Not twenty feet from him the linked monster rushed upon the switched rails in a crashing tempest of sound. Surely, he thought, it must turn the rails with the impact, but the steel and the spikes held and the swaying string of cars turned in toward the hills, clamoring.

Connor stared after it and struggled to his feet, laboring for breath, then, a quarter of a mile away, the rocking runaway struck a short compound curve between the hills and climbed the rails, or tore out the tie-spikes. No man will ever know.

Connor saw a thousand things leap high in the air, and heard a crash that seemed to split the world downward to its core. He went headlong from the mighty concussion. For a moment, as he threshed against the earth he felt himself shot through with agony, then darkness engulfed him. He was lying thus when those who had hated him came marveling and found him.

THE thunderous detonation was felt and heard afar. The splintering, unpicturable drive of the rushing train against the hillside, the sky-shattering crash of the cases of nitroglycerin, jarred the world from horizon to horizon. It shook the windows of houses in Hemlock, and the coaches of the nearing passenger train rocked. Old Garven Stour and his son clutched each other in consternation.

A few minutes later they stood by their bruised and prostrate savior. In wild wonder they had seen the wrecked plane and the indescribable havoc left by the explosion. One-half of a hill seemed entirely torn away, the hidden bones of the earth lay bare. From an inception of misty, conjecture the truth presently dawned upon them, wonderful, overwhelming. Tears ran from Belden's eyes as he looked down at Connor.

"I've been waiting and waiting to kill him, and see what he has done for us!" he cried, not caring who saw that he wept.

Old Garven's bitter mouth drew down at the corners, but his lips trembled.

"Carry this man into a coach and make him a bed of seat-cushions," he said to the gaping men about him. "He is going to my house."

And presently Connor MacNair, lying upon a stretcher, and all unknowing, went into the house of the Stours through its great front door, about him a hush of awe, of tears and whisperings.

He awoke upon a strange bed and in a strange room, but Donna's face was above him. For a moment he looked into her wide eyes, then her white throat trembled with a crooning of joy and pity, and she laid her cheek against his cheek, clutching him tight and sobbing.

He tried to get up, staring about him wildly.

"The train, the train! The people!" he cried.

She held him close, pressing him softly back upon the pillow.

"You saved them, Connor, forty-two

passengers, and among them—my father and Belden!"

He looked at her curiously for a moment as he lay panting, then closed his eyes.

"It was God," he whispered in awe, "for I did not know."

A gray woman, a hurrying man with a surgeon's case, and Garven Stour and Belden came in. The gray woman and Donna went out, and after a time the surgeon said:

"He is fearfully bruised from the explosion's concussion, and his collar bone and four ribs are broken. Must have crushed them throwing himself against the switch lever. He will have to stay right here in bed for a good while."

Connor smiled faintly in his pain.

"Seems like a good place," he panted. "I wish you would let my folks know."

"I'll take my car and go and bring them," said Belden.

With his big right hand he pushed the tumbled hair from Connor's forehead.

"Brother," he said huskily, "you are the grandest fighter in every way, that I have ever known. You have cured us of hatred."

Connor's bruised face glowed for a moment as with sunshine. "That means steel rails through the Gap," he said.

"That means steel rails through the Gap, if the money can be found," agreed Belden.

"It will be found," panted Connor, "it will be found!" and their right hands came together, gripping hard.

TWO HOURS LATER Connor's father and mother and Seth MacNair came hurrying into the room. With them came the Stours, save Donna, who was already sitting by his bed. Connor laughed aloud, for his bones had been set, and he felt almost gay.

"All hail!" he cried. "Here come the delegates to the disarmament conference! I move the sinking of all gun-carrying craft and the inauguration of peace!"

And with smile and handshake and

expressions of delight, his motion was adopted.

Upon the third day after that Donna came flying into Connor's room. Breathless and radiant, she fell upon her knees by his bed and clasped him.

"Look out, sweetheart! Don't squeeze so hard! Remember my mending ribs!" he laughed.

She kissed him and straightened up, regarding him with shining eyes.

"Connor," she cried, "do you know what has happened? The explosion you caused, down there by the quarry, uncovered the iron-bearing strata we were looking for! Father and Belden just found it out and sent us word! You have made us rich!"

He looked at her steadily and in awe for a little time.

"Then the money to build the connecting line has been found!" he breathed, wonderingly.

## THE FIRST MRS. BLUEBEARD

By Gene Markey

IN TURKEY—or it may have been Persia—many centuries ago, the Bluebeards were married. And it was generally considered that they were happily married. Bluebeard himself was as handsome and amiable a fellow as ever took out a marriage license, and as for his wife—she was the original of the lovely ladies who adorn cigarette ads. Indeed, the first Mrs. Bluebeard was one of the reigning beauties of Turkey—or it may have been Persia. . . .

Now it came to pass that on a certain morning—and a rather chilly morning it was—Bluebeard got out the wrong side, so to speak, of the bed. There had been some slight argument as to which of them should get up to close the windows, and when Bluebeard kicked into his slippers and shuffled out of the chamber, he was in an unpleasant humor.

Mrs. Bluebeard lay quietly listening to him in the next room, making ready for his morning shave. Though he shaved but his upper lip, it was, nevertheless, a daily ceremonial.

"Bluey," she called at length, in sweetened tones. "Oh, Bluey—you aren't angry with little wife, are you?"

Came sounds of Bluebeard slapping the lather upon his face.

"Well, no," he answered peevishly, "but you know perfectly well how I hate to scramble out on a cold morning and shut the windows. Besides, according to Turkish—or Persian—matrimonial regulations, it's part of a wife's duties—*G-r-r-u-h-h!*"

His voice rose in a sudden crescendo of profanity—and Mrs. Bluebeard quailed.

"Wh—what is it, darling?" she cried.

"Yow!"

And Bluebeard, clutching his upper lip, and banishing his razor, rushed into the room."

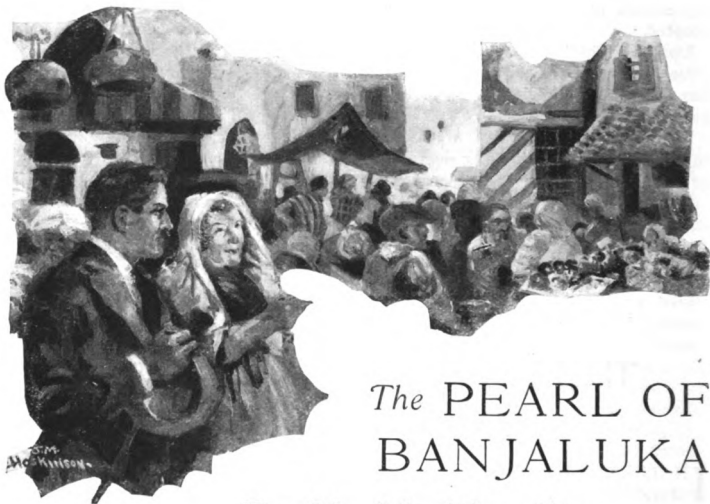
"Ow! Wow!" he wailed. "Who's been using this razor? Answer me! Have you?"

Mrs. Bluebeard trembled before the violence of his manner.

"Why, why—I *did* use it, dear, but I didn't think you'd mind. Yesterday I used it to open a tin of sardines, but—"

"*Gadzooks!*" howled Bluebeard, or words to that effect. And with a dangerous glitter in his eyes, he started for her.

Thus ended the career of the first Mrs. Bluebeard.



## The PEARL OF BANJALUKA

By H. M. Hamilton

Illustrations by James M. Hoskinson

**I**T WAS LATE in the afternoon when Cyril Dreame awoke from his siesta; on the white-painted walls of his cabin danced beams of sunlight reflected from the sea. He looked out . . . nothing was to be seen except limitless water, smooth as a mirror, and radiating a stagnant heat. He dressed slowly, clumsily—he realized half-angrily how awkward he had become, since his wound and the endless convalescence that had followed. Irritable too; the slightest thing was enough to throw him off his balance. The food served on the *Orduna*; the heat; a trivial overcharge on the part of a porter at Piraeus; each of these occurrences had been the excuse for a violent outbreak, regretted afterward, but at the time unavoidable.

It was a part of his condition, the doctor had said. And now—there was Miss Whympers!

When he had dressed, he limped through the corridors and stepped out on the deck.

The heat of it blistered his soles; there was still not a breath of air. Far off to the east lay the dim high crags of Albania, spuriously beautiful from the sunlight upon them, and from the delicate far-away blue of the sky above. The *Orduna* was moving slowly, with a rhythmic pulse of the engines; save for a slight vibration the boat seemed to be standing still.

The young man flipped his half-smoked cigarette into the water, and walked abruptly forward until—in the very bows of the boat—he saw it:—a black-and-white-striped parasol; just where he had known it would be—just where it had been so many other afternoons—and he wondered why that very invariableness annoyed him. He liked Miss Whympers;

she was charming, well-bred, dainty without being petite—all that he could ask, and yet—

As he came close, the parasol moved ever so little to welcome him; she took her books from the vacant steamer-chair beside hers—then looked up and smiled to him. A charming smile—a charming face, with fair hair, violet eyes, soft English coloring—

"Damn!" exploded in his mind like a bomb.

She had smiled and made a place for him a hundred times, exactly in the same way, exactly with the same sweet look and gesture . . . and she was doing it to please him—because she obviously liked him. . . .

"Perhaps I'm a cad," he thought, "but I can't stand this sort of thing any longer."

He lowered himself carefully into the chair.

"Have a nice nap?" she asked cheerily. She always asked that.

"Yes, thanks."

His pale blue eyes smiled pleasantly into hers; no one could ever have guessed that at the next question he felt sure he would scream.

"What time are we due to arrive at Trieste tomorrow—or is it the next day?" she pursued.

He clenched his hands savagely.

"Next day, I think the Captain said—" his tone the most nonchalant in the world. "I never thought to ask. You see, I'm not going through."

One minute before he had not known this; it had come to him just as he sat there, that he could not endure another day of that sort of thing.

"I'm leaving at Gravosa—didn't you know?"

For the hundredth part of a second the violet eyes that turned quickly to flash an inquiry into his seemed startled, confused, sorry in a way that bit even through the crust of his annoyance. She was such a nice girl! It was a shame, if she cared! But her instant response did

not even hint at more than a casual interest.

"Why no, Captain Dreame, I didn't know. I fancied you were going to Trieste for Vienna—I don't know *why* I thought so—I suppose it was something you had said that I misinterpreted. But—I'm really sorry . . . we have had such a pleasant trip so far—"

**S**HE STOPPED SHORT. What could she say more? Dreame knew it was his privilege to say whatever he might wish to—but he had nothing to say. He could only plunge into banal explanations.

"I thought I'd spoken of it. You see, before the war I used to live up there, back of those big hills—a little Bosnian mountain town you've probably never even heard of—Banjaluka. I was representative of a big American firm there. Now—I've the fancy to go back, to see my old friends—the ones that are left at least."

"Ah!"

There was a bleak coyness in the exclamation.

"The Girls You Left Behind! I see!"

She smiled; no one but an expert, Dreame thought, would know it was not the real thing.

"Hardly that."

Dreame looked away, conscious of having colored a little in spite of himself.

"Naturally—since I lived there two years—I had some friends, but they're probably scattered to the four winds by the war."

"Tell me about it," she said, with a show of interest. She had quite recovered herself by this time, Dreame thought—if indeed she had been perturbed by his announcement. He was not sure whether she had been or not. Boyishly, he wished he knew.

"There isn't much to tell. I lived with a Serbian by the name of Dimitri. A pretty little place he had, with a tiny walled garden, and lots of shade trees. There were only the three—himself, and his wife, and their niece. I was quite one of the family."

"Ah, I see!" said Miss Whymper, not so coquettishly. "There was the niece . . . that explains many things!"

She tried to smile with coyness. Dreame laughed.

"Well—they speak of woman's instinct—but I doubt it. Lalia was about so high—" indicating the top of his cane—"and I used to teach her her letters. If you call that a romantic situation—" he broke off, grinning. She seemed pleased.

"But I'm sure, then, there was some one else—"

"No—" Dreame's negative was inconclusive. "Of course—knowing almost every one who was to be known there—"

"Tell me."

Miss Whymper's tone invited confidence. Dreame blushed again, self-consciously.

"Oh, it was quite nothing. I was only a boy—twenty-one or two, you know—that was in 1913. But there was Marya . . . it was perhaps only a silly fancy—but I've always wanted to see what she has grown to. She was—well, I'm no word-painter, but you can imagine . . . Great dark eyes; proud, and straight, and tall—I assure you I was quite wild about her—as was everyone else. I'm not even sure she favored me—she never said so, but I've imagined—"

He stopped.

"You'll think I'm a rotter, talking this way. But you asked me. Of course, it is only a silly notion of mine—to go clear up there just to see the old place—"

"It's not silly at all," she said with fervor, her delicate pink cheeks showing an unwonted color. "I think it's splendid—going so far for a romantic memory."

"Do you really think so?"

He had never liked Miss Whymper more.

"I didn't know how it would strike you. But—I've often thought of Marya—not really seriously, you know, but I've wondered, as I say, what has become of her. . . . I can't make you see how wonderful she was!"

"I can imagine."

Her tone was warm, yet far away.

Dreame gathered it wasn't coming any nearer, in the short time left to them together.

"Yes . . . splendid," he repeated dreamily. "They called her the Pearl of Banjaluka. . . . I've always thought of her so."

"I'm so glad," she murmured, gathering up her books and closing her parasol. "I do hope you find her—and that she brings you happiness—"

She was actually leaving him!

"Hullo!" he said. "Going?"

"Yes—I'm sorry. But I've some letters to write, so as to mail them at Ragusa. I'll see you, of course, in the morning."

AFTER she had gone he mused long into the twilight, watching long shadows fall, blue and gray and finally black, while he smoked on, nervously . . . thinking contradictory things—now how Miss Whymper had—for a little time at least—filled all his susceptible heart . . . now, how she irritated him.

Yet he had justice enough left to admit that she had really behaved very nicely. She had not angled for him; indeed, until he had definitely sought her out, she had been rather aloof. After that, she had been responsive—but he could certainly not blame her for that.

Indeed, he had liked her—he still liked her. He liked the unexpected rare quality of her smile, flashing out a glimpse of her hidden personality, a spirit both whimsical and tender.

She had not, it is true, made much over his war record, or of his lameness. He didn't expect any "my hero" stuff—but she might have treated it more seriously. It had cost him sacrifice enough!

"Oh damn!" he said again. "I'm carrying around a chronic case of the sulks, and expect her to share it. Why did I tell her I was leaving at Gravosa?"

There was no answer. There was the mystery of darkness all about him; the throbbing of the propeller and the faint swish of the waters were all that broke the deep silence. Far off, a darker line:

the mountains beyond Cattaro—that Balkan desolation from which a world's misery had sprung.

"If it hadn't been for Sarajevo, I'd probably have two good legs, and be deep in love with Katherine Whymper, as I ought to be. As it is, I suppose I'm in love with no one. And yet—I wonder why I'm leaving tomorrow!"

He flung his last cigarette over the rail, and hobbled to his cabin. But all that night the question haunted him.

## II

NEXT MORNING the air was crisp and sweet. The Orduna drew in closer to shore; Dreame could see the details of the steep cliffs very plainly—bare except where olive trees or vineyards had been terraced along the hill-sides. Far ahead, half hidden by the little islands close to shore, lay Ragusa, white in the sunshine. He heard a crisp voice saying:

"If you must leave us, at least you're leaving us at a lovely place."

He turned quickly. She was in white; something about her eyes, and the soft pure color of her cheeks made him think of a rose with the dew still on.

"I'm sorry I'm going to leave you," he said, very simply.

"Oh—feeling as you do, it's the one thing you must fulfil. You'd never forgive yourself, being so near, if you didn't go."

"But I'm not sure how I feel!"

She looked at him almost scornfully, he thought.

"I'm sorry for people who don't know how they feel," she said.

"You always do?"

"Of course. But what sententious nonsense we're talking! I know you'll have a wonderful trip to—wherever it is."

"Banjaluka. But you—you go to Vienna?"

"Yes—for as long as my father chooses to stay there."

She was certainly not encouraging him

not to go. Indeed, she was making it impossible to say—"I'm not leaving, after all." He wasn't sure what he wanted to do—but she might be a little sorry! His irritation returned, until he looked at her. He couldn't be angry with anyone so lovely. So he pursued the subject, with:

"But where in Vienna?"

Her eyebrows lifted just a shade.

"Why? If Captain Dreame is in—Banjaluka, it is?—with the girls he left behind—"

He made a gesture of irritation; he could not endure to be humbled further. But she added, rather penitently:

"We'll be at the Imperial, in the Ring, very near the Park. If you like, I'll write it on a card for you."

Angrily, without thanking her, he thrust the card into his pocket. Of course he wouldn't use it, after that! Did she expect him to get down on his knees?

ONLY when the Orduna had rounded Point Lapad, and was entering the little *porto* of Gravosa, did it occur to him that he had been behaving very much like a spoiled child. She was so lovely, fresh and fine and delicate; he felt a sudden gush of tenderness for her. Of course he couldn't stay with the Orduna: but he might stay at Ragusa for a day or so, until the next Dalmatian steamer came in; he would be in Vienna almost as soon as she was!

"Good-bye," he said, taking her cool hand in his. "Maybe I'll see you in Vienna, after all."

"Not a chance!" she smiled back. "You'll have forgotten all about me—after you get up there."

They came closer to shore—that charming little water-front lined with cypress trees and palms in the villa gardens.

"That's the railway station," he pointed out.

"And that must be your train!" she exclaimed.

He felt himself trapped. Ahead, near the pier, he could see the little tram-car that might soon be taking him in to

Ragusa, only a mile or so away. But under her eye he couldn't take it.

"Good-bye," he said. "I'll probably have little enough time—with the customs, and such things—if I'm to catch that train."

**A**N HOUR LATER, with his ticket bought through to Jajce—the nearest railway-station for Banjaluka—he saw from the window of his first-class carriage the Orduna steaming out to sea. No doubt that was Katherine Whympers at the rail, but the thought gave him no thrill—only inspired in him a profound resentment.

"If she hadn't been watching me, I wouldn't be here," he thought. "Why the devil am I here, anyway?" . . . And he had no answer ready.

He had occasion, that day, to ask himself the same question with greater heat, as the train jolted along wearily, climbing the bleak hills at a snail's pace; threading the gorges of swift rivers, tunneling, and circling back upon itself through a primitive country.

For company he had a taciturn German commercial agent, and a tipsy Bosnian in officer's uniform, who insisted upon knowing Dreame's business, nationality and station in life, commenting upon the answers in execrable French. Dreame resented his impertinence, and gave himself up to a profound melancholy, gazing out at the interminable stretches of limestone karst, with little pits of verdure here and there where the wretched peasantry managed to sustain itself.

So this, in reality, was Bosnia! not that glamorous memory he had kept from his impressionable younger days with Marya in Banjaluka. It came back to him in a sort of golden haze—the simple household of Joseph Dimitri and his wife; the long evenings with Lalia—a tiny, black-eyed minx—saying her lessons at his knee, and adoring him wonderingly. Then the unforgettable hours with Marya, whose wild dark beauty still thrilled him in memory. And Marya had favored him

above all the others; that much was sure! When the war loomed over the Balkans, he had gone away; he had told her he would come back. Now he was fulfilling that promise.

Yet might it not, after all, be a fool's errand? He had given up for it what might have meant a certainty of happiness, with Katherine Whympers. He could not tell; he could only go on, doubting miserably, to whatever fate might have in store for him.

**A**T LAST twilight fell, then night, and after a long time, he saw the lights of Sarajevo twinkling far ahead. That night he slept in a room in a hotel near the river, disturbed only by the jangling of a little electric car that trundled the length of the quay; then that, too, ceased, and there was only unbroken silence, in the sleeping little mountain city which had cradled a great war—a war which had flung him out again into the world maimed, tortured, and trying in vain to pick up the threads of his life where he had thrown them down.

### III

**T**HE NEXT AFTERNOON he climbed down from the motor-diligence at the market-place of Banjaluka. His journey was ended; he was sore and shattered from travel, yet he had the elation that comes only at the end of a long pilgrimage accomplished.

A carriage took him to the Hotel Balkan, where he dined in the open air, under wide-spreading trees, to the accompaniment of wild dance-music played by a string-orchestra, and to the Croatian speech he had once half-learned and now nearly forgotten. Even though a new flag waved over the town hall, Banjaluka was unchanged: there were the same picturesque embroidered peasant-costumes in the market-place—the same white minarets—the same unchanging peace. . . .

"I'll go over to Joseph Dimitri's now," he told himself with a little thrill.

He was half-afraid. A long-forgotten spell began to weave itself about him as he walked through endless wide, shaded streets of gardens and old houses. At last—there was the house!

In front of it, on a seat beside the door, sat a man of sixty, with jutting brows, deep-lined countenance, and twisted mustache, cutting a fierce horizontal black line across his face. . . .

Joseph!

As Dreame opened the garden-gate and came up the pebbled walk, Joseph looked up quickly, suspiciously, with narrowed eyes, then cried:

"May God and His Saints bear witness! It is our Cyril!"

He embraced Dreame tremulously, kissing him on both cheeks. After a few eager questions he said:

"But the others! they are not far! I shall go tell them."

"They are well?"

"All well, Saint Iliya be thanked! We have escaped as though by a miracle, though death has been all around us."

"And Marya?"

"Marya—yes—I shall tell her, too. Stay thou here—I shall call Stepan to talk to thee while I am gone."

He summoned a shy boy, curly-haired, beautiful, bidding him talk to Dreame, who would have preferred silence. But he spoke to the boy, who answered in halting French.

"Can you tell me about Marya?" Dreame asked him.

"Marya?" The boy scratched his head. "I know not the name."

"Marya—surely you must know her. She used to be called—when I lived here—by a fanciful name—'The Pearl'."

"*Mais oui, Monsieur!* The Pearl! Of a certainty I know her! My master has just now gone to bring her."

"And is she still beautiful?"

"Ah!"

The youth clasped his hands.

"She is the loveliest thing of God's creation! Monsieur will say so when he sees her."

CYRIL DREAME felt a thrill at the boy's enthusiasm. If Marya's beauty could stir even a serving-boy so! Then he heard a clicking at the gate; he looked up expectantly, then resentfully. Some one was coming in, a large woman—a neighbor, no doubt, full of a neighbor's insufferable curiosity. This particular specimen was fat, and had one infant in her arms, another clinging to her skirts. As she approached, she smiled, that bovine smile of a Bosnian peasant woman which Dreame knew well. He groaned, and asked the boy:

"Who is this?"

"It is Madame Veliki, Monsieur."

Dreame rose. The woman's smile disappeared, perhaps before his fierceness.

"Does Monsieur not know me?"

"No, Madame," said Dreame. "I am a stranger here."

"That I know well. Yet, if I dared, I would none the less embrace thee—fat old woman as I am!"

Dreame felt a strange chill running down his spine.

"My God!" he cried. "You aren't—"

"Yes. I am Marya."

Dreame sat down heavily.

"Joseph has just told me of your coming," she continued. "I came quickly: my husband will follow soon." The child at her skirt began to whimper, and she cuffed it.

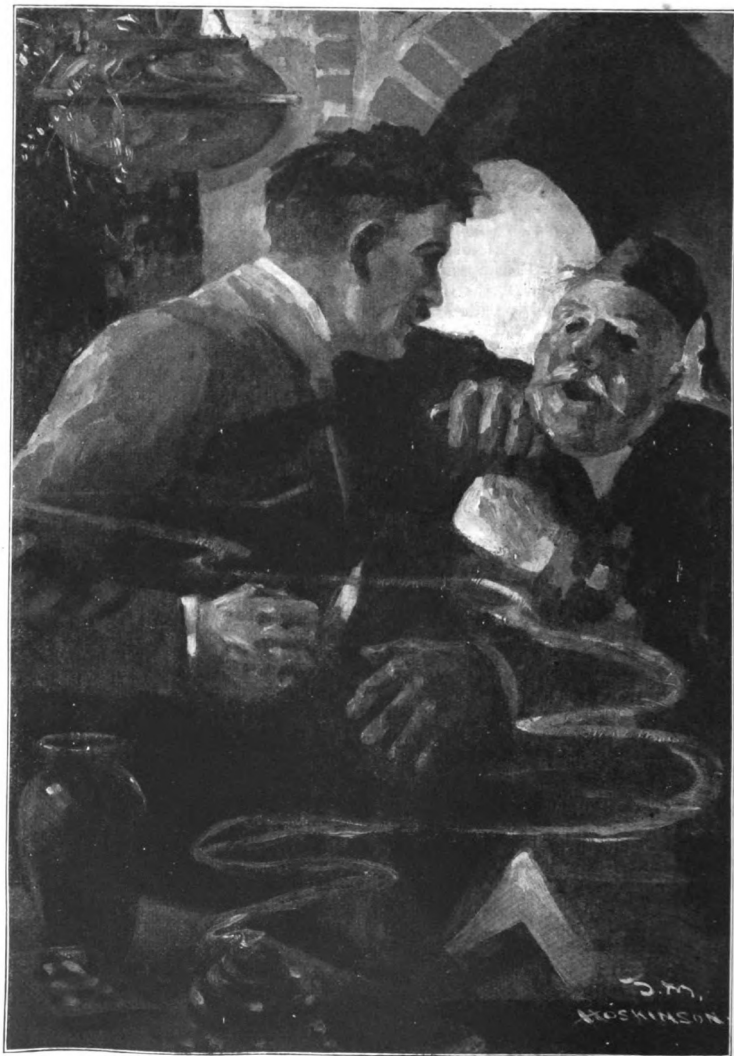
"Have you forgotten all about Marya, perfidious one?" she asked, coyly, ponderously. "As for me—I dare confess it now—I have lost sleep, thinking—"

An hysterical desire to laugh came over him.

"I remember you," he said at last—"although you have changed."

"We have all changed," said Marya in a softer voice. "I am no longer girlish, and soft, and lovely as I have been told I once was."

IT WAS EARLY DUSK. Stepan had wandered away tactfully. Dreame felt no longer the acute sting of his disappointment. It was as Marya had said;



"Dreame could see, as though a veil had been lifted, the flame of fanaticism and cruel triumph in the Turk's soul."

life did not stand still! And it had been eight long years!

"Thou, too," she said, leaning toward him a little—"thou art also changed. Older, harder, not so expectant."

"I have been expectant enough," he said ruefully, thinking of his futile journey into the hills, to find—this! "But I had forgotten that it was so long."

As he spoke he saw, coming soberly toward the gate, Joseph and a tall vigorous woman—Theodora, his wife. Then—it all happened so quickly that he could not understand how: something streaked past them, flashed up the garden walk like a thunderbolt, and threw soft arms about Dreame's neck, smothering him in kisses. He tried to escape—to see who had so tumultuously taken possession of him.

He held her at arms' length; she gazed reproachfully into his eyes, crying in French:

"Ah—it is *mon cher* Cyril! And he does not know me!"

"See, monsieur," interposed Stepan. "Did I not say truth? *La Perle!* Is she not all that I have said?"

"The Pearl!"

Marya laughed—a short laugh like a sob.

"Once I was called by that name."

"For God's sake!" cried Dreame, gazing into the wonderful young face—the dark eyes—that looked into his—"for God's sake, who are you?"

For an instant she teased him. His senses reeled with the freshness of her beauty: she was the loveliest thing he had ever seen—he knew that—yet there was none the less something reminiscent in her face. At last she laughed outright at his confusion.

"Who but Lalia—but of course thou hast forgotten Lalia—after all these years she has cherished thee!"

Then he remembered, of course; Lalia who had been a child clambering over his knee, printing sticky kisses on his cheek!

"But how can you be Lalia?"

"How? Because it is eight years since

thou hast been here—and eight years are almost half my lifetime away."

CYRIL'S HEAD was in a whirl. The fat woman who had once been Marya smiled at him comprehendingly—the smile of one to whom life had taught many things. Joseph and Theodora murmured polite greetings and ceremonial words of welcome; Joseph insisted that he stay with them, and not at the hotel:

"I myself shall arrange for the luggage to be brought over!"

But through it all Cyril Dreame was conscious of only that lovely face, all fire and life and passion. Lalia! She was abrupt, disconcerting, darting here and there like an exotic butterfly, coming back to his side to press his hand, to smile up to him.

"Canst thou not walk with me, Lalia?" Stepan came humbly up to ask her. "There is the cinema, which changes to-night."

"Bah! The cinema!" She turned her back on him. "Take Nadia, or some other girl. I stay with my dear Cyril."

Disconsolately, Stepan departed; Cyril and the girl sat a little apart from the others, who chatted, peasant fashion.

"I have not become used to the idea that you are Lalia," he said.

"Wouldst thou have had me stand still?" she challenged. "It is time that I become a woman. In the Balkans one is not long young."

"Yes, a woman," broke in Theodora, who had been listening. "And a woman has responsibilities. See thou remember that!"

"See," whispered Lalia into his ear. "She will never cease speaking of that which is in her heart. She would have me marry. Thou hast come in good time, *mon cher.*"

"And you do not wish to marry?" he asked.

"When I marry, it will be a man of my own choice. Thou knowest our saying: 'The world belongs to the new generation.' At any rate, my life belongs to

me: not to a crabbed old woman like my aunt. But no more—she is trying to listen. Good night—”

AND HE FELT the touch of her lips on his cheek, then she darted away into the house. Marya went home; Theodora had work to do; and Cyril Dreame sat long with Joseph, who talked of many things—the war—and taxes—and of the beauty of friendship, which stretched between hearts like a cord, never breaking, no matter how far apart friends might be. He brought out a bottle of *slivitz*, to celebrate the return of his friend . . . while all the time Cyril smoked and let the thought of Lalia crowd out all other thoughts from his mind.

That night, in the simple plain room that had always been his, he took from his pocket the card Katherine Whympier had given him, and very carefully tore it into small bits.

THE NEXT MORNING the muezzin's call awakened him:

*"God is great!  
There is no God but God!  
Mohammed is the Prophet of God!  
Come to prayer; come to prayer!"*

He looked out over the charming garden, shaded by cypress and willows. It was fresh and cool—a mountain-coolness. He thought of Lalia, wondering if he could have dreamed it all. He felt young; vigorous: no longer racked by nervousness as he had been. Quickly he dressed and went down into the garden; perhaps Lalia would be there! But no one stirred there; he went into the great kitchen of the house—as in all Bosnian houses, it was dining-room and living-room as well. Theodora was there, busy about the stove. She gave him a friendly nod, looking up with flushed face, upon which the black eyebrows met above her sharp eyes.

"Where is Lalia?" was his first question.

"Lalia? Ah, she is a fine lady. She does not get out of bed so soon. I shall have

my bread out of the oven before we see her."

She untied the snowy apron from her waist, and put a bright-colored scarf over her head.

"I am going to market," she said.

"I'd like to come along," he said. "I've not seen Banjaluka yet at all."

Together they went down the quiet, shady street, with pleasant little houses—each with its garden of bright flowers. As they turned into the *Carski Drum*, to cross the bridge to the market-place, Dreame gave a little cry of pleasure. There it lay in the sun—the wide open-air market, with fantastic flashes of scarlet and crude green and purple in the costumes—with heaps of fruit, of plums, of apples—exactly as it had been when last he had seen it all.

"Nothing has changed!" he exclaimed. "Nothing."

"Everything has changed," said Theodora, almost angrily. "We have all grown older; our burdens grow heavier with the years."

"What do you mean?" he asked in surprise.

"I mean Lalia. Once—when thou wert here before—she was a small child, and we kept her without grumbling. Now she is a woman grown. It is her duty to help us."

"What would you?" he asked, half indignantly—"Do you think she should be working?"

"Of course not. Bosnian women of her rank do not work—for pay. But it is time for *prossidba*—thou knowest the word—for betrothal."

DREAME knew the word; he had witnessed more than once that strange peasant ceremony—that family council which with many a traditional and time-honored formula marked the first step toward a betrothal; starting with a feast and ending with the firing of guns to announce the glad news. But he could not connect Lalia with such a custom, and said so.

"She is Bosnian, as we are," was Theodora's curt answer.

"But—with whom would you betroth her?" he asked.

"Thou shalt see," said the woman.

When she had finished buying what she needed for the morning, she led him across the market-place to the *carsija*, or bazar. In front of a stone shop-front she paused. Dreame read upon the door the words "Mehmed Ali"—in Roman, and Cyrillic, and Arabic characters. Theodora opened the door, and they entered.

It was a shallow room, scarce more than a booth, but it was covered with exquisite rugs. A few small necklaces and charms were displayed; the bulk of the stock, no doubt, was in the modern safe which stood against the wall.

DIRECTLY in front of them a man sat cross-legged on the floor, smoking. On a tiny table beside him stood a copper coffee-pot, lidless and with a long handle; beside it a small cup and a jar of sugar. Dreame had just time to see that the man was fat and had rather bulging eyes, and that he wore a fez: then he had risen to his feet, and was bowing before them.

"Ah, *hanum!*" he cried, in a suave voice that was in keeping with his general sleekness. "This is a great honor."

Dreame felt that the protruding eyes took in at one glance himself and everything about him, without seeming to see him at all.

"I have brought our guest in to see you," said Theodora, smiling. The Turk bowed low.

"Your friends are mine," he said, his words seeming a caress. Then he clapped his hands; a small boy appeared.

"Selim: coffee and sweetmeats," he commanded.

In another moment they were seated with him, drinking the syrupy sweet beverage.

Mehmed Ali turned to Dreame.

"You do our little town too much honor, *Efendim.*"

"Monsieur was formerly of Banjaluka," Theodora explained.

Cyril Dreame divined the veiled curiosity and dislike behind the Turk's benignity.

"You sell trinkets?" he asked. "Perhaps, later, I shall wish to buy a few trifles."

"Mehmed Ali has the most wonderful of jewels," Theodora volunteered.

"Not *the* most wonderful, *hanum!*" their host said, significantly. "I hope to have that later, Allah willing!"

They did not stay. Theodora discovered that she must go back for some onions; Dreame went home, full of disquiet.

Lalia met him at the gate.

"It is the earliest I have been up for many months," she said, giving him her hands.

"So your mother says," he said.

As he gazed at her his heart beat faster; by day she was even more radiant than by night.

"You like my clothes?" she asked, anxiously.

"I only saw your face," he confessed. She smiled.

"That is a pretty compliment. But pray look at my clothes also."

SHE was dressed in a filmy dress of Paris cut, very short, with silk stockings, and shoes with French heels. He had seen such garments as she wore in every city of Europe; but he could see that he was supposed to be impressed.

"You like it, *hein?*"

"You do not dress in the Bosnian fashion, then?" Dreame suggested.

"Ho! That is for the old folks. I am cosmopolitan. All of the young people here are the same: we learn French in the High School; we discuss everything. Do you suppose we are behind the age? No; we talk of voting—birth control—and *la danse*. That reminds me!"

She ran to a little machine that stood at one side of the room.

"It is a real gramophone!" she cried

proudly. "We shall dance—you and I—to the jazz—*la chimie*, is it not called?"

"I believe so," said Dreame. "But I do not dance; not since my wound."

She surveyed him sorrowfully.

"Ah—but what a pity! You should see Stepan dancing with me—but enough: I see it pains you, to think of what you cannot do. Come, talk to me. Where didst thou go with my estimable aunt, this morning?"

"We went to visit one Mehmed Ali."

"Aie! That fat swine! *Ce gros cochon!*"

Her dainty and bantering air left her: her dark eyes flashed dangerously.

And then:

"It is that creature I am to marry."

"And you will?"

Dreame could not keep the bitterness from his voice.

"I? I had rather marry a leper! He has already one wife; she has borne him the boy you no doubt saw. Now she is old and fat and has only one leg—*Val!*"

Then her voice softened; she leaned over to caress him.

"I did not mean that for thee, *Milenko*—dear one! Come now—thou and I alone—we shall sit in the garden, and talk!"

LIKE A DREAM that day passed; others followed—breathless days, with an enchantment that weaved itself stronger and stronger about him. True: there was much that hurt—but to be in love always hurts. Beside her flashing spirit his own sober nature seemed to him dull; a thousand times he reproached himself for lack of lightness.

"Stepan says I am like a dragon-fly," she said one day, when he fished for trout in the green waters of the river below the town.

"And I—what am I like?" he asked.

"Thou art like a blue-bottle; buzzing about the honey," she said, laughing boisterously, till she saw that he was hurt.

Then she ran to his side to kiss him.

When he tried to return her caress she slipped away, elusive as a fawn.

"Stepan wanted me to go with him this morning," she announced.

"Why did you not go?" asked Dreame, suddenly jealous.

"With Stepan? Bah! he is always looking at me with sick eyes. I said to him: Go away, little brother! He was very angry."

"Do you not love Stepan?"

"Pouf!"

She looked at him with mocking eyes.

"No—it is Mehmed Ali whom I love! Ask my *tante* if it is not so!"

THAT DAY—they did not know it was to be the last of its kind—ended tenderly. They had stopped at a tiny restaurant near the Trappist monastery, where Dreame had a *schoppen* of the dark beer brewed by the monks, and Lalia sipped some buttermilk.

Her gay mood had passed; she had become pensive—was tired, perhaps, and as they walked on under the overhanging trees she clung to his arm.

"Thou hast always been good to me—like a good old uncle, Cyril," she said.

"No more than an uncle?" he asked, half in bitterness.

"Ah—thou dost not love the word. Yes: more than an uncle; for see, Joseph is my uncle. . . . How much more? Ah: there is no measure for love, *golubi*—little pigeon. I am not tamed yet; a strong and firm hand must tame me. But just the same—" swiftly she held his cheeks in her hands and kissed him lightly on the lips—"I love thee a little, my friend."

He tried to clasp her, but she evaded his arms; presently she ran along the path ahead of him, chanting:

*"A Turkish heaven is easy made;  
Two black eyes and a pipe, and a shade."*

But that night Dreame vowed to himself that the strong and firm hand would be no other than his own: at last his doubts were all gone.

## IV

NEXT DAY there was a long discussion between Joseph and his wife—a discussion not intended for Dreame's ears, since it was held in Croatian, which he only partly understood. As he passed in and out of the room, however, he caught detached words: Lalia's name, and what sounded like threats.

"Where is Lalia?" he demanded of Joseph, when Theodora had gone out into the garden.

"She is in her room."

Joseph's gaze fell before Dreame's accusing eyes.

"Theodora has locked her in, to stay until she decides to accept Mehmed Ali."

"And you permit it?" Dreame's teeth were set.

"By *Sveti Iliya*—what can I do? Thou hast never been married, my friend. Thou dost not know the meaning of the words '*Moya Zena*'—my wife! Theodora wills it; never will there be peace until I give in."

"But you do not favor this fat Turk?"

Joseph shrugged his shoulders.

"*Parbleu!* A woman has long hair and short vision. She would marry Lalia to Mehmed Ali, because we are in debt, and he has many dinars. If I were free—but one cannot have the moon. I must do as Theodora says. . . . But I tell thee, little friend, I shall not mourn to see this Turk lose countenance. If I were young, and unmarried, and strong—but I say no more."

DREAME flung out of the house; with no set plan but a blind fury in his heart. He decided to go to see Mehmed Ali.

The Turk welcomed him effusively. Dreame noticed as he sat down a photograph of Lalia lying on the little table with the coffee-cups. It made him lose control of himself—though perhaps he would have done so anyway.

"You mean to try to marry that young woman?" he demanded.

The Turk lifted his eyebrows by a hair's breadth.

"That is as Allah wills," he said, softly.

"But you have a wife living now!"

A look of pain came into the face of Mehmed Ali—pain at the stupidity of one who has overstepped all bounds of politeness.

"Monsieur will realize," he said, still softly, "that we Ottomans do not often speak of our private affairs—at least to strangers."

"To the devil with you!" cried Dreame, flaming into hot rage. "I have come to tell you, at any rate—that you shall not marry her! I swear it!"

Mehmed Ali did not move, except to pour out another cup of coffee.

"An oath is a grave matter."

"I have warned you!" said Dreame, rising—conscious, too, that he had made a fool of himself, in the face of the other's impassivity. He longed to make Mehmed Ali wince as he had winced. He saw the photograph of Lalia on the table.

"At least you shall not keep this!" he cried, and tried to seize it. He felt his wrist held in a small hand that had a grip of steel—so powerful that he felt himself like a child in its hold. For one instant Mehmed Ali gazed into his eyes—Dreame could see, as though a veil had been lifted, the flame of fanaticism and cruel triumph in the Turk's soul; then he felt himself very quietly led to the door by a power he could not resist. Mehmed Ali smiled, saying—

"The *sultanum* has made a mistake. The picture is mine. All else that I have is his; the picture I would keep."

Ridiculous in his own eyes, humbled by an antagonist he had held too meanly, Dreame went back home. There was no one in the garden; he could see Theodora's grim face bending over the stove. He could not go in; he was too furious. As he sat down in the seat in front of the house something tickled his cheek. He looked up: a wisp of paper dangled from a string out of the window directly above him. He seized it and read:

"Do not look up. Tonight I shall be allowed to walk in the walled garden behind the house for an hour. Hide thyself at the gate; I must talk to thee. Thou art my only hope."

THE GARDEN behind the house had two gates—one opening into the house, the other, fastened by a huge chain, gave out upon the open country beyond the *Nova Varos* highway. With Theodora on guard at the kitchen gate, it was apparent to Dreame that he could not slip unseen into the garden, so he announced his intention of going down to the river for a walk. Starting off in that direction, he circled around the town, arriving at last at the gate. He found Lalia waiting impatiently there for him.

"I thought thou wouldst never come!" she exclaimed. "My hour is almost over; we must speak quickly. Tell me now—what plans hast thou for getting me out of here?"

"Plans?" exclaimed Dreame. "I have no plans."

She made a gesture of disgust.

"Bah! Thou art worse than Stepan—he was here, and has just gone. He had a thousand plans; the only fault with them is that they will not work. That is because he has no money. But thou—"

"Very well, then; I *have* a plan," said Dreame, quickly—"and I have also plenty of money."

"Ah—that is good. Tell me thy plan."

"It is this: tonight I shall come with a ladder to the window of your room. You must have your clothes all packed, prepared for everything. After that—"

"Yes?" very eagerly . . .

"After that we go by the diligence to Jajce to be married."

"Married? Thou and I?"

"Yes."

The hesitation in her voice, in her scarcely visible face, was more than offset by the certainty of his own. She wanted a firm, strong hand, did she?

"I love you," he added. "Do you not love me?"

"Of course, I adore thee, little pigeon. But—after that?"

"After that, there will be America, New York. You'll love New York."

"New York?" she pouted. "I think I'd like Paris better; it is so much more *chic*. Yes: I will marry you, if it is to be Paris."

"Very well, then—Paris be it! Can you be ready in an hour?"

"No, *ma mie*—not in an hour. For this reason: my aunt watches me close. And there is no diligence until tomorrow morning. If I were to go this evening, she might send out an alarm. Instead, come for me at the first streak of dawn. Whistle softly; I shall hear."

"Lalia!" called her aunt's voice. "Come in now; the hour is over."

Lalia put her hand through the bars; he kissed it. His mind was in a daze, in the hours afterward, when he walked at random through the silent city. Lalia: and his! From a carpenter he secured a ladder, and hid it near the house.

Then he went to bed, but not to sleep. A dozen times he started up, fearful that he had overslept. At three o'clock he crept downstairs; it was still night. At five there was a flush on a cloud in the eastern sky; he crept up to the gate and whistled soft and low.

Instantly she replied from the window, whispering:

"I am ready."

He put up the ladder, mounted it and secured her heavy bag. She clambered out nimbly after him; in another minute they were going down the empty street, which was lit only by infrequent lamps.

The dawn came quickly, however; he could see her face, pearly-white and exquisitely beautiful.

She was rather incongruously attired in her filmy short dress, and wore high-heeled shoes.

FOR A TIME they walked in silence. Dreame carried her heavy luggage and his own with great difficulty, limping more than usual. As they neared the bridge which divided Banjaluka into two

parts, Lalia uttered a soft exclamation and drew him back into shadow.

"It is Mehmed Ali!" she cried. "What shall we do?"

Dreame was disconcerted, but said:

"I shall go ahead alone. As soon as I have induced him to leave the bridge, you hurry past and go to the stables at the market place. Here: I shall give you notes for one hundred pounds, English money. At the stables, you must rouse some one, and pay him to drive you to Jajce. After I have attended to Mehmed Ali I shall follow, by the diligence. Meet me at Jajce. . . . Is it understood?"

She nodded. Abruptly he left her and marched down toward the Turk, who smiled affably, showing yellow fangs.

"Ah: the *Efendim* is abroad early!"

"Yes," said Dreame curtly. "I am leaving by the diligence. But first I would like to buy a few trinkets in your shop."

"It is early for buying and selling," smiled the Turk. "But—by the Beard of the Prophet—a dinar is a dinar, at day-break as at noon. Come with me."

THE TURK led the way into his little store, where for fifteen minutes Dreame chaffered with him over bits of jade and jasper and filigree. At the end of that time the Englishman said abruptly:

"For that picture—how much?"

He pointed to Lalia's portrait.

The Turk's countenance darkened.

"That is not for sale."

"Very well, then—" Dreame took a step forward—"I have this to say, Mehmed Ali; thou art a dog, and the offspring of a dog!"

At this insult, to a Mohammedan the supreme taunt—Mehmed Ali's face turned livid. For an instant he stood tense, then his hand, which had been hidden in his coat, flashed forth with a dagger in its grasp: it described a semi-circle downward, toward Dreame's heart. If the younger man had not leaped back it would have struck him fair: as it was, it only gashed his cheek.

Before the Turk could recover himself Dreame's fist shot out, landing on the curve of Mehmed's jaw. He went down heavily, smashing his little coffee-stand as he fell; but he was up again in a moment. This time Dreame caught him. He did not get up, but sat amid the ruins of his household, wiping the blood from a cut in his lip.

"Is that enough?" Dreame panted. "Or shall I give you more?"

"It is enough," said the Turk, with perfect dignity. "The *Efendim* hits too hard. . . ."

He hunted about on the floor till he found what he sought.

"Take this, *Sultanum*: thou hast earned it."

It was Lalia's picture.

"You give me this?"

"Why not? Something tells me it is not the will of Allah that I keep it." Mehmed sighed. "I tell thee this; not for the best maiden in Bosnia would I take such another beating. Now—" bowing as he scrambled up—"if the *Efendim* will excuse me, I shall go to seek medicaments for this lip of mine!"

## V

IT WAS NINE O'CLOCK when the diligence started. Dreame had been able to learn at the stables that a young woman had departed at daybreak in a carriage for Jajce. His mind was at rest, and he saw only happiness ahead.

He was proud of the way he had managed it. A firm, strong hand: that had been his—that was what Lalia had confessed she needed. And with him—she should always have it!

It was mid-afternoon when the heavy omnibus rumbled through the steep streets of Jajce, whirling around sharp bends up the winding road to the station. A little train already steamed there. And he could see Lalia—she was waving. But who the devil was that with her?

As he climbed out she waited for him with hands outstretched. Behind her,



"'It is Mehmed Ali!' she cried, 'what shall we do?'"

smiling sheepishly, stood Stepan, twirling his cap in his hands.

"Stepan!" cried Dreame. "You here?"

"He also was waiting for me, at the stables," said Lalia. She laughed nervously. "And so—he decided to come along."

"Yes, *Monsieur*," the boy broke in, his voice breathless. "You see we have arranged—"

"Idiot!" cried Lalia. "Have I not told you not to talk. Go back into the station and wait for me! I myself shall explain to my Cyril."

"What is Stepan doing here?" Dreame demanded, sternly.

"Do not scold me!" she implored like a child. "Thou art not pretty with a frown. It is like this. So long as I had no money, I was willing to go to Paris with thee. What else was to be done? But now—thanks to thee—I have a hundred English pounds. That makes Paris seem far-away and strange again. Canst thou not see? I am still only a child at heart—I cannot promise to behave like a woman. And thou hast need of a woman—who knows her own heart."

"Stop!" cried Dreame. "Are you telling me you love Stepan better than you love me?"

"Do not say that, my pigeon. I adore thee, of course. And who knows? If thou wert a Bosnian like myself—if thou wert a little younger—if thou wert fleet of foot as Stepan is, so that we might dance together—perhaps even now I might take thee instead of him. But as it is—it is only that Paris is too far away. With a hundred pounds Stepan can buy a booth in the *carsija* at Sarajevo; there we can live very comfortably—"

"Lalia!" cried Stepan. "The train is about to start."

"I come!" she cried over her shoulder to him; then—

"I am sorry, my little Cyril. Say thou wilt forgive . . ."

She held out her hands beseechingly. She had never seemed lovelier.

With one last soldierly impulse he

straightened, and steeled himself to smile.

"I forgive you, my dear," he said—"and I shall pray for your happiness."

He lifted her hand to his lips, but instead, she threw her arms around his neck and held him, kissing both his cheeks.

Then the warning bell rang again. Lalia ran and caught the train, just as the guard was closing the doors.

## VI

IT WAS EARLY EVENING, and the rain fell softly, persistently, with a whispering sound upon the trees in the park. Cyril Dreame walked aimlessly, dragging his wounded leg. It hurt him in damp weather.

Now he stood on the curb of the Park Ring, watching the automobiles pass in glittering procession—half hoping, half fearing, he might see her. Slowly he walked back into the Karntner Ring, leaning on his cane. Just as he passed the brightly-lighted Imperial Hotel he heard his name called, in a crisp, clear voice:

"Captain Dreame!"

She was just alighting from a taxicab, followed by her maid. She gave him her hand; she had an icy little smile for him that moved him to smile back in his old manner, reserved and mocking.

"I had no idea you were in Vienna," she said, in a voice utterly without feeling.

She was exquisite, he thought; the sheltered, perfumed hot-house product of a heartless caste-system! What a fool he had been, ever to think she had another and tenderer nature! What was she saying?

"Perhaps you'd like to come up and see my father?"

"No. But I'd like to talk to you."

Her eyebrows lifted ever so slightly.

"I can give you a few minutes—in one of the parlors here."

"No. I want to walk outside—where we can talk freely."

She considered doubtfully.

"It is raining. But—of course—if you

insist— Marie! tell my father I shall not be long. Now, Captain Dreame!”

TOGETHER they went out into the dimness of the Stadtpark. He held his umbrella over her; she waited for him to speak. At last, with the faintest touch of impatience she said:

“The Balkans—have you finished with them?”

“Yes—thank God!” he said huskily.

“Ah!”

She smiled maliciously.

“Then they did not come up to your expectations?”

There was a whiplash of scorn in her tone. He answered:

“No—ah—they didn’t suit me at all. Not the place for an American.”

“So you decided—since the Pearl didn’t quite please you—you’d come back and have another look at me!”

She laughed without mirth.

He looked at her; only her voice was laughing. Even in the darkness he could see that she was very pale; her mouth was straight and hard, but her lips trembled.

“Yes—I wanted to see you,” he said after a pause.

“Then there’s no use in our walking further, Captain Dreame,” she said coldly.

“I’ve already told you I didn’t like people who don’t know their own minds. You seem not to know yours at all. . . .”

Suddenly her voice broke.

“I’m tired. I think I shall have to sit.”

“These benches over here are dry,” he said quickly.

She sank into one helplessly. He waited for an instant, then said, in a sudden rush of words:

“Look here: I’ve got this to say to you—just this; then I’ll leave you forever. I didn’t go up there, as I said I did, and decide that the Pearl of Banjaluka wouldn’t do for me. That was a cowardly lie, to save my face. This is the truth: I was madly in love with her—with little Lalia, I mean—wanted her to marry me—”

“Well?”

“She said she would—and she threw me

down—hard! Because I wasn’t young enough—because I am crippled—because I’m a foreigner! Oh—I know; I deserved it all. I’ve been a conceited ass, thinking I had only to ask a girl—and I could have her. I’m not defending myself—I only wanted you to know. That’s all. Good-bye.”

But for some curious reason he could not go—he found that she was holding his arm, and that her mouth was trembling pitifully, trying to form words.

“Do not go, yet—sit down beside me. I’ve been a horrid little beast, but it was only because I thought you were proud and hard, and were trying to hurt me. If you’re suffering yourself—but sit down here—tell me why you came to Vienna to taunt me like this.”

He was patting her arm awkwardly.

“How do I know?” he asked in a broken voice. “Because I was tormented to death—and I remembered your smile—”

SHE was smiling now—it was something luminous, and had deeps of fidelity and tenderness in it. Suddenly his own defiant mood gave way, and he buried his head in his hands. Without speaking she pressed his arm close to her.

Gradually he grew quiet.

“Sorry,” he said. “My nerves—you knew they were gone. But that smile was what I needed.”

“So you do know what you want at last?” she asked him.

“Yes—I think I’ve known for a long time—in spite of my folly. You *know* I’ve been a fool, Katherine. I’ll always be one, I suppose.”

If he expected her to contradict him he was disappointed. She only smiled again, mischievously this time, and said: “Well, suppose you are! It doesn’t matter, does it, so long as you’ve got me to take care of you?”

Her hand clasped over his, and although the rain was falling and the night was chill, neither of them realized anything, except that after many wanderings they had both found peace.

# OLD "TEEPEE" MIXES IN

The Story by Wallace C. Wadsworth



## The Illustrations by Leon A. Beroth

**T** P. PERKINS, familiarly and fondly known as "Teepee," president of the Goliath Tractor Works, was going strong. His slight body leaned forward at a perilous angle as he pounded the desk before him; his white side-whiskers bristled out pugnaciously from his round pink face; his sharp old eyes snapped furiously as he shouted and gesticulated. A stranger would have thought that murder was being committed behind the closed doors of his office—his employees merely smiled knowingly at one another and concluded that Andy Willys, the Goliath's sales manager, had fallen down on an order which the old man had set his heart on landing.

"And you let a small town hick buffalo you," Teepee groaned. "Here you have a week, free from all competition, to land the biggest order this concern has had a chance at in a month o' Sundays, and what you do you do? I'll tell you. You come crawling back home with your tail between your legs like a whipped pup. Star salesman! Sales manager! . . . Bah!

"And two more Bahs! . . . Order taker, you mean. Just a plain, common, ordinary order taker, like I can hire for thirty dollars a week. Here you've wasted a week, and all you have to show for it is one worthless interview. You have prospects, you say, of getting this order. Prospects be hanged! All the prospects

in the world don't equal one dollar's worth of actual business."

"Now, boss," broke in the exasperated Andy, "be reasonable. Listen to the facts in the case, and then turn on the fireworks. In the first place, Melton isn't a small town, and, in the second place, McConnell is a long way from being a hick. He's—"

"All the more reason why you should sell him. Approach him as a man of brains. Tackle him any way you wish—but . . . *get him!* He scared you out first thing off the bat, as if you were a mere schoolboy. Do you think I'd have spent a week in the same town with him and not sell him—or else get kicked out? Why, rather than give up, as you've done, I'd kidnap him—I'd knock him in the head—I'd do anything to get his attention for ten minutes, and in that ten minutes I'd have him signing the contract. . . . A week to get an interview!

"By Jiminy Godfreys! I'd *sell* him in one day."

Andy laughed long and hard as Teepee paused to catch his breath and mop his streaming face. "Yes you would—not," he jeered. "I know. This man is the hardest bit of humanity I ever ran up against. He's simply not ready to place this tractor contract yet, and he can't be made ready by salesman's talk. That's final.

"As for selling him in one day—why, I'll bet you a fifty you can't even get an interview with him in a day's time."

Teepee struggled with his emotions.

"Why—why, you young wh-whipper-snapper," he stuttered, "are you trying to kid me? Can't get an interview? No man ever lived that I couldn't interview if I wanted to. I'll take you up—make it a hundred! If I can't make you kiss your money goodbye I'll—I'll resign."

"I'll take the hundred. And if you sell your first day in Melton I'll make it twice that."

"Done," said Teepee. "I leave here for Melton tonight, and I'll be back day after

tomorrow with the contract in my pocket."

"All right, boss, go to it," laughed Andy. "You have a hard fall coming. You may be able to teach me lots of things about selling, but you can't inform me of a single thing about that McConnell chap that I don't already know. His nickname in Melton is 'Hardface' McConnell. A piece of granite is companionable compared to him. Words have less effect on him than drops of water on the Matterhorn. He's simply not ready to buy, and he won't waste any time going over the matter until he is ready. Such are the facts. . . . But of course you insist on learning them for yourself."

"Rats," said Teepee. "They don't come like that. You were just not man enough to put the big deal over. You've been having it too easy for a while; taking reorders from old customers has got you sluggish. And now, when the ship strikes a real snag the old man has to steer it. All right, he can do it. And meanwhile, you'd better run down to Greencastle and see Bixby. He needs more machines and you might as well get credit for the order."

Teepee chuckled softly as his victim squirmed.

"Have your fun now, Boss, because my turn is coming," Andy warned. "I'm saving all my laughter until you get back from Melton. Meanwhile I'll take this Greencastle order—it will be just that much more than you will get from McConnell. But here's wishing you luck, and may your fall not be too hard."

"Get out of here, you scalawag. If you save your laughter for me you'll never smile again. Off with you, and don't let Bixby slip through your fingers."

Outside the office Andy turned and shook his fist at the door.

"You old reprobate," he exclaimed. "Out of love and respect for your gray hairs I feel sorry for you. But you've sure got it coming. You'll think calamity has struck you before you get back from Melton."

IN MELTON the next morning no one paid particular attention to the dapper elderly little man with the white side whiskers and youthful carriage who stepped spryly from his Pullman. For Melton considers itself something of a city, and business-like and important strangers are no novelty.

Teepee handed his grip to a grinning porter. "Well, Sam," he asked, "which is the best hotel?"

"De Windsor House am de newest," informed Sam, "but de Salem suhves de best meals, so de drummers all say."

"Good, the Salem for me," and Teepee hustled out to the waiting bus in the wake of his dusky monitor.

When he had been assigned to his room he paused for a few moments on his way to breakfast for a few words with the loquacious clerk.

"Yes, sir," that worthy proudly announced, "'Hardface' McConnell is the ringmaster of this show. He cracks the whip an' they all jump through hoops; business, politics, or what not, he runs 'em all. . . . When's the best time to see him? Well now, partner, that's a hard question. There ain't any best time, I reckon. He's always kinda e-lusive. However, there ain't any use of trying to see him at his office before ten or ten-thirty, as he never gets down until that time."

"Thanks," said Teepee. "That's what I wanted to know."

In the dining room the first person who met his eye was Johnson, sales manager for the Power tractor, a rival of the Goliath.

"Well, well," exclaimed this old enemy, hoisting his huge bulk and stretching out his huge hand to greet the newcomer, "if here isn't Teepee himself, on hand to show us how to sell tractors. This is a pleasant surprise. . . . Here, sit down, and have breakfast on the Power Company."

"Gladly," Teepee dryly accepted the invitation. "I often fare well at the expense of that firm."

"Nonsense," said Johnson, reddening a

little at Teepee's reference to several past victories of the Goliath. "The dead past is buried."

"So you're here, and I'm here," casually remarked the president of the Goliath organization. "How many more of the workmen have assembled for roll call?"

"None that I know of. I had a confidential tip, and am really surprised to see you here, you sly old fox. I hardly think that any of our rivals have any inkling that there is anything on foot here that amounts to anything."

"You think it really amounts to something, then?"

"Now, Teepee, you old darling," and Johnson shook a plump finger admonishingly, "don't try to pull the wool over my eyes. I know you too well. Of course it's big, and mighty big. You know and I know that you wouldn't be here otherwise. An old man like you is past the age when he goes after small deals just for the sake of the game. . . . Now, I have a proposition to make: each of us has certain information covering the situation here; what say you to a fair exchange?"

"I refuse to have any dealings with a person who calls me an old man," remarked Teepee acridly. "Such a remark immediately informs me of his poor judgment, and it is not safe to trust anyone with poor judgment. I'm not old. I may be seventy years of age, but I still have my figure; I can eat what I like without the counsel of some ossified pill-roller; I can beat you at golf any day in the year, and I've never worn glasses yet. Now, you misguided hippopotamus, let's hear if you can tell me anything about this contract that I don't already know."

"Wow, take that!" exclaimed Johnson, chuckling.

Then his visage became serious as he settled to business.

"You are familiar with Melton, of course. It's the biggest city in a radius of a hundred miles or so; it is surrounded by the richest country in the State, and

is the center of quite a number of smaller towns that do a thriving business. As it is the manufacturing and distributing center for all this territory, you can understand what an enormous toll it must be paying to the railroads in these days of high freight rates, on the tremendous amount of merchandise which it sends out to its neighboring districts. The Chamber of Commerce has figured it up, and the total is so astonishingly large that some of Melton's biggest men have tried to find a way of conserving a part of this expenditure. Henry F. McConnell, the biggest duck in this puddle, has hit upon the idea of sending Melton's merchandise out over the country via tractor trains—tractors pulling trailers loaded with goods. The country around here is flat, the roads are good, and the tractor trains could reach every part of the district dependent on Melton much more cheaply than could be done by either the railroads or a fleet of motor trucks.

"It's a sure thing the deal is going through. The money is pledged and Melton's biggest men are back of it. McConnell has full say; the rest will do just what he asks. It only remain for some enterprising salesman like myself—ahem! to take the order. See?"

**T**EEPEE sat silent for a moment, reviewing the information just given. It practically coincided with that which he himself had, and that fact served to strengthen his hunch that somehow or other the contract was his. Tractors with an immense pulling power were desired. The Goliath, in addition to carrying the most powerful and dependable engine constructed—a steam engine, using oil for fuel—possessed a special patent feature that no other tractor carried: the "Velvet Foot," so called from the fact that its huge drive wheels were shod with an elastic gripping contrivance that gave a surer trackage and a greater pulling power. It consisted of a steel reinforced rubber composition calk that replaced the sharp metal calks ordinarily in evidence

on the drive wheels of tractors, and it especially fitted the Goliath for the purpose at hand inasmuch as it insured against injury to roadways or pavements.

"Mebbe so, mebbe so," smiled Teepee condescendingly, and then proceeded to enlighten Johnson on a few minor additional points the other had not mentioned.

"When McConnell hears my flow of language and learns a few things about the Power tractor he's going to blossom out like a flower," boasted the big man. "And before I'm through with him he's going to forget that there are other machines made."

"You have met him, then, have you?" inquired Teepee.

"No, but I'm going to before long."

"Tell you what we'll do. We're both anxious to see him as soon as possible, and there is going to be trouble when we both try to get in to him at the same time. Let's draw straws to see which gets the first chance; the winner gets an hour and a half lead over the loser. One of us sees him at nine o'clock and the other at ten-thirty."

"That's fair enough," agreed Johnson.

Teepee arranged two matches.

"All right," he announced, "here we are. The match that is perfect gets first chance, from nine to ten-thirty; the broken match gets second place. Draw!"

Johnson thrust out his plump hand and drew a match as unmarred as the day it was headed. "Tough luck, Teepee, old dear," he grinned as he beheld it. "My star is in the ascendancy. You'll have to take my dust from now on. The contract is awarded to the Power."

"Well, well," said Teepee. "Fortune does seem against me," and he carefully crammed into his pocket the match left in his hand. It was as perfect as the one Johnson had drawn.

**T**EEPEE, to fill in the time until his ten-thirty call, sought out the place where Andy, the week before, had stabled the big Goliath tractor

that had been shipped to him at Melton for demonstration purposes. It was in an old deserted livery stable, one of the countless solid massed ramshackle frame buildings that clustered about a huge warehouse near the river. On the other side, this ancient section abutted on the wholesale district of the city.

In the dim twilight of the gaunt shed-like structure, the old man lovingly passed his appraising eye over the gigantic piece of machinery which his genius had helped to perfect and exploit. Not a piece of brass work but shone with perfect glitter, not a square inch of steel that did not reflect back in shadowy form every move of the man beside it. Every part evidenced perfect grooming and care, every line bespoke a power that was almost unlimited.

The Goliath was an oil burning tractor, equipped with a special burner that achieved a full head of steam within two minutes or less. Teepee, testing it out, held it to the low figure of a minute and a half. His old eyes sparkled as he climbed into the driver's seat and fingered steering wheel and throttle with loving hands. The confined space within the structure forbade anything in the way of an extensive test of its motive power.

But Teepee couldn't resist trying it out as much as possible, sending it forward a few feet and stopping it suddenly, and then back again at every speed that was possible within such short distances. Then, satisfied that everything was in perfect condition, he climbed down from the seat, carefully padlocked the big doors of the stable, and then started back toward the town.

It was exactly thirty minutes past ten when he stepped off the elevator at the eleventh floor of the Conway Building. The entrance to McConnell's suite was 1127, and just as he paused before the door it was thrown open and Johnson walked out. Not a jovial Johnson this time, however, but an angry Johnson, even more red-faced than usual. His

whole bearing indicated an intense disgust.

"So this is the man who sells Power tractors in hundred lots," greeted Teepee. "Well—well—well!"

"Don't you dare laugh at me, you little runt," warned the big man. "If you manage to get even an interview with that fellow you're a wiz. And say, I've a crow to pick with *you*. This McConnell never gets to his office before ten o'clock. I'll bet you knew that this morning when you gave me the first call of the day.

"Anyway, I didn't get to first base with him. When he finally did arrive I corralled him the minute he stepped in the door and started to give him the glad hand.

"He came back with a stare that would have frozen a smaller man into an icicle. Not a word—just one look that took the breath out of me, and before I had recovered he had gone on into his private office, where he is now. He's about as accessible as the Grand Lama of Thibet. I persuaded the girl to take my card in to him, and I penciled a little note on the back that I thought would surely bring him around. She came back with the glad word that Mr. McConnell was not ready to discuss the tractor matter with anyone today, and would I please leave my address so that he could notify me when he is ready for a conference.

"Can you imagine that? He expects me to hang around this one horse town until *he* gets ready to give *me* a few minutes of his valuable time."

"And the worst of it is," chuckled Teepee, "that you'll do as he says."

"This thing is too big to let my personal pride interfere in any way with my being on hand to make a try for the contract," said Johnson, unmindful of the interruption. "But great guns! You'd think he was Rockefeller from the way he acts. If something smaller were at stake I'd be taking the next train back to the city. As it is, I'm going out and see if I can't get cards for both of us for some good golf club. You'll soon be through here, and

we might as well plan a little game for this afternoon."

"Whoa!" exclaimed Teepee. "Don't dismiss me so easily. I'm going to see that man today and talk tractors to him if I have to use a jimmy to get into his office. He's my meat, and I'm darned hungry. I have to get back to the factory as soon as possible, and so I am going to land that contract today. Ta-ta."

A broad grin overspread Johnson's face.

"I'll see you at lunch, and if my delicate ears can stand your language I'll listen to your tune then. Here's wishing you joy," and he turned toward the elevator.

McCONNELL'S outer office evidenced the carrying on of a business much greater than Teepee had supposed possible in a town of this size. He gave his card to the switchboard operator.

"I don't think Mr. McConnell will see you. He has already sent one man away this morning because he is not ready to discuss tractors, and from your card I suppose that is what you want to see him about."

"You're a bright young lady, aren't you?" Teepee smiled, and winked prodigiously. "But really I think Mr. McConnell will see me. Tell him I shall be in Melton today only, and that I have something to show him that will interest him strongly. All I wish just now is a moment or two to make arrangements for an actual test of the Goliath tractor."

The girl smiled back.

"I'll do my best to give him your message," she promised, "but I have my doubts as to whether it will do any good. Mr. McConnell seems to have made up his mind not to talk tractors today, and when he makes up his mind—" and she jammed a plug in the switchboard.

Teepee heard her repeat his message, and then noted that her face grew red as she caught the reply. There was an indignant flash in her eyes as she looked up that betokened the emphasis of the words she had just listened to.

"He says that he absolutely will not be bothered in any way today about that tractor contract," she said.

"Or words to that effect. Eh?" and Teepee grinned at her red face.

"His language is rather strong at times," she admitted. "You may be able to see him tomorrow. If you will leave your address I'll notify you when you will have the best chance of speaking with him."

"You're very kind," said Teepee, "but I think I'll wait around a little longer and maybe I can get his ear for a few minutes.

"I must see him today, and I intend to camp in this office until I talk with him or get thrown out," and he seated himself to wait until the first opportune moment should present itself for seeing his man.

It was half-past twelve when the switchboard operator motioned to him. "Better get your lunch," she advised him. "He has just had me phone down to have his sent up to him here. That means he is not going out this noon."

"Those are cheerful tidings," said Teepee, and his eyes brightened with a sudden thought. "Where does he have his meals sent from?" he asked casually.

"The Alpine Restaurant, downstairs on the ground floor, usually sends up a waiter with the luncheon," the girl informed him.

AS GEORGE WASHINGTON JONES stepped off the elevator his dusky complexion became ashy gray for a moment as his laden tray was tilted perilously to one side.

"Say, Boss," he warned, "you-all bettah be moah careful 'bout monkeyin' wiv hot soup. Little mo' push, an' this yere been upst on top o' you-all's haid."

"Listen, black boy," said the little man with the white side whiskers who had run into him, "is that the lunch for Mr. McConnell?"

"Yessah," George enlightened him.

"Would you like to make twenty dollars?"

The negro's eyes rolled.

"Say, Boss, is you-all talkin' to me you don't have to ahgues no mo'!"

"All right. Set that tray down a minute. There, right on the floor. *That's* right. Now take off your jacket and apron. And here, hold my coat and hat, and don't dare move from this spot until I get back. Hear me?"

"Yessah," assented George, dazed at the rapidity with which things were happening. He eyed unbelievably the crisp ten dollar bill that was thrust into his hand.

"Do as I tell you, and you get another one of these when I get back. Now lift up that tray for me."

GEORGE did as bidden, and watched in huge amazement as the small, white haired figure hastened down the corridor under the weight of the big tray.

Teepee pushed open the door of 1127, and passed back toward the private office. He located the right door, and knocked. He was conscious of being a little excited as he heard footsteps approaching the door.

The door was opened, and Teepee, tray and all, stepped in. He was conscious of a feeling of disappointment; the man before him fitted in no way at all his previous conception of that czar-like personage whom his townsfolk had dubbed "Hard Face" McConnell. He was a slender, fastidiously dressed individual, with straw colored hair and weak, baby-blue eyes. His hair was most carefully slicked back, and he wore spats. And if there was anything which Teepee loathed and ridiculed as the excrucience of emasculated minds it was spats! His mouth dropped open in wordless astonishment.

"Come, come, my good man," interrupted the vision in spats, "really, you shouldn't stare so. You may put the luncheon on this table," and he pointed to a small table in the center of the room. "That will be all; I shall serve Mr. McConnell myself. This is for your trouble," and he handed Teepee a silver dollar.

Teepee's mind hurriedly readjusted itself. "Isn't Mr. McConnell here?" he

inquired cautiously. "The luncheon is for him."

The vision lifted his eyebrows.

"Yes, yes," he agreed, "Mr. McConnell is busy in his inner office. He will be out presently. You need not wait."

"Say, Wetherby," bawled a stentorian voice from the next room, "get rid of that fellow and come in here."

"That is he now," exclaimed Teepee's host. "You really must go," and he edged his guest toward the door.

"But," Teepee managed to say, "I would like to see Mr. McConnell just a moment. Here, this belongs to you if you manage it so I can see him personally."

The expression of longing overshadowed the suspicion in Wetherby's eyes as he beheld the bill of large denomination which Teepee flashed before him.

"Are you coming?" again came the voice, more peremptorily this time.

"Yes, sir," and Wetherby again headed Teepee toward the door. "Couldn't think of it, old top, couldn't think of it," he mumbled hastily, and landed another prod in Teepee's ribs. "There, old dear, is the door. No I really couldn't do it, don't you know."

And before the astounded Teepee could catch his wits he was standing again on the nether side of the closed door. He tried the knob; it had locked itself.

"That fellow has had lots of experience, I bet," he commented, as he betook himself toward the outer door. "And who'd have thought that anyone in spats could do that to *me*!"

He found George patiently awaiting him in the corridor. "Well," he said, "I guess I'll just step down to your place and have lunch myself. Here's the other ten I promised you."

George extended a greedy hand.

"Yessah," he grinned, "we sho' does have one fine place to eat."

THREE QUARTERS OF AN HOUR later Teepee was again seated in his chair—waiting. The hours rolled by and it neared closing time. Teepee sat for—

ward on the edge of his chair, ready for the moment when McConnell should pass. Five o'clock arrived, and still no opportunity of seeing his man. It was a little later when Teepee bounced out of his chair and stepped briskly forward to meet a big, pleasant faced young man who came from the rear offices. "Can you tell me," asked Teepee, "how soon Mr. McConnell will be leaving?"

"McConnell? That's my name."

"Delighted to meet you," exclaimed Teepee.

"I've been waiting here since morning to see you. Can you spare me a few minutes now?"

"Certainly," smiled Mr. McConnell, and led the way to the rear of the big office. "How's this for a place to talk?" and he ushered Teepee into a little room.

"Fine," said Teepee, and settled to business.

It did not take long to drive home the Goliath's special qualifications for the intended Melton enterprise. Teepee knew that he had the man before him cinched on the proposition.

"I'm sold," McConnell finally said, "and I promise to do what I can to swing the contract to the Goliath. I can do nothing except urge it, however, as my father has full charge of the matter. I advise you to talk with him about it. He'll probably be ready to take the matter up with you about the end of this week."

"Aren't you Henry F. McConnell?" Teepee inquired in astonishment.

"Junior," explained the other.

"Well I'll be hanged! I suppose your father would have no objection if you took me in there to him now and arranged so that we might have a few words together?"

"Sorry, but he left just after you came in here with me. He's going out with a couple of friends this evening and I hardly know where you could possibly locate him until tomorrow."

"I'll find him," said Teepee. "I must see him before twelve tonight, and I'm going to have a talk with him this evening

if I never do another thing as long as I live."

TEEPEE evaded Johnson at dinner that evening. If the latter were still grumpy from his disappointment of the morning he would be poor company, and if he had recovered and was his usual jovial self he would get on one's nerves.

Teepee telephoned the McConnell residence several times, but to no avail. Mr. McConnell, so he was informed, had not been home during the evening. No, they had received no word as to where he was or when he would be home.

Thoroughly disgusted with the failures chalked up against him during the day, Teepee settled himself in his room. The removal of the tension which he had been laboring under throughout the day left him tired and sleepy, and at first he paid no attention to the clamor of fire trucks rushing by beneath his window. It was not until several had passed that he became sufficiently interested to lay aside his paper and step to the window. The sight that met his eyes stirred him to quick action.

Down toward the river, in the warehouse section of the city, where he had been that very morning, roared a huge conflagration that looked as if that entire end of the town were ignited. Even from this distance the crackling of the flames could be heard and the whishing of the streams of water which the combined force of the fire department was ineffectually pouring on the flames. It was easy to locate the blaze—it was the big warehouse he had noted that morning near where the Goliath was stabled.

It looked as if the fire were spreading, and at the thought Teepee was galvanized to action. He must save his tractor; his salesman's mind could not accept the possibility of losing it and thus materially lessening his chances to secure the contract.

A taxi deposited him on the edge of the crowd that, at a respectable distance, surrounded the fire. He threaded his way

through the assemblage, and, seizing a moment when the officer guarding that point had his back turned, darted into the fire area.

His fears for his tractor increased. The fire that was consuming the huge warehouse before him seemed past all control, and was threatening the surrounding buildings. It was an enormous structure that had long lorded it over the host of small ramshackle frame buildings crowded closely onto it on three sides; the river was on the fourth. The surrounding flimsy buildings now constituted a menace to the entire business section of the city, for, should the flames spread to them, as it seemed they would do, the fire would sweep on through them as through a strawstack, and carry the conflagration over so wide an area that other important buildings would surely be caught before the flames could be put out.

That this was fully recognized was evident from the frantic efforts that were being made to prevent the flames spreading.

Every stream of water that could be spared from the big blaze was playing on the roofs of the surrounding buildings, wetting them down and extinguishing sparks. It seemed a fruitless task, for the wood was so hot that the water was transformed into steam almost as soon as it fell. And, working away like madmen, was a small army of volunteers, making an heroic attempt to wreck and remove piecemeal the buildings that were the greatest danger points before the flames could get to them. With an open space cleared away at the imperilled spots, the flames could readily be prevented from leaping the gap.

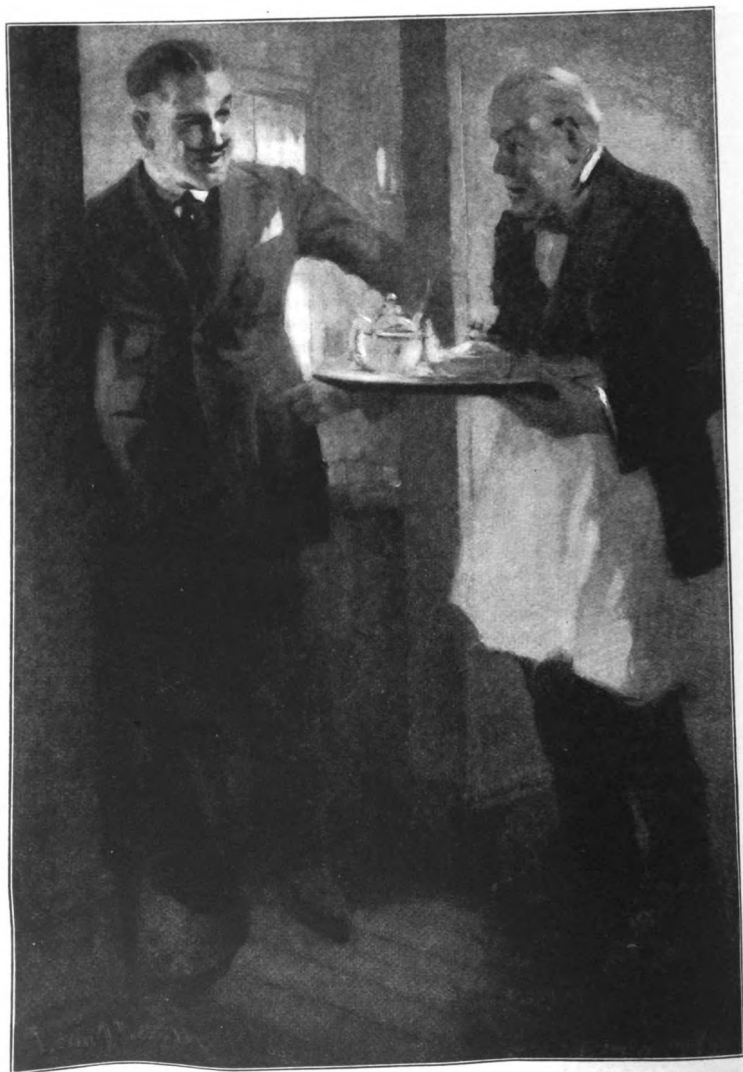
**T**EEPEE'S thoughts were all for his tractor. Darting down the alley that gave entrance to the old livery stable, a few steps brought him to his destination. Its scorching proximity to the flames spurred him to frantic haste, and in his hurry to unlock the doors he dropped the padlock key. Down on his knees he went,

in search for it. No need for any other light than that of the big blaze; he was so close to the conflagration that the heat made his eyes smart and his skin feel as if it were shriveling. Several times he was burned by flying sparks; countless others flying all about him warned that he dare not tarry long. Should they ignite the buildings near him it would be but a few minutes before he would be encircled by flames.

There came a sound like a moan from the crowd of spectators. Teepee turned, only to see that the streams of water playing on the blaze had dwindled in number. The city water pressure had failed; there remained only the river and the furiously chugging engines as a source of protection against the spread of the flames.

His search for the key was futile. Unable to waste any more time looking for it, he rushed to the corner of the building where the office of the stable once was. Smashing a window, he crawled in. He was going to get his tractor out safely, or die in the attempt. He started through the office into the main part of the old stable, stumbled over something and fell headlong. A touch of his hand recalled to his mind the picture of a length of log chain which he had noted lying there that morning, rusted a little from long disuse, but still retaining all its original strength. It gave him an idea, and, wrestling with its weight, he managed to tug one end of it over to where the black mass of the Goliath loomed through the darkness. It took but a moment to hitch that end firmly to the drawbar of the tractor. Fumblingly he located a match and ignited the burner; a minute and a half and more and a new test of the Goliath's qualities would be made.

It was becoming unbearably hot in the old stable. Teepee's eyes were smarting, and a tightening around his chest made him cough. A sudden tiny red flicker in the corner of the building showed him that the place was filled with smoke. There was a crackling overhead, and a



"The door was opened, and Teepee, tray and all, stepped in."

growing light, evidences that the wrecking crew had lost their fight.

Teepee glanced at his steam gauge, made visible by the encroaching flames, and nodded with satisfaction.

Testing the machine by opening the throttle just a little, he headed the Goliath directly at the big doors outlined before him.

Then he opened it up wide. . . .

THE WRECKING CREW, giving up the fight after a last heartless effort to stop the spreading flames, scattered like rabbits as there came a sudden rending crash from the solid front of the building they were hastening past. The building bulged out, torn asunder by some mighty force, a great gap appeared as the big doors gave way, and through it came a snorting, irresistible monster, surmounted by a little, shouting, red-faced demon with white hair and comic opera side whiskers.

"Get out of my way, you numbskulls!" he shouted. "Old Goliath craves action, and we're going to give it to 'im. Follow me, boys, and we'll go right through these pasteboard houses. Just watch me. I'm a rovin' wolf and this is my night to howl!

"E-e-yippy!"

"You little white haired shrimp you!" bellowed a hoarse voice near him, "watch where you are going. You nearly got me that time."

It was the big man who had led the wreckers in their efforts to clear away the next building.

"Too bad I didn't," retorted Teepee at the top of his voice.

"You deserve it for not having brains enough to use dynamite to clear away this stuff."

"City ordinance against storing the stuff in town—we have none."

"Well, c'mon," yelled Teepee. "Catch the rest of that gang of yours. I've got something here that's as good as dynamite," and he patted the Goliath as he started it forward at a rapid pace, the

big man running along at its side and getting his crew together again.

"There," Teepee pointed, "we'll jerk that old shed down; it'll give a little breathing space before the flames get that far."

"We haven't got time," said the big man.

"We'll have to go farther on."

"Don't argue with me," shouted Teepee. "Chop a place so you can fasten that chain to the corner stanchions," and he backed the Goliath into position. A few seconds, and the free end of the big log chain was securely fastened around the main supports of one corner of the structure.

"All right, all clear!" and the Goliath seemed to gather itself before it plunged forward with a sudden irresistible surge. There was a crash, a tremendous splintering sound, and then the building sagged, one whole corner ripped out.

"Whoopee! Hitch 'er on again," yelled Teepee, rushing back after dragging the mass of debris away. The big man was already making a place ready for attaching the chain to the other corner, and motioned for Teepee to rush the tractor into position.

Once more came the crash as the building was rent apart, and once more the Goliath dragged away a huge portion. With the removal of the support of the second corner the entire upper structure trembled precariously, held only by the stanchions on either side of the center doorway.

Another tug by the Goliath, and with a shattering of timbers the roof crashed to the ground.

DIRECTED by the big man, axes were playing wherever possible, dismembering the debris into huge parts to which the chain of the Goliath was attached. Then, with a snort from the engine, and a wild yell from Teepee, the mass would be hauled to a clear space beyond reach of the flying sparks.

Back and forth, back and forth, lum-

bered the big monster, guided by a little, white haired, white whiskered sprite who seemed to have a store of energy as un-failing as that of the machine itself. In record time a space was cleared in the path of the advancing flames. One ramshackle, shed-like building after another was torn from its foundations and dragged away by the smoothly running machine and its indefatigable master. The flames came close, but they did not leap the gap that had been torn between the tightly packed smaller buildings on that side of the main blaze toward which a slight breeze was impelling the flames. More than one worker was singed and blistered by the scorching heat—but the danger had been overcome.

There was a yell from the spectators, as new jets of water sprang into the air in combat with the fire. The city pressure had again gone on, and with it once again the flames began to be beaten back, bit by bit.

Teepee, relaxed at last, sat on the driver's seat of the Goliath and mopped his exceedingly red and tender face as he watched the blaze being brought to bay.

"Well, old 'un," exclaimed a loud voice beside him, "you and that iron horse of yours sure ripped things up to a fare-fare-you-well."

"I thought I was seeing the devil himself when you came tearing through the front of that building."

Teepee grinned.

"This baby would go through a brick wall just as easily," he boasted, "and as for pulling, it has never been hitched to anything yet that it hasn't persuaded to come with it."

**A**N ALERT YOUNG MAN at that moment made his way through the crowd to the place where the two were talking.

"I'm from the Tribune," he informed, "and I would like to get your verification of what we have estimated to be your loss through the burning of your warehouse."

"Around three hundred thousand dollars, isn't it?"

"About that," the big man agreed. "Most of that will be taken care of by the insurance."

"Thanks, Mr. McConnell," said the reporter, and hastened away.

At the sound of that name Teepee was galvanized to action.

"So *you're* McConnell, are you?" he barked.

"Old 'Hardface' McConnell that won't talk tractors."

The other not denying it, Teepee continued:

"Why, you dinged old fossil, here I've been waiting around in this hick town all day, trying to see you. Now I've found you, and you're going to talk tractors with me or, by Jiminy Godfreys, I'll punch your big nose," and the little man, in his excitement, leaned down from his seat and brandished his fist in the big man's face.

For a moment McConnell was dumb-founded.

And then, second glance at the irate figure as it bounced to the ground and danced angrily before him brought a smile to his face, and then, throwing his head back, he burst into a shout of laughter that drew the gaze of everyone around.

Teepee's face became more red than ever and his big round eyes snapped with rage.

"Laugh at me, will you?" he shouted, waving his fists threateningly at the hilarious McConnell. "You keep me waiting in your blanked old office all day, and then slip out so I can't see you. That's the way you treat *me*, T. P. Perkins, president of the Goliath Tractor Works. I was going to tell you what the Goliath would do, but you wouldn't listen. Now you've *seen* what it can do, and you've seen it in a way you can't overlook. You can't ignore the Goliath any longer. I dare you to try it. I've got you now, and you're not going to give me the slip until you talk turkey with me. I'm going to

stick to you tighter than the skin on your face until I get your name on a contract. D'y'e hear me shoutin'?"

McConnell was still chuckling.

"You old devil, you——"

"'Old' yourself! You ain't no chicken. By Jiminy Godfreys, I'm not so old but I can land on you like a ton of brick if you try to shake me before we have had a talk."

Again McConnell burst into resounding merriment.

"Come on, let's get out of this and talk over this tractor matter a little," he suggested.

"We'll locate a taxi on the edge of the crowd."

"Taxi, hell," said Teepee. "We'll stick by the Goliath."

"Climb on!"

"Say, that'll be good," laughed McConnell and hopped aboard just as Teepee settled himself and eased the tractor forward through the crowd.

Once on the street, away from the mass of spectators, Teepee turned to his passenger.

"Here, now, you run it the rest of the way."

"Simple as a child's toy. And power? Oh, boy!"

McConnell slipped into the vacated seat.

And, following a few simple directions, he urged the Goliath on towards the hotel.

"Easy to operate," explained the little man, as his companion thrilled at the feel of power within the touch of his fingers—"the greatest pulling power of any tractor made."

"And besides, it can be run over paved streets or roads, or over the roughest ground, with equal facility. The special

patent calk, 'The Velvet Foot,' gives all the pull needed on rough ground, while it can be run equally well on pavements without cutting them up, as steel calks always do."

THE DOORMAN at the Salem House was astonished and horrified to see two dishevelled and grimy red-faced men of assorted sizes disembark before the hostelry from the strangest vehicle he had ever beheld.

The doorman was about to intercept them, when he recognized one of them as being none other than Henry F. McConnell.

That was sufficient. He bowed as they passed.

Teepee secured his room key and ushered his companion into the elevator. Arrived at his room he carefully locked the door and thrust the key into his pocket with a flourish that caused the big man another spasm of laughter in answer to the twinkle in his eye.

It was exactly midnight when the night clerk on the desk clanged his bell. "Boy to 648."

"Take up a telegraph blank and call a messenger."

And under his breath he added:

"And tell the porter that Mr. McConnell, old 'Hardface', you know, is up there and wants a bottle of the real stuff, *right away!*"

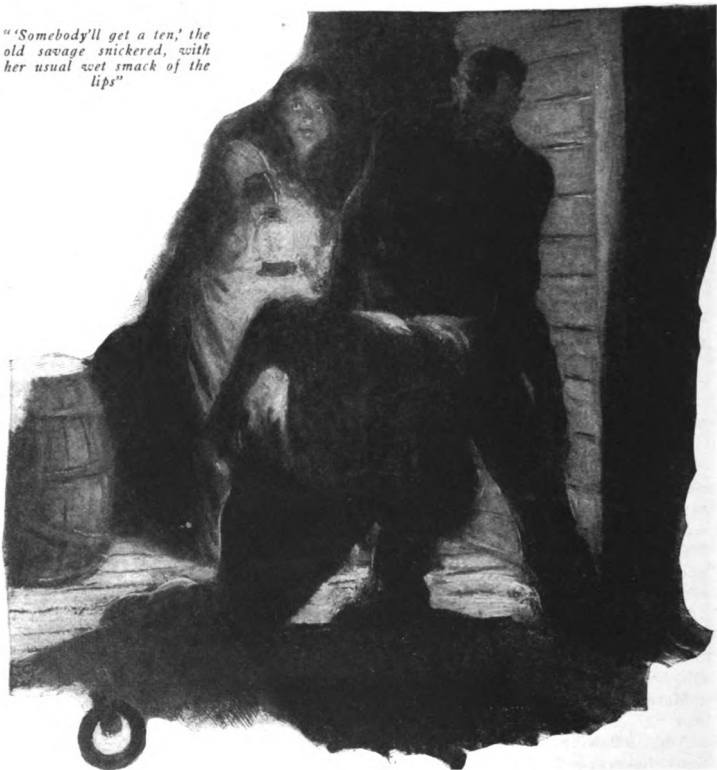
THUS it transpired that in a distant city Mr. Andrew Willys was called from his bed at one o'clock in the morning to receive a wire.

"Got interview," it read.

"Sold 150 Goliaths. Am staying over for golf game tomorrow with McConnell."

"Will collect bet when I see you."

*"'Somebody'll get a ten,' the old savage snickered, with her usual wet smack of the lips"*



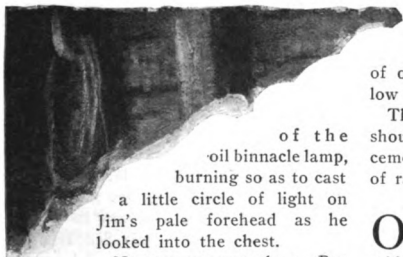
# THE SEA GIRDLES

By Kenneth Perkins

Illustrations by John Curry

**I**N THE LOWEST FLOOR of the many-roomed old shack, there was a chest, the lock of which Jim Dabbins broke open, expecting to find bone-necklaces and pearls from the South Seas. The room was musty, damp, and the dark-

ness helped the boy to believe that he was in the hold of a brig. There was the rankness of the mud at ebb tide, and a stale, salty odor, as of winds being imprisoned in the little place for many years. Added to that there was the scent



of the  
oil binnacle lamp,  
burning so as to cast  
a little circle of light on  
Jim's pale forehead as he  
looked into the chest.

No treasure was there. But there were a few ledgers, stained yellow, which told of the 'Frisco Sea Grill in the days of its glory. He read for a while through the faded blots and the yellowish spotted pages until certain things caught his eye. Old Captain Potts had thrived; that was certain. There were entries supposed to be mysterious, but ridiculously plain to a youth as sharp as Jim Dabbins: "To Crater Jones for Nightmares, \$250," or else, "\$250 for jute, gum, wax." That was easy.

It was only after a long perusal of the damp, wrinkled books that he noticed a constantly recurrent entry which for the life of him he could not understand. Repeatedly a woman by the name of Oahu Nell had been credited with ten dollars for pilotage, fishhooks, dredging, quayage and a dozen other items. Despite the incongruity of the amount of services this Oahu Nell offered, she never received more than the fixed compensation of ten dollars.

The room, littered freely with hawsers, fenders, row-locks and mussed-up tackles, was built underneath the pier, forming a sort of hanging cabin. It was dark and doweled like a ship so that people referred to the place as the "Hold." In old days a landing-float had been anchored directly below it, and a companion ladder came up through an opening, or stair-well, in the middle of the room. The hatches over this well were bolted—without, Dabbins reflected, sufficient security. He decided to have a carpenter nail the place up. There was no use for the companionway now, as

the float had been abandoned long since because of the swirl of the sea under the pier, and the danger of one of the rocks, which was dry at low water.

The hatches over the companionway should be boarded up permanently, even cemented, Dabbins resolved, on account of rats.

OAHU NELL was a half-breed Polynesian the size of a man, who at middle age still had a wealth of straight black hair falling over her fat shoulders. Dabbins had not heard her enter because of her inveterate habit of walking around the old hotel in her stocking feet. When certain ships were in port she civilized herself sufficiently to put on a pair of Manila hemp slippers.

"I'm tellin' you to clear out'n here," she said to young Dabbins. "They's goin' to be a storm and—"

"Now, look here, Oahu, if you go playing any of your crazy pranks on me while I'm trying to build over this place—"

"It ain't a crazy prank, and I'm advisin' you because I like you. I'm tellin' you straight to shag out'n here quick, or you'll get beat up."

"You can't scare me out. This house has changed since the old days."

"You mean you ain't afeard of gettin' your skull broke?"

"No."

Oahu smiled a broad, idolatrous smile. When a man showed fight he belonged to her clan.

She defied him.

"We shall see," she purred huskily.

Dabbins went above to the first floor, which was the level of the wharf on which the old hotel stood. What he wanted immediately was fresh air. The musty air and the suggestion of mildewed coprax in the "Hold" of the old building had stifled him. And he wanted to get away from Oahu Nell. He liked her when others were around, but he had a vague fear concerning that smile. Anything but to be alone with her when she smiled—at him!

WHEN Dabbins went out on the pier, he looked up at the old rickety combination of saloon, sailor's boarding house and oyster joint, which he had been engaged to rehabilitate. Several old salts, their reefers buttoned close, came out of the dark doors, crossed the weed-slimed wharf and disappeared in the dusk across the long saloon-dotted moor beneath Fillmore Hill. From there, Dabbins knew, they would take the Union Street car for the Barbary Coast. These boarders leaving reminded Dabbins of rats leaving a ship.

One reason for this peculiar feeling was the fact that the cloud banks standing over for Mount Tamalpais were black, with the winds hanging in the northwest beyond the Golden Gate. In the lee of the point gulls began wailing and screaming.

"Old Nell knows a think or two," Dabbins said to himself. "It's a wise man who takes her warning, so many a tar has told me before this, but I'll not take her warning this once. I will spend the evening with Oahu Nell and the little girl. The girl will play checkers with me, and Nell will cook us bananas with a hunk of pig and miti, and maybe I'll take a drink of her damned bino when the storm hits."

Presently he added:

"If there is to be a fight, the little girl must be taken care of."

Oahu Nell lived in the seaward corner of the house with her young mistress. The latter was a girl from the South Seas—of a French mother, and a father who before his death was a trader from Seattle.

A little sitting-room haunted by the older tars when the girl's step-father was home, opened on the Bay. The clouds were now wiping away Tamalpais, which bore northwest, as well as Alcatraz Island, which was close aboard—so close that in fine weather you could see the prisoners working. Inside the sill of the window there was a water-logged wheel with a rusty binnacle. This made Dab-

bins think he was in a deck-house, and because of the lowering curtain of fog and darkness and the stretch of black water he might have been on a ship in the stream standing out for Honolulu.

THIS was the scene in which Dabbins found Hallie. It was a scene where she belonged. A slim girl she was, who seemed in her own way to be a remembrance of the South Sea Islands—as much of their savagery and beauty as the carved toa spears in the room, and the lizard handled clubs. A wealth of silken shadowy hair was done up with a jade comb, and she wore a bone necklace that brought a tinge to her tanned throat and shoulders. More of the wild than Oahu Nell, yet frail, Dabbins observed, with a fear lurking in her eyes.

But Hallie affirmed that she was unperturbed about Oahu's warning. Hallie would not under any circumstances leave the house. It belonged to her step-father who was away on a voyage, and, to run away from the house he had bought for her was ridiculous—particularly if her only reason was because of some hoodoo brought up by Oahu Nell.

"I don't like you having anything to do with this servant, Oahu—you are young," Dabbins said to Hallie. "She is a left-over of the Shanghai days—the Chink-den days."

Hallie's laugh rippled back: "She won't harm me. She cares nothing for me, and with you here I feel safe."

"Safe from what, child?"

The youth caught her up.

"It isn't important. And it's nothing to bother with. It happened when I lived in Tonga with my step-father. There was a sea-captain there—with a trumper. His name was Bill Herzog and he liked me and all that. He came around and would eat raw fish with his big, tattooed paws."

"He liked you!" the boy echoed, horrified.

"And my step-father wanted him to keep clear. He brought me to 'Frisco to live in this place and help run it. He

was thinking this would free me of Bill Herzog."

"Why didn't he kill him?"

"Afraid."

"Oahu Nell's talking of a fight!"

The boy jumped to the final conclusion.

"Yes, Bill Herzog has followed me here."

"And the fight?"

"Oahu says the skipper takes what he wants. He must have heard that my step-father has left 'Frisco on another voyage and he must think now that I have no protector—"

"All you have to do is to go away. I will take you—anywhere."

"This is 'Frisco. There are laws," the girl replied. "This is not the Fijis where a man is his own law."

"There's no difference."

"The police."

"He'll have to fight me," Dabbins said quietly. "A woman loves the man who fights for her—here as there."

"I'll stay."

THE FIRST FLASH of lightning reminded the two that they had been talking in the growing dark and that their cheeks were flushed. Thunder crashed in upon them and a blast shivered the old timbers of the house. Again Dabbins had the vision of the old salts leaving the wharf—leaving, he thought once more, with the prescience of rats forsaking a ship before its sinking.

Dabbins joined the girl in supper. Nell ate her own meal in the kitchen, but she could be heard as distinctly as if she were in the same room with the others. Having a few drinks of her anise-flavored gin—a concoction which she dressed up to resemble the bino, dear to her heart—she picked up her ukulele and came into the little sitting-room.

As was her wont after eating, she reclined on a couch near the stove, where a mattress of kapok floss served the flabby South Sea queen for a throne. She mixed up her chanties and missionary hymns, singing out of a mouth generally

half-full of candy. The ginger candy from Chinatown she ate somewhat in the quantities of a horse eating bran mash.

But all the while, despite the rather sensuous cast of Oahu's life, there was a sentimentality as sugary as her diet, and as dramatic as her past. A romance was burning before her like the old heathen cannibal fires. Here was a ship in storm, a lover and a beautiful girl. And a glorious fight was coming—the sort of fight dearer to her heart than the sugar-cane which was her meat, and the bino which was her drink. The fight was her life. The fight of a man for a woman, which she anticipated with a rising fever, was her soul.

"I got a secret I been keepin'," she finally divulged, softly fingering the ukulele.

The two lovers who had been sitting in a corner holding hands and waiting, looked up.

"Bill Herzog's ship made through the Gate before the gale set in."

Dabbins jumped up.

"Then he will be here any minute."

"A wise old master—shoaling his water afore the kona blows!"

"Where is his ship?" the boy cried, running to the window and scowling futilely into the pitch black of the storm.

"The brig's got a foul bill of health," Oahu scraped her pudgy fingers over a merrier chord. "That's why the skipper ain't been here yet. She's anchored in quarantine with Angel Island close aboard. This I hear from old Barneson at the chandler's. The ship's foul."

"Thank God for that!" from the girl who had defied fate by staying that night.

Oahu opened her big sleepy eyes.

"But he'll make a fine lover for you!" she objected. "Everyone's afraid of Bill Herzog! A giant he is—with a snake tattooed about his leather neck and hands. Great iron hands," said Nell, "with bracelets tattooed and hair. And his skin so thick that the tattoo spreads dim when the sea's runnin' high. There's no man that ain't afraid of them hands of his."

"And you mean to say you'd let our

little Hallie marry a man like that!" Dabbins cried.

"She must marry a fighter. A woman who is not mated to a fighter becomes like a man herself, which is a bad thing. For she must do her own killing then—as I have done in my day."

"I am going to marry Jim Dabbins," the girl put in excitedly.

Nell pursed her lips sceptically.

"Jim is all righto. Pretty. He'd be the man for you—exceptin' look at his hands: not a blow could he strike—"

"I'll fight Bill Herzog!" the lover cried, reddening.

Nell's eye glowed. There was a glint of pleasure in the muddy brown.

"Not Herzog! You're afraid, little boy.

"Way down to the Marqueens, when Bill Herzog had a headache, old Nuku Moana scraped his skull so that the devil in his head would be free. But instead seven devils found their way in and stayed there, men said, when the hole was healed."

"We are not afraid of devils, are we?" Hallie asked, nestling unabashed into the arms of her lover.

THE fat old savage, feeling the bite of the wind and having no arms to warm her, drew the blanket about her beefy shoulders. She rolled a cigarette, twisting the paper as she had done in the old days when she dried her own tobacco over the flame and twisted a pandanus leaf about it for a smoke.

"I hear once as how old Bill Herzog followed a girl from port to port until she threw herself in the surf down to Samoa—preferrin' the salt blue sea to his hands!"

"Rot! You're playing with us. This is a civilized time!" the boy objected, eager to believe his own words. "Things don't happen like that. Nell, you've taken too much kava. Better sleep."

"Sleep tonight? Not me! It's many years since I seen a man fight for his woman."

"But he's held over at Angel Island, you said!" the girl cried.

"Old Skipper Herzog never let a foul ship keep him from going ashore."

"The police—" the girl gasped incoherently.

"We're all crazy!"

Jim held the girl so that she winced.

"The idea of our trembling here, because of some bully from the end of the seas. I'll use this on him!"

He picked up a little bone dagger which was inlaid with shark's teeth. The two women were looking at his white, delicate, civilized hand, and Oahu burst in a roar of barbaric, salivary laughter.

"When he comes, I will meet him myself, and I will say to him: 'Bill Herzog,' I'll say, 'you are a low-down bully, and a pirate. You think you are in the South Seas, with your damned cannibals eating missionaries, but you aren't. You are here, claiming my girl—the girl who has given me her heart. Now, if you so much as bat your eye at her, I'll stretch you cold and throw you out for the gulls and the seals of the Gate!'"

"Dam' fine!"

Oahu clapped her pudgy hands.

"I will say to him, 'Bill Herzog,'—"

"No, I myself will talk to him first!" the girl interrupted. "I will say, 'Bill Herzog, you are in a free country, where no woman will take a husband against her will. And you are in a country where you cannot take the mate of another man. This man here whose name is—'"

THE THUNDER choked her off and the old house rocked in the storm as if it had been a ship, grounding and crashing from stem to stern. The faces of the youth and his clinging girl paled in the lightning and Nell settled back comfortably like a lady who removes her hat and eats candy during the overture of a play.

The lull between the thunder peals was far more nerve-racking than the howl of the wind or the rattling of the old house. In one of these silences the three people

in the little fore-castle room heard someone pounding on the hall-desk downstairs like a drunken sailor calling for a night's lodging.

Nell's heart leapt within her as she saw the little girl jump frantically to her feet and circle the room blindly as if for a hiding place. The boy's face was ashen. This old Nell noticed, and a qualm went through her: perhaps after all there would not be a fight and she would have to give her mistress up to the stronger, heroic man!

"You're a child-man," she said to Dabbins. "You're all right till you hear the knocking on the desk—with big tattooed fists. And then you're small. Then you ain't *loud* any more. You stand up and let your woman hide away in her little room there! You're little! You're a child-man!"

**B**ILL HERZOG repeated his impatient call below, and Oahu Nell knew that neither the girl nor her lover would go out to meet him as they had boasted. It was Nell herself who must go below and meet the ship captain. She lumbered down the rickety old stair-case and looked into the front hall. The acetylene jet which had been turned up to a noisy flare guttered in the wind. Shadows wagged across Bill Herzog—a giant, whose bull-like torso, all the bigger because of his pea-jacket, tapered to a great neck and a handsome head. To Nell's eyes there was not a fault in the picture—not even the rusty hair or the thing in the corner of his mouth, which looked like a black growth—his cigar.

Nell fervently hoped that the conflict which was the soul of her drama would come. Here at least was a man who would fight. But his adversary, the fair, spiritual youth who was waiting upstairs—he was the kind, Nell thought, who would call the police. His girl could not love him for that!

"It's old Skipper Herzog!" she breathed worshipfully. "They told me you was

comin'. And upstairs they's someone waitin' for you."

"Where's everybody? What's the place so dark for?" Herzog asked before he recognized the woman.

"The decks are cleared, bein' as I expected you."

"Who the hell are you?"

"You don't remember old Oahu Nell?"

"Oahu Nell!"

The skipper came to the stairs and scowled up to her so that she saw the tattooed snake on his neck. "I remember they used to keep a girl here who sang for the men and did the hula for them.

"Old Oahu Nell who took some of them away in the holds of ships! Sure! Old Oahu, the crimp—old Shanghai Nell. Sure I remembers!"

"But, God, what a hulk you've growed into!"

Nell laughed wetly as the skipper went on:

"I come here to get a woman. Her dad down to the Fijis promised her to me and then sneaked off with her to 'Frisco! A little girl with green eyes. How about it? Come now!"

"She's here—waiting for you up above."

Herzog bounded after the woman, and on the way up the old stairs, she asked him:

"Thought your ship was foul!"

"Rowed over to Tiburon in the fog to Jake Hennesey's. He wasn't there so I sneaked on the ferry. There ain't a soul in the world that don't think I'm snoozin' in my cabin aboard ship."

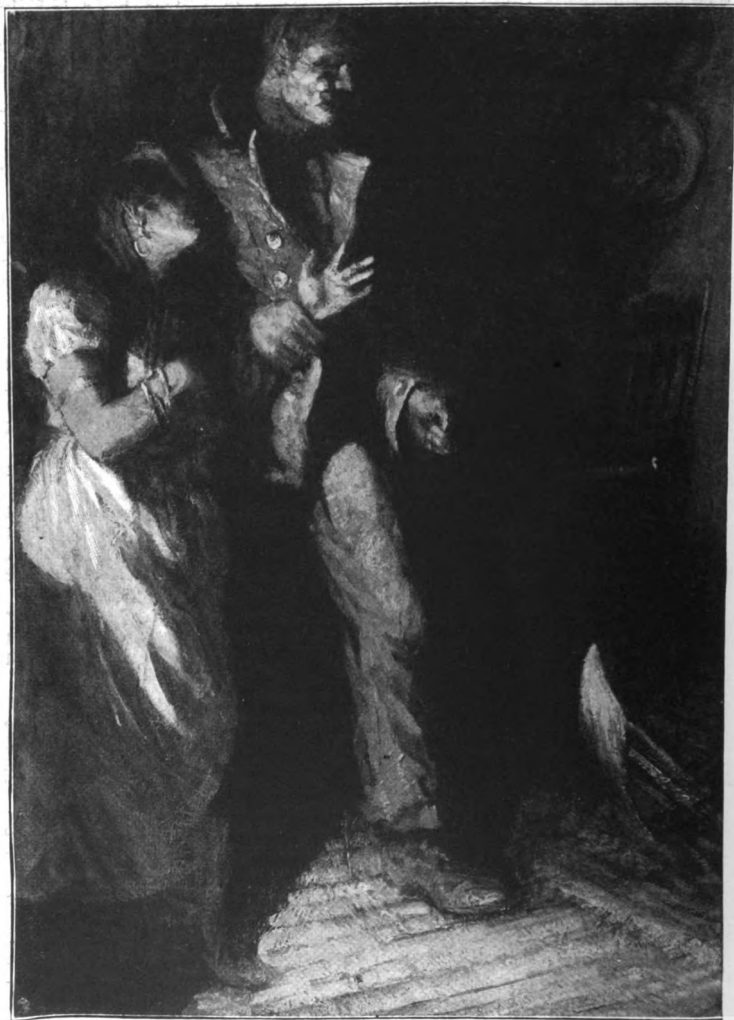
He followed Nell down the hall into the little room where Dabbins was waiting.

"Take off your jacket and I'll be fetchin' you a little gin," Nell said.

Dabbins looked up at the man. It seemed that the skipper filled the entire room and that Dabbins himself was a little bird fluttering in a corner.

"Who the hell's this?"

"It's the girl's boy-friend."



"Hallie came out and ran to the prostrate body of Dabbins. 'Yah! Zowie!'"



old Bill said. . . . "There you are, my little green-eyed sea-girl!"

HERZOG'S big peppered jaw dropped, and as he stared at the youth's white face he suddenly broke out into a laugh. The laugh displeased Nell. She knew that the real hero of her romance—who was the youth, had proved too insignificant—too laughably small.

"Yes, this is Hallie's mate," the boy said, in a small tight voice. "I am her—her mate. I—well, I love this—girl—whose mate I am."

It was not exactly the glorious challenge the boy had promised to make, but there was a note in it not without its dramatic possibilities. Oahu instead of going for her gin waited expectantly.

"Shag the hell out'n here, kid. I'm goin' to be busy," was Bill Herzog's answer.

He turned his back on the boy and addressed Nell:

"Now, then, where's the woman?"

"I say, look here!" the youth went on.

His voice was not so choked, now that he had actually heard himself speak. The fact that the giant would take no notice of him had softened the loud-beating of his heart.

"You can't see this girl. She has promised to be my wife. You must not stay here. You must go away—you—"

He had walked out of his corner and Bill Herzog turned around slowly, wondering if anything in the words should be considered seriously. He evidently decided that there was nothing. Out of the corners of his dark squinting eyes he looked at the little frightened bird. At the same time he tried to light the cigar butt in the corner of his mouth. This was a feat: in fact, he could do little else but burn the hair in his nostrils and sniff—a considerably more annoying incident than the little bird.

"Hurry up and get the girl, dammit! You said she was awaitin' for me. Tell her Bill Herzog, master of the Sally Jones, is come for her."

"No, no! I told you, you must fight me first. I am here to protect the girl!"

Nell's heart began a slow beating.

Here was the best thrill she had had for many a month. It was after all a fight! Bill Herzog could not ignore that.

But he did. He laughed.

The boy took a step toward him. He stopped, looking into the skipper's face; he saw the mild threat gleaming in the corners of those eyes. It seemed to say: "You've got a little spirit, kid, but you seem to have made a mistake. You are talking to the master of the Sally Jones. Think again before you buzz into my ear any louder."

THE BOY read the threat and paused for a few brief seconds. Nell saw that he was pausing merely to get the balance of his feet. The next instant he hurled all his weight behind a blow which caught the giant squarely in the mouth.

Herzog's big neck merely tightened so that the tendons writhed. To Nell it seemed that the snake on his neck had come to life. The cigar spattered with its sparks—half in his mouth and half against his chest. This he brushed away coolly and then, as Dabbins made his second more furious onslaught, the skipper grabbed him by one of his shoulders and hurled him bodily through the door of the hall.

Oahu rushed into her room as the skipper came towards her.

"I'll git the girl, Bill. I'll git her!"

The fight pleased Nell—there had been a new thrill—a thrill which she could not remember ever having experienced before. In the old days it had always been a fight between two big men. This kind of a combat where one was small—hopelessly small—and was fighting for more than his life—seemed to her to have a very pleasant new element in it.

As soon as Oahu reached the girl's room, Hallie came out and ran to the prostrate body of Dabbins.

"Yah! Zowie!" old Bill said, after he had wiped his mouth with the back of his hand. There you are, my little green-eyed sea-girl! Look here!"

He went to her and took her hand.

"Look at me, I ask you. See where I've sailed to for my little lady of the jungles—clear to 'Frisco Bay where it's blowin' knoas all winter long!"

"Take your hand from the girl!" Dabbins cried as he struggled to his feet.

He wiped the blood from his forehead as Herzog wiped from his own mouth the smirched ashes.

"Take your hand from her! She's mine and I'm going to kill you before you can so much as touch her hand!"

THE BOY rushed fiercely at the huge form looming above him. He pounded against the man's chest with his white fists until he felt a huge sledgehammer blow crash into his jaw.

Nell clapped her hands excitedly: the fight now was great—as great as she had hoped, for Dabbins was again lifting himself up. If he could only stay up and pound away!

Hallie had fled into Nell's arm, covering her face. Her only hope was that there would not be murder. Even the thought of her lover killing a man horrified her. But to Oahu Nell a stirring murder was the only solution to the romance. She burst out in an excited laugh when the boy picked up a chair.

Dabbins, who felt that the floor was heaving like a deck, looked around blankly for the dark towering form. When he was sure he knew exactly where it was he hurled the chair and it crashed half against the window pane, half against Herzog's shoulder.

"Get the girl's hat and things," Herzog shouted to Oahu Nell. "I'm goin' to get her out'n this hole!"

"Might she prefers the boy who fought for her!" was Nell's sudden revelation.

"Look here, Nell. Don't you go again me or I'll have you sent up to San Quentin for some of your old scores."

"I ain't goin' agin you, Bill! Nobody ever dast went agin you!"

But then she added ecstatically:

"Exceptin' this here boy! He dast!"

Old Nell had found her romance at

last. She felt the triumph of it coursing through her veins like the kava which was her youth-blood. But with the outcome she was not at all satisfied. It was paramount that her romance should have a happy ending. The boy who had fought against the giant must win the fight and live happily ever after!

Nell would see to it!

Bill Herzog's voice crashed into her thoughts.

"Shag along there and get the girl's things! I want to haul out. And while I'm waitin' I'm goin' to kick the life out'n this dam' landlubber's carcass."

"Don't kick him," Nell counseled calmly.

She had made up her own mind as to the outcome and from this point on she spoke with a demure assurance. "I'll fetch a bit of hawser-laid, and we can use a bowline with a bight on him."

"Sure," Herzog agreed. "He's laid cold. Won't trouble us none if we bouse him taut. It'll hold him for an hour, and I can't be leavin' a murder behind, unless—" he turned to Nell—"unless I finish you too—"

This was a suggestion that Nell hurry out for the rope.

Hallie clung to her lover until the skipper pulled her away, whispering to her huskily to do as she was told and "everything would come out all right."

"It don't look like the girl will go with you," Nell remarked when she returned.

Herzog grunted stupidly as he tied Dabbins' feet.

"I'll take her to Chink Peter's place on Front Street. We'll get her aboard a smack and cross the Bay for Angel Island when the storm clears."

"But the girl will fight you," Nell cautioned. "And people will see. When you are out on the pier the arclight shines down on you like the moon at Waikiki."

"You won't fight me! Will you, little lady!" Bill cajoled. "You wouldn't fight the master of the Sally Jones what's sailed all the way from—"

"Yes, I will fight!" the girl cried im-

petuously. "If you don't untie my boy I'll fight and scream and call for the police."

"There you are," Nell remarked placidly. "I advise you, Bill—watch the girl or she'll give you the slip!"

HERZOG followed Hallie into her little room, where he swept the bureau of its feminine properties—hairnets, cologne, powder—into a little handbag.

"No, you ain't goin' to fight ole Bill Herzog!" he laughed. "You're comin' with him like a good little sea-queen. Now then, what else'll I pack in here—everything you need—'cause you ain't never comin' back."

"I'm not going with you, Bill Herzog," the girl cried. "I'm going to fight you."

"For what use? No matter how many times you fight and run away little queen—I'll foller to the ends of the seas!"

"And Jim Dabbins will help me! If you take me away, he will kill you!"

Herzog laughed.

"Him? With his white hands? You think he could kill anybody? Look at these here hands of mine, little queen! Them's the hands what'll kill, and what'll perfect you from now on!"

Bill himself looked down at his great fists. Yes, the tattoo had spread and turned dull with the cold weather. The girl should see those tattooed bracelets in the tropics when the red and the purple brightened! She would love him then!

Meanwhile Oahu Nell had decided the fight had not come out with the happy ending necessary to her conception of romance. As soon as Herzog had disappeared in Hallie's little room Oahu untied Dabbins' feet.

some dreadful thing. But there was a much more definite perplexity in his mind—something which had lurked there all that day, he remembered reading in a stained, water-swollen book about certain payments; ten dollars over and over again to Oahu Nell. It was about this he puzzled when he first regained consciousness. What was that ten dollars for?

"He's taking Hallie with him now, kid," Oahu was whispering. "Kill him! The 'hold's the place for him—and the hatch-way. Throw him to the gulls, like you promised you would. And then maybe some poor crimp'll get ten dollars for finding a drowned seaman!"

A change came over the blank dazed face of Jim Dabbins as the savage old woman was holding his face up to hers. A flood of light seemed to break in upon him, solving the riddle of the ledger with a single miraculous flash.

"You did that in the old days, Nell!" he said aloud. "And you never got caught—"

"Shut your mouth, you little—"

Herzog had heard the voice and came blundering into the room. Dabbins immediately jumped to his feet. He backed away to the door, and picked up the first thing that came into his hands—Oahu's gin-bottle. This he hurled at the giant skipper. Herzog ducked easily, but the bottle crashed against the low ceiling and splattered over his neck. The skipper stumbled across the room in a blind rage, overturning a chair, hurling the little table aside. When he crossed the floor Dabbins slipped out of the door and bounded down the dark stairs. Herzog followed, roaring out that this time he would finish the little land-rat once and for all.

SHE threw some gin into the boy's mouth and he got up staring at her. As he came to himself several confused ideas flocked to his mind. There had been a long evening waiting—waiting for he could not quite remember what. It was a tense biding for the coming of

DABBINS fled out of the dim halo of light which the gas-jet cast on the first floor, and with Herzog at his heels, he sprang down the companion-way which led to the "Hold." The skipper paused a brief moment to look down into the blackness and then, as soon as his

eyes dilated to the dark, he saw the top rung of the ladder. The boy was at the bottom, and the sound of his feet on the creaking floor was distinctly audible. The skipper leapt down the ladder, felt cautiously for the floor and ducked into a corner where he fumbled in his pocket for a match.

"I got you where I want you now!" he yelled at the boy. "You're trapped!"

He could not tell exactly where Dabbins was, but he heard the clank of hinges and the movement of boards. As the skipper lit the match a gust of wind came up suddenly. It seemed to Herzog as if it had started at his very feet, whistling up around his head like a wild scream.

"Where the hell are you!" he shouted with a new frenzy.

"Over here!" the boy's voice came with a ring. "Come after me. I'm waiting for those fists of yours."

THE SKIPPER rushed forward. He knew exactly where the voice had come from—a distance of scarcely ten feet. It was a pitch dark corner, except for a faint glare which came up from the middle of the floor like sea-fire. Herzog groped for the shadow of the boy but his foot found no hold. Instead of catching Jim Dabbins, who had reached out tauntingly at him, the skipper found he had stepped into the empty air. He doubled up and tried to whirl around like a cat that has been dropped feet upwards. He made a windmill of his arms and clawed at the green slippery spile. For a moment he held, then fell an immeasurable distance into the tide, which was churning up in a tangle of kelp and sea-girdles and foam.

Dabbins waited a few moments in a daze, sinking to his knees. He swept the floor with his hand until he found one of the hatch-planks. This he tried to drag over the well as the gale howled up and the salt spray stung his eyes. In another moment a lantern wagged down through the ceiling of the hold.

"Come down here, Oahu," Dabbins called. "Help me clap this hatching down; the bolts are rusty."

"Somebody'll get a ten," the old savage snickered with her usual wet smack of the lips. "In the old days you could drop a souse through the well and many was the skipper who'd give a ten for him alive."

She came down the ladder, her lantern flooding the "Hold" with light.

Hallie's voice floated down from above. "Where is Jim?"

Jim went to the ladder, climbed up and reached the girl, who leaned down through the opening so that her curls fell about his head.

"Or if the souse fell into the water at ebb, so that the rocks got him!" Oahu's voice was droning on, as she bolted up the hatchway. "Or at flood and the weeds got him—the Port would come through with a ten just the same for the body. . . . It was a safe game—"

"Where is he—Herzog!" Hallie cried. "He ain't been here!" Oahu snapped back.

"He fell through the well while chasing me," Jim said. "The sea-girdles have him."

"I tell you he ain't been here!" Oahu repeated resolutely as she took her lantern and climbed up after the other two.

"Bill Herzog—not been here—what do you mean?"

"He wasn't here all evening," Oahu said. "It was his ghost. His ghost came wanderin' in from his old ship which was heavin' in the storm."

WHEN THEY RETURNED to the fore-castle room in the top story, Oahu prepared some coffee, flavored with the usual anise-seed nectar. She was too proud of her old vocation to keep quiet.

"The fishermen—they'll find him," she said. "But no man will ever know how Jim Dabbins saved his mate. Herzog is gone from us—he will go further—for as I remember in the old times, a souse would haul over for the Golden Gate on the third day, maybe gainin' Baker's Beach or Seal Rocks on the half-ebb."

THE peace and perfume of the old garden seemed to Nickson Mills too good to be true. So often he had dreamed of it and then waked up in the midst of things too bad *not* to be true!

Now he sat and smoked, content because he did not wake up. The fragrance of his Egyptian cigarette mingled in a delicate, friendly way with the fragrance of simple American flowers—roses, and grass pinks, lilies and lavender.

"This time it's real," he thought, "and it's going to last!"

The sound of a footstep on gravel was a jarring note, but it was only Bartin tramping along a short cut from the dining-room door to the summer-house. Probably old Bart thought it time to take in the breakfast tray. As if time mattered here! It didn't, and shouldn't. That was why one had come to Mills Valley Farm.

"Cablegram, sir, reply paid," said the hard-bitten, weather-beaten man who had served Mills before the war, joined up and served with him in the war, and would probably go on serving him till the next war.

"Damn!" grunted Mills, as he took the envelope from its small tray. "Why can't I be let alone? See here, Bartin, what if you throw this thing in the fire? Then I shouldn't have received it, should I?"

"They'd only keep on sending duplicates, sir, till you did receive one," replied Bartin, in his pessimistic way. Mills tore open the envelope.

The message was a long one—two

## The SILENCE OF

By C. N. and A. M. Williamson

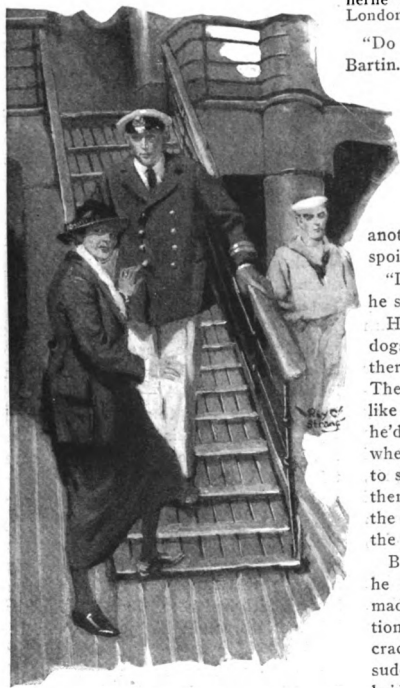


*"The best we could do was to shadow her all the way"*

sheets. He glanced at the end of the second one for the signature. "Tallman," and an address in The Temple, London.

# JENNY MILLS

Illustrations by Ray Strang



Mills couldn't remember knowing anyone of the name of Tallman. Yet it echoed with a faint familiarity. . . . Lawyers inhabited the Temple. Back he turned to the first page, and read:

"Obtained your American address from Embassy as business urgent. You may know of me as Duke of Ullswater's solicitor. Have great favor ask of you as distant relative of late Duchess and her sister. Miss Mills has suddenly and secretly left England with valuable family jewels, heirlooms belonging present Duke. We under-

stand she is in Virginia and to save unpleasant proceedings family scandal we beg you see young lady ascertain true facts persuade her return heirlooms immediately. Hope you will consent for Miss Mills' sake and communicate result by cable our expense. Tre-

herne Tallman, King's Bench Walk, Temple, London."

"Do you wish to answer, sir?" enquired Bartin. "Boy's waiting."

"No-o!" Mills returned absent mindedly. "I won't answer yet. The boy can go."

Bartin's step grated once more on the gravel. Mills was alone. The fragrance of the flowers was as sweet as ever. He could light another cigarette. But everything was spoiled.

"I might have known it wouldn't last!" he said to himself.

He had worked like a dog—like twenty dogs—in the American Embassy over there in London till we went into the war. Then he'd fought—not like a dog, but like a man, he hoped. And in the trenches he'd thought of Valley Farm, and how when the war was over he'd go there, just to sit still, look at the flowers, and smell them; and hear no louder sounds than the hum of the bees or—well, at loudest the song of a bird.

But when the war was over, of course he couldn't go to Valley Farm. They made him stay with the Army of Occupation. Then at last, when his health cracked up after the news of his father's sudden death in the Wall Street office, he'd been freed to return to his native land.

But not to Virginia. Oh, no! there'd been wearing, tearing months of settling business, seeing to his own interests, and putting them for a while into the hands of his father's partner.

This was his second day at Valley Farm, and now—

Nickson Mills (his friends called him "Nick," or "Young Nick"; his father had been "Old Nick") picked up the cable-

gram again. . . . What a thing to ask him to do! But, if Jenny Mills were really at Valley House, he supposed he must at least try to see her.

He hoped to goodness she wasn't there. They couldn't expect him to ransack the United States for the girl, even if he was her forty-second cousin.

As for the Ullswater jewels, there must be some absurd mistake. He hadn't seen Jenny often, and not once since 1917. That was nearly five years ago, and she'd been a "flapper"—not a day over fifteen, and more interested in a new bulldog puppy than in a new young man. Nick recalled that he'd been impressed by the child, the first day when they met at luncheon in Berkely Square in an Easter holiday of hers: something brave, and "upstanding" about the creature, he'd thought; not modern. Unless Jenny Mills had lost her mind, she'd never turn jewel stealer.

Nick doubted if she would remember him. Quite likely not. Time is long between fifteen and nineteen! But Jenny Mills's face, clearly photographed in his brain, now uncovered itself, sorted itself out from other old imprints, dusky, pale, gazing from between straight curtains of black hair . . . chin held high, on a long white throat; no smile, no noise, no slang, no "jazz" about that girl!

But, though she hardly spoke and didn't move much she made you think of her. You wanted her to glance up so that you could see what the deep shadow of her lashes hid. When she did look up, what eyes! They were unlike the eyes of other young girls you met, though they were innocent enough. Eyes of Fate, they seemed.

All this, though Jenny Mills at fifteen wasn't a beauty, like her dazzling sister, the Duke of Ullswater's second wife. The Duke, whose first marriage had brought him pots of money, had chosen the Virginia girl, Mary Mills, for her looks. She hadn't chosen him for the same reason; nobody could. As a child she had wanted to "be a queen, or at least a duchess."

Some American girls are still like that, you know, even in these days! But Mary was married before the war.

Nick Mills's branch of the family was an obscure one until Old Nick made several millions, and kept enough sentiment concerning his ancestors to make an offer for Valley House. The "*real* Mills" were poor and couldn't afford to keep the place up, but they wouldn't sell. Nothing would induce them to sell. They did part with the Farm, however, for ten times what it was worth; and people said that with the spoils Mrs. Mills had contrived to "float" Mary in England, and land a duke.

THE HOUSE was only a mile away from the Farm, and the properties—which once had been united—adjoined. Even if Nick had arrived two weeks ago instead of two days, however, he would not have gone to look at Valley House. Nobody lived there now, except colored caretakers, an old husband and wife (unless Jenny *had* come!)—but it would have seemed like prying, to go and stare at dilapidations which his father's money had not been allowed to stop. His own caretakers at Valley Farm were Northerners and wouldn't think of picking up gossip. Or, if they had heard things, they wouldn't tell him. Pondering the situation, Nick Mills sighed, lit another cigarette, and strolled towards the farmhouse which had been "done up" for him. His hands were in his pockets, but the burden of life was on his back.

In the smoking room he sent for Mrs. Bean, the reticent Martin's equally reticent aunt. . . . No, she'd heard no news of a young lady at Valley House. She'd heard no talk of Valley House at all.

"No good cabling that chap Tallman that I'll act in the matter, or won't till I learn whether the girl's there," Mills decided. "She probably isn't."

And he thought that he *hoped* she wasn't. Yet when he had gone round by the road to the main entrance of Valley House, he began to be queerly excited. If he enquired for Miss Mills, and was

told that she was in England, it would be soothing, but—it would be very flat. Then, suddenly, he came face to face with a girl and a white bulldog in the green gloom of the vast colonial porch.

THE GIRL had been seated in a huge, old-fashioned rocking chair, with the bulldog in use as a footstool. At the sound of a step, up jumped the slim figure in black, like a trapped thing wild to escape, and the dog spraddled to its feet, silent, too well trained to spring save on command, but with reddening lids, and a short neck swelling in its thick, spiked collar.

It was too late, however, for the girl to get away and drag the dog with her. The first flash of immense dark eyes was hostile to the intruder. He was on the lower step before the door could be reached, and thus became a fact which must be faced.

Nick smiled, snatching off his hat, and recognition softened the girl's frown. She hated his coming, Nick was sure of that.

But then, she was relieved that he was not a stranger.

"Oh—it's Mr. Mr. Nickson Mills!" she stammered. "I—didn't know you were—down here. Please don't mind Winston Churchill. He's not so fierce as he looks—unless I tell him to be. Perhaps you remember him as a puppy."

"I do: I remember you named him because of a speech Churchill made when the war began, likening England to a bulldog, that 'could breathe while it held on,'" laughed Mills. "I've only been at the Farm two days," he added, bounding up the steps and holding out his hand. "How nice that you've come to this part of the world. But—I say—are we to call each other 'Miss' and 'Mr.'? We weren't so deadly formal in London. You were 'Jenny' and I was 'Nick'—"

"It's a long time ago," hedged the girl; but she gave him rather a wistful smile. "Still—I don't mind! Who told you I was here?"

NICK wished that she hadn't asked this question. He'd planned to work slowly up to the point—if he ever resolved to touch it at all. He saw, however, that if he prevaricated now he'd make trouble for himself by and by.

"I'll tell you about that," he evaded. "But—I wonder if you're going to ask me to sit down?"

Jenny Mills blushed, like a scolded school girl.

"Oh! I didn't mean to be rude!" she exclaimed. "It's simply that I—forgot. Would you care to come indoors, or—"

"Let me draw that big rocker this way," Nick suggested. "It shall be your throne, and I'll sit on the top of the steps at your feet."

He placed the chair so that she would face him as he leaned against a pillar supporting the high porch roof.

"It was a cablegram from London that gave me the news about you," he blurted. "I didn't believe it. I—"

"Believe what?" the girl wanted to know.

She stared straight down at him, he straight up at her. The blush had faded. She was ivory pale now. Perhaps the black dress she wore and the green light sifting through young grape leaves gave her that look of being statue-white, but it frightened Nick. What if she should faint?

What if—she was so young—almost a child, though tall and grave. And she had grown beautiful. Yes, more beautiful to his eye than her famous sister.

"I didn't believe that you were really here," he answered her question.

"Oh!" said the girl. Then—

"Who sent the cable?"

"A man named Tallman. He'd ferretted out my address, and—"

"Please tell me what he wanted you to do?"

"Or—perhaps you've got the cable with you?"

"I have, but—"

"I'd like to see it."

"So?"

RELUCTANTLY Nick drew the folded sheets of paper from his breast pocket.

"This is turning out differently from what I arranged before I came," he hurried on, still grasping the telegram, though Jenny's fingers were on it too. "Of course, there's some silly mistake. But let's try to clear it up here and now. I'm one of your family in a way, and—"

"There's no mistake," cut in the girl, "if Mr. Tallman says I took some jewels. I did take them."

Involuntarily Nick's grasp of the papers loosened. Jenny Mills snatched the cable forms and read what was written. When she had finished, she offered the document to Nick again.

"I suppose you'll want to answer this—unless you've answered it already," she said.

"I haven't," admitted Nick. "I came here first to see—"

"Well—you've seen."

Mills tried to laugh. "I haven't seen very far! But I think there must be some sort of joke, since you say it's not a mistake. This lawyer chap talks about heirlooms. Of course you wouldn't—"

"I did. I took them. I—came as far away from England as I had money to go. Mr. Tallman can—can have me extradited, for theft. I believe that's the word. But there'll be an awful scandal if he does—scandal in both countries. And it would be no use: for nothing they can do will make me tell where the jewels are."

"Good heavens!" gasped Mills. "What can a child like you know about extradition—and scandals?"

"I'm not a child any more. I'm nineteen. I feel—old. I knew they'd search for me, and I'd have liked to hide myself somewhere instead of coming home and being a disgrace. But I told you—I hadn't much money; and the only place seemed to be Valley House. Now that you *know*, I don't think you'll want to come and see me or call me 'cousin' any more."

"Don't you think so!" echoed Nick. "What I think is, that you need a cousin to look after you—unless there's somebody I haven't heard of who has a better right?"

"There's no one at all. Except my dog," the girl said.

Suddenly she looked down. From under the black fringe of lashes fell two tears. Only two.

"There's me," Nick reminded her. "I'm on the spot. What you've been saying sounds crazy and mad. However, no Mills was ever a thief; and you'd be the last one to—"

"I *am* the last one. The last Mills, I mean. Which is the reason I'm sorriest to be a thief. All the same, that's what I am. I've stolen those jewels—the things my sister Mary liked best. I got away with them before anybody suspected. You see, it was so soon after her—death. And the jewels were kept in a safe in her room. So I had my chance."

Nick Mills was—the only word he could think of—"flabbergasted." He didn't know what to make of the creature or say to her. Though she looked so calmly sane, her brain must be clouded. It seemed to hurt him personally to believe this. It made his own life look awry, somehow: yet what other explanation could there be?

He decided to humor the girl, and if possible draw her out.

"But what good can the Ullswater family jewels do you, especially living here?" he put the question. "You can't wear them."

Jenny Mills made no answer, except a slight shrug of the black-clad shoulders.

"Have you brought the jewels to America—to this house?" he ventured. "Though how you could have got them through the customs—"

Again that shrug; and silence.

"Oh, of course I can't force you to tell me anything," Nick exclaimed, nettled. "But it would be better—better for us both—"

"It would *not* be better for either of us

if I answered those questions. Yet, don't be too angry, please. I don't mean to be ungrateful or rude. There are some things that can't be helped."

"And some things that can!" Nick caught her up in a changed tone. "Some *people*, too. You, I hope; helped by me. Won't you trust me, Jenny? I'd like to be your friend. And it seems as if you were asking for trouble!"

"I don't deserve to have friends. And—I've nothing to say to them," the girl almost whispered.

NICK brooded for a moment. Then he broke out: "Do you object to mentioning what jewels you—you're supposed to have taken from the safe?"

"No, I don't mind," Jenny Mills said quietly. "There's a diamond collar, and a rope of four hundred and fifty pearls. There are four brooches, all diamonds, a diamond pendant, and two Marquise rings. One of these rings used to belong to Marie Antoinette, I believe. And—I think that's all."

"*All?* I should hope so!" gasped Mills. "The little lot can't be worth much less than half a million dollars—a hundred thousand pounds. And the things belong to your sister's young step-son! My dear girl, if you won't explain even to me, why you took them, or how you got the things through, if you *have* brought them here, for God's sake let me help you send them back."

"I can't—I shan't send them back," said Jenny Mills.

"For your sister's sake, if not for your own," pleaded Nick. "You loved Mary."

"I worshipped, adored her," returned the girl. "But I shan't send the jewels back. I don't mean that anyone shall get them. Not while I live. Nor after I die, I hope."

"When you marry, your husband will make you give the things up, if Tallman doesn't—er—force an issue before that. But he's bound—"

"Oh, I shan't marry!" the girl exclaimed. "Of course I *couldn't*, even if I

wanted to. Were you going to say that Mr. Tallman will have me arrested in spite of scandal—and extradited?"

"Well, it depends on whether they can actually prove—"

"I'm afraid they could," she admitted. "And I shouldn't lie. I hate lying. It's cowardly. But one can always keep silent. People used to, in old days when they had tremendous secrets. Even when they were tortured."

Nick was consciously glad that those "old days" were over. He could easily imagine the strange girl with the ivory face and black ink-wells of eyes, keeping silence on the rack, or in flames. A queer shiver ran through his spine. The thought of pain for this obstinate slip of youth made him physically sick. He shut his lips grimly for an instant; then words broke from him which he hadn't meant to speak.

"You must be out of your mind, child!" he said.

"Perhaps," she agreed. "I shouldn't wonder. Insane people are sometimes quite clever, aren't they, about hiding things? If I'm insane I may *forget* where the jewels are. But in any case I won't tell."

"And I hope that nobody can find them. Let the police take me if—"

"I won't let them!" flashed Nick. "It won't come to that. Do remember, I want to be your friend."

"Even now? You *are* good! But if you're my friend, will you drop this subject for today. We might have tea, and talk about pleasant things, if you'd care to stop?"

Nick did care to stop. He was almost thirty, with an experience of diplomacy and years of war behind him, to say nothing of his business battles since. Jenny Mills was about nineteen. Yet he felt that she had him at a disadvantage. Her silence, her soft obstinacy, were as hard to fight as a white fog. He knew that the beautiful peace he had dreamed of was lost; but somehow he did not regret it, after all.



"The tea-truce was kept loyally, though with difficulty, for few subjects which crowded to Nick's tongue could be called very 'pleasant things'."

THE TEA-TRUCE was kept loyally, though with difficulty, for few subjects which crowded to Nick's tongue could be called very "pleasant things."

He must not speak of the girl's sister, because only a few weeks ago the Duchess of Ullswater had died suddenly and rather mysteriously. A famous doctor had certified the cause of death to be heart failure, and an inquest had been avoided; but a friend of Nick's in the Embassy had written that gossips had whispered of suicide. Fortunately, so far as was known, there'd been no motive for suicide. There was a man who had got the Duchess talked about at one time; but that was years ago; besides, she'd been a widow for some months before she died, and free, therefore, to marry Louis de Valignac if she chose.

The subject of old days in London was equally tabooed, because it would have been impossible to talk of them without bringing in Mary. Then there was the subject of Jenny's journey and arrival at Valley House. That was merely a branch of the forbidden topic. But Nick did his best to keep conversation on the right level. He tried to tell amusing stories of adventures in the war; and if he asked questions, they were about the bulldog, "Win"; or the two old servants who had Jenny's comfort in their hands. It was all that light order of chat which sparkles on the surface like foam-wreaths which hide the darkness of shadowy pools: and Nick knew well that his thoughts and Jenny Mills' were 'caught on the same black snag, far down in the hidden depths.

It would have been useless as well as indiscreet to ask the girl her "plans." What she had told him showed that she had no plans. She had fled to the only refuge in her power to seek; and his arrival today had proved that it was no refuge. "They" knew where she was, and she was no longer safe. Yet she was as safe as she would be anywhere else, and Nick understood that she meant to stay at Valley House unless—she were removed by force.

She accepted his offer of books, and said—with reservations in her air though not in words—that she'd be glad to have him come again. But she didn't wish to see anyone else, she added. She hoped that nobody in the neighborhood would call. With "Win" she would not be lonely. He had always been her best friend (except one!) since he was a puppy, four years ago.

Nick did not ask who the one exception was. Even if the girl's look hadn't told him, he would have known that she thought of her sister—the beautiful, the adored Mary.

WHEN he left Valley House, instead of going home he walked to the village and sent off the answer which Mr. Tallman had prepaid.

"Will do all I can to help and hope to accomplish something. Don't move in the matter till you receive letter from me. Writing immediately."

He fixed on this wording after some thought: for what he wanted was time—time if possible to save the girl from herself.

If, with this same object, he could have camouflaged her place of refuge, he might have been tempted to try, for his distant cousin's safety and welfare suddenly loomed in vast importance for Nickson Mills. His experience warned him, however, that Tallman, acting in the boy Duke's interests, would not trust to his good offices alone. They would be wanted, and would be valuable, because if they could be used they might avert scandal, as the work of no detective could do. But it occurred to Nick that Tallman no doubt had a detective already on the "job," hovering in the background to await developments. Probably it was this discreet blood-hound who had tracked Jenny to Valley House and cabled to his employer not only the news of her arrival, but his—Nick's.

It would not, indeed, have surprised Mills if his visit to Jenny were known, and if he had been watched when send-

ing off his cable to London. This idea jumped into his head while he was still in the village which honored the great name of the county by calling itself Millstown: and instead of turning homewards he turned back.

Yesterday his aim had been to hide himself at Valley Farm, the world forgetting and by the world forgot. But now the world in the shape of this bomb-shell cablegram has hurled itself at his head. He was caught, and in his turn, he would catch.

MILLSTOWN was not a beauty spot, nor a lure to tourists. It had only one hotel, which seldom got any stranger visitors save travelling men. Even they were not strangers really, for the few who thought it worth while to come, came year after year, and the advent of a new face shook the Valley Hotel and all Millstown, with a kind of earthquake-shock.

Nick had gone a roundabout route from the railway station to the Farm two days ago, on purpose to avoid the staring eyes in the village; but despite the taciturnity of his servants, everyone at Millstown and within a circuit of twenty miles was aware that young Mr. Mills had installed himself at Valley Farm. Most likely they were aware of Jenny's presence, too; or, if not, and she'd been specially cautious, the secret would soon be out. At places where nothing ever happened from year's end to year's end, such news flew through the air like microbes.

Nick was not surprised, therefore, to be received cordially by the old landlord of the Valley Hotel, who knew all about his father; about the restoration of the Farm; in fact, all about everything.

As it happened, this fitted in with Nick's new scheme. He chatted with the ancient boy; talked past history; and bought boxes of cigarettes. Leaning, in a friendly way, on the counter where the hotel register lay open, it didn't seem odd that Mr. Nickson Mills should glance

down at the two pages displayed. They sufficed for the arrivals of a fortnight, and during the last four days there had been one entry: "Davison Daw, New York."

"Daw—Daw!" repeated Mills. "Name sounds familiar. Maybe I know this chap. The world's small."

"Small enough," agreed Old Boy Crawley. "All the same I reckon you ain't likely to know this bird. He's a book agent. Don't suppose he'll do much here. I wonder 'twas worth while his boss sendin' him—if he's got a boss. But he's right pleased with his accommodation. Says he may use Millstown for a sort of center and stay awhile. Here he comes now. If you don't want to be landed with his goldarn dictionary you'd best look real harsh: and I don't know as that'll help any. He's got a kind of foreign accent, but plenty of gen-u-ine Yankee cheek."

"I don't care," Nick said. "I'll look at his dictionary if he wants me to. I may need one any minute at the farm!"

"All right," I'll introjuce the feller in that case," chuckled old Crawley. "He'll fall over himself!"

HE DID. And Mills met him half way; a small man of neutral tints and a veiled sharpness of eye was Daw. The "kind of foreign accent" was English, and faintly cockney, as Nick spotted at once. Mr. Davison Daw, of New York, might have written himself "of London" if he'd liked. He was delighted to find a willing customer for once, but careful not to betray personal pleasure. He had only a sample of "Everybody's Dictionary," he said, but was booking orders, and expected a big supply by that night. Might he call on Mr. Mills with the volume tomorrow, at a time convenient to him?

Nick named a time, chuckling within. The man thought himself doing smart work—didn't dream he was the detective detected!

That night Mills sat late in the summer house, by the moonlight, smoking many

cigarettes of a better brand than those he'd bought at the Valley Hotel. He wondered what Jenny was doing. His thoughts were all of her or her affairs. Instead of peace, he had a problem: a Problem of Silence.

Jenny had taken the jewels. . . . But why? One had only to look at the girl to know that she hadn't stolen them to wear, or to sell, or to use for her own selfish ends. Mills would have bet any sum on that. Yet he hated to turn to the obvious alternative; that she had done this mad, this monstrous thing, to serve some man.

"It can't be that," he insisted, though he'd lived long enough to know that there was nothing a girl wouldn't do for a man she loved, if it were to save him from danger. Jenny Mills he thought, was a girl capable of a very great love, a tragic love. Yes, it *must* be that! He hated to believe it. He hated the man—a cad hiding behind a girl, and letting her suffer for him!

It was only after he had at last gone to bed that Nick suddenly sat up, in the dark, and snapped out aloud two words: "Great Scott!"

Only two words. But he spoke in the tone of a discoverer who sights a new world through distance and mists.

AT TEN O'CLOCK next day Mr. Davison Daw called with "Everybody's Dictionary," and was escorted by Bartin to the summer-house, where Mills had lately finished breakfast.

"Handsome volume—dirt cheap these days at six dollars. Just lay it on the table and help yourself to a cigarette," said Nick when the book had been produced. "You'd better sit down and rest after your walk. I'd like to ask you something about—er—your family name. You may be connected with a friend of my childhood. Any relation of—Marjorie Daw?"

He threw the question as a fisherman throws his line. And if nothing else, he caught the book agent's eye. The eye opened wide, then narrowed. Nick's own twinkled.

"There was that nice little story almost everyone must have read," Mills went thoughtfully on. "It ended up in such a dramatic way: 'There is *no* Marjorie Daw!' Now, it occurred to me when I read your name in the hotel register that maybe, by a queer coincidence, there was no Davison Daw. That's why I wanted to buy your dictionary. I thought you might show me a keyword in it—the keyword explaining why you came to Mills-town. If you don't want to, it doesn't much matter. I can easily find it myself. Only, things would be simpler if we worked together, and put our cards as well as our dictionary on the table."

Daw laughed at last. "You talk like an amateur detective!" he said.

"That's what Mr. Tallman, of the Temple, London, begs me to be," returned Nick. "I hope it doesn't arouse professional jealousy? If it does, I can retire into my shell. I'd have asked nothing better—yesterday."

"Please don't talk of retiring, Mr. Mills," urged Daw.

"Well, it's up to you whether I do or not."

THE OTHER, slightly flushed, took from his pocket a lettercase and produced a card for Mills's inspection. On it was engraved the name of David Dawson; and underneath, at the left-hand corner, Nick read "Pickford's International Detective Agency; London Branch."

"You've spotted me," the late book-agent grinned, "and, as you say, the best thing that can happen in the circumstances is for us to work together, if you agree."

"I agree not to work against you, in any case," said Nick. "Our end is the same. You want to get back the Ullswater heirlooms without fuss. I want you to do it, and at the same time to prove that Miss Mills is not a common jewel thief."

"She's certainly not a 'common' one," Dawson capped him. "I must apologize

to you for my little ruse. Mr. Tallman had great hopes of your help. But—er—there was just the chance that you—

"That I was somehow in with the girl?" Nick suggested. "Running with the hare, and hunting with the hounds, what? So your business here was—to see the lie of the land under my feet, as well as keep strict watch on Miss Mills?"

"That's about it," confessed the detective.

"Of course, *you* wouldn't want a family scandal, any more than my client Mr. Tallman would, acting in Ullswater interests. It did seem a bit of a coincidence your being in these parts at the same time, when Miss Mills—Miss Mills sneaked—I mean—"

"Sneaked" is a good enough word," said Nick. "It is a coincidence, but nothing more, as you've probably found out one way or another by this time."

"I pretty well have," admitted Dawson. "We knew the young lady was here when Tallman cabled you. I missed the ship she sailed in by a few hours only, and of course we wirelessed the captain. We were sure Miss Mills would have taken the stuff with her, and as she had no money to pay duty on valuables, she must intend to hide them somewhere. We didn't want trouble for her on landing, for the family's sake: there are always a lot of reporters hanging around, smelling out a 'story,' you know! There's generally a female detective of sorts on a big ship, and we arranged that the young lady's things should be thoroughly gone through on the quiet."

"Nothing was found. And when she landed, she slipped through the customs all right."

"A very smart girl, that! Without being too drastic—having her undressed and searched—the best we could do was to shadow her all the way from the docks here."

"We had that done by one of our New York men. And it wasn't really essential I should come over, but Tallman—who's known me for years—wished it."

"And I was on the sea before Miss Mills' ship docked on this side."

NICK was thoughtful. "The customs difficulty had occurred to me, of course," he said, "and I tried to scare some admission out of Miss Mills by springing a question on her. But she only shrugged her shoulders. If she did take the jewels—which I still doubt, as she may be protecting someone else—she doesn't mean to let drop a hint as to whether they've been left behind in England, or smuggled over here. On account of the customs difficulty alone, I should say the things were still on your side."

Dawson shook his head.

"No. In that case there'd be no sense in her coming so far, with more expense than she can afford and no supreme object. She wanted to get right away with the jewels, and dispose of them according to some plan she must have made. She hoped, I expect, that when they were gone beyond recall, the Duke's trustees would let the matter drop rather than kick up a nasty scandal for the pleasure of punishing the thief."

"Another question," Mills said, when he had heard Dawson's argument to the end. "If we grant that this young girl was smart enough to deceive a female detective on board ship, and the New York customs sharps at the docks, how can you be certain she wasn't smart enough to trick your 'shadower' also, and pass the things into other keeping on the journey to Valley House?"

"I'm certain because our chap isn't the kind that can be tricked. He didn't let the lady out of his sight. She met no one; she spoke to no one. And I don't mind mentioning—since you'd guess it if I kept mum—that I've had a good prowling round the family mansion since Miss Mills arrived in it."

"The devil you have! How did you contrive that?"

"Like falling off a log: just as easy. I was all over the place—cellars, servants' rooms and all—in the night; and—"

"What about the bulldog. He sleeps in his mistress' room I hear. Hadn't he something to say to that?"

"I was just going to tell you; on account of him I didn't attempt to do the young lady's room after dark. I gave that the once-over at breakfast time, when she and that beauteous pet of hers were downstairs—the old negro couple, too. I've not forgotten the grounds either—any part of 'em where the girl could have sneaked without my knowledge. But nothing seems to have been buried anywhere.

"Of course, you're thinking she keeps the things on her person; and that's where they probably are; though there's enough pearls alone to make a fair bulk, and in this weather, with the sort of clothes women wear nowadays, a pocket, or parcel, or even a belt would be dashed hard to hide. She couldn't be always slipping the things out of the hem of one dress and putting them in another, if she'd thought of that classic old plan. As for cloaks and hats, I had a peep at breakfast time. Still, it's my theory she's found a way of concealing the spoils on herself. And that's why persuasion from a relative like you would save us all from something damned unpleasant."

"And I mean to try persuasion for all it's worth," said Nick. "But I shall be able to put more heart into it if you'll give me the precise history of the—supposed theft by Miss Mills."

"I can do that in a few words. You see, she had the Duchess' two keys to the safe where these particular jewels were unfortunately kept, instead of being at the bank where they ought to have gone when the Duke died, if not before. The Duchess had been specially fond of these missing articles—didn't want to let them go out of the house; wore them continually, though she was of course in black for her husband; had the lot on the evening before she died. You'll remember she passed away in the night."

"Ah!" Nick sprung upon him, suddenly alert. "How do you know the

things were ever returned to the safe? If they weren't, that would score for Miss Mills, provided your one proof is her having those keys. . . . By the way, how can you be certain she *had* the keys?"

"I'll answer both questions," snapped Dawson. "Her Grace's maid put the jewels away every night. The Duchess wore the two keys of the safe (very small they were: one for the wall-panel or outer door, one for the steel door inside) hanging from a thin gold chain under her dress. She slept with them beneath her pillow always till that last night. Miss Mills came in, as was usual after the Duke's death, when the sisters weren't going out into society at all. She sat by Her Grace's bedside; and when the maid—an elderly woman named Parker (you may have seen her at the house)—when Parker started to hand back the keys to Her Grace, Miss Mills took them out. 'That's all right, Parker,' said the Duchess. 'It's on account of a dream I had. I thought a masked burglar came and stole the keys and then the jewels.'

"The poor lady went on to explain, Parker stated, that she wasn't superstitious as a rule, but the dream had left a horrid impression on her mind. She wasn't feeling well, and thought she'd sleep better if Miss Mills had charge of the key chain. Parker didn't think much of this at the moment. Her Grace had plenty of whims and fancies! Indeed, in the excitement of finding the Duchess dead in bed when she took in her morning tea, Parker forgot the key episode. In fact, it wasn't till Miss Mills was missing the day after the funeral with only a big suit-case for luggage, and the inevitable bulldog, that the maid recalled that circumstance. Now you understand how Miss Mills got such a good start before the loss of the heirlooms was suspected."

"Hm! Yes, I understand that," Nick grudged. "What I don't understand is the motive: unless you're wrong about the girl bringing the stuff away, and she was hypnotized by some beast who got the things before she bolted."

"We thought of that, of course: *cherchez l'homme*, you might say, as we'd already found '*la femme*.' But the objection to your theory is, there wasn't a man, there wasn't any powerful factor of any sort in Miss Mills' life, except her sister. She'd been at a fashionable school. We made investigations on the spot. The girl's existence there had nothing hidden in it.

"And she wasn't much more than a child—not quite seventeen—when she left school for good: thought she was old enough to do war work; persuaded the sister to let her come to London, and act as pantry maid or something in a private war hospital the Duchess helped to keep going.

"But the war finished before the girl had time to do much. Just then the boy—the present Duke, Marquis of Borrowdale he was then—failed in health and was brought home to be nursed. Miss Mills devoted herself to him. She went with him everywhere, even to Davos, when he was sent to the high Alps. It's not long since he was well enough to go back to school—only a few weeks before his father's death.

"So you see, though we can't read her mind, we can read the pages of that young lady's life as if they were in an open book."

"They seem to have been white pages," Nick commented. "And you admit she was devoted to the Duke's son: yet you think she has coolly eloped with his property, about a hundred thousand pounds worth of it?"

Dawson shrugged his shoulders.

"Does seem queer psychology. But there it is!"

NICK didn't speak. He was trying to analyze his own pleasure in hearing of the "open page" which had been so closely scanned. The report confirmed that queer inspiration of his in the night. And a certain sentence of Dawson's, dropped carelessly, had caught and held his attention: "There wasn't a powerful

factor of any sort in Miss Mills' life—except her sister."

Having reached this point he was anxious to get rid of Dawson. Questions he could have put to the detective might have produced useful answers: but they were questions he shrank from asking a stranger. He wanted to ask them of himself first, and see what answers would come; so, with the knowledge he'd gained now, he was keen to begin this self-catechizing.

He told Dawson that he had a definite plan of conduct to carry out in connection with Miss Mills. He thought that he saw how she might be induced to give up the jewels of her own free will; but if so, the thing couldn't be done in a hurry. The girl mustn't be frightened or threatened. Would Mr. Tallman be patient, and Dawson, too? Would they trust him—Nickson Mills—without interference, to do what the lawyer had requested him to do?

Of course, Dawson enquired whether this patience was supposed to endure through days, weeks, months or years; because consent would naturally depend on that. Miss Jenny Mills couldn't be allowed to keep the Ullswater heirlooms forever, for the sake of saving her feelings. Some reasonable time limit must be fixed.

"Would six weeks be reasonable?" Nick asked.

"Say a month," substituted Dawson. "You see, I can't go away till you've done something; because if you fail it's up to me to succeed. And my time is Tallman's—or rather the Duke of Ullswater's—money."

"Very well, we'll make it a month," Nick assented after a moment's thought. "Unless I'm wrong in my theories, I ought to bring off the stunt in a month. It would be pretty well impossible in less."

"You talk like a budding Sherlock Holmes!" grinned Dawson.

"I hope to goodness I may bloom into one!" retorted Nick.

And there was so strong a suggestion of concrete purpose in his look and tone that Dawson's smouldering curiosity broke into secret flame. He'd promised to "trust" this amateur aide-de-camp; but he hadn't promised not to "keep his eyes peeled." . . .

THOSE who wish to concentrate upon any given subject, do it in different ways. Some shut themselves up alone in a locked room. Some stare into a crystal. Nick Mills, when he had a mental puzzle to solve, instinctively went for a long, lonely walk. When Dawson had departed, Nick told Martin that Mrs. Bean needn't bother about luncheon. He was going for a stroll. He'd find food somewhere if he felt hungry.

The country round Valley House and Valley Farm had a gentle beauty which Nick loved. But today his eyes were empty windows. His body marched on mechanically. His soul rushed over seas to England. It plunged back into the past. It found Mary Mills as she had been in 1913—his first year in London—when her beauty had made a sensation. An unusual girl she had been: ambitious, yet passionate, vain, impulsive, yet curiously calculating for one so young—at least, that had been his impression of her. A flirt, too. She flirted with every man—apparently couldn't help it. She had tried the game on young Nick Mills, her distant cousin; but somehow, despite her dazzling prettiness, she hadn't appealed to him in the way of falling in love.

There had been a lot of men about her. She'd flirted with them all; each one believed she liked him best; several were hit, and showed it when at the end of the season her engagement to Ullswater was announced. The only one of that set who didn't seem to mind losing her was the one who had had the air of caring most, the Frenchman, Comte de Valignac. He was at the wedding; and Nick remembered his being somewhat conspicuous at the reception Mrs. Mills gave. He quite "helped to do the hon-

ors," as an American woman mischievously remarked; a handsome, decorative fellow, more like an Italian than a Frenchman; greenish eyes, very brilliant and rather light, like grey jade in his olive face; dead black hair; and one of those melancholy—or cynical—turned-down mouths that interest women.

LOUIS DE VALIGNAC had kept up his friendship with Mary after she became Duchess of Ullswater. The two had been together a good deal. De Valignac was a secretary in the French Embassy, but he had plenty of time to hang about drawing-rooms.

The war had come just in time to stop the gossip about Mary and her Frenchman. De Valignac had gone back to France then, but he was supposed to have a weak heart, and couldn't fight. Presently he returned to his old job at the Embassy, and things went on much as before, except that Mary's mother had died and she was in mourning. Besides, she was busy with war work; and anyhow, most people had too much to think of and do on their own account to notice their neighbors' little affairs.

Nick Mills had noticed, however; couldn't help noticing, as he was often at the Ullswater house before 1917, when America went into the "scrap." Mary had seemed to like her cousin, had seemed to turn to him in a dumb, wistful way, because he was the only one left of her own kin, except Jenny at school. De Valignac had been constantly on the scene; and Nick remembered now (though he'd thought little about it then) that Mary was never quite the same when the Frenchman was present. She was nervous, lost her repose, yet made an effort to keep it.

Had she cared for de Valignac? . . . Perhaps, though she'd never appeared to take pleasure in his society. Rather the other way round. Nick recalled some expressions of Mary's face in those days—and wondered.

He continued to wonder during the rest

of his walk, which ended with a visit to Jenny Mills at Valley House. She had said he might come as often as he liked, if he "wouldn't speak of unpleasant things," so today he contrived to make Jenny smile more than once, and surprised her by striking up a warm friendship with the dog.

"Win is always polite to people when he's sure I approve of them, yet I never saw him take to a stranger before," she said.

"Perhaps he vaguely remembers me from his puppyhood," Nick suggested. "Anyhow I must have been a dog in some early incarnation, I get on with the race so well, and seem almost to know what dogs want to say when they wag their tails or bark. I'm an A1 vet, too, I may tell you. If ever there's anything wrong with Mr. Churchill, you may call on my professional services. By the way, have you noticed that the boy's nose is rather hot and dry? Er—and I don't want to worry you, but his coat's not quite as glossy as a healthy dog's ought to be."

Jenny took fire at once. She might be as "smart" as Dawson thought her, yet she was singularly unsophisticated in some ways. For instance, Nick saw that she did not suspect him of making love to Winston for the sake of Winston's mistress. But then, she was not thinking of the man at all at that moment. She thought only of the dog, anxiously insisting that he was quite well; it was only that he hadn't got over the sea-trip yet: and in the next breath asking if Nick believed that he was really ill.

"Is he off his feed?" Mills questioned, gravely.

"He—I'm afraid he hasn't had much appetite since we left ho—I mean England," the girl admitted. "But since we came South I've put it down to his being too dainty to care for our food. He's been rather spoiled, you see! And here—we don't have meat in the house. It costs such a lot, and we don't like it, any way. The servants live mostly on hominy, and I have eggs and fruit."

Nick's heart stirred with tenderness for the child. He knew that she had little money. Now he pictured her so poor as to be on the verge of starvation. Something must be done—and soon! Already he was conscious of what he wished that something to be. He was in love with Jenny Mills, and wanted to marry her. He wanted it very much indeed, and it seemed to him now that he must have cared for her more than he knew, ever since 1917. This would account for the fact that no other girl had made any deep impression upon him since he had seen Jenny last.

"I think special food and treatment might do the boy no end of good," he answered guiltily. "Would you let me take him over to the Farm, and keep him under my own eyes for a few days? I'd bring him to call on you once every twenty-four hours. And if he was too miserable without his missus, we could give up the experiment."

"You are good!" said Jenny.

Nick was not so sure. Still, he meant well—in the end.

"But will he go with you?" the girl went on. "Oh dear, I'm afraid he'll be very unhappy! Let's wait till tomorrow and see how he is then."

"All right!" Nick agreed, wondering what was in her mind. "I'll drive over in my car instead of walking tomorrow morning. You might let me spin you back to Valley Farm, and lunch with me there—what? You could see all the changes that have been made, and criticize them. It would be easier for you to shed Win at a strange place, than for me to get him there alone."

THIS program of Nick's was carried out next day, and the unsuspecting Win, brushed to a high polish and re-joining in a new collar extravagantly bought for the occasion, accompanied his mistress on a visit to the family friend. After luncheon, the bulldog was enticed to the kitchen by a beautiful bone, while his mistress—almost in tears—escaped.

She spent a wretched night, yet hardly knew whether to be glad or sad when, soon after breakfast, Nick appeared with Win on a leash.

"The poor chap can't stand it," Mills explained. "He's all heart. There's no place like home for him, I'm afraid. But I've mixed him some medicine that I hope will do the trick. It *must* be taken after bones, so I'm sending you round a supply—enough for a few days. And I'll look in every afternoon if you'll let me, to 'watch the case.'"

Jenny was grateful. But it struck her that there was something odd about Nick. He had been "odd" ever since she and Win came out from the house yesterday, to go off with him in the car. She said that she would be glad to have him "watch the case," and Nick took her at her word. He was most solicitous for Win, but somehow he did not seem to bring the "boy" good luck. It was during his first "professional call" that the dog disappeared.

The thing happened in this way: while Jenny gave Nick tea on the great porch, a thin, yapping bark was heard in the distance. Win, who had no companions of his own race at Valley House, delightedly pricked his ears, wuffed, and darted away as fast as his spraddle legs of a bull could carry him.

"Some little dog must have squeezed under the gate," Jenny said. "But Win won't hurt it. He's chivalrous to small dogs, and never *starts* a fight with any creature. I'm not worried about either of them."

NICK was glad she wasn't. He exerted himself to entertain her and succeeded. She actually forgot that Win was gone. When fifteen or twenty minutes had passed, Mills broke off abruptly from what he'd been saying, and flung a question at her head.

"Oh, by the by, I've often wanted to ask you! What's become of the Comte de Valignac?"

Jenny blushed.

"I—I think he went back to France," she said.

"I wonder if he was chucked from the Embassy?" blurted Nick. "Er—perhaps I oughtn't to suggest that. He was a good friend of yours."

"No!" the girl objected. "No!"

She bit her lip, and did not speak for a few seconds. Then she went on:

"Comte de Valignac used to come to the house a good deal—when my brother-in-law was alive. Not afterwards. I—never cared for him."

"Nor I," agreed Nick. "In fact, I'm afraid he was a bad lot in some ways—from a diplomatist's point of view. I used to expect that the Embassy people would find out a thing or two about him some day. Did you and—Mary—ever come up against his gambling propensities? I heard a story about how he just missed being turned out of a certain bridge club, once. And there was a house where they played roulette every night—but why should I bore you with the man's secret history?"

Jenny shivered as if a "mouse had run over her grave." "Ugh! I don't want to talk about Comte de Valignac. There's no reason why I should. Let's go and find Win!"

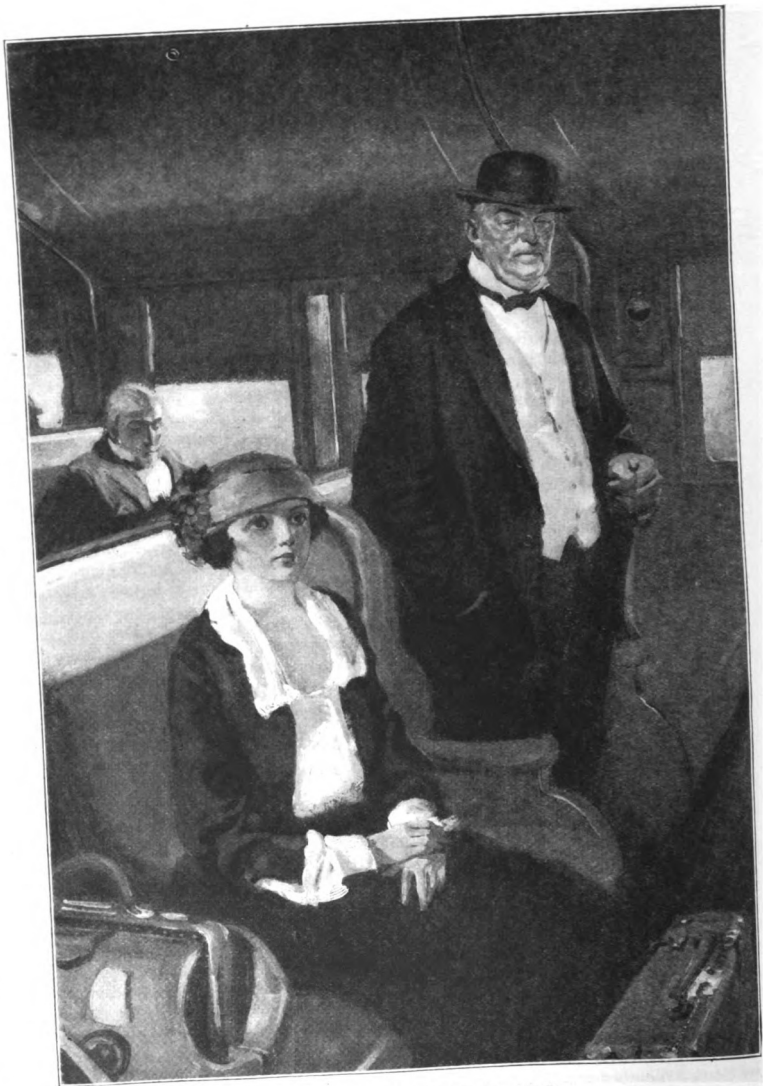
BUT they did not find Win. They searched. They called. They scoured the place in vain. The dog had vanished.

As the gates were closed, there could be little doubt that he had been stolen, and Jenny's pale despair struck at Nick's heart. The boy wouldn't be injured, he assured her. Thieves knew too well which side their bread was buttered to hurt a valuable, pedigree dog like Win.

"They've taken him for one of two motives," he explained. "Either for ransom, as they kidnap a child; or else to sell him for a big price, probably in the nearest large town, Richmond. Either way, I'll get him back for you, never fear—and before long, too."

But Jenny would not be comforted.

"I don't think what you think," she



"He didn't let the lady out of his sight."

said. "Those men who are watching me, because I'm a—thief: it's they who've done this. They know that Win's the only thing I've got left on earth. It's—tit for tat. They've stolen him. Perhaps—to bargain."

Nick was desperately sorry for her. "I don't believe you're right," he urged. "But—if you are, Win isn't lost forever. You would—know how to bring him back."

"No," the girl said, "I would not."

"You wouldn't bargain?"

"No."

"You wouldn't give up a few beastly jewels that you can't want, to redeem the thing you love best?"

She could not speak. But she shook her head.

Nick could stand no more. "Well, anyhow, you shall have Win again!" he exclaimed. "I promise that. And I'll be off now to—talk to the Millstown police."

Two days later, though there had been no direct news of Win, Mills was able to show Jenny a paragraph in a Richmond paper. It advertised a "fine English bulldog" for sale, and gave an address at which information about the animal could be obtained.

"I'll bet my hat it's Win, and I'm going to find out on the spot," he said. "I won't trust to correspondence."

NICK left for Richmond by the next train, but instead of hastening to the address he had read out to Jenny, he taxed to the most important jewellers in town.

It was a firm well known throughout the country, and "connected" with a famous name in New York.

To a polite assistant he handed a visiting card upon which—not engraved but written in ink—was the name of "Mr. William Walker."

"Please give this to your best expert in pearls and diamonds," he directed, "and say I'd be glad of a chat with him on a matter of business."

Presently he was shown into a quiet

inner room, where a quiet man introduced himself as Mr. Aronson.

"I've come to get your opinion," William Walker announced to this gentleman, "on a collection of jewels considered to be of enormous value. Also, I may want you to make some purchases for me in New York, unless you can supply what I want from your own place."

At this encouraging news Mr. Aronson looked pleased, but the expression turned to surprise on seeing the extraordinary receptacles in which the visitor had brought the articles to be inspected.

From three separate inner pockets of a light overcoat, Mr. Walker produced parcels, or bags, clumsily made up of silk handkerchiefs. With a penknife he ripped some firm if amateurish stitches, and then poured out upon the velvet covered table a quantity of jewels. There was a long rope of gleaming pearls; there was a splendid collar of diamonds with single stones dangling like a fringe all the way round; there was a diamond pendant; there were four brooches of different shapes, composed of large brilliants; and there were two exceedingly beautiful, old fashioned rings, one of very white diamonds surrounding a big cabochon ruby, the other of emeralds clustering queerly round a star sapphire.

Mr. Aronson examined the display with minute attention. When he had finished, he still sat in silence by the velvet covered table.

"Well?" prompted Mr. Walker. There was a note of impatience in his voice. "Well—what do you think?"

"I think—that the settings are very fine," replied the expert.

"Yes. I didn't doubt you'd say that. And—the jewels themselves—the pearls, and all the rest?"

"Er—I'm afraid I have a disappointment for you there. You—seem to believe, sir, that the collection is of great value. It may have been so once—judging from these settings. But at present—I regret to inform you, the entire lot has been—most cleverly counterfeited."

"Ah!" sighed Mr. Walker. And if such a thing were possible, one might have thought the sigh one of relief. "You're sure you're not mistaken?"

"Absolutely sure," Aronson replied. "Though, of course, you can consult other authority if you like."

"I don't like," said the visitor. "I've heard of you. I know I can trust your opinion. A pity about these things! But—there it is! The next question I have to put, is this: can you duplicate the pearls and everything with genuine gems, copying the copies, so to speak, for a round sum of five hundred thousand dollars? If so, can you do it with entire secrecy, inside of—three weeks?"

"Good heavens, sir, you are evidently an amateur in this line!" exclaimed Mr. Aronson, for the first time showing excitement.

Mr. Walker, who had been seated, rose.

"That's what I am," he said, "an amateur. But I've got to find some professionals somewhere who are up to this stunt. And when one's got to do a thing—one does it!"

HE WOULD HAVE SWEEPED the shining litter into his pockets, but with a gesture the expert stopped him.

"You took me by surprise, sir," he apologized. "If anyone can do what you want done, we can—with the cooperation of New York. And I think the price you name would be satisfactory. But you must give me time to think—to consult."

Mr. Walker stuck out a brown arm from its white cuff and glanced at a soldier's wrist-watch. "I'll give you twenty minutes," he said. "After that, if you turn down the job, I must catch a train for little old New York. There are several pebbles on that beach."

"An awful young man!" thought Mr. Aronson. "An appalling young man. But he must be a money-bag. And one would put oneself out a good deal before throwing money-bags into the hands of other firms. Also, the affair seemed to be an

interesting and mysterious one. Secrecy, of course: that could easily be managed by those who knew how. But some day one might read of a case in the newspapers, and be able to put two and two together."

Mr. Aronson went out, and was gone for the full twenty minutes, having taken the false jewels to show to his colleagues. At last he returned, accompanied by another gentleman as quiet as himself. This was the head of the firm. All jewelers seemed to be singularly quiet persons. Nick thought. And he felt rather quiet himself.

The newcomer, Mr. Morgan Atterley, explained the result of the consultation to the waiting client. The gems which had been so cleverly copied must have been extremely good, but fortunately for Mr. Walker's request, they were by no means unique in the market. Genuine duplicates could be collected without great difficulty. The trouble was, to get and reset them in a hurry. Was it not possible to give more time, say, at least six weeks?

It was not possible, Mr. Walker said. The time limit had to stand. But, if Messrs. Morgan Atterley and Aronson would guarantee to do the job, he was willing to pay four hundred thousand dollars in advance: pay within the hour in cash. In fact, he had already made arrangements to do this, if business materialized.

The two partners looked at each other. "I think we can give you the promise you want," Morgan Atterley said.

"Think," won't do," the awful young man persisted.

"Very well, we promise."

The words seemed to be dragged from the quiet, conservative lips. But the man of mystery was satisfied.

"I take your word," he said. "I'll go out and fetch the money. Back in ten minutes. Meanwhile, please get busy with New York. From what you say, there isn't a minute to waste. You can make out an estimate of the whole

amount later—up to the five hundred thousand. That will be all right for me if it will for you.”

They would have liked to have him followed but they did not do that. What they did was to telephone their bankers (perhaps Mr. Walker's bankers also, who could say?) to send over a trustworthy judge of bank notes, post haste. No doubt the request was acceded to though, when Mr. Walker returned, he found no new addition to the company in Mr. Aronson's private room. He paid without blinking the promised sum, and got a receipt. Just what the firm did with the bundle of notes before putting them into their safe he knew not, neither did he care.

THAT same evening Nick Mills sent a long telegram to Jenny, at Valley House. “Winston Churchill safe, but complications arisen. He has already been sold by kidnappers and taken New York. I am going on tonight, and will negotiate and buy back. No doubt of success, but may be some delay in transaction. Will not return without the dog, but you may confidently expect me in three weeks. Meanwhile will wire often. Courage. All is well.”

From New York next morning he telegraphed also to the book-agent at Millstown.

“Everything satisfactory. Can keep within time limit. See you end of three weeks.”

To this message he signed the name of “Walker,” as he had warned the seller of dictionaries he would do, if obliged to wire. But what Nickson Mills was really doing with his three weeks David Dawson did not know. Somehow, one trusted Mills, that was all. And Dawson was comfortable at Millstown. He was writing a detective novel, to be published when he retired.

Nick sent off a message of sorts by wire each day to Miss Mills. He sent also books, chocolates, and well-packed flowers, but—even in answer to her four or five letters—he never wrote. To concoct

a whole letter would have been too difficult. He must simply grin and bear the weeks' separation, the suspense, and—do the best he could.

Mills was back in Richmond before the appointed time was up, but from there he did not communicate with Jenny. He was still supposed to be in New York. At last, however, he telegraphed instructions to the book-agent, who whistled as he read them—whistled and wondered, but prepared to obey.

THEN, one morning after three long weeks which told upon Jenny, the postman brought her a letter—the first letter she had received at Valley House.

It was short, but it said that Nick had got Win back for her, and that he would arrive with the dog almost as soon as the note. There was no date or address on the letter, and if there had been, the girl would scarcely have noticed. Nick was coming. He had got Win!

That was her thought, as she stood on the porch waiting. She was actually happy, until an old fear, banished only for a moment, stabbed her heart in the accustomed place.

“What if Win—”

There was no time to finish the question. A powerful bulldog came bounding along the short cut from the gate, far ahead of a rapidly striding young man. The big white bull flung itself with such abandonment into outstretched arms that they were bruised by the spikes on the thick collar. Long before the dog's transports were calmed, Nick had run up the porch steps, and had the girl by both hands.

“Now are you happy?” he beamed.

She caught her breath. “Oh—happy to see you—happy to see Win!” she answered. “But—” Jenny glanced over her shoulder at the half-open door of the house.

“But—there's a ‘but’?” Nick prompted.

“Yes. The time has come for me to—pay.”

“You mean?”

"There's a detective in the library," she said, in a low tone. Mr. Tallman, the London lawyer, has sent him here. He called early this morning and insisted on speaking with me,—just before the post-man came with your letter. I was—*so* glad you were near! Not that you can *do* anything. But I told the man you were my cousin, and that he must speak to you. He says he has a warrant to arrest me at once, if I won't see reason after all this grace they've given. He's come all the way from England to take the jewels back, or—to take me."

"By Jove!" said Nick. He had not let go of Jenny's hands. "Did you—confess to the man, in so many words, that you—"

"Stole the things? Yes."

"Was that wise?"

"I won't lie. Besides, I've told you, they have proof."

"Then—what shall you do?"

"Let him arrest me."

"He shan't do that," Nick said. "Jenny, look here. . . . Do you know I love you?"

The color streamed to her forehead.

"I—sometimes I've thought—I've feared—"

"Is 'feared' the word? Don't you care for me a little?"

"Oh! I *do* care. I couldn't help that! But—it's no use. I mustn't let you speak of it. That man—"

"Hang the man! Darling child, if you love me half as much as I love you, we'll be married before the world can say 'knife!'"

"I'll have the right then to offer the Duke, through his lawyer, the worth of his damned old jewels—"

"No!" Jenny cut him short. "I do love you. I'm young, and I'd like to be happy. But it just can't be. And I'd kill myself rather than you should pay. I'd be better dead!"

"Not at all," said Nick suddenly, in a changed and matter-of-fact tone. "Jenny, come indoors with me now, and give that detective from London the jewels."

The girl stared, speechless. She looked frozen.

"Do you trust me, or do you not? My child, this is the acid test!"

"I trust you," she said. "But—"

"This time there's no 'but' left! Your martyrdom is ended, poor, brave, loyal kid! You're going to be married and adored."

"I—"

"Wait! You took the jewels, yes. You did it because of *danger*—to the memory of one you loved. You felt bound at any cost to keep the secret. *But the danger you dreaded has passed.* I tell you that on my honor. And the honor of the dead won't be tarnished if you walk into that room with me now, show Tallman's man where you hid the jewels, and turn them over to him."

ALL STRENGTH, save strength of spirit, had oozed from Jenny Mills, as water runs from a sieve. Her body, white in its black dress as a daylight flame wrapped in smoke, leaned for support against a pillar.

"What do you—know?" she whispered.

"I know a jolly lot more than you know yourself, my dear. But that fellow in the house knows, and will know, nothing more than—what I've just hinted. That's all he'll wish to know. The same with everyone concerned. What Ullswater's agents want, are the jewels. And those—now listen to every word—they can have in five minutes; *intact, full value.*"

The girl looked at him.

He repeated, "Intact, full value." On my life!—on your's, which is worth far more to me. On your sister's memory that's worth more than either to you. Will you come?"

He held out his hand.

Very pale, but with a beautiful gesture she laid her hand in his.

Together, the bulldog at their heels, they entered the room where David Dawson marched up and down, longing but not daring to smoke a cigarette. By no faint twinkle of the eye did he betray former acquaintance with Mr. Nickson Mills, or that his long delayed visit at

Valley House was made according to instructions.

Jenny was silent. It was Nick who spoke.

"Can you tell real jewels from false when you see them?" he asked.

"Yes," said Dawson. "I was trained by a Hatton Garden man. Such tests are often part of my job."

"Very well. My cousin, Miss Mills, doesn't deny that she has a certain number of the Ullswater jewels in her possession.

"She took them for a good reason. Now it no longer exists, and she's not only willing, but anxious, to give them back—on one condition; that she's asked for no explanations."

"She can keep the explanations!" said Dawson. "Though I confess I'm curious to know how the lady contrived to hide the things!"

"Oh, she'll gratify you in that detail!" announced Nick.

Jenny stooped, and with hands that trembled unlocked the heavy, spiked collar which caused Winston Churchill's short neck to look even thicker than it was.

"I bought this in London," she said. "I took it to pieces and arranged it with secret pockets inside. It was hard work. But—I did it all myself, and sewed the jewels in.

"Then I—then I fastened the padlock on the collar and kept the key. No one ever suspected. But I never let the dog wear his collar when he was away from me on shipboard or anywhere. Even when he went to my cousin's farm, I bought him a new collar. I—I hope—I believe—you'll find the jewels as—as they ought to be. Oh, Nick! Can't we go out of the room while Mr. Dawson looks at them?"

Nick led the girl into the drawing room next door.

"Dawson claims to be a judge of jewels," he reminded her. "If he's satisfied with what he finds, will you marry me at once, and let me make you forget all you've suffered? That is, will you if you *care*?"

"I worship you," she said. "But—I can't tell even *you* the real story."

"I don't want to hear it. I'll never ask you a question."

"You're wonderful!" Jenny breathed. "I didn't know there were such men. But there's one thing I *can* tell! If—that man's satisfied, then—I did someone I loved a great injustice."

"Maybe I understand. If I hadn't been sure he *would* be satisfied, I'd have kept you out of his way. I'd have saved you, somehow."

"You have saved me!" Jenny said. "I don't know how exactly, but—"

"If I ask you no questions you need ask me none. That's our bargain," Nick cut her short. "Shall we seal it?"

She lifted her face, and he kissed her on the lips.

HE WAS HAPPY; and he knew that he could make her happy; yet as he held the girl the figure of Mary her sister seemed to rise for an instant. He saw a woman whose love had been betrayed, a woman tortured, blackmailed, desperate. Knowing that, with the new Duke's reign, her fraud would be found out, she had preferred to die rather than bear shame. She had thrown the burden on shoulders younger, yet braver, than her own.

Ah well, now she might rest! The secret was safe, bought and paid for. As for the price, just this first kiss of Jenny's was worth it.



### The Understanding

Binks: I'll pay you when my shoes wear out.

Collector: What do you mean by that?

Binks: By that time I'll be on my feet again.

### Which Country?

Diner: Ham and eggs, country style, please.

Waiter: I have traveled all over the world, so you will have to be a little more specific.

### An Exacting Fit

"Brown is marrying again, I hear."

"So they say, and from all accounts his second wife will make rather a lively stepmother for the children!"

"O, a sort of watch-your-step-mother, I suppose!"

### Still—

The excited citizen rushed into the little bank and slapped a \$50 bill down upon the cashier's window ledge.

"Gimme two cases!" he cried.

"What?" asked the astonished cashier.

"What? Two cases of what?"

"Two cases—this ought to cover it."

"What sort of a place do you think this is? And of what do you want two cases?"

"Anything—I'll drink it whatever it is. I saw a sign outside that said '4%'!"

### Divorce Rings

*(Divorcees have adopted the plan of wearing a divorce ring—new stone for each divorce.—News note.)*

Now comes the divorce ring—that isn't so bad,

With a setting that's proper, they say,  
I fancy 'twill prove quite a popular fad  
And simplify matters straightway.

As oft as a lady her freedom would win,  
A badge of said freedom she'll own,  
So remember, good gentlemen—he with-  
out sin

May be one who will cast the first stone.

### Wonders Never Cease

'Twas not so long ago, a marvel was  
vouchsafed to mortal sight!

We stood and gazed in wonder at that  
first electric light!

Now, with iron, curling tong, washing  
machine and grill.

We stand and gaze in wonder at that  
last electric bill!

### Singing the Old Songs

"Ah, for the old days!" sighed the old-fashioned young man. "The girls of to-day are not at all like our mothers used to be! Why, I'll bet you don't know what needles are for!"

He glanced with admiration at the modern girl.

"I do too!" she flashed. "They're for phonographs!"

### Who Can Minister?

"Outdoors and exercise," said old Dr. Gruff,  
 "Will cure you completely. Ozone you may quaff  
 While essaying daily eighteen holes of golf."

"At such a prescription no patient could scoff.  
 I'll go 'pull' in tall timber and 'slice' to the rough.  
 But what, after that, Doc., will cure me of golf?"

### Or a Pair of Traces

Thieves have looted Stringem's stable,  
 Up beyond the Bentley Place,  
 Took his horses, took his harness,  
 Just before the final race;  
 It's no use to try to catch them,  
 For they haven't left a trace!

### His Taking Ways

Mrs. Subbubs: Smith must adore his lawn—he keeps talking about it all the time.

Subbubs (who loathes a constant borrower): But he likes our lawn mower!

### Stylish

The newest style in women's clothes  
 Is truly light and breezy.  
 The winds will expose  
 The rolling of hose—  
 It makes me so un-knee-zy.

### Lament

Words fail! The bootleggers  
 Give me a conniption.  
 The stuff they are selling  
 Beggars prescription!

### Shop Talk

Banks: Do you believe in pursuit or in possession?

Kneedel (his tailor): Both. Possession only comes after so much per suit.



Drawn for Wayside Tales by Carl T. Anderson

"Dad, you'll have to raise my spending allowance. The papers referred to me yesterday as a 'scion'."

### Obeying Orders

"Why has Saddun been arrested?  
 He's a mighty fine young man!"  
 True; but this was in a crime wave,  
 And he fell beneath the ban,  
 "If a man looks crooked, pinch him;  
 Hesitation is a sin."  
 And you know poor Saddun's cross-eyed,  
 So, of course, they ran him in.

### Watchful Weighing

Caller: Well, Mr. Grabbins, how do you find business?

Profiteering Butcher: Oh, it's just the weigh one feels about it!

### What's Mine's Mine

Hill: Bounder always wears a thirst-quencher on his hip but never offers a drop to his closest friend.

Dale: He believes in the saying that, "to wear is human, but to give divine."



Drawn for Wayside Tales by Chester I. Garde

"Oh, Henry, I'm so sorry you ever gave up tennis for golf!"

### Might Become Excruciating

The human jackass had approached his friend stealthily from the rear and greeted him with a horrible blow upon the shoulder blade.

His thoroughly angered friend asked, with deadly calm:

"Is that your idea of being humorous?"

"Sure," guffawed the assaulting idiot.

"Sometime, if you get a pile-driver," suggested the victim of his exuberance, "you can tickle somebody plum to death."

### A Gadder's Lament

A torrid hereafter awaits Bill McClain: He threw cigarettes in the hand-basin drain.

### What Teacher Pulled On Him

"Teacher pulled something on me today that made me mighty sore."

"What was it?"

"My ear."

### Pruneville Personals

Owing to a lack of funds this spring Miss Crocus Quick is trying to think of something that will take the place of a new hat. Crocus, it will be remembered, couldn't afford to wear goulashes the past winter, so she come as close as possible to being style by racing around with her shoestrings dangling.

Due to an alarming increase in the number of casualties, the stairs leading from the Home Brew Clubroom over the Economy store are being rebuilt to slant in much less of a hurry!

The Economy store-keeper and Linger Knotter assisted Deb Feathery in chasing his new hat when it blew off yesterday. The Economy store-keeper hadn't got his pay for it yet, and Linger wanted to borrow it.

Gabe Saddler will not sleep on the floor during the next few months, as a big-city cousin has wrote that he's liable to walk in on Gabe most any night.

Os Peachblow bets that the well-known Irish expression, "Be dad!" didn't originate in any divorce court.

Dunk Dillum, proprietor of the Economy store, got the postoffice department all swept and dusted off yesterday, before he learnt that the stranger standing out in front wasn't an inspector.

Leslie Van Every.

### New Versions

Jug ye not and you'll not be juggled.

### The World and His Wife

"Wee" Askem: And what are the beef dressers demanding now?

Hugh Tellem: Higher wages. They claim that, at the present scale, a man that kills to dress cannot support a wife that dresses to kill.



Drawn for Wayside Tales by G. B. Inwood

"Say, are you holdin' five aces?"

"N-n-no, sir!"

"Well then, what's everybody duckin' fer?"



Drawn for Wayside Tales by C. D. Small  
The barber, who plays the bass fiddle for a pastime,  
becomes somewhat absent-minded

### Subdivision

Flowers and rumors of flowers  
Strangled in hedges of weed;  
Symptoms of streets and of showers;  
Sproutings of catalogue seed.  
Rows of toy houses and fences;  
Noah's Ark trees that are quaint,  
And over the sound of expenses  
An odor of guaranteed paint.

### Seeking Information

"A fool," said the professor to the student who asked a catch question, "can ask things a wise man can't answer."

"Is that the reason," asked a student in the back row, "why I flunked, last term, in this subject?"

### Her Principle

Saphead: Will you trust me with your life?

Miss Sweet: No, indeed. Cash down is my motto.

### From Their Wives' Diaries

Mrs. Garibaldi: It is all very well for my husband to wear a red shirt, but not when he wants me to walk with him through a pasture where there is an angry bull.

Mrs. Poe: Edgar Allen writes poems about ravens, but he never earns enough to provide chicken or turkey.

Mrs. Penn: William and a soldier courted me at the same time; I finally decided that the Penn is mightier than the sword.

Lady Reynolds: I call Joshua "Josh," considering that abbreviation appropriate because of the way he beautifies ugly patronesses.

Mrs. Franklin: Benjamin and I are important personages now and I find it extremely humiliating when he publicly refers to his humble beginnings.

The wife of "The Man in the Iron Mask": I am the happiest married woman on record. Familiarity breeds contempt, and I am kept constantly guessing, never having seen my husband's face.

Harold Seton.

### Why He Flewsseau!

A lady, who purchased her trousseau,  
Now thinks she was foolish to doesseau,  
For the man she would wed  
Has just bolted instead—  
That is why the poor maiden boo-hoosseau!

### Dilemma

In Salem Town the Goodly men  
Were sorely puzzled—evil strode  
Across their land from fearsome fen,  
And magic on the night winds rode.

Suspicion pointed far and wide,  
And so to Justice came the hitch;  
There were so many to be tried,  
They could not fathom which was witch.

### Habits, Not Love

*(A contemporary urges engaged couples to cease talking of love, and discuss one another's habits and tastes.)*

He: Dear May, since it's settled we're  
going to wed,  
The average amorous chatter's  
A thing we'll avoid for the future;  
instead  
We'll talk of more serious matters.

She: For instance, what sort of temper  
you'll bring  
To one who's been hitherto lonely.  
And if your good humor's a work-  
aday thing,  
Or worn when you're visiting  
only.

He: As soon as our married existence  
begins,  
For cash will you worry and  
wheedle?  
How much do you want as allow-  
ance for pins,  
And what is your form with the  
needle?

She: What word will you use, if the meat  
isn't done,  
And pies prove appalling produc-  
tions?  
And, if you're not home by the set  
of the sun,  
Will you deem it no reason for  
ructions?

He: You'll always be cheery and joyous  
and bright,  
And really obedient, won't you?

She: I think that is all we need mention  
tonight?  
You do love me, Algernon don't  
you?

La Touche Hancock.

### Saved!

Wife: Physicians claim that tea can  
be made as intoxicating as liquor.

Hubby (after consuming the last  
quart): Spree-tea good, I'll say!



Drawn for Wayside Tales by Lansing Campbell

Dr. Monk: Don't forget to gargle your sore  
throat, Mr. Ostrich, and tie something around it  
—a spiral puttee will do all right."

### Floral Love

I am a ragged sailor much  
In love with mignonette,  
But with sweet william she delights  
To openly coquette.  
I can't enjoy my Indian pipe,  
I feel inclined to take  
The monkshood and retire within  
The dark woods for her sake.  
I would not live forever thus  
Alone, so I will don  
A prince's feather in my cap,  
And fox-gloves I'll put on,  
At four-o'clock I'll go and ring  
The bluebell, and behold!  
Present to her my bleeding heart  
All framed in marigold.

Minna Irving.

### Letters

I hate to write letters; they grieve and  
they peeve me;  
They give me the shivers and willies, be-  
lieve me.  
Don't expect me to answer your mis-  
sives—I won't.  
I hate to write letters, and, listen, I  
DON'T.



Drawn for Wayside Tales by G. F. Kauffman

"Do you know, Tommy, how many little bees had to die so you could have honey for your bread?"

### A Time for Everything

Beneath the spreading chestnut tree,  
The village smithy stands.  
He's knocked off work, because you see  
His union so demands.

The sizzling horseshoe, glowing red,  
He's not allowed to swat.  
Because the labor leader said,  
"Strike—while the iron is hot."

### A Lie Ability

Hill: Safe flying is the aviator's greatest asset.

Dale: You mean the lawyer's greatest asset.

Hill: What have lawyers to do with aircraft?

Dale: Pardon me, I thought you said safe lying.

### Refuting the Ancients

A thought we often dandle  
In our cerebellum gray stack  
Is: What could one be doing  
With a needle in a haystack?

### Sh! Sh!

Tho' birthday parties bore them,  
The ladies all say,  
They'd rather keep their birthdays  
Than give them away.

### My Bonnie Trods Over the Golf Course

Oh, the lass who loved a sailor  
Didn't lead as lone a life  
As the lass who loved a golfer  
And became the golfer's wife.

### A Pup-Thought

"Humans probably think my master walks down street in order to arrive at some other place besides the one he starts from. I know better. He does that merely to lift up one heel so I can bite at it, then jerk it away and put the other one up for me to nip at. He can't fool me!"

Strickland Gillilan.

### A Dog Tale

An oak leaf fell upon my foot—  
To walk I wasn't able—  
'Twas solid oak—I'll say it was—  
From our extension table.

### Time Was Up

Curious: What went wrong at the wedding? Did the bride faint?

Sarcastic: No—the license expired.

### Kneading It

As two lovers were sitting on the couch in the parlor, the girl stroked her lover's bearded chin, with her hand.

Peaved, he said, "I know that I need a shave, but you don't have to rub it in."

# What is Your Occupation?



## DO YOU LIKE TO DRAW?

No matter where you live or what your occupation may be, if you are spending any time at all in amusing yourself by drawing, you should devote that same time in a *practical way* so you will be able to do better work.

Among our students are men in the **Army and Navy, Doctors, Bankers, Lawyers, Architects, Merchants, Actors, Chauffeurs, Civil, Mechanical, and Electrical Engineers, College Professors, Students, Plumbers, Carpenters, Telegraphers, Railway Men, etc., etc.**

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Are you one of those who say—

***"I can make a good copy, but  
I can't draw an original?"***

If you can make a good copy you should have no trouble in soon being able to draw a good original, providing you are shown how in a PRACTICAL WAY.

CARTOONIST EVANS, in his course of instruction in CARTOONING and CARICATURE, will teach you the fundamental principles of the work first. You will be advanced as your own individual work merits. You will not have to keep up with or be held back by any class. Each Student is a class by himself. AND YOU WILL BE TAUGHT HOW TO DRAW ORIGINAL CARTOONS.

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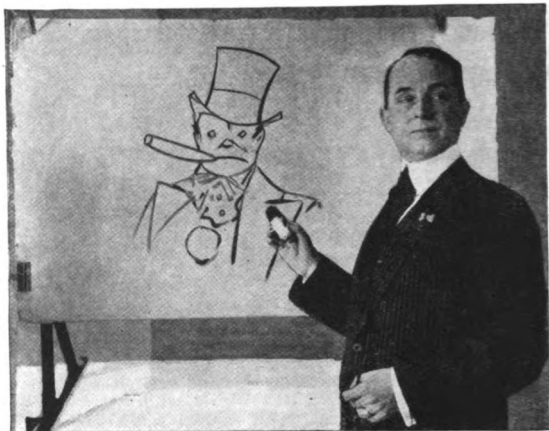
Send a small sample of your work, and we will mail you the **PORTFOLIO OF CARTOONS** and **BOOKLET** with full details about the course. **THE COURSE IS NOT EXPENSIVE**

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**T**HINK of the advantage of studying animated movie cartooning under the originator of the art himself! Through the Federal Course, Winsor McCay, tells for the first time, the secrets and methods of successful animated movie cartooning. He explains in a clear, systematic way the conception, uses and field for this art.

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Fontaine Fox's idea of the Toonerville Trolley earned him \$20,000 the first year.

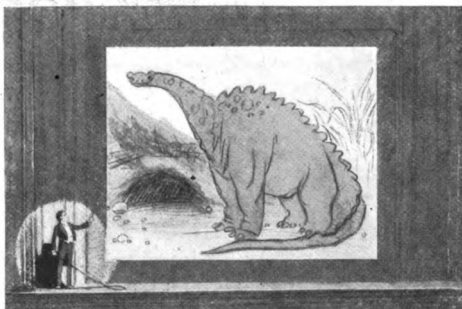
It is the idea that counts in animated cartooning. The details are often executed by someone else. Federal School methods develop originality. Each lesson submitted is constructively criticized by practical artists. These criticisms are designed to encourage originality of idea and individuality of style. No small part of the incomes of Fontaine Fox, Sid Smith, and Clare Briggs (averaging close to \$100,000 a year) is due to originality of idea and its adaptability to movie presentation.



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Fontaine Fox—Central Press Ass'n.  
Herbert Johnson—Saturday Evening Post.  
D. J. Lavin—Formerly Art Dept. Manager Chicago Tribune.  
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Alton Packard—Redpath Chautauquas.  
Norman Rockwell—Cover Designer and Illustrator.  
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Charles Sykes—Philadelphia Evening Ledger.  
Walter J. Wilverding—Animal Painter.  
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### Contributors

McKee Barclay—Baltimore Sun.  
J. W. Bengough—Toronto, Canada.  
Edwin Bloom—Federal Schools.  
Paul Branson—Illustrator.  
Ted Brown—Chicago Daily News.  
William Jennings Bryan—Former Secretary of State.  
Perry Carter—Formerly with Minneapolis Tribune.  
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J. W. McKur—New York American.  
John T. McCutcheon—Chicago Tribune.  
Ted Nelson—Formerly with St. Paul Dispatch.  
Roy Olson—Animator, Chicago.  
Cary Orr—Chicago Tribune.  
Lauros M. Phoenix—National Society of Mural Painters.  
H. T. Webster—New York Tribune.  
Clive Weed—Philadelphia Public Ledger.  
Gaar Williams—Indianapolis News.

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# FEDERAL SCHOOL NEWS

A RECORD OF ACHIEVEMENT IN  
ILLUSTRATING AND CARTOONING

EDITED BY

CHAS. L. BARTHOLOMEW

*Chas. L. Bartholomew*



WILLIAM GEAGAN

He writes: "I am still getting great praise from all sides, and sincerely appreciate your co-operation, and will always have a warm feeling for the Federal School and its Dean."

CHAS. F. WANTZ, a young banker of York, Nebr., proved so successful in public appearance that he developed chalk talk for church work. He writes: "Since entering the ministry I have had some time to devote to my drawing, confining myself to show cards and chalk talking. I desire to thank you for your part in getting me interested, and assure you that it is a great asset in my sermon work. I am sure I am more efficient because of this talent which you helped me find and develop."



WILLIE CLARK

display advertising and engraving house drawings. I give the Federal School credit for having gained so much."

WILLIE CLARK, upon publication of his cartoon in the *Mart Daily Herald of Texas*, writes: "It's sure a 'grand and glorious feeling' for a fellow to see his cartoons appear in print. I arrived at this in connection with my study of Division Four. My drawing has given me much publicity and now keeps me busy in posters,

HUGH HUTTON is doing full color paintings in oil for reproduction in "The Gopher," of the U. of M., and cartoons for the feature section, also a design for the leather cover. Assignments come to young Hutton in three figures, showing rapid development in practical drawing for reproduction, which started from beginning work in chalk talk and illustrating of school publications in Lincoln, Nebr., and later in the West High School and University in Minneapolis. Hutton's art training was interrupted by a trip overseas in Y. M. C. A. entertainment work with the Army of Occupation.



HUGH HUTTON

JAMES G. HUNTER, a young railroad clerk of Chicago who has gone through eleven divisions of the course, writes: "Thank you for your encouragement and helpful criticism. Such things inspire a fellow to dig in. Divisions 10, 11 and 12 are wonderful, especially the animal lessons. In fact, the whole course is excellent as to plates, clearness of type and subject matter."



JAMES G. HUNTER

This endorsement is typical of the comment received from active young students who, through study of practical drawing in connection with high school, college and early business associations, come promptly into remunerative use of drawing. As in the case of Mr. Hutton, chalk talk often leads to highest form of color and tone drawings for reproduction.

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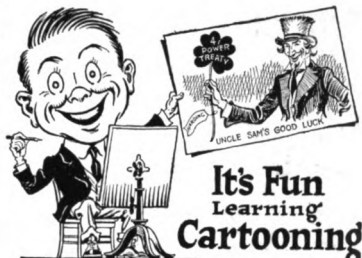
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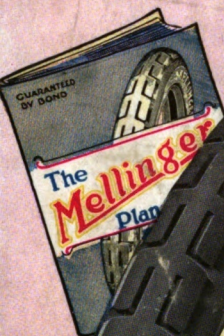
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