

Stageland

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NOVEMBER 1909

THE
BLUE BOOK
MAGAZINE



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in the condition of perfect
health and functional activity.

OF ALL SCENTED SOAPS PEARS' OTTO OF ROSE IS THE BEST.
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MISS LOUISE DRESSER, late Prima Donna "The Candy Shop," now in Vaudeville. *Photograph by Moffett Studio, Chicago*
Color supplement November 1909 THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE

\$500 in Monthly Prizes—Get Your Share

TEN QUIZ

Trade Mark Reg.

U. S. Pat. Office

\$500.00

IN CASH PRIZES

For Answering the Ten Questions Printed Below from the Reading and Advertising Pages of the OCTOBER, 1909, ISSUE of

THE RED BOOK MAGAZINE

The Ten Questions

Every One of Which Can be Answered from the Reading and Advertising Pages of the October, 1909, issue of THE RED BOOK MAGAZINE

1. Who owns the elephant that won't eat anything but EASTER BONNETS.
2. Where did Col. Jack keep his Secret-service emblem?
3. Name a process that grips each tiny hair?
4. How much money did Elizabeth Deane go shopping with?
5. What are the three ingredients of the soft gray filling of the brain?
6. What curious receptacle did an eccentric old gentleman use to convey a considerable sum of bank notes to his niece?
7. What is it that 3,000,000 men do every morning?
8. Who is the cleverest woman spy in the world?
9. What delicious natural food should never be placed in direct contact with ice, because of change in color and loss in flavor?
10. What kind of hens LAID THE EGGS which a Little Brown Girl broke?

**BUY A COPY OF THE RED BOOK MAGAZINE
TO-DAY OF YOUR REGULAR NEWSDEALER**

THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE

THE DECEMBER BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE

IF you were a struggling dentist, with barely enough to pay your rent and eviction looming in the foreground, and a stranger were to offer you an absurdly large amount to perform a trifling operation on a sick old gentleman, would you do it? That is to say, would you, if a very beautiful girl, a kinswoman of the sick old gentleman, pleaded with you not to? Such was the predicament in which the hero of John Barton Oxford's amusing novelette, "The Molar Mystery," found himself once upon a day. The action he took in the face of threats and warnings and what ensued goes to form one of the most diverting stories THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE has published in a long time. It will appear complete in the December issue, out November first. Moreover, it is but one of over a score of splendid complete stories selected for that holiday number.

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CARICATURE ILLUSTRATIONS BY MARIUS DE ZAVAS

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IMPORTANT NOTICE: Do not subscribe to THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE through agents unknown to you personally, or you may find yourself defrauded. Many complaints are received from people who have paid cash to some swindler, in which event, of course, the subscription never reaches this office.

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**One
Blade
Shaved**



**Mr.
Maxim
151 Times**

MR. HIRAM PERCY MAXIM

Inventor of the famous Maxim Silencer, etc., and eminent mechanical engineer, says: "I have shaved with one AutoStrop blade 151 consecutive shaves, and consider that the AutoStrop is the only safety razor which is mechanically perfect and practical."

More about prominent and enthusiastic Auto-Stroppers in our next advertisements.

A BLADE A YEAR—Though 151 consecutive shaves sounds unusual, there isn't anything particularly wonderful about it. Any fine razor blade, stropped expertly each shave, will shave you for six months or a year, because you constantly *renew* the edge. An AutoStrop blade is long lived because you constantly renew the edge by automatic stropping. And as for the twelve blades in the AutoStrop set, they will probably last you several years instead of one.

THE WHOLE AUTO STROP IDEA—Your friends who shave themselves with old-fashioned razors don't have their razors honed more than once or twice per year. The AutoStrop Safety Razor is simply the same edge that your old-fashioned friend or head barber uses, only it is constructed ingeniously so that a novice can strop it as expertly as the head barber, and so that a novice can shave with it as expertly as the head barber, and can't cut himself. That is all you want a razor to do, is it not?

TO GET HEAD BARBER SHAVES—you must strop your blades. No other way to get

them. That is why the AutoStrop is a strop razor.

You simply slip strop through the AutoStrop Razor (without removing blade or taking apart,) and move back and forth. Blade falls automatically on strop at *exactly* the right angle and right pressure, thus stropping itself expertly. No experience required. No trouble. No time lost. Result? Delicious edge quick! Cost per shave, $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ cent; time, 4 to 5 minutes.

No blade trouble. Little blade expense. A wipe and it's clean and dry. Nothing to unscrew and screw up again.

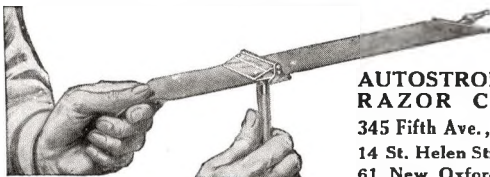
Consists of heavily silver-plated holder, 12 blades and strop, in small, handsome leather case, size only 2x4 in. Price \$5.00, which is probably the total cost of your shaving for years.

Get one and try it. You'll be glad you did. Like Mr. Maxim you'll say it's the only *practical* safety razor.

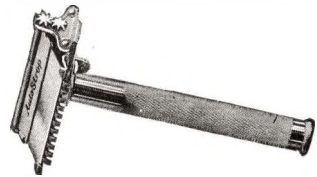
GET ONE AND TRY IT FREE.—for thirty days. If you don't like it, get your \$5.00 refunded. If your retailer doesn't sell the AutoStrop on thirty days' free trial, we will. Every buyer must be satisfied with his AutoStrop or with his money back. Get an Auto Strop while you have it in mind.

A BOOK YOU WANT.—If your shaving is too satisfactory, you don't want it, but if it isn't, this book will keep you up late. It's a quick, speedy, witty, instructive, interesting conversation, entitled: "An Interview With the Greatest Razor Expert." Write us before you forget.

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**AUTOSTROP SAFETY
RAZOR COMPANY**
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STAGELAND



MISS ANNA BUSSERT and EDWIN WILSON,
in "The Gay Hussars."
Photograph by White, New York

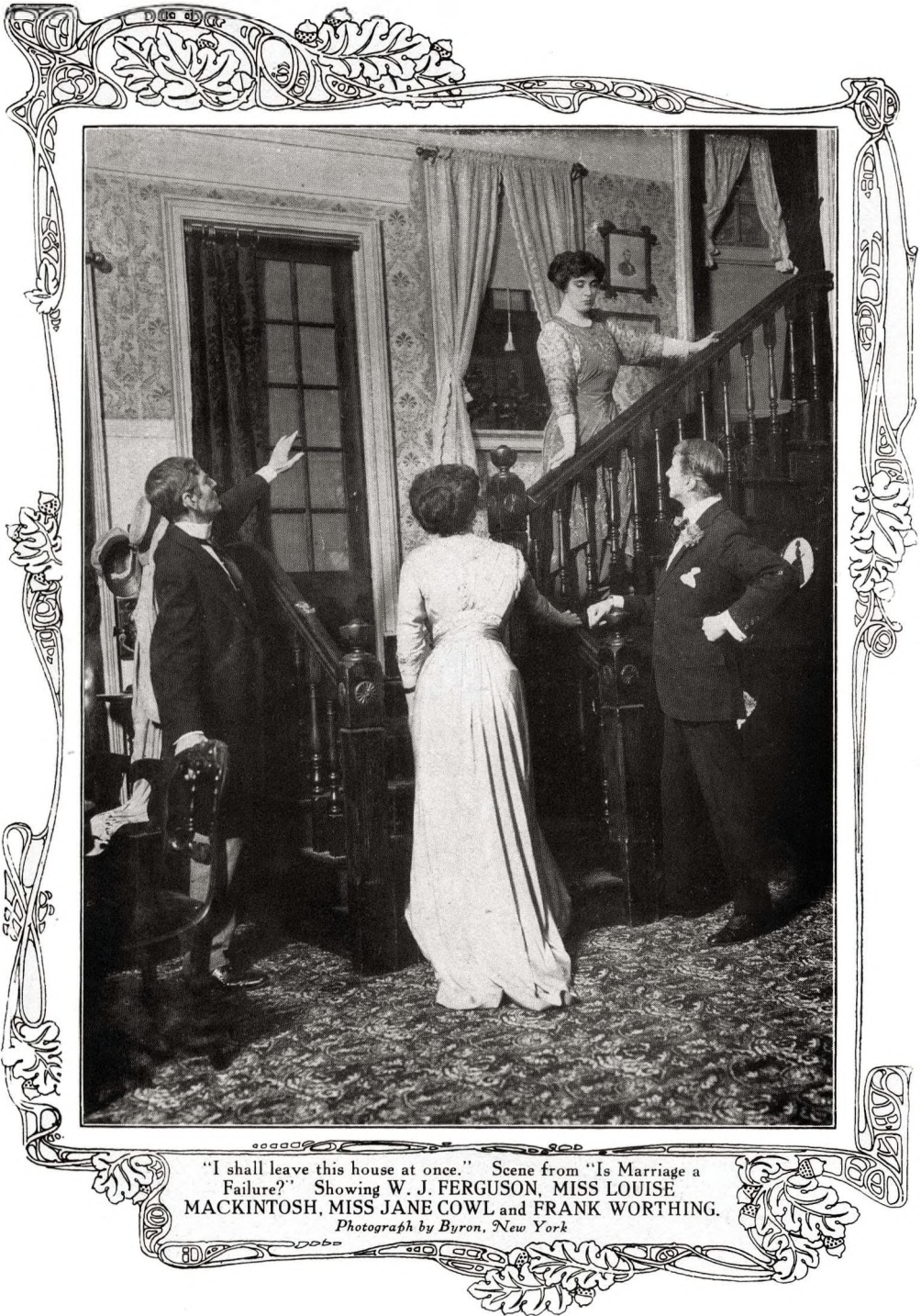


"I was married by Bill Gaylor during the closed season."
Scene from "Is Marriage a Failure?" Showing T. NEWTON LINDS,
MISS LOUISE MACKINTOSH, JOHN F. WEBBER,
W. J. FERGUSON, FRANK WORTHING and WM. MORRIS.
Photograph by Byron, New York



"Your shoe string is undone—I am undone." Scene from
"Is Marriage a Failure?" Showing FRANK WORTHING and
MISS JANE COWL.

Photograph by Byron, New York



"I shall leave this house at once." Scene from "Is Marriage a Failure?" Showing W. J. FERGUSON, MISS LOUISE MACKINTOSH, MISS JANE COWL and FRANK WORTHING.
Photograph by Byron, New York



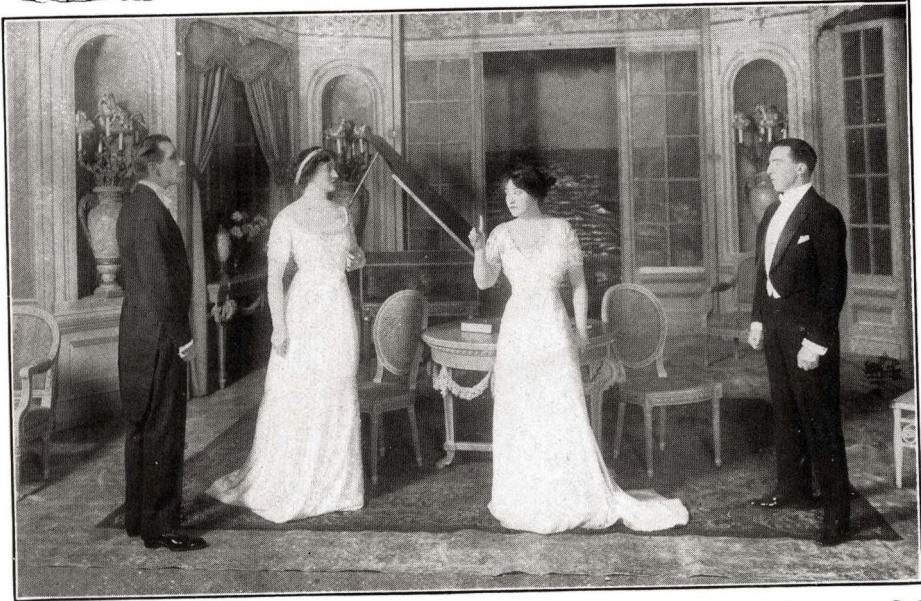
"The meeting of the clearing house committee," in Act III.
"The Dollar Mark." Two central figures are CUYLER HASTINGS
and HASSARD SHORT.
Photograph by White, New York



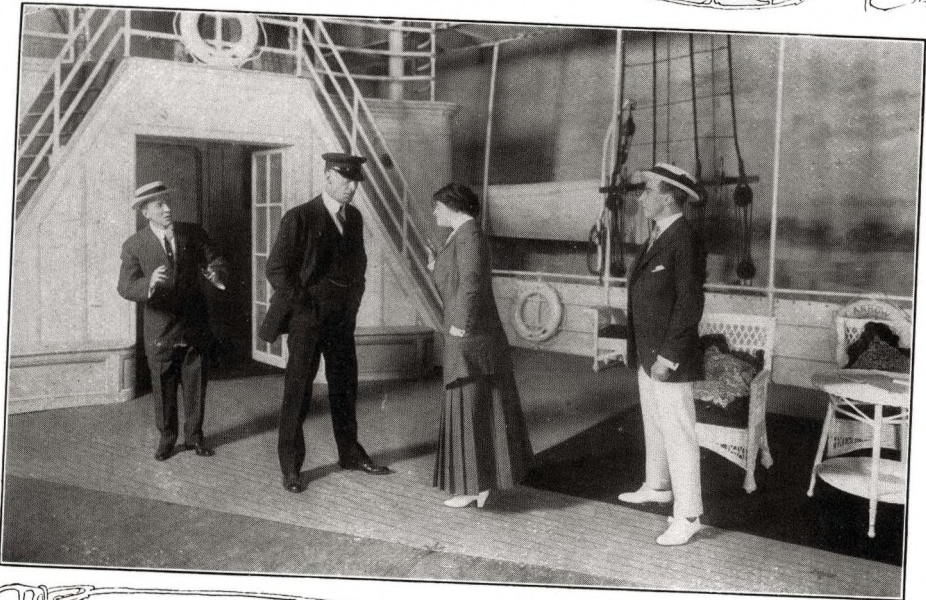
"You are the first white woman I have seen in twelve years."
This and the other half of the same picture on the
opposite page represents a strong scene from



George Broadhurst's new play, "The Dollar Mark," produced
under the direction of W. A. Brady.
Photograph by White, New York



BRINSLEY SHAW, MISS SELENE JOHNSON,
MISS PAULINE FREDERICK and HASSARD SHORT,
in "The Dollar Mark." Photograph by White, New York



GEO. WRIGERT, CUYLER HASTINGS, MISS PAULINE
FREDERICK and HASSARD SHORT, in "The Dollar Mark."
Photograph by White, New York



MISS NINA MORRIS, in "The Florist Shop," a new
Henry W. Savage production.
Photograph by Otto Sarony Co., New York



MISS MURIEL TERRY, as "Marosi," in
"The Gay Hussars."
Photograph by White, New York

MISS FLORENCE REID, as "Baroness Treszka,"
in "The Gay Hussars."
Photograph by White, New York





The Riding Girls in "The Gay Hussars," the new musical comedy from the German, produced by Henry W. Savage.
Photograph by White, New York



MISS ANNA BUSSERT, as "Baroness Risa Von Marbach,"
in "The Gay Hussars."
Photograph by White, New York



The wedding scene in "The Florist Shop."
JOHN THOMAS, as Rev. Cadwallader Cope, and his nephew and niece,
Mr. and Mrs. Dick Baxter, played by MISS LOUISE DREW
and RICHARD STIRLING.
Photograph by Hall, New York



MISS MARION LORNE, MISS LOUISE DREW, LIONEL WALSH and RICHARD STERLING, in "The Florist Shop."
Photograph by Hall, New York



Arrival of the country relatives, interrupting the honeymoon in
"The Florist Shop." Scene shows LIONEL WALSH,
MISS MARION LORNE, WM. FREEMAN, MISS ANNA L.
BATES and MISS ADDIE ORTON.
Photograph by Hall, New York



MISS OZA WALDORP and WM. ROSELL,
in "The Ringmaster."
Photograph by Hall, New York



ARTHUR BYRON, LUCIUS HENDERSON and
GEO. HOWELL, in "The Ringmaster."
Photograph by Hall, New York



ARTHUR BYRON and MISS LAURETTE TAYLOR, in a
strong scene from Miss Olive Porter's new play, "The Ringmaster."
Photograph by Hall, New York



BEN JOHNSON, FORREST WINANT and
MISS MABEL CAMERON, in "The Only Law."
Photograph by White, New York



BEN JOHNSON, FORREST WINANT, WILL E. SHEERER
and MISS MABEL CAMERON, in "The Only Law."
Photograph by White, New York



FORREST WINANT, MISS MABEL CAMERON and
MISS MABEL FRENYEAR, in "The Only Law,"
the play written by Wilson Mizner and Geo. Bronson Howard.
Photograph by White, New York



SIDNEY DREW, MISS JANE MARBURY, FRANKLIN JONES and MISS MARIAN CHAPMAN, in "Billy."
Photograph by Hall, New York



FRANKLIN JONES, SIDNEY DREW and MISS STUART ROBSON, in "Billy."
Photograph by Hall, New York



MISS JANE MARBURY, SIDNEY DREW (Billy), MRS. STUART
ROBSON and MME. NEUENDORFF, in the scene in which Billy's
false teeth are being auctioned, in "BILLY."
Photograph by Hall, New York



MISS HATTIE WILLIAMS, EDWIN NICANDER
and MISS VIRA STOWE, in "Detective Sparkes."
Photograph by Hall, New York



JULIAN ROYCE, LOUIS MASSEN and
MISS HATTIE WILLIAMS, in "Detective Sparkes."
Photograph by Hall, New York



MISS HATTIE WILLIAMS and JULIAN ROYCE, in a scene from Miss William's play, "Detective Sparkes," her first departure from musical comedy.

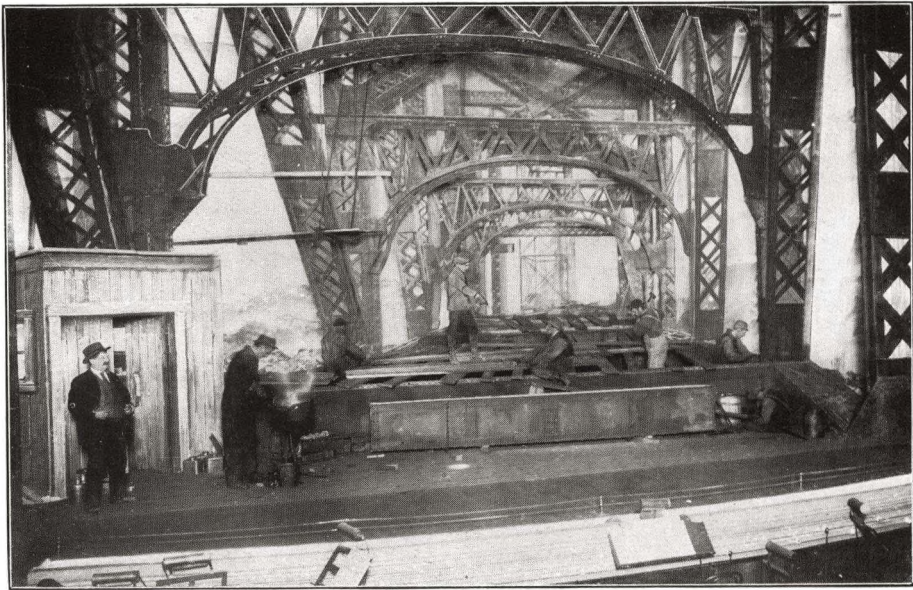
Photograph by Hall, New York



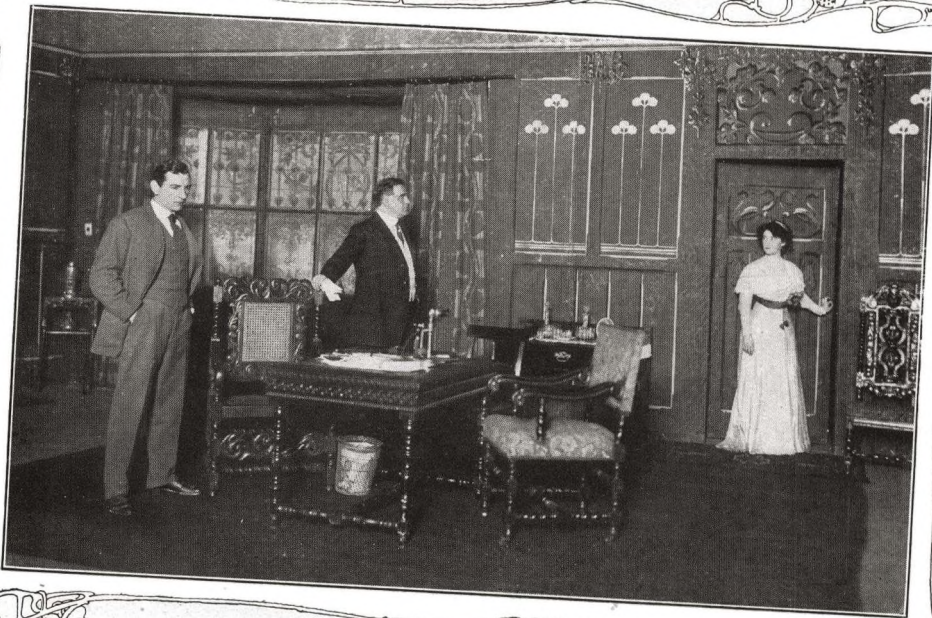
MISS HENRIETTA CROSMAN and PAUL DICKEY,
in Miss Crosman's latest play, "Sham."
Photograph by White, New York

Photography by White, New York
in an interesting scene from "Sham."
MISS HENRIETTA SCOSMAN and her company





The great bridge scene in the play by Rupert Hughes,
entitled "The Bridge," in which Guy Bates Post is starring.
Photograph by E. Chickering, Boston



GUY BATES POST, ALBERT GRAU and
MISS KATHERINE EMMETT, in "The Bridge."
Photograph by E. Chickering, Boston

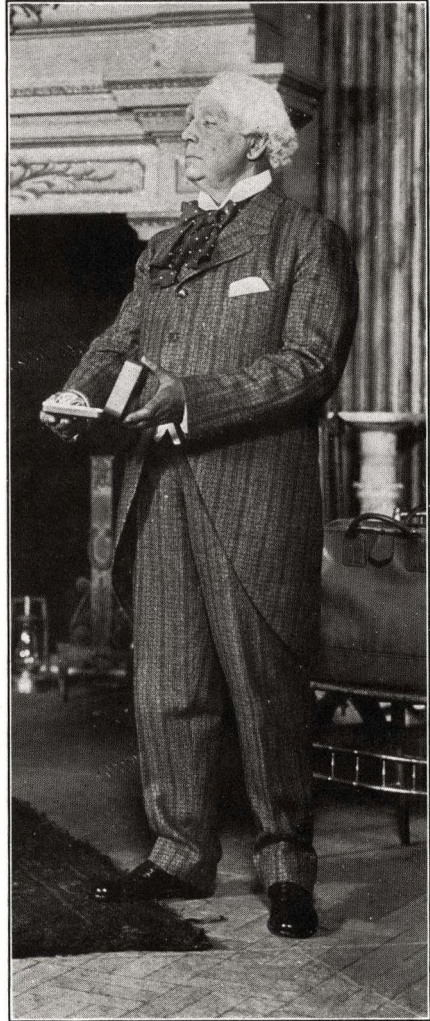


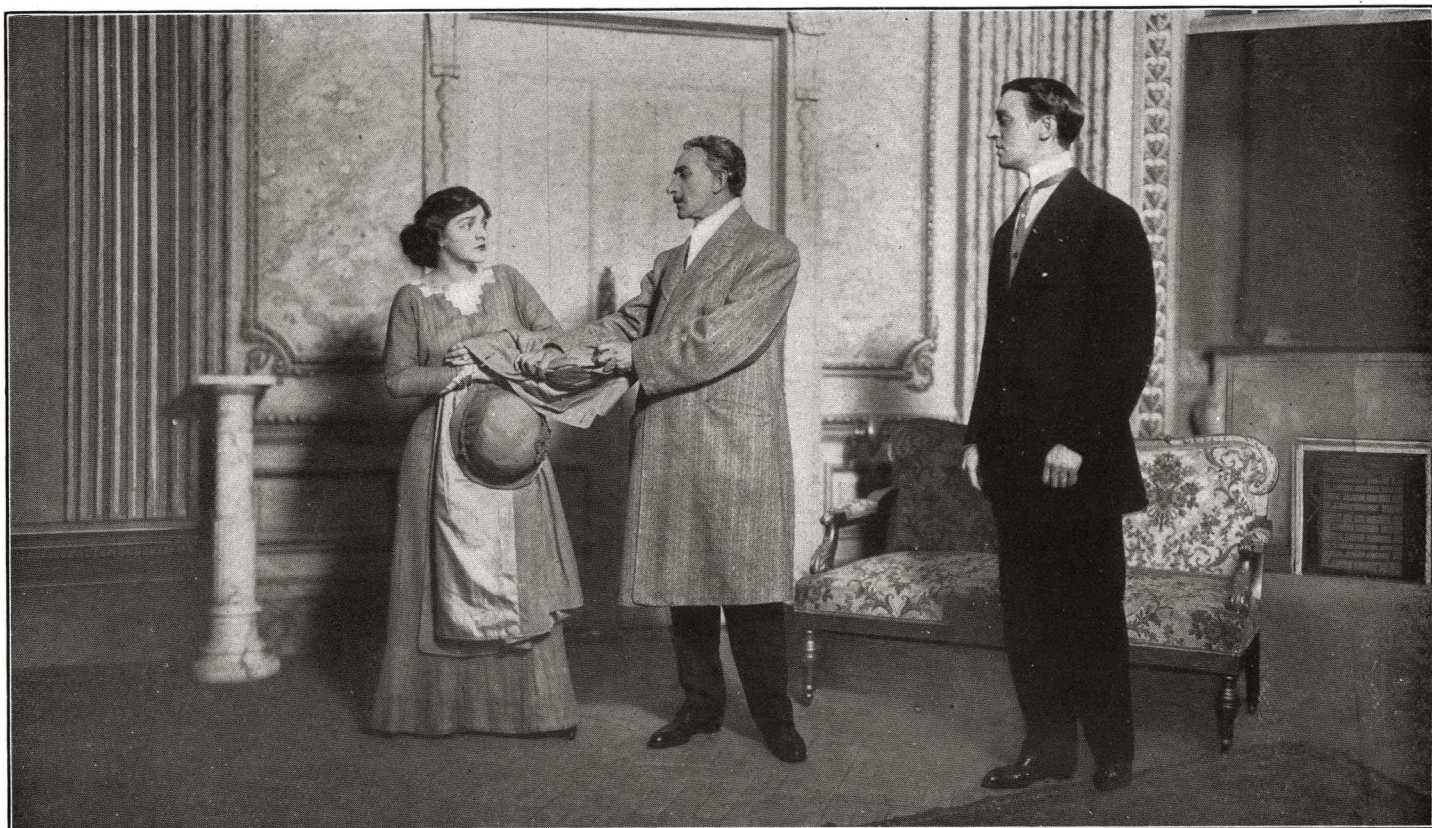
Strong scene from "The Bridge."
GUY BATES POST is shown at extreme left.
Photograph by E. Chickering, Boston.



MISS VIRGINIA HAMMOND, in "Arsene Lupin."
Photograph by Hall, New York

CHAS. HARBURY (showing the diamond tiara, which
is later stolen), in "Arsene Lupin."
Photograph by Hall, New York





Scene from "Arsene Lupin," showing MISS DORIS KEANE,
SIDNEY HERBERT and WM. COURTENAY.
Sonia (Miss Keane) accused of the theft.
Photograph by Hall, New York



MISS FLORENCE MAY SMITH, as "Kokomo,"
in "The Top o' th' World."
Photograph by T. Kaiwara, St. Louis

THE BLUE BOOK

MAGAZINE

VOL. X

NOVEMBER, 1909

No. 1

The Treasure of Rubies

By MARVIN DANA

THIS is one of the most intensely interesting novelettes THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE has ever published. In fiction the pursuit of jewels has ever been fraught with lively adventure and startling complications, yet rarely has a bag of rubies held, in addition, more of excitement than in the present case. The author, whose earlier stories are well known to our readers has never wrought to better purpose than in the present story, to begin which is to end it at a sitting.—THE EDITORS.

CHAPTER I.—THE ENVELOPE BY EXPRESS

THE door slammed shut behind the departing messenger-boy; I heard him whistling shrilly as he clattered down the three flights that led from my apartment to the street. And still I sat staring amazedly at the long envelope, made fast with many seals, which lay before me on the table, where the bearer had cast it down. Then, finally, as the noise of the whistling died away in the distance, I put forth a hand, and drew the object of my curiosity closer, and turned it over in order that I might read the superscription, for, at the boy's direction, I had signed the receipt mechanically, without this examination. Now, however, it occurred to me that a mistake had been made.

There was no mistake. The name and the address were very clearly written; they were my own:

*Mr. James Morris Barclay,
146a East Seventy-seventh St.,
New York City.*

Here, then, was no room for doubt. It was possible, indeed, that others of my name might have their homes in the great city, but I knew for a certainty that none save myself had his domicile in this modest tenement. It was, therefore, evident that the envelope of the American Express Company was designed for me. In that fact lay the cause of my bewilderment.

So, as is the custom of men and women in such perplexity, I fuddled my wits with futile guessing, instead of gaining immediate knowledge by the simple expedient of breaking the seals. Even, I hastily reviewed the principal facts as to my position in the world,

questioning a clue to the mystery; but the inquiry was fruitless. Of a truth, there was none to send me aught, so far as I could tell. I was an orphan, without any near relatives of whom I had knowledge. I had no circle of intimates. For that matter, I had no friends—merely a few acquaintances in the office where I endured the tedium of a clerkship by day to secure the means of a meager living. Of social life, I had none at all. I had decided to make a career for myself, and to that end I gave my energies each evening to the study of law.

I scanned the circumstances of my life and of its environment, but they afforded no inkling as to whence this packet came, no hint as to the nature of its contents. So in the end, I was brought to the point of doing what I should have done while yet the messenger was clattering down the stairs. I took up the envelope, broke the seals, and drew out that which was contained within.

If I had been perplexed before, I was astounded now. Very slowly, very gently, I laid down on the table the result of my investigation, and sat gazing at it with round eyes. For there before me was a sheaf of banknotes, clean, crisp, compact. The Roman numerals on the topmost were two X's. I was stupefied by this spectacle of a sum apparently so large, so inexplicable as to its source. When, at last, I reached out hesitating fingers, and examined the money, I found that there were just ten of the notes, each of the same denomination as the uppermost. This total of two hundred dollars, the largest sum that I had ever had in my possession, was there on the table before me, alongside the envelope of many seals which bore my name and address. I shook my head wearily over the hopeless confusion of my thoughts. The days of fairy godmothers, of genii out of bottles, of miracles in general, have long been gone. Nevertheless, there lay the money. I counted it once again; the amount was incontestable. I pinched myself; I was awake, not dreaming. The money was real—so, too, was the envelope that bore my name and address.

A glance toward the envelope to ver-

ify this fact anew suggested another thought, on which I acted without delay. A single glance within showed me that I had not drawn forth all the contents when I took out the package of money: a smaller envelope remained. I seized on this eagerly, and found that, like the one which had contained it, this, too, was addressed to me. Here, then, was the explanation of the mystery. With hands that trembled in the eagerness of my curiosity, I tore open the wrapper, and spread the single sheet of the letter before me on the table.

This letter, which carried a Chicago address and the date of the second day preceding, ran as follows:

JAMES MORRIS BARCLAY, ESQ.,
146a East Seventy-seventh St.,
New York City.

DEAR SIR:

I have been instructed by my client, Nathan Hemenway, Esq., to forward you the sum of two hundred dollars, (\$200.00), in currency, the which amount I inclose herewith, under seal of the American Express Company. The said Nathan Hemenway, Esq., further desires me as his attorney to advise you to the effect that the designated sum is transmitted to you as a provision for expenses in making a visit to my said client, at the Leland House, in Chicago. I regret that I must add, by way of explanation in the premises, that my client is now confined to his bed by an illness that will be terminated only by his death. It is, therefore, imperative that you should answer his summons in person at once, since, though there exists a possibility of my client's lingering for weeks, the end may come at any moment.

I have the honor to remain, sir,
Your obedient serv't,
(Signed) THORNTON APPLEBY.

On my first hasty reading of this stilted missive, I made no more of it than the one fact that the money had been sent me in order to insure my visiting the death-bed of its donor. The name of that donor meant nothing to me, and the mystery remained as profound as before. But now, when for a second time I perused the letter, my attention became definitely fixed on the name of the lawyer's client, and it was borne in on my consciousness that the words, Nathan Hemenway, were somehow remotely, elusively familiar. Yet, despite my conviction in this regard, I

ransacked my memory for hours without avail, and, indeed, I came finally to believe myself tricked by some idle vagary of imagination. It was only when I had turned my thoughts from the search that, of a sudden, the truth flashed on me. The name was in fact known to me, a souvenir of earliest childhood. I had neither heard it nor seen it for many years; for that matter, I had never given heed to it. But now I remembered that it had been uttered in my presence by my father. This Nathan Hemenway was the name of my father's half-brother, a man much older than himself, who had gone West, and had never been heard of again.

As this precise recollection came to me, I understood, at last, something of the puzzle. The mysterious donor of the money was a man of my own blood, since the mother of my father was his mother as well. Moreover, it was apparent that he deemed the kinship of some importance, inasmuch as he had been at such pains to secure my presence at his bedside. I must confess that hope mounted high in my breast. It seemed to me, in view of the tidy sum he had bestowed on me for the costs of the journey, that my unknown relative must be very rich. And he had sent for me as he lay dying! I dwelt excitedly on the obvious possibilities suggested by these facts, and saw dimly into a future made golden by unexpected wealth. Of a truth, I strove to suppress such sordid conjectures as unbecoming by reason of my uncle's condition, but I succeeded none too well. My best efforts were unable to contrive much real grief over the approaching dissolution of an old man on whom I had never set eyes, of whom I had scarcely heard the name. So, I slept but little that night, for the affair had set my nerves tingling, but the hours of wakefulness were far from unpleasant. Through them, I was rejoicing in those roseate waking dreams in which the creature of toil and of poverty contemplates the delights of possible leisure and wealth.

The afternoon of the next day found me speeding West on the Standard limited, the fastest route between the two cities, and which would land me in Chicago early the next morning.

CHAPTER II

NATHAN HEMENWAY

In due course, I made my appearance in the office of the Leland House, and made inquiry of the clerk at the desk for Mr. Nathan Hemenway.

"You can't see him," came the terse answer. "He is seriously ill—unable to receive any visitors."

"But," I exclaimed, in consternation, "I have come on from New York expressly for the purpose of seeing him. He sent for me."

"Oh," the clerk said, with a new note of respect in his voice, "that does make a difference, certainly. You must see Mrs. Nash."

"Mrs. Nash?" I repeated, interrogatively.

"Mrs. Nash is the nurse," the clerk explained. "I will send your card to her. If you will wait in the reception-room yonder—"

He made a gesture to indicate the direction.

I gave him the required card, and afterward took my way as he had bade me. Presently, a page entered the reception-room, and, following him, came a matronly woman whose face wore a curiously pleasant expression compounded of gentleness and strength. The page stood aside when he had come near me, and the woman approached.

"This is Mr. James Barclay?" she asked.

"Yes," I answered.

"I am Mrs. Nash," she went on, at once, "Mr. Hemenway's nurse. I was informed that he had sent for you to come. Unfortunately, at this hour of the day, it is not well to disturb my patient. Will you come again at ten o'clock to-morrow morning?"

I signified my assent, and she added:

"Then, you need not send up your name at that time. Just come direct to Mr. Hemenway's suite, number three hundred and sixty-one, on the third floor."

We chatted together in desultory fashion for a few minutes longer, and Mrs. Nash gave me some details concerning my uncle's illness. Then she left me, and I was free to follow my own devices for the remainder of the

day. Under the circumstances, however, I was disinclined to seek any active amusement, beyond a short walk about the city. Afterward, I remained in the hotel, where I had taken a room, and passed my time in reading and in meditating, but chiefly in meditating. One can conceive that I was become the prey of vivid imaginings. Now that I had arrived so near to the knowledge I craved, the delay fretted me mightily, and I endured the tedium of waiting with sorry grace.

I was astir at an absurdly early hour of the morning, so that, after I had dawdled my best over the breakfast-table, I had yet a full two hours of final suspense before, at last, the clock marked five minutes of ten, and I felt myself free to seek the chamber of my kinsman. As I entered the elevator from the lobby of the hotel, one other passenger followed me within it, and, since I had nothing better to do, I scrutinized my fellow-traveler with particularity.

This was a man a trifle older than myself, perhaps of twenty-five years, rather below the middle height, but lithely built, with unusually long arms, and possessed of shoulder muscles and a depth of chest that told of strength much beyond the ordinary. His face was well-featured, but of a saturnine expression, thin-lipped of mouth, cold blue of eyes, which were set deep beneath brows strangely shaggy in one so young. The impression I received of the man from this first survey was that his prime characteristic was unscrupulous strength. And, too, somehow he provoked in me a feeling of seemingly causeless hostility, whereat I wondered, inasmuch as I had no thought that his path and mine could ever cross again. Nevertheless, the fellow aroused in me an inexplicable interest, so that I continued to study him closely the while we mounted to the third story of the hotel. When, finally, we halted at the third floor, I took it for granted that I should part from this chance companion of a minute. On the contrary, as the iron lattice of the door slid open, he stepped briskly out ahead of me, and passed down the corridor. As I followed him, I observed for the first time that he walked with a slight lameness in the

left leg. The limp was barely perceptible, however, and offered no bar to full activity of movement.

I paid the man no further heed for the time being, for I was now giving my attention to the numbers on the doors that lined the corridor. I came soon to three hundred and sixty-one, and raised my hand to knock. The movement was arrested by a voice close by me. The tones of it were low and richly sonorous, yet it smote my ears unpleasantly.

"I have already knocked," were the words.

I looked up, and saw, standing a little apart, the grim-visaged fellow of the elevator. At the sight of him waiting motionless by my relative's door, a great disquietude fell on me. My examination of him had already convinced me that he was neither physician nor lawyer. His presence in the place, at this hour, puzzled me. An instinct of distrust against him cried out at this moment.

I murmured a vague, "Thank you," as the hand I had raised dropped again to my side. There was no time for further speech between us, had either of us desired it, for now the door swung open, and Mrs. Nash appeared.

"Ah, both of you!" she exclaimed softly, as her eyes rested on us. "That is good. You are punctual." She smiled as she spoke, and forthwith ushered us through a short passageway into the sitting-room of the suite. "Mr. Hemenway will see you in a minute," she said to us.

She went out of the room by a door that evidently led into the bedchamber. During the brief period of her absence, the other visitor and myself stood stiffly in our places, without exchanging a word. I looked curiously toward the man from time to time, but he held his own gaze steadfastly on the floor. I realized subtly that the latent feeling of antagonism between us was not mine alone. The very manner of his aloofness suggested the repellent. Perhaps, had his manner been less churlish, I might have discussed the suspicion aroused by his presence there—the suspicion that his interests and mine were vitally opposed. As yet, however, my emotions in

regard to the fellow were ill defined; I understood no more than that I experienced toward him an aversion sudden and masterful. I did not guess the truth: that destiny had set us two face to face in the battle of love, of life and of death.

Immediately on her return into the sitting-room, Mrs. Nash bade us enter the bedchamber, the door of which she held ajar for us. When we had passed within, she closed the door behind us, and we found ourselves alone in the presence of the sick man. Instinctively, as my companion advanced along one side of the bed, I chose to approach by the other. I moved forward thus until I was within a yard of the bedhead, where I came to a standstill, as did my fellow on the opposite side. Then, the two of us stood in silence, looking down on him who had summoned us.

Now, for the first time, my heart was really stirred to pity in behalf of this being of my own blood. I saw a face of waxen whiteness, so wasted that even the wrinkles of age were gone from the tautly-drawn skin. Only a small portion of the cheeks and of the brow was exposed, since a patriarchal cascade of silver beard concealed all the lower part of his face, while thick locks of the same color, apparently unthinned by time, fell low on his forehead. The masses of hair suggested the virility that must have belonged to him in his prime, and the revelation was emphasized by the eyes that shone out from beneath bushy brows. These were very dark, and they retained a surprising brilliance. Now, they darted for a single instant to the form opposite me; then, they turned to me, and studied me with cold insistence. Beneath this silent scrutiny, I felt myself grow restive. There was in the old man's impassive stare a hint of power that disturbed my composure. I guessed that in this physically impotent creature before me I beheld the arbiter of my fate. I was compelled to a secret agitation concerning my own destiny, even while my kinsman's evident nearness to death excited my commiseration.

"You are William's son," the sick man said, at last, without taking his eyes from me. His voice was thin, but it

was equally penetrating and distinct.

"Yes, sir," I answered; "I am your brother William's son—your nephew."

"And the other, too—he is my nephew as well, although he is no kin of yours," my uncle said. "Do you two know each other?"

"No, sir," I replied, while the young man across from me shook his head in mute negation; "I never in my life set eyes on him, until at the door, just now, nor have I ever heard of him."

"Well, he knows who you are, I'll warrant," the invalid remarked, and there was a cynical inflection in his tones. "He is Norris March, the son of my father's only sister. You, James, and he are my only near relatives. I am a lonely man. I have lived alone and I shall die alone. I have cherished only one friendship even. Yet, I have taken the time and the trouble to inform myself concerning you, James. Of Norris, I have had more intimate knowledge throughout his life. I have been too busy, however, during my lifetime to give either of you much attention. Now, as the hour of my death draws down on me, I have concerned myself with you. One of you, my two nephews, shall profit by my passing."

For a few seconds, my uncle was silent, the while his gaze roved us twain alternately. Then, he spoke feebly, querulously:

"Will you ring that bell, James?"

His eyes dropped to the handbell that stood on the table beside the bedside, and I struck it obediently. Instantly, Mrs. Nash appeared from the sitting-room, and addressed us briskly.

"You will go now, if you please, gentlemen. Mr. Hemenway will see both of you again at ten o'clock to-morrow morning."

I would have delayed to speak a phrase of kindness to my uncle, but Mrs. Nash checked me with a gesture, and so, in complete silence, the two nephews of Nathan Hemenway went forth from his chamber.

CHAPTER III

THE SECOND INTERVIEW

Still without speaking, Norris March and I traversed the corridor, and stood

together by the entrance to the elevator, where I touched the button-call. The response was of the quickest; nevertheless, even in that little interval of time, the muteness between us grew irksome to me, so that I would have spoken but for the fact that the only utterances which suggested themselves to my thought were hopelessly banal. I was resolved, however, that I would not let the occasion pass without trying at least to put an end to the ostentatious restraint between us. So, as we descended together, I turned toward March, and addressed him in a manner as genial as I could manage.

"Are you staying here, in the hotel?" I asked.

"No, Mr. Barclay," came the crisp answer; "I am not."

He vouchsafed no further word, and this reticence was so significant that I could not ignore it. It was plain that he had determined against any intercourse between us; therefore, I had no excuse for insistence against his will. I swallowed my chagrin as best I could, and made no effort toward other intrusion. As we stepped from the elevator into the lobby of the hotel, he said good-morning with a certain air of negative courtesy, and then walked swiftly away. I made answer in his own words, and afterward stood watching as he limped to the door and out into the street. And, as he went from me, I found myself thanking heaven that this nephew of my uncle was in truth no kin of mine. My first vague distrust of him was now become a dominant detestation. And, surely, there was reason a plenty for this since I had been made aware that his fate and my own were so enmeshed together. I had learned little during the short time of the interview in the sickchamber, but that little, while it had made nothing else clear, had established the fact that Norris March and I were destined to be, in some unknown fashion, rivals for an inheritance from this uncle of ours. By so much, then, we must be at odds; by so much, there was ground for hostility between us. Beyond this, I had no exact knowledge as yet; I had not even wherewith to base conjecture. One of us two, the old man had said, would

profit by his death—he had added nothing more definite. Would that fortunate one be myself? Would it be Norris March? By what means would our uncle reach his decision? Or, had he made his choice already? And, if this were indeed the case, why did he now require the presence of both of us at his bedside?

Throughout the remainder of the day, and, too, throughout the better part of the night, I gave myself to anxious ponderings of these questions—always without finding any satisfactory answer. In the end, as at the beginning, I was sure of only one thing: Norris March was my enemy. For that matter, I preferred him as a foe, rather than as aught else. My friend he could never be.

Within a minute of the appointed hour of the next day, I stood at my uncle's door, and knocked. And even as my rap sounded, Norris March entered the corridor, and drew near, walking swiftly as was his habit, the effect of his lameness showing only in a little undulating movement that was characteristic of his progress. As he stopped beside me, he said good-morning, and I had just answered him with equal brevity when Mrs. Nash opened the door to us. On this occasion, we were not made to wait in the sitting-room, but were conducted immediately into the presence of our relative, where as before, after the door had closed on the nurse, March took up his station on one side of the bed, while I had the place opposite him. My rival, as I had come to consider him, spoke a word of salutation to the invalid, and now the soft volume of his voice was very pleasant to the ear; it was quite free from that undertone of coldness which had sounded in it when he greeted me. I, too, addressed my uncle, and uttered haltingly some expressions of regret for his illness, and a hope that he found his condition improved.

The old man himself appeared just as he had on the preceding day. In like manner, his eyes darted to March for a second, then dwelt on me. I realized that this fact was by no means a portent in my favor; it was merely a matter of curiosity, since hitherto he had had no

personal knowledge of me, whereas he had had some previous acquaintance with his other nephew. He paid not the slightest heed to March's words, nor to mine—save the concluding ones.

"No," he declared grimly, "I am not better. I shall not be—until after I have shaken off this worn-out carcass. It is because I must die soon that I have sent for you two to come to me." The voice of the speaker was very thin, as it had been on the yesterday; but, as he went on, it seemed that the force of his will gave to it an added strength, and he spoke with surprising swiftness.

"The only man whom I have cared for during my lifetime was a former partner of mine—Bevis Channing. His wife, too, was always very kind to me, and I esteemed her highly. Their daughter Ruth has been almost as my own child. She will inherit my estate."

At this saying, so completely fatal to my dearest hopes, I made an involuntary movement. Moreover, I have no doubt that my face bore eloquent witness to the intensity of my disappointment. I dropped my eyes from my uncle's face, and, in the pause that followed the announcement, I felt his piercing stare in contemplation of my confusion and distress. There was a note of raillery in his voice as he continued speaking.

"But you, my two nephews, need not be altogether in despair over what I have just told you. Or, rather, you, James, need not be. As to Norris here, he has already taken his precautions against this very end." Again, my uncle paused, and now he chuckled sardonically.

I looked across toward March, and saw that, despite his impassivity, a dull red had spread itself over his cheeks and brow. It was evident that my kinsman's humor was of a savage sort, and that the shaft of it had struck home, although I could make no guess as to wherewith it was barbed.

When, presently, the old man resumed his explanation, there remained no trace of levity in his manner.

"Bevis Channing gave me my chance in the world. It is unnecessary that I should enter into details concerning our relationship. **Only, it was when I was**

already somewhat advanced in years—older than he. I had made a succession of failures. Without his aid, I think that I must have remained a failure throughout my lifetime. So, it is no more than simple justice that his daughter should have my estate—some profit of her father's kindness and trust. For, afterward, he lost the bulk of his fortune, and he was too proud to take mine, which I would willingly have given him. But, apart from all this, you two young men, who are of my blood, shall have your chance. I have something else of value, something that will not be listed in my estate. This is a treasure of rubies. For many years I traded in all sorts of precious stones. The rubies I loved, and I made a collection of the finest for my private delight. I wearied of them at last, as I have wearied of everything else—except Bevis Channing, his wife and his daughter. But the treasure remains, although my love for it has passed. It is worth as much as my other estate—more, in all probability. One of you two shall have that treasure. Now, it so happens that I respect cleverness, crisp intelligence. That is the reason why I wished to see the two of you here before me, together. So, I sent for you. Well, I have seen you. It is my decision that the cleverer of you shall have that treasure—the cleverer, or the luckier. Sometimes it is hard to tell the difference between brains and luck. Anyhow, you two shall have the determination of the matter in your own hands. You shall fight it out between you—a fair field and no favor. The details as to the contest will be made known to you in due time—when I am dead—James, will you ring the bell?—Good-by! I shall not see you again, ever."

I struck the bell, scarcely knowing what I did, and mumbled an indistinct farewell. The door of the sitting-room opened, and the voice of Mrs. Nash called softly, yet imperatively:

"Come, gentlemen, please!"

March limped out ahead of me, without vouchsafing a word of parting to his uncle, without a single backward glance. But, for my part, I turned in the doorway for a last look at the extraordinary old man, the juggler of my fate.

His eyes were closed now, and with their light extinguished the face was as that of one dead. I shuddered as I went forward at the heels of Norris March, for I realized that my kinsman, whether he lived or died, had set me to dance as the puppet of his will.

CHAPTER IV

THE MANNER OF THE COMBAT

It is better that I should pass over the interval of waiting that followed my return to New York. There, I continued my former avocations, by day enduring the drudgery of service in the down-town office, by night wearying my brain with the intricacies of legal learning. The days lengthened into weeks; the weeks, into months. In due course came the time of my examination for admission to the bar. I went through the ordeal successfully, and, at last, was ready to enter on my chosen profession. Nevertheless, I still continued my humble toil at the clerkship, for I could not bring myself to settle for the real struggle of life until after the determination of the inheritance from my uncle.

This was, in very sooth, the incubus that weighed upon me without ceasing. And small wonder that it should be so, inasmuch as, from the moment when the door of suite number three hundred and sixty-one, in the Leland House, closed behind me, I had heard no single word concerning Nathan Hemenway. I could not be sure even that he lived still. Often, I was tempted to write Thornton Appleby for definite news of my kinsman. But, somehow, I managed to curb my impatience from this manifestation. I had come to realize in a measure the indifference of the old man toward me and toward his other nephew, and I therefore understood that I ought to expect no communication from him in his lifetime, which, from the nature of his malady, might be extended for many weeks. So, I went on my way as best I could, outwardly much the same as before, but inwardly fretting most miserably for a settlement of the affair. Indeed, so wretched was I during this period of uncertainty that, at times, I heartily wished myself in ignorance of the existence of Nathan

Hemenway and his treasure of rubies.

But the most tedious of periods must have its ending, and so, finally, there came to me a letter bearing the Chicago postmark, and I knew that the hour of destiny was at hand. A glance at the signature of the first sheet which I unfolded assured me that my correspondent was, as I had already guessed, my uncle's attorney, Thornton Appleby. Here follows the full text of the lawyer's communication:

JAMES MORRIS BARCLAY, ESQ.,
146a East Seventy-seventh St.,
New York City.

DEAR SIR:

It becomes my melancholy duty to inform you of the decease on the fourteenth instant of my esteemed client, Nathan Hemenway, Esq. Pursuant to the instructions of the said deceased, I herewith inclose you draft for one thousand dollars (\$1000.00), which sum is in the nature of an unconditional gift to you from the said Nathan Hemenway, Esq. I also inclose herewith a letter of instruction addressed to you by my said client, in which he has set forth in detail the matter of a certain treasure concerning which he had spoken to you, as I have been given to understand. As the duly empowered attorney for the deceased, I, of course, hold myself in readiness to execute my client's wishes in accordance with the conditions set forth in his own statement herewith. I feel constrained to add, however, that I deemed it my duty to advise the said Nathan Hemenway, Esq., strongly against the extraordinary course he had chosen in this matter of a certain treasure. He preferred, nevertheless, to follow his own devices, and I have, therefore, only to carry out his commands in that manner which shall be determined by events hereafter in the contest to be entered on between yourself and one Norris March, Esq., to whom, under even date, I have written a letter essentially a duplicate of this present, with similar enclosures of draft and statement of directions from the said Nathan Hemenway, Esq.

I have the honor to remain, sir,

Your obedient serv't,
(Signed) THORNTON APPLEBY.

It was with a feeling of momentary exultation that I fingered the draft, for this sum, at least, was mine indisputably, and it was, of itself, sufficient to solve the question as to the means wherewith to open an office for the practice of law, should the greater inheritance fail me. Yet, despite this

transition from poverty to comparative affluence as represented by the draft, I now gave the money but brief passing attention. My thoughts, inflamed by long imaginings, were all for the treasure of rubies. Therefore, the draft was soon cast aside, nor was further attention bestowed on the attorney's letter. At once, with acute anxiety, I turned to the statement to which was affixed my uncle's name.

This astonishing document ran in these words:

JAMES MORRIS BARCLAY, ESQ.,
146a East Seventy-seventh St.,
New York City.

MY DEAR NEPHEW:

I have already told you of the treasure of rubies. There is, therefore, no need at this time to do more, than set forth the terms of the contest which shall decide whether this treasure belongs to you or to my other nephew, Norris March. The facts necessary for your enlightenment are these:

I often made my home for a time with Bevis Channing, in Vermont. After his death, I paid a visit to his widow and his daughter Ruth. On this latter occasion, it was my whim to hunt out a secure hiding-place for my collection of rubies which I had been in the habit of carrying about with me. On receipt of this statement from me, after my death, you will immediately proceed to the town of Panton, in Vermont, where the homestead of Bevis Channing's widow is situated. There you will prosecute a search for the rubies in the house itself, bearing in mind always that no defacement of anything whatever is required in order to come on the clue you seek. Mrs. Channing and Ruth have been advised of your coming and its purpose. They will afford you every facility for conducting your examination of the house. Norris March has his home in the neighborhood, and he will receive directions similar to these at the same time, and he will share with you in the attempt to discover the hiding-place of the rubies. I have set a limit of one month from the day of my death as the time within which one or the other of you must come into possession of the gems. If you are so stupid as not to succeed in that period, the probabilities are that you would never solve the problem. In case both of you fail to discover the place of concealment of the rubies, they will be reclaimed by my attorney under explicit directions in his hands, and he is further empowered to sell the treasure, and with the proceeds endow a home for indigent imbeciles.

The value of the rubies is something

in excess of two hundred thousand dollars.

As a hint for your guidance in the search, I refer you to Proverbs: XXXI,
10. Yours truly,
(Signed) THORNTON APPELBY.

My first overwhelming sensation was one of awe before the magnitude of the wealth that soon might be mine. Two hundred thousand dollars! The sum was far beyond the avarice of my wildest dreams. But, in the further contemplation of my uncle's strange scheme, I found myself swayed by many and varied emotions. Naturally, I was a-thrill with excitement over this revelation, so long delayed, as to the nature of the contest on which I was about to enter. At one moment, hope mounted high in my breast, to be followed swiftly by consternation over the possibility of my failure in the appointed task.

Indeed, I was altogether dismayed by a thought that came to me of a sudden in the midst of roseate anticipations of success. Doubtless that precise attorney Thornton Appleby, had posted his letter to Norris March at the same time as he had the one which I had just received. In that event, as I judged, the two missives would reach their respective destinations on the same day. The result of this must be that March, who lived in the neighborhood of the Bevis Channing homestead, would have the advantage of a day in the search, since there existed no possibility of my reaching Panton until afternoon of the morrow. Moreover, from what I had seen of my rival, I dared not hope that any prompting of a chivalrous instinct would cause him to delay his beginning of the quest until such time as I should be with him on the scene. It was, indeed, quite possible that he might come on the treasure at once, and bear it off in triumph ere yet I had ever set foot within the house. This idea depressed me mightily and for long. At last, however, by a great effort of will I succeeded in putting it out of my thoughts, and thereafter devoted myself to contemplating other, more pleasing phases of the situation. I read the letter again, in more leisurely fashion, and, at this second perusal, the closing line claimed my attention.

"As a hint for your guidance in the search, I refer you to Proverbs: xxxi 10."

At once, I was fired with zeal. I had been fretting under the thought that I must remain inactive until the following day; now, however, I found set plainly before me something on which to employ my abilities. In a tremor of eagerness, I got out my Bible, and turned to the designated passage in Proverbs, where I read these words, Nathan Henenway's clue to the hiding-place of the treasure of rubies:

"Who can find a virtuous woman, for her price is far above rubies."

CHAPTER V

THE BEGINNING OF THE BATTLE

It is hardly necessary for me to announce the fact that this Scriptural text conveyed absolutely no meaning to me beyond that on its surface, which, just then, was no concern of mine. I read and reread the words painstakingly—always in vain. I took them to bed with me at last, and pondered them, waking and sleeping, throughout a restless night. Nevertheless, their cryptic significance to my needs continued to elude every effort. I could get no further than the obvious fact that there existed some mysterious connection between the treasure of which I was in search, the rubies, and a virtuous woman. When the morning was come, I struggled anew with the problem, the while I was engaged in the transaction of such business as was made imperative by my sudden departure, and I wearied myself again in like fashion after I had boarded the train for the north. The only result of it all was that by the time the station at Panton in Vermont had been reached, every nerve in me jangled over the reiteration of Proverbs: xxxi, 10. The clue offered me by Nathan Hemenway still lay concealed beneath the phrases of Holy Writ.

On arrival at my destination, I found myself on a barren station platform, set in the midst of a charming valley, beyond which loomed outlying ranges of the Appalachian Mountains. It was now late in November, and to-day the au-

tumn sunlight was softened by the haze of Indian summer. I was calmed and refreshed, almost unconsciously, by the tranquil loveliness of the scene. But I gave small attention to the landscape; my whole interest was for the subject of my quest. As there remained still a full hour before sunset, I determined to seek out the Channing homestead immediately, if it were not too remote from the railway. I inquired as to this matter of the station-agent, and learned from him that the place was only a short half-mile distant, situated on a road that ran to the north-west. In answer to other questioning, I was told that the village of Panton was about a mile further on beyond the house, and that a hotel there offered accommodations.

Accordingly, I set forth over the smooth clay road, and so came presently within sight of the fateful spot where opportunity awaited me. The place was easily recognizable, as the station-agent had advised me, by reason of the group of Lombardy poplars that stood sentinel alongside the driveway. I paused for a moment on the crest of the slope, a hundred yards above the house, and stood there, looking down on this scene of such vital import to me. The house itself was a modest one, of the sort common to the region, having two stories with an attic and an ell that ran from the back. A veranda extended across all the south side of the structure, and there was a porch over the front entrance. The house was painted white throughout, save for the green shutters. The usual outbuildings clustered in the background. The whole effect was of neatness, quite without any suggestion of ostentation. The general air was one of homely, smug complacency that was free from the least hint as to possible treasures in gems or as to curious duels for the winning of wealth. Nevertheless, this was the site chosen by an eccentric old man to pit his heirs in a contest of cupidity. I stared down on the dwelling anxiously, expectantly, curious over every detail in this, the theatre of my fate, my heart beating tumultuously as I realized the imminence of the struggle between myself and Norris March. Then, the

thought of him aroused in me again that fear lest my enemy should have begun already on the search for the treasure. Forthwith, I was off, hurrying down the slope. Two minutes later, I was sounding the knocker on the door beneath the porch.

After a little interval, steps were heard within, and then the door was opened by a trim maid-servant. On my inquiring for Mrs. Channing and for her daughter, I was told that the ladies were at home. I therefore entered, and the servant conducted me into a drawing-room off the hall, where she left me to wait while she went away to make my presence known to her mistress. Now that I was indeed within the house, I gazed about me curiously, more than ever under the spell of desire to know everything possible concerning this place where my destiny had so much at stake. In the aspect of this apartment, however, there was nothing of a striking character. It was very simply furnished after an antiquated fashion with haircloth chairs and sofa, a Brussels carpet, many embroidered hassocks, and a passable collection of old steel-engravings. I stared about me hungrily, peering closely at this and that, for I was vividly aware that my fortune might at the moment be lying hidden within reach of my hand.

This train of reflection was interrupted by the entrance of Mrs. Channing, with her daughter, Ruth. The two greeted me very pleasantly, and by the affability of their manner did much to remove the feeling of constraint which, naturally enough, I experienced at this meeting.

"You understand, do you not, the reason why I have ventured to intrude on you in this way?" I asked, after we had exchanged salutations.

Mrs. Channing smiled, whimsically.

"Oh, yes," she answered readily. "A letter from Mr. Appleby, the lawyer, explained everything to us. Besides, Nathan—Mr. Hemenway—had given us some warning of the plan he had in mind, at the time of his last visit to us, though he told us none of the details."

"It seems a great imposition on you," I suggested, "that you should have

strangers ransacking your house in such fashion."

Mrs. Channing smiled again.

"No, indeed," she exclaimed. "Ruth and I are much interested. It will be as exciting as a game to see you and Norris pottering about the place on your treasure hunt. Why, all this afternoon, I did nothing but follow Norris around."

"Then, Mr. March has already begun his search?" I questioned. A wave of indignation swept over me at this revelation of the fellow's unfairness in the contest, although it was no more than I had expected of him. "Did he find any trace of the rubies?"

Mrs. Channing, who was evidently of a most sunny temper, laughed aloud, delightedly.

"Indeed, he did not," she replied. "And he grew horribly cross over his failure, I assure you, Mr. Barclay."

I was vastly relieved at this information as to my rival's discomfiture, and doubtless the emotion I experienced was shown in the expression of my face, for now Ruth Channing spoke, for the first time since the few words of her greeting to me. The coldness of her voice made clear the fact that her sympathies were not for me, but all for my foe.

"I am quite sure," she said, "that Mr. March had no wish to take advantage of you, Mr. Barclay. But, of course, he could not know when you would arrive here. For that matter, as far as his knowledge went, you might even prefer not to trouble yourself with the thing at all. So, of course, he was quite free to begin his investigation as soon as he had the news."

"Oh, of course—certainly!" I murmured. In truth, I was secretly wondering if the girl actually believed what she had said. I guessed that she was parroting the glib assurances of March to her in defense of his conduct. But was it possible that she herself was convinced as to the justice of such arguments? To me, aflame with my longing for this treasure, it appeared wholly incredible that any person could, for a moment, believe me capable of neglecting such magnificent opportunity to possess wealth. As to that, indeed, the

instant activity of March himself was a sufficient proof as to the insincerity of his contention. These thoughts flashed through my brain the while I murmured the insincere phrases of agreement. Hitherto, I had given no particular heed to the girl, inasmuch as my absorption in the matter of the treasure left scant room for interest in maidens. Now, however, her declaration as to March's course caused me to regard her more attentively.

She was very slight of form, although of the average height for women. Yet, despite her unusual slenderness, the lines were all of grace; there was no least hint anywhere of angularity. Her face, too, was thin, but the oval of it was perfect, and there was not a sign of ill-health or of weakness in the clear pallor of her complexion. Her mouth, with its daintily-curved lips of vivid scarlet set me a-tingle with an emotion new to my experience, whereat I marveled. But, finally, it was by the eyes that my attention was chiefly held. These were large, and very lustrous in moments of excitement such as the present. They were of a blue-gray color, that changed its tint with every variation of her mood. From the first, they attracted me strangely, despite the fact that at this time they were coldly hostile as they rested on me.

Mrs. Channing broke in on my study of her daughter, with hospitable intention.

"It will be supper time soon, Mr. Barclay. You will wish to go to your room now, perhaps. I have already sent to the station for your things."

I was much astonished at this offer of entertainment, and pleased as well, although I protested against acceptance of it.

"I must not trespass on your kindness," I replied. "I have learned that there is a hotel near by, where I can put up."

But Mrs. Channing insisted.

"No, Mr. Barclay," she declared, "you must remain here during the time that you are hunting for the treasure. Indeed, it will be a real pleasure to us to have you in the house. You see, there is very little society in this isolated place, and your visit will make an

agreeable variation from the usual monotony of our existence. Besides the fact that this arrangement will be so much more convenient to yourself, it will be a real boon to two lone women, my daughter and myself."

I looked toward Ruth Channing inquiringly as her mother thus urged me, but that young lady sat with downcast eyes, and gave no positive sign as to her own desire in the matter. Her aloofness, however, gave me the impression that she by no means shared the generous sentiments of her mother. A sense of antagonism against the girl was provoked in me by her attitude. In consequence of it, my first impulse was to refuse Mrs. Channing's hospitality. This was followed by another, the result of a keen irritation against the daughter. The result of it was that I decided to accept the invitation, just because I felt sure this course would be displeasing to Ruth Channing.

Presently, after I had gratefully expressed my willingness to become a guest of the house, the trim maid-servant showed me to my chamber, where I found my luggage awaiting me. I washed and changed my linen as hurriedly as possible, in order that I might have a few minutes of leisure afterward before the ringing of the bell, which, as Mrs. Channing had warned me, would be the summons to the evening meal. The cause of this haste on my part was a thought that had come to me at the moment of entering the sleeping-room. Here was, doubtless, the usual guest-room of the house; as such, it had, in all likelihood, been occupied by my uncle, Nathan Hemenway, on those occasions when he paid his friends a visit. If this were indeed the fact, what was more probable than that the eccentric old man had chosen the hiding-place for his rubies within this very chamber? The idea took possession of me, so that, once I had made an end of my rapid toilet, I set about a close investigation of the floor, the walls, the furniture. I completely failed, however, to find the least trace of the hidden treasure. For that matter, I had by no means time enough for a thorough examination ere I was interrupted by the summons to supper.

As I entered the dining-room, I uttered a little ejaculation of surprise, for I saw before me, standing by one of the chairs at the table, the short, broad figure that I had beheld last as I went out from the death-chamber of Nathan Hemenway—the figure of Norris March. I do not understand why his presence here, at this time, should have astonished me so greatly, since I had known that he lived in the neighborhood, and, moreover, had been told that he was in the house during the day. Perhaps, I was unconsciously affected by the man's air of being perfectly at home, a subtle suggestion of proprietorship in his manner. He looked up quickly as I approached and spoke to him. For a single instant, his eyes met mine full; in their expression, I read distrust of me and dislike—and something else, elusively inimicable to me, a wordless threat. His musical voice, however, was genial as he addressed me.

"You have come promptly, Mr. Barclay," he said, with a smile. "I can't exactly wish you luck in the hunt, for I am not saint enough to desire my own loss, but we can be friends apart from this business of the rubies."

"For my own part, certainly," was my ready answer. I strove to render my voice as genial and sincere as was his, but, notwithstanding my effort, the note of constraint was distinctly audible, and, too, quite without intention, there was a suggestive emphasis on the word, "my," in the phrase, "for my part."

If he observed these details, March concealed the fact well, for he appeared in the best of spirits throughout the meal; he was, indeed, the life of the party. Against my will, I was compelled to admire the fellow's wit and intellectual resource. His conversation was of unusual excellence; his stories were amusing in themselves, and in the telling of them he displayed skill as a *raconteur*; his comments on men and things were crisp and shrewd. But I by no means lost any of my suspicions concerning this rival of mine—rather, these were rendered more potent as I perceived in the man an intelligence so much beyond the average.

March went away at once after the

supper was done. His own home was, as I now learned, hardly a mile away by a path across the fields, although the distance to it was twice as far by the road. After his departure, I chatted with the ladies for a little while, in desultory fashion, but at the first opportunity pleaded the fatigues of the day's traveling as an excuse for retiring early to my room. For the matter of that, I was indeed very tired from the long hours in the train, yet my real anxiety was to find myself again in the guest-chamber, in order that I might resume there my search for the treasure. To this task, therefore, I betook myself as soon as I had closed the door behind me.

There were two closets in the room, which I had hitherto had no time to investigate, and my first examination was now directed to these. Both were bare, however, without the slightest cranny to serve as a hiding-place; a careful tapping over walls and flooring failed to detect any hollow place within them. There was a third door in the chamber, which I had taken to be that opening into another closet. But, on unlatching it, I discovered that it led into the attic of the ell, the floor of which was on a level with that of the second story of the main building. I could see but dimly within this space, for I had left the lamp on the table of the chamber, but I was able to make out that it served as a lumber-room. There was no bed in it, or other sign that it was used for living purposes. A jumble of miscellaneous objects cluttered the attic throughout the distance from my door, which was at one end, and the single window at the other. A ghostly moonlight shone in through the panes to meet and mingle with the yellower lamplight that issued from the chamber.

Before the spectacle presented by the attic's contents, I shrugged my shoulders in forlorn recognition of the multitudinous opportunities for concealment of the rubies offered by this single room. I consoled myself in a measure, however, by the reflection that I could conduct a scrutiny here by night, after my fellow seeker's departure to his own home. It seemed to me that in this manner I might offset the day's march which he had stolen on me. With

this somewhat futile encouragement of my spirits, I returned to a painstaking examination of the sleeping-chamber. Thereafter, I ransacked the room for hours, and only gave over the labor when, at last, I was convinced beyond any shadow of doubt that the precious stones were not hidden within the chamber. Of course, I had not prosecuted the search with the meticulous thoroughness of a French detective; the chairs, the stands, and other articles of furniture were not dismembered in quest of cunningly-contrived cavities. But I made thorough work of it, none the less. As to the rest, I had in mind the assurance of my uncle in his statement to me, to the effect that no violence toward anything in the house would be needed in order to come upon the treasure—So, finally, exhausted by the fatigues of the day, I made ready for bed.

There was a small coal-stove in the room, in which a fire had been kindled to temper the shrewdness of the autumn air. I looked to this with some care, for I had had experience with the sort in my earlier days. The fire was burning brightly, with a sufficient supply of coals to last through the night. I swung the door of the stove wide open, and turned both the dampers in the pipes so that the gas might escape freely. Afterward, I lowered one of the windows from the top, blew out the lamp, and got into bed, where almost instantly I fell into a deep sleep.

It must have been that an hour or more had elapsed when, of a sudden, I became broad awake, and lay motionless, listening—sure that some person was in the room with me.

CHAPTER VI

THE MATTER OF THE DAMPER

A long time passed while I lay thus expectant, but there came no faintest sound to warrant my conviction of another's presence in the chamber. The shades of the windows had been drawn, so that it was impossible to distinguish any object in the room clearly. At last, however, my attention became fixed on a shadowy something by the opposite wall that seemed to shift its appearance

slightly as I gazed toward it—seemed, indeed, to move, to move very slowly and in complete silence. Instantly, I sprang from the bed, and darted forward. In the same moment, the object of my attack vanished from sight, and a door slammed noisily.

As I leaped in the direction taken by the intruder, I came in contact with a closed door, which I knew from my position to be that leading into the attic. It was evident, then, that my visitor had entered the room from the ell by way of the loft, and that, on being discovered, he had fled by the same route, shutting the door behind him in order to hamper pursuit. As I realized the situation, I pulled the door open, and stepped within the attic. I could perceive nothing distinctly in the gloom here, but a noise of movement in front encouraged me to persevere in the chase. Unfortunately, the litter scattered over the floor made the path so devious that I could advance only after tedious gropings and flounderings. It was apparent that the fugitive possessed a familiarity with his surroundings greater than mine, so that he was able to proceed much more rapidly, inasmuch as I had felt my way a scant two yards when the faint light grew even dimmer, and, as I looked up, I saw the form of a man silhouetted against the window. I had no time for a second glance at this, for in the next instant it had disappeared. At this revelation as to the whereabouts of my quarry, I strove to mend my pace, but the effort was quite in vain; I could do no more than blunder from one obstacle to another. In the end, I abandoned all attempts at haste, and by the exercise of a patient slowness managed finally to reach the window.

I now discovered that the lower sash had been raised so that there was ample space for the passage of a man's body. But, when I leaned out over the sill, I had no inclination to leap down. The ground at the back of the house sloped sharply, so that this end of the ell rested on a foundation wall ten feet high. Thus, the total distance from the window down to the frozen earth was something more than twenty feet. I was by no means minded to run the risk of broken bones offered by the drop. And,

as I looked down, I wondered exceedingly at the daring of the man who had not hesitated before the dangerous descent. There was no pipe on either side of the window by which he might have ventured in comparative safety, and it seemed certain that he had essayed the leap. Then, a moment later, I espied, lying on the ground beside the foundation wall, the indistinct outlines of a ladder, whereat the matter of the fellow's escape was made clear to me. He had made his entrance into the attic by means of the ladder raised to the window; he had left the ladder in position, with the window open, in order to facilitate his departure. In the haste caused by my pursuit of him, he had not delayed to shut the window behind him, but he had taken care to throw down the ladder, so that I should have no means of following him immediately.

I had just arrived at this solution of the mystery as to his disappearance when the slight veiling of clouds which had restrained the moonlight was rent asunder, and the scene stood forth with astonishing distinctness. Welcoming this opportunity, I stared hither and yon in eager scrutiny, in the hope that I might catch somewhere a glimpse of the prowler. But the outbuildings were close at hand, and I guessed that the man had hidden himself within the shadows of these. Beyond them, to the northwest, lay a full half-mile of meadow land, level, unencumbered by any tree or bush. The full brilliance of the moon now lighted the field with a radiance almost equal to that of day. For a moment, my eyes roamed thither aimlessly. Then, suddenly, I uttered an ejaculation of excitement. My gaze had been caught by a swiftly-moving form, a quarter of a mile away, and I made sure that this was none other than my midnight visitant.

At the first, instinct urged me to hurry out of the house with all possible speed in pursuit, but reason checked me. Doubtless, the fellow would be out of sight long ere I was fairly on his trail, and, afterward, the chances would be against my coming up with him in this region where every lurking-place must be familiar to him, while I knew it not at all. So, I sighed my discontent,

and remained passively watching the receding figure. I was able to make out that the man was not running, but that he was walking with extraordinary rapidity. And, then, as I continued to gaze toward him, I became aware of a fact that impressed me as of strangest import. There was a certain rhythmic variation in the fellow's movement. It was so slight that, with the distance between us, I could not be sure it was aught more than a trick of my own imagination; nevertheless, I seemed to behold in that swift walk an almost imperceptible undulation. And, in consequence, it came about that I fancied the stealthy visitor in my chamber to have been no other than Norris March himself. Of this, there was no proof by which I might convince another besides myself, but, for my part, I had now no least doubt as to the truth. I believed that the man crossing the meadow in the moonlight walked with a little limp—the limp characteristic of my rival for the legacy of Nathan Hemenway.

As the form of the man finally vanished within the shadows of some trees growing on the far side of the field, I was aroused to a realization of the fact that I was shivering with cold, for, clad only in pajamas, I had been all this while leaning out of the attic window. Now, therefore, I made haste to pull down the sash, and afterward to pick my way back across the loft to the sleeping-chamber. Yet, even as I busied myself thus, my mind was absorbed in speculations concerning the significance of this expedition on the part of Norris March. What had been his purpose in visiting my bedroom at dead of night? Was it possible that he feared lest I might have come on the treasure already, and sought thus secretly to assure himself as to the fact? The idea was too absurd for credence, yet I could hit on none more feasible. I could, indeed, contrive no rational explanation of an occurrence at once so amazing and so sinister in its revelation of the ruthlessness and the audacity possessed by my adversary in the quest of the rubies.

As I came near the open door into the bed-chamber, I became aware of the odor from carbon-monoxide gas. The

fact puzzled me for a moment, until I remembered the coal-stove, and guessed that it was the source of the smell. There remained no doubt as to this, once I had set foot beyond the door. Indeed, the fumes of the gas were so strong within the room that my first act was to spring toward the nearer window, and to throw up the sash. A few inspirations of the in-rushing, pure air relieved me of the choking sensation which the gas had caused, and I then stepped to the other window, and opened it wide. Afterward, when the air of the chamber had cleared somewhat, I lighted the lamp and went to the stove itself, in order that I might correct the cause of the escaping gas. A glance showed me that the damper in the upright portion of the pipe now lay turned to the horizontal. My first care, of course, was to turn it to the vertical, that thus the gas might have a free passage through the pipe instead of being driven out into the room. This accomplished, I next stooped close to the open door of the stove, and assured myself that there was no longer any discharge of the fumes into the chamber. Finally, as the air had now become pure again, I closed the door leading into the attic of the ell, and pulled the windows shut.

It was only when these things had been accomplished that a new wonder sprang up in me. What was it that had caused this condition of affairs? Of course, the closed damper had been the occasion for the flow of gas out into the chamber. There remained, however, the question as to how that damper had come to be closed. I remembered perfectly well that I had set it to the vertical before going to bed. How chanced it, then, that it had been turned from this position? A sudden gust of excitement shook me. I went hurriedly to the stove, and there experimented with the damper in order to determine whether or not it were so loosely placed in the pipe that it might even fall from the vertical to the horizontal of its own gravity. I found, however, that this theory was quite untenable. The shaft of the damper was so firmly fixed that considerable pressure was necessary to revolve it.

So, at last, it was borne in on me that

this change in the stove had been effected by my visitor of the night—by Norris March. Moreover, it was impossible for me to believe that the alteration had been the result of a chance contact in the gloom of the room. The light of the coals showing from out the open door of the stove rendered it the one thing within the chamber most clearly distinguishable. A chill of dread touched me as I admitted to myself that the weight of evidence proved this act of my rival to have been deliberate. In consequence, there followed the inevitable question: Why had he done this thing? To that question only one answer was possible: To compass my destruction!

And yet other proof was to come. A new thought sent me to the window which I had lowered from the top before getting into bed. As I had already guessed, the upper half of the window had been pushed shut. At this final confirmation of my worst suspicions, I shuddered again, and went faint. I felt myself flinch as I stood face to face with the gristly truth. The man had crept into my chamber while I lay sleeping; he had noiselessly closed the window left open by me; he had set the damper in such fashion that the deadly fumes of the gas would pour out into the unventilated room, to kill me while still I lay sleeping. Only some careless motion of his at the last moment had aroused me to escape the snare laid by him. Or, perhaps, my own unslumbering sub-conscious self had warned me to awake before this peril of death. I shuddered once again as I realized that, almost in the first hour of my arrival on the scene of combat between us two, Norris March had most treacherously sought to murder me.

At first, my emotions were all of mingled fear and horror as I contemplated the foul attack. But, presently, these yielded place to wrath. And, when, at last, after barricading the door to the attic of the ell and bolting the other securely, I got to bed again, sleep was altogether impossible by reason of the rage that possessed me. And from that moment, I hated the man persistently, but I feared him no more than was necessary to maintain an unceasing

watchfulness against his future machinations of evil.

CHAPTER VII

THE FOOT-BRIDGE OVER THE FALLS

March did not appear at the breakfast-table next morning, much to my relief, for I had no wish ever to set eyes on him again, and, in his absence, I was able to make some progress toward intimacy with Ruth Channing. To my intense surprise, the attitude of the girl had undergone a complete change over night, and, where before she had been reserved and distant in her manner to me, even to the point of hostility, she was now friendly, and met my advances with a frank gaiety of spirits that made me a sharer in the joyousness of her mood. In consequence of this alteration in her, I found myself regarding the girl with a delight altogether strange to my experience. Hitherto, I had seen her only in the half-light of the drawing-room at the waning of afternoon, and again at the supper-table, where her face had been in shadow. So, while I had observed her as closely as the opportunity permitted, I had by no means realized the essential charm of her. Now, in the brilliant illumination of the morning sunlight, she appeared to me the revelation of complete beauty. I had already apprehended in a measure something of the loveliness of her eyes; now, I was moved to surpassing wonder and admiration before their clear and limpid and ever-changing splendors. I gave no particular heed to the regularity of her features; but I was filled with rapture in contemplation of the singular, vivid purity of her complexion in its even tint of warm pallor, and, too, the delicate grace of her every movement fascinated me. Then, as her lips curved to a smile at some chance word, my thoughts abandoned all else, to revel in the exquisite tenderness of her mouth.

This morning, for the first time in many weeks, I quite forgot the treasure of rubies; the cause of that forgetfulness was Ruth Channing. A new and subtly-pervasive longing grew in my heart, a longing destined never to die out—a longing for her presence with

me, a longing for the blessedness of her smile. Very soon, I was musing on what it might mean to possess a home of my own made sacred by the companionship of a woman loving and beloved. A vision of that hearthstone rose before me, and, for a beautiful moment, the face of that ideal companion shone beside it—the face of Ruth Channing. I blushed hotly as, suddenly, I realized the wild audacity of my fancy; I could hardly stammer a coherent answer to some question the girl herself addressed to me just then.

My thoughts were still running riot in this unaccustomed fashion after the meal was done, while I stood looking idly from a window. The daughter had left the room, but Mrs. Channing remained with me. It was then that a remark by the mother scattered my dreams on the instant, and brought me back, face to face with the realities about me. I do not now remember what other conversation between us led to the utterance; it had not been of sufficient interest to gain more than a superficial attention from me. Finally, however, she spoke in a tone confidentially lowered.

"I suppose, Mr. Barclay, that your uncle told you about Ruth, my daughter, and Norris?"

"Ruth—Miss Channing, Norris March!" I exclaimed. Somehow, the simple question struck me with a chill of apprehension. "Why, no; he said nothing of them to me. You see, Mrs. Channing, I was with him only twice—and then only for a few minutes. No, he told me nothing of them."

"Well," the mother continued, with gossipy affability, "the fact is, Ruth and Norris are engaged. I suppose that Ruth might do better, now that she has all of Nathan's money, but Norris is a fine fellow, and he has a modest fortune of his own, even if you manage to beat him in the hunt for the rubies." Mrs. Channing smiled at me as she concluded, and I contrived to smile wryly in return. Soon afterward, she went out of the room, and I was free to reflect at my leisure on this new phase of the situation.

I must confess that my first dominant emotion was a wholly unreasoning in-

dignation, which included both the girl and her lover. But, presently, I perceived the utter absurdity of this mood, and thereafter I strove to put it from me, though without much success. Then there flashed on me a recollection of Nathan Hemenway's words to the effect that this Norris March had provided for himself in the event of loss in the matter of the quest for the treasure. I had not thought of the statement since I had left my uncle's bedside until this moment. Now, however, I remembered vividly how March had flushed at the old man's speech. Evidently, my kinsman had been aware of the troth plighted between his nephew and his heiress, and it had been to this his cynical humor had made reference.

Of a sudden, all other emotion on my part was submerged beneath an engrossing hate against Norris March. By so much as the wisomeness of Ruth Channing had won me to reverent desire of her, by so much now I was inflamed against this vile fellow who had ensnared her innocence. I know well that hate is an unlovable thing, but, as I look back over the years, I am not wholly ashamed of the feeling that then possessed me. True, my own selfish yearning after the girl was active in my mood against March; but, on the other hand, there was in it a mighty and righteous indignation against the man, based on pity for her—Ruth. I knew that concerning my rival which was known to none other: his unscrupulous wickedness, capable of impelling him to any crime in his own behalf. The event of the night had proved the malignity of his character beyond any possibility of doubt. It were sacrilege, that, to commit this pure and gentle girl into his keeping. I determined there and then to do all in my power to avert that consummation of evil. A fierce, vindictive energy surged in me against the man, so that, on the instant, I was all eagerness to begin the task of thwarting him. And, then, memory of the original struggle between us two leaped again in my brain, and I was at once a-quiver with desire to be at the hunting of the treasure. The first necessity was obvious: I must beat him in the combat for possession of the rubies.

At once, on Mrs. Channing's return, I broached the subject of the search, and she again assured me that the house was wholly at my service. I had already decided that the simplest method would be to take the separate rooms in the natural order of their arrangement, and I had, therefore, fixed on the entrance hall at the front for my first effort by day. I had just done explaining my plan to Mrs. Channing when March came into the dining-room. I gave him a glance that was none too kindly, for, as may be imagined, I had a vivid memory of what had occurred by night, but his greeting was so cordial that I was forced to a hypocritical amiability in return. The fellow seemed to find nothing wanting in my manner, and promptly brought forward the matter between us. We agreed then that we should work apart, either being free to choose whatsoever place he would, so long as it was not occupied by the other. With this understanding, I betook myself to the hall, while March remained in the dining-room, to carry on his investigations there.

I went through the labor with such feverish haste that the rather barren hall was soon thoroughly explored, whereupon I made attack on the drawing-room. Here was an abundance of furniture, of ornaments and pictures, which afforded greater opportunities for a hiding-place; yet, within two hours, I had completed a very minute examination of the room and of its contents, without coming on anything of import. The library, which was on the opposite side of the hall, next engaged my attention.

I found this a very pleasant room, even luxurious in its furnishings. It was in the south-western corner of the house, so that the four large windows in the two walls flooded it with light. The other two walls were filled, to half their height, with book-shelves, except for the middle part of the one at the back, where was an open fireplace. A fire of logs was crackling merrily, and for some time I stood contemplating this delightedly, for I had scarcely seen the like since boyhood. It was while I was still standing before the grate that my eyes caught sight of a picture set as

one of the panels in the woodwork beneath the mantelpiece. This was a portrait of Miss Channing—of Ruth, as even then I called her in my thoughts—and my heart beat a little faster as I bent to observe it more closely.

As I regarded it now, I perceived that the painting had been done in oils, on an oblong piece of polished slate, which had been afterward baked in order to secure permanency for the pigment in the porous surface. The area of the stone was about that of an ordinary cabinet photograph, and the face of the girl was of a size corresponding. The work had been well done, and rendered with striking fidelity the charming lines of the features, the delicate purity of the complexion, the magic lure in her violet eyes. For a long interval, I gazed on it with eagerness, until the spell of this new and sweet personality again held me in its thrall, and I forgot all baser things. Then, of a sudden, there came to my ears, through the closed door that gave on the dining-room, a burst of laughter, in which I recognized March's mellow notes; and, along with his heavier tones ran a melodious ripple of merriment from the girl whose portrait I had been contemplating with such wistful fondness. I listened, frowning to the sounds of their mirth; dreams fled from me; in their stead came the lust of action. I turned to my task again with fresh zeal, for the knowledge that these two were thus together was like ichor to my desire. This intimacy of companionship between her and him stimulated me to increased endeavors against the man who had so wantonly assailed me. There was, indeed, some stirring of indignation against the girl in my emotion, since I guessed that she might even be aiding him in the hunt. As I went on with my interminable tapping of walls and prying into crannies, the murmur of their voices came always softly. And that murmur rang in my ears as the challenge of an enemy to be met and to be overcome.

Nevertheless, two days passed by without aught worthy of chronicling. By the end of that time, I had made my first rapid examination of the entire house. I had even gone over every arti-

cle in the litter of the ell's attic—I robbed myself of sleep in order to accomplish this while the others of the household slumbered. But nowhere, despite all my pains, did I chance on any slightest guide to point the way of success. For the rest, my brief hours of sleep were undisturbed by any second attempt against me. I did not neglect, however, the nightly precaution of securing the doors of my chamber in such fashion as to guard against another invasion. I saw little of the others in the house, or of March himself, save at meals, for at all other times, with a single exception, I devoted myself to the treasure-quest.

That one exception was the hour after the mid-day dinner, when I walked with March. I took this recreation in the open air for my health's sake, and I suffered the companionship of my foe because I felt myself safer when I knew just how he busied himself. I have no doubt that similar considerations influenced him in a measure, for, when during dinner on the first day the subject of taking a stroll came into the conversation, he immediately offered to show me those paths which were pleasantest. And during our rambles together I was forced often to a half-jealous admiration for the man, despite the violence of my prejudices against him. Indeed, his powers of entertainment were extraordinary; his conversation abounded in interesting information, varied by lively sallies. Moreover, it now seemed to me that he set himself with studied art to disarm my antagonism. Whether or not he guessed that I suspected him of the attack on me, I could never quite determine. Certainly, he never betrayed any uneasiness in my presence; but, on the contrary, treated me with a jovial comradeship of fellow jaunters on a holiday. The repellent and saturnine manner with which he had received my advances in Chicago had wholly vanished. In its stead, was a genial air of good-fellowship, without apparent subtlety of purpose.

But, on the third day, something occurred to make it memorable to me and to the other actors in our drama.

After dinner on that day, March and

I, following our custom, lighted cigars, and set out to walk.

"We'll take a look at the gorge," my companion suggested, as we left the house, "unless you have some other place in mind."

"Oh, the gorge, by all means," I replied, readily. "I have heard Mrs. Channing and her daughter speak of it as being very beautiful."

"It is, indeed," March agreed. "It affords some splendid scenery. It possesses majesty as well as loveliness. And it has the additional merit of being readily accessible for us within the time at our disposal." He talked of various things throughout the remainder of the way, but spoke no other word concerning our destination.

Presently, when we were come about a mile from the house, we entered a thick wood. A rumbling sound reached our ears soon afterward, and this increased in volume as we penetrated deeper into the forest, until, at last, as we stepped forth from a tangle of underbrush into open sunlight, it burst on us in a deafening roar. Here, within a little clearing, I cast my eyes about in search of the cataract, but it was nowhere visible. Then we rounded a knoll that shut the third side of the free space, and the gorge lay revealed.

We were now on the edge of a cleft in the earth, some hundred feet in height, which formed one side of the miniature *cañon* where the creek ran. The width of the chasm was not great; at the most, it could not have exceeded fifty yards, nor was the body of water in the stream remarkable. But the vehemence of the flow was both astonishing and impressive. The creek writhed and seethed down the sharp slope of the gorge's bed, pounding the boulders in its course with fierce, yet futile wrath. Everywhere opposing currents coiled and hissed beneath their veils of foam. Before the wild rush of the waters, I stood for a time absorbed, fascinated by the movements of the hurrying flood at once so persistent, so complex, so indicative of nature's energies. How long I remained thus in contemplation I cannot tell precisely, but, from the knowledge I afterward gained the interval must have been considerable. I

was suddenly aroused from it by a pebble which struck the ground within a rod from the spot where I was standing. It so chanced that my eyes were caught by the stone at the moment when it dropped to the ground. I had not seen it fall, but, as it rolled forward a few feet, my gaze followed the movement, and then I looked about to discover whence it had come.

At the first, I could make nothing of it. I stared here and there along the bank without finding any trace of man or thing that might have given motion to the pebble. Presently, however, I raised my eyes, and my gaze went across the rift in the earth. Forthwith the mystery was made clear. On the opposite side of the gorge stood March, who, as he saw me turn toward him, waved his hand, and smiled. Evidently, it had been he who cast the stone near me, with the purpose of drawing my attention to himself, since the uproar of the torrent must have rendered shouting vain. I was wondering as to the means by which he had got across, when he began to gesticulate, and I understood that he wished me to follow up the stream, and cross over to the other bank. Nothing loath, I set out to obey him, for already my interest had been aroused by the fact that the gorge bent sharply to the left at a point a little way above me, so that all the upper part or the creek was hidden from my sight by the rising ground in that direction. Forthwith, therefore, I turned and began to clamber up the steep ascent. As I came, finally, to the crest, a cry of delighted surprise burst from me.

Here was shown in its entirety that which had been wholly hidden by the abrupt curve in the channel. Moreover, I now understood the reason of the great roaring sound. Just before me were the falls that found their outlet through the gorge. The single broad sheet of the cataract had a height of perhaps thirty feet. The water moved smoothly, silently, even, as it seemed to the eye, slowly, until it reached the verge, then plunged in a swift arc of grace down into the mad cauldron below, where for a time it reveled furiously in its huge basin of stone;

afterward, it fled, as if in an ecstasy of terror, to the narrow recesses of the gorge.

I looked across the falls toward March, who was still visible on the other shore, and I nodded to him a mute expression of my appreciation of the spectacle. By way of return, he gesticulated again, pointing upward toward the falls. Thereupon I went forward, up a second, slighter rise, which led me to the level of the stream above the falls. As I mounted this I soon perceived the explanation of March's presence on the far side, for just above the falls hung a tiny foot-bridge swung on cables. This, obviously, had been the means of his crossing over. As I came to the level ground at the head of the falls, my enemy beckoned to me, and I accordingly went on to the water's edge, at the point where the bridge touched the shore, with the intention of passing over it.

I must confess, however, that the venture showed itself to me none too attractively. I had had little experience in situations where steady nerves were imperative. My life had been painfully staid, humdrum. My only experience in the matter of heights had been in looking from an office window in New York. And this bridge was, indeed, wretchedly flimsy, manifestly inadequate to its situation. Doubtless, it had been put there for the convenience of those who were not squeamish as to possible vertigo, inasmuch as it spanned the stream close by the edge of the fall. From the point where I stood at the end of it, I looked down into the churning mass of the pool, and the spume of it beat back into my face. Thus, the passage offered ample opportunity of disaster to one wholly unfamiliar with such height and noise and rush of swirling waters. There was, as well, another difficulty, as I learned in the moment when I first set foot on the bridge. The structure had been made most simply by means of two parallel cables, swung a yard apart, across which boards had been placed for footing. That the bridge had hung there for many years was proven by the fact that most of the boards were much decayed, while some even had rotted

away completely, leaving in their stead gaping interstices above the leap of the stream. And, in addition to all this, there was no railing of any sort. In view of these facts, my stopping short after stepping on the footway is small matter for wonder, since I found that the bridge swung to and fro in uneven oscillations with every movement of my body the while I stood hesitating there.

For an instant, I paused undecided, gazing out over the peril of the span. But, in another moment, my gaze went to March, who had approached the opposite end of the way. On his face was a smile of mockery, of derision. It was as if he had called me coward to my face, because he had just made the crossing before which I quailed. As I beheld the malignant contempt of his expression I trembled in rage against the man. Whatever my other faults, fear is not a chief characteristic of me. Moreover, it flashed on me that it might be the part of prudence to display a bold spirit in the presence of my foe. Surely, whatever he could do, I could do—and more! At the thought, the trepidations of doubt vanished from me, and I set forth, walking resolutely out over the falls.

The task was, of a truth, fearsome to me. The irregular swaying of the bridge beneath my feet made every step precarious in the extreme. It was necessary, too, that the rotted boards be tested ere I dared trust my weight to them. And, always, there below my eyes I saw the stealthy gliding of the stream. Once my gaze wandered beyond the narrow path, and fell to the deeps of the pool where the element roared in turmoil. The sight caused my head to swim, so that I staggered blindly, and was near being precipitated into the gulf. But I made a mighty effort for self-control; my brain cleared, and I went on again, without ever daring a second look downward.

I had made about half of the distance when, above all the clamors of the cataract, there was borne to my ears a faint, shrill sound, quite distinct from the din around about me. It seemed to me like the scream of a child or of a woman, from very far off.

Without in the least understanding why, I was confused and alarmed by the unexpected nature of it. Involuntarily, I halted to listen. Again, the cry sounded, and, this time, I could not doubt the reality of it. In my perplexity over it, I forgot the dangers of the place in which I was. I raised my head, and stared inquiringly toward March, who had been watching my progress from his place at the other end of the bridge. Now, however, I found that his gaze had shifted from me to some unknown object behind me. I saw, too, that his face had become ghastly white, as if from some sudden terror. By reason of this, I made sure that the source of the shriek was somewhere at my back, visible to him. Then, for the third time, the cry came. And now I would have turned to look for myself, but, at this moment, another noise sounded, a sharp, crackling note of doom. In the same instant, the flooring of the bridge dropped from under me into the water where it bent to the plunge. My cry of horror as I fell was strangled by the torrent. I felt myself swept down and down, underneath the vast bulk of the cataract, as if I had been hurled forth into the endlessness of the eternal void.

CHAPTER VIII

IN THE MOUTH OF THE GORGE

In the first few seconds after my drop into the stream, I had no clear consciousness of anything beyond a sense of overwhelming terror at thus rushing through space, crushed beneath the remorseless flood. In that brief interval of supine fear, I was hurled over the edge of the cataract, down into the nethermost depths of the pool. It was then that, of a sudden, memory recalled the icy shock of the water on my body at the moment of immersion. In the stress of a greater emotion, I had given it no heed at the time. Now, however, I recalled it, shuddering, for the chill of the pool bit sharply. The new sensation seemed somehow to clear my brain, to guide my energies toward a struggle for life. Forthwith, I began to beat against the water with every atom of strength in hands and in feet, for

my lungs were near to bursting for want of air, and I knew that I must reach the surface speedily, or perish there in the maelstrom. Yet, it seemed to me that I buffeted my way upward in vain. The pressure in my breast became intolerable; I was in despair, for I felt that I could no longer endure the frightful strain. Then, of a sudden, my head shot free of the water. I drew one great, gasping breath, and another, ere the greedy currents sucked me down again. Even in my peril I tingled with delight, as the blessed inhalations swelled my aching lungs. And afterward, when I had been drawn below for a second time, the comfort of those two breaths continued with me. Moreover, as I went whirling and bobbing at the mercy of the eddies' whims, I found myself marveling gratefully that I had not been destroyed outright when first sent hurtling from the height above. It seemed to me then, and, indeed, it seems to me now, that almost a miracle had been wrought in my behalf. It was, in truth, well-nigh incredible that I should have made this leap in the embrace of the waterfall without leaving the life beaten out of me by the rocks of the pool.

But, meantime, while my thoughts thus ran on the first escape, I by no means underestimated the dangers of a position in which each moment might be my last. Constantly I was striving as best I might to attain the surface for a second time, and in this, after a little interval, I was successful. Once more I was able to take the air into my eager lungs. This time, too, I contrived to maintain myself against the grip of the undertow, and held my face above the level of the stream. I even raised my head high enough to distinguish the surroundings clearly, which, as a glance showed, were still those of the pool itself, although I was now at the farther end of it, close by the outlet into the gorge. For a moment, I was within the comparative calm of an outlying eddy, and the realization of this fact moved me to struggle toward the rim of the basin. But I had hardly made a movement before I was snatched from the place. It was as if the hand of a giant had clutched me,

and it held me in a grasp of resistless power. It was the hand of the current into the gorge that had been laid upon me. Helpless within its might, I was dragged forth into the race of the flood.

As I understood what had befallen, a great dread moved in me, for I remembered too well the wild flight of the creek through that tortuous channel where its path was strewn with boulders against which it flung itself so furiously. I had seen, too, the jutting points of other rocks here and there, fragments of the original cliffs that had withstood the erosion of the stream. I knew that, at any instant, I might go crashing into one of these, to my destruction. Nevertheless, I strove with every resource of skill and of strength to avoid the menace of the course, watching alertly for any sign of especial peril amid the confusion of the waters. Hither and yon, white aureoles of foam gave warning of the rocks, and, with these to guide me, I battled fiercely to save myself from being swept against the stones. The force of the current was, however, so great, its speed so masterful, that I had small opportunity to choose my direction. Yet despite the inequality of the conflict, I persevered, and so won my way in safety past many a jagged point of rock. Once, indeed, the edge of a boulder struck me in the shoulder. It was only a glancing blow, but the rapidity of my flight with the current was such that the impact bruised me woefully, so that, afterward, my right arm was almost useless. Then, as the seconds passed without further catastrophe, I dared take heart of hope. Once, I ventured to glance back over my shoulder, and I saw the black walls of the cavernous place stretching far behind me. The sight cheered me mightily, for I made sure that I had come a long way. It seemed possible now that I might, at last, win to the end of this turbulent cañon, might issue into the smoother reaches of the river, where the shore could be attained.

It was while I was in this mood of increased hopefulness that the current tossed me around an elbow, by which the gorge veered abruptly to the right. Here, for a little way, the channel was

even more tumultuous than before, flecked everywhere with spume thrown off by the waters pounding on the crowded rocks. But I recked nothing of this threatening aspect, for beyond my eyes caught the sheen of tranquil waters. There, close at hand, a haven was offered me, and at the sight my heart leaped joyously. In the next instant, a poignant anguish thrilled through every nerve of me, and I lost consciousness.

CHAPTER IX

THE ACCUSATION

When, a little later, my eyes unclosed, I looked up into the face of Ruth Channing. At the very first, I felt no wonder over the fact of her presence there with me. My dulled consciousness recognized only a single thing, that she was thus beside me, bending over me; and I was filled with gladness. I smiled up at her weakly, without a word, supremely content because she and I were together, mindful of nothing else in all the world.

But the girl did not return my smile. Instead, she uttered a low cry of relief, and then spoke very quickly.

"Tell me, Mr. Barclay!" she questioned. "You are not seriously hurt? Oh, tell me!"

I was puzzled by the ring of anxiety in her voice as she asked me this, and, too, her words conveyed some vague memory of the perils through which I had just passed. Yet, for the moment, my clogged wits remained motionless. So, I answered her readily:

"No, Ruth, I am not hurt in the least—only, a little tired, nothing more."

At that, the girl smiled wanly down on me.

"Thank God!" she murmured, below her breath.

Now, however, my faculties were beginning to regain their poise. Suddenly, there flashed on me a vivid recollection of the danger out of which I had escaped. As knowledge dawned, I was seized with astonishment at finding myself still alive.

"How is it that I am here?" I questioned, eagerly. "The last thing I remember was that blow in my side. How

did I manage to get out of the creek?"

"Here at the bend," Ruth answered, "there is an in-set. The current is not so strong."

"But I was unconscious," I objected. "I could not have climbed out, upon the bank here. How —?"

"Oh, I helped you," the girl interrupted, carelessly. "Really, it was nothing."

But her nonchalance of manner did not deceive me. Moment by moment, as my mind cleared, I experienced a growing amazement over the circumstances of my rescue. In my bewilderment, I sat up suddenly. The movement caused a racking pain through my side, so that involuntarily I groaned.

"Oh, you are hurt!" Ruth exclaimed, in swift alarm. "What is it? You must tell me!"

"It is nothing of any importance," I declared, rather ungraciously, I fear, for I was ashamed at my lack of self-control which had thus frightened her. "One of the rocks caught me in the side. It was that put an end to me, for the time being. But, indeed, it is nothing. It knocked the wind out of me for a bit, that is all."

"You are not trying to deceive me?" Ruth demanded, with a keen glance.

"No, no," I protested. "It has left me a little lame and sore where the rock struck. There is nothing more serious than that, I assure you."

For that matter, I spoke no more than the truth in thus making light of my injury, for it turned out to be nought worse than a trifling inconvenience, although the force with which I had been swept against the stone had sufficed to render me unconscious for a minute. But, now that I had relieved the girl's concern in my behalf, I was again the prey of a consuming curiosity as to the method of my escape. I stared about me, in search of anyone who might have aided her, but there was no one within sight. Then, once again, my gaze went to Ruth, and now I perceived something that had hitherto been unnoticed by me in my dazed condition: the jersey and the skirt which she wore were wringing wet. Thereat, finally, comprehension of the truth came to me. It was she—she alone!—who had saved

me from death. Her indifferent acknowledgment that she helped me had been an equivocation of modesty. And, now that my brain was unclouded I could not doubt the difficulties of her task. I had been wholly unconscious, a lifeless bulk, the impotent victim of the torrent's caprice. By some mystery of Providence, the girl had been here at the bend of the stream, she had seen me, she had boldly entered the water, and, alone, she had brought me to the shore, had dragged me out upon the bank. It was no mean achievement for a man to have wrought this thing; for this slender girl it was stupendous. As I looked down to the creek I could see that the current still ran fiercely, even here in the comparative calm of the broader stretch. Out of that ruthless rush of water she had fetched me, a dead weight of one hundred and eighty pounds for my six feet of height. I regarded her with reverent admiration. It was evident that the lithe grace of her body masked muscles of steel, since she had been able to do this thing. And, too, she possessed both courage and the indomitable energy necessary to make it avail; otherwise, she had not dared this exploit, nor succeeded in it. Already, I had given her my highest esteem, and something more. Now, I learned that she was worthy beyond anything I had divined. It seemed to me then, in the first warm glow of my emotion, that Ruth Channing was the most splendid, the most adorable creature in all the world. In the days that have sped since this hour I have never found reason to change the judgment I then made; on the contrary, experience has but confirmed it. Rather, I should say that greater knowledge of her has made it appear inadequate, for to describe perfection is to limit it.

"You saved my life!" I said, softly, and there was a note of awe in my voice. I reached out my hand timidly to the hem of her dripping skirt, and raised it to my lips, and kissed it. "I owe my life to you, Ruth," I murmured. Throughout this time of stress, it had not once occurred to me that I had no right to address her thus intimately by name.

The girl's face flushed hotly.

"It was nothing—nothing, I tell you!" she returned, with a vehemence almost petulant. "There was no risk for me."

"As to that," I remonstrated, "there is always risk for one in the water with a drowning man. And in such water—" I left the sentence unfinished, as I glanced significantly at the darting stream. "But we need not argue as to that," I continued. "I know the river, to my sorrow; I know in what condition I was; I know what must have been my end, but for you. Sometime, I shall try to thank you."

"At least, then, say no more about it just now," the girl urged. "Do you think you are able to walk to the house, if I help you?"

I was sure that I could manage to go easily enough unaided, but the temptation of intimate association unwittingly offered by her beguiled me to play upon her kindness. So, I got to my feet clumsily, and even allowed myself to lean lightly on her shoulder. The contact thrilled me, and, as we went forward together, I quite forgot the perils through which I had passed and the sharp aching of my bruised side, in delight at this closeness to her.

We had gone a half of the mile that separated us from the house, when Ruth again referred to my misadventure. Then, she explained that she had chanced to stroll toward the falls with the purpose of making some sketches, when she had seen me out on the bridge. A moment afterward, one of the cables had parted, and I had been thrown into the river. Forthwith she had whirled about and set off running in the hope of intercepting me at the bend, which was not more than two hundred yards in a straight line from the point where the bridge had been, although the distance made by the river in its curving course was a full half-mile. While she was speaking, I recollected the screams which I had heard just before the giving way of the bridge, and I inquired of her concerning them.

"Did you cry out, when you saw me on the bridge?" I asked.

"Yes; of course, I did," was the prompt reply. "I shouted my loudest,

in the hope of making you turn back. But you didn't hear me."

"I heard you very faintly," I explained. "But I wish you would tell me why you were frightened on my account. Did you fancy that I could not cross without losing my head?"

"It was madness ever to try," the girl declared, with emphasis.

But I shook my head stubbornly, for my pride was in revolt.

"What others can do, I can do," I said.

"But no one had done anything to excite your emulation in this instance," Ruth retorted. Her voice had in it a note of amusement, as if she had guessed the secret of my mood. "No one has used that bridge for years. Everyone knew that it was unsafe."

"But, in that case," I exclaimed, in great surprise, "March must have known the danger. Why should he have risked crossing by it?"

It was now the turn of the girl to be astonished.

"Who? Norris?" she demanded. "He would never venture on it, you may be sure. You should have gone across the creek in the boat, as he did."

"In the boat!—as he did!" I repeated, stupefied, and I stood still in the path.

Ruth, too, halted perforce, and now she regarded me curiously.

"But he stood at the other end of the bridge," I went on, after a moment, "and he beckoned me to cross over to him by it." I had my eyes on the girl's face as I spoke, and I saw a swift change in its expression. The violet eyes grew lighter of tint, colder, while her slender form became tense, and her face whitened. But her voice was emotionless as she put a question:

"Had he not told you that the bridge was unsafe?"

"No," I replied, "he said nothing about it in any way." I recounted to her how March had left me without my knowledge and had crossed to the opposite bank, before I was even aware of the existence of any bridge. "And, naturally," I concluded, "I supposed that I could cross safely where he had."

There was silence between us for a little; then the girl asked another ques-

tion. Her voice was as calm as before, but now, as it seemed to me, it held in it a subtle note of dread.

"Did you see Norris cross the bridge?" she said.

"No," I answered. I found myself perplexed both by the question itself and by the manner of it.

"No, you did not," Ruth agreed, scornfully. Her self-restraint was thrown off now, and she continued with an impetuous wrath in her tones: "No, most assuredly you did not. He crossed by the boat, as he always does. I saw it fastened to the other bank of the creek, a little way above the falls, where he had left it. . . . And I saw him there at the end of the bridge, watching you cross by it. He —"

She broke off abruptly, and stood with set face, staring down at the ground. But she had said enough. While she was speaking, the veil had been torn from my understanding; a lightning flash of illumination revealed all the truth to me. I shuddered as I realized the devilish artfulness of my enemy's device against me. He had lured me to the falls, had stolen away from me, had rowed himself across the river above the falls. Then, he had attracted my attention by the pebble, had guided me to the bridge, had enticed me into the hazard of crossing it. He had deliberately plotted my death in this stealthy fashion, which would leave him unsuspected by any one. And, too, he must have succeeded but for the interference of this girl who was betrothed to him. I had lowered my gaze in the confusion of emotions that came rushing on me at this new proof of the malevolent resources at my adversary's command; but, as my thought came thus again to Ruth, I raised my eyes, even as she lifted hers, and for a long minute we stared questioningly at each other. In that mutual scrutiny, we accused Norris March, and we found him guilty; moreover, each of us confessed knowledge of the truth; each of us perceived that the other understood.

Presently, the girl's head drooped wearily.

"Let us go on," she said, listlessly.

We went forward in a silence that was not broken until we were come

almost to the house. Then, Ruth paused, and addressed me timidly.

"My mother has gone away for the afternoon," she said. "I hope that it will not be necessary to tell her of — of this! You do not —" Her voice trailed into silence.

"I shall say nothing of it to anyone, ever," I promised, "since you ask it of me."

Something in my voice caused her to glance at me curiously; then, she blushed slightly, and looked away from me.

"Thank you," she said, simply. And we went on, together.

CHAPTER X

FOR HER PRICE IS FAR ABOVE RUBIES

From the window of a room upstairs in which I was working, I saw March approach the house within the hour. Presently, to my astonishment, I heard his steps in the corridor outside, and then his knock came on the door of the chamber. In response to my call, he entered, and stood before me without displaying the slightest trace of confusion.

"By Jove, old man," he cried heartily, "I never expected to see you alive again. I couldn't dive into that pool after you, you know."

"No," was my tart rejoinder, "I didn't expect you to." I was burning with rage. My one desire was to seize the fellow by the throat, and then and there have done with our contest, once for all; but I felt that I must not give rein to my passion in this house. So I checked myself after that one sarcastic outburst, and waited impatiently for him to continue. He did so immediately, without showing any sign of having understood the sneer in my words.

"Yes, it was awful," he went on, brazenly. "I don't know when anything has given me such a turn." My lip curled in scorn at the man's hypocrisy. I wondered if, by any chance, he could deem me so easily gullible as to believe him innocent of planning to put me out of his way. But, in the next words, he made plain his purpose. "I never in my life saw anything so reckless," he declared, earnestly. "In spite of all my

shouting, you would persist in your foolhardiness. I can't understand why you should have refused to heed my warnings, Barclay."

"I did not hear your shouts," I said, significantly.

But March seemed impervious to irony.

"That is curious," he rejoined musingly, "for I could distinguish Miss Channing's screams. Yet, after all, it is not hard to explain: Of course, her voice was shriller than mine, and therefore traveled farther, and was more distinct through the roaring of the falls."

"Oh, certainly," I agreed, still sneering; "I believe that her voice did travel farther than yours did." But, again, he took no notice, seemingly, of the jeer. "How did you know that I had escaped?" I demanded, suddenly.

For the first time in our interview, March hesitated slightly, and his face changed color. Nevertheless, after an instant's delay, he responded readily enough.

"I saw you with Miss Channing, as you were on your way to the house," he said, composedly.

The reply was, in my opinion, equal to a confession of guilt on his part, inasmuch as I could imagine no reason other than his own sense of wrongdoing that could have kept him from coming forward at such a time, whereas he had waited for almost an hour before seeking me. There was mockery in my voice when I spoke.

"It is a pity," I said, "that you did not show yourself, in order that Miss Channing might have been relieved from the task of helping me."

But March changed the subject adroitly.

"Ah, you are injured," he exclaimed, solicitously. "It is nothing serious, I hope."

"No," I replied, and there was a grim note in my voice; "it is not serious. I am a bit lamed, but I am as fit to fight as ever I was, should the occasion arise." My eyes challenged him, but he only smiled pleasantly by way of answer. Then, he made a last remark of such colossal impudence that before it I was in too great a rage for words,

whereupon the while I glared at him, he turned about, and coolly walked from the room. . . . The audacious scoundrel had said this to me:

"Well, Barclay, I am sorry that the thing happened in just the way it did. It was really my fault that you got into trouble. And, besides, I didn't have any share in getting you out of it. I think I'd better go and make peace with Miss Channing. I am afraid she will blame me for your mishap. I shall tell her, also, how sorry I am that the thing happened as it did."

The impertinence of the fellow rankled for a long time after he had left me, so that I had much ado to go on with my hunting. But, once again, I was forced into a most reluctant admiration of March, by reason of the inimitable coolness which he had displayed in a critical situation. And, too, I gave due credit to one whose ruthless spirit was at once so persistent and so ingenious in enmity. In the end, however, I abandoned both vain detestation of my foe and vainer apprehensions. I determined that I would rather make my feeling toward him one of concentrated purpose to defeat him at every turn—in the matter of his machinations against my safety, in the affair of the rubies, in the thing of supreme importance: the winning of Ruth Channing. And, for the time being, the one that commanded all my energies was the affair of the rubies. To that I must devote myself forthwith, with new vigor.

Nevertheless, despite eager industry, the supper hour arrived without my having found aught to encourage me. I felt myself depressed by the continued failure, although doubtless the fatigue of the experience through which I had just passed and the pain of my injured side contributed their quota to my low spirits. But I was speedily cheered by an unexpected pleasure on my arrival in the dining-room, for Mrs. Channing told me that March had declined the customary invitation to the meal. My hostess seemed somewhat worried over this defection of her favorite, and I noticed that, from time to time, she glanced toward her daughter, as if she guessed that a lovers' quarrel lay at the bottom of his absence. For my own

part, I sincerely hoped that such was indeed the case, that March had failed utterly in the effort to excuse his conduct to the girl. For that matter, since our mutual admission of his guilt during the walk homeward, I could not believe her capable of a continued respect for such a man. Yet, to-night, her conduct puzzled me. She was much more vivacious in her manner than was customary to her. She favored me constantly in her conversation, so that I was overflowing with delight. At the same time, there was a certain coldness in her gaiety, which led me to fancy that she was playing a part. I wondered if she had made an open rupture with her betrothed, and if, in consequence, this air of liveliness were assumed to mask her heartache. I understood that this might well be so, for my enemy was one to win a woman's love, so long as he kept the evil in him out of sight. It was my comfort that I knew Ruth Channing for a woman to spurn the one, however dear, who proved base. The wickedness of Norris March had been revealed to me. His brilliancy, his plausibility, had no power now to deceive me as to his character. Had he been a decent man, I had never dreamed of trying to steal the heart of his promised wife from him. But he was wholly unworthy of her. For that reason, I had no shame now as I vowed that I would strive to the limit of my strength to win the love of Ruth. The events of the day had given a bond of union in the secret we shared. And to-night her manner to me was, for the first time, so kind that I was a-thrill with happiness and with hope.

I had planned to spend the evening in going over the library a second time. I spoke of this intention to the ladies, who approved of it, each declaring that she had no wish to occupy the room, and offering some pretext for leaving me free of the apartment. So, when supper was done, I withdrew into the library, and promptly engaged in a detailed exploration of its every cranny and recess. I even went through the almost interminable task of examining each individual book, taking every one from the shelves and running over the pages, and scrutinizing the backs, with

elaborate care. But the meticulous thoroughness of my searching profited nothing. At the end of four hours, I gave up work, and sank down to rest in an easy chair before the fireplace, in which the logs were still smoldering. I was exhausted after the strenuous episode of the afternoon and the tedious labor of hunting through the room. The chair was so luxurious, the surroundings so agreeable, that I had no wish for the time being to change these for my bedroom. Therefore, I lounged there in lazy content, with my eyes fast on the glowing embers.

Yet, while I thus rested outwardly, my brain still wrestled with the problem of the rubies. Ever, the question ran in my thoughts: where could this treasure lie hidden, if indeed it were aught more than the illusion of an old man's dotage? The rubies! the rubies! These made the pivot around which all my idea went spinning. I have said but little concerning my unceasing meditations on the theme of the elusive treasure. I grew so weary of endless speculations on the subject in those days of seeking that even now I dislike to recall my memories of the period. Most of all, I detested the text of Scripture, which my uncle had attached to the end of his letter of instruction—that text wherein was concealed a clue to the hiding-place of the treasure. To-night, as a thousand times before, the words of Proverbs, xxxi; 10, beat on my brain with wearisome persistence, until they might madden me.

"Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies."

Always, the clue that was in the sentence avoided my probings for it. Nevertheless, in this seemingly futile text was an intangible something that might guide me to the secret of the treasure. Else the whole affair were naught save a vagary of senility. So, I conned the words again, and yet again, ever vainly. They afforded me only a single definite idea, that of the lissome girl who had breasted the current of the river to save me from death. Finally, I gave over all thought of the rubies, in order that I might cheer my soul with reveries of her strong and slender grace, her pale face with the scarlet lips and vio-

let eyes; the subtle charm of her purity, all the fragrance of her personality.

Presently I leaned forward in my chair, the better to study the picture of her painted on the slate which was set as a panel in the woodwork of the mantel-piece. I regarded with fondest yearning the loveliness of this girl, so gentle, yet so radiant of energy. The eyes of the portrait seemed gazing into mine with a caressing earnestness in their blue depths; the crimson lips appeared as if about to curve into a smile of tenderness. "A virtuous woman"—truly, it was she of whom Solomon wrote in prophecy, since all the virtues were united in the crown of her glory.

Of a sudden, my thoughts leaped back from dreams to a consideration of my first need in the matter of the rubies. Although I had often mused on Ruth Channing in this same connection, it had never occurred to me hitherto that Nathan Hemenway could have referred to her when he quoted the passage from the thirty-first chapter of the Book of Proverbs. Now, however, the fancy seized me, and dominated. Moreover, it seemed the most natural thing in the world that the old man should have meant to suggest her. That he honored her above other women was proven by the fact that he left her a fortune. Every circumstance, indeed, pointed toward her as being somehow involved in the secret of the treasure. The wealth that was not bestowed on her was in the rubies, and the hunt for their possession was set in her home. Surely, then, Ruth was that woman whose price is far above rubies.

But, for a long time, I could get no farther in the puzzle, although I stared steadfastly at the picture of the girl and racked my wits for any least suggestion toward the truth. "Who shall find a virtuous woman?" As to that, I had worked out the answer, for I had come on her—Ruth! Beyond this, I was convinced, there could be no further clue in the question of the text. There remained, then, only the words: "for her price is far above rubies." Of these only the one word was in any way suggestive of applicability to my need: "rubies;" but neither it or the

others cast a gleam of light on the darkness of the mystery. "For her price is above rubies." I said the words over and over again, in monotonous iteration, until I was half-asleep. Finally, I caught myself mechanically repeating the phrase, "above rubies," "above rubies." It was as I heard myself murmuring those words aimlessly that the instant of illumination came, at last. "Above rubies," "above rubies!" What did the saying mean? What could it mean? Did it, in truth, mean anything?

I rose slowly from out the chair. I was all a-tremble with excitement, with eagerness to put this inspiration to the test of experiment. I stooped forward, putting my face close to the woodwork of the mantelpiece, where the slate panel of the portrait was set. Then, for a long time, I regarded it intently. Now that it was studied with particularity, this ornamentation revealed a greater intricacy of design than was to be expected in the decoration of this modest country home. It occurred to me, presently, that the fireplace had been the gift of Nathan Hemenway, for I had already learned that the library was his favorite room during his long visits to the Channings. The supposition was borne out by the presence of the portrait in a place so unusual. Doubtless, the fond old man had the painting of Ruth made and inserted in the paneling. Indeed, all the reasoning I could bring to bear on the subject reinforced the fancy that had so suddenly seized me. I was convinced that here, if anywhere, was the repository of the secret I sought. So, finally, I made bold to put a tentative hand on the carvings. The vagrant pressure of my fingers was long continued, exhaustive. With minutest care, I went over the whole extent of the panel's borders, searching patiently for a hidden spring. But my efforts met with no response whatever. I caressed every line and every hollow to no purpose. Every petal of every flower, every vein of every leaf was traced by my touch; and each and every one remained immobile. Finally, I decided, though sorely against my will, that to continue the attempt here were futile, and I desisted moodily,

most bitterly disappointed by this latest failure of my hopes. . . . It was my reluctance to accept defeat that led me to put out my hands yet once again, and to press them aimlessly against the slate itself. To my surprise, it yielded a little under the contact. On more careful examination, it became apparent that the piece of stone was rather loosely set within the surrounding woodwork. There was, indeed, nothing of great significance in this fact, yet, somehow, it excited me to new ardor. For a time, I fumbled at the slate without reaching any result. But, at last, by a happy chance, I pressed it upward with my finger-tips.

At once, it moved.

The unexpected movement startled me so that, involuntarily, I lessened the pressure, whereupon the panel slid back into its former position, of its own weight.

But, by an effort of my will, I calmed myself, and then pressed my fingers against it a second time, and lifted. It appeared now that an opening back of the woodwork above the point where the stone had rested permitted it to be raised for some distance upward. I pushed it on slowly, until the lower edge was an inch above the line of the bottom carvings. Then, I thrust my fingers beneath it, and thus I was enabled to lift it higher without difficulty. When the opening below had grown to two or three inches in width, I paused, holding up the panel with one hand, while I put the other within the opening. I found a narrow and shallow cavity; and my fingers fell on a parcel lying there.

I clutched at the packet, and drew it forth, exultantly. I stared at it with eyes of wild delight, for I believed that I now held my fortune actually within my grasp, at last. It was a parcel of oblong shape, some six inches in length, by half as many in width, and thin. It was without seals, but a wrapping of oiled silk protected it, and a mesh of silk threads was knotted about it. Forthwith, glowing with happiness, I lowered the panel back into its place, dropped into my chair, and busied myself over the various fastenings of the packet.

CHAPTER XI

IN CIPHER

As the many folds of silk fell from the package, dismay seized me, for there remained now only a thin envelope of ordinary letter-size. I made certain, by a hasty pinching of this between thumb and finger that it could not possibly contain the gems I sought. I was in consternation over this utter defeat which had followed hard on the heels of seeming victory. I had much ado to resist the impulse that bade me hurl the offending parcel among the embers of the fireplace. Instead, I examined the envelope closely, scrutinizing it for any indication of its character. There was none, however, so, finally, I slit it open with my penknife, and removed the enclosures.

These were two in number, and the first, which I now spread out before me, read as follows:

TO EITHER OF MY NEPHEWS, NORRIS
MARCH OR JAMES MORRIS BARCLAY;
WHICHEVER OF THEM SHALL BE THE
ONE TO FIND THIS:

In the paper enclosed herewith is set down in cipher the precise location of that which you seek. You have now only to send the cipher description to Appleby, who already has my instructions in the matter. Retain a copy of it for your future use. On receiving the original, in my handwriting, Appleby will send you in return a key to the cipher, by which you will be enabled to translate the copy in your possession. In the very unlikely event of any person other than one of my nephews finding these papers, that person will be good enough to forward them at once to:

Thornton Appleby,
586 State St.,
Chicago.

who, acting in my behalf, will make a reasonable payment for such service.
(SIGNED) NATHAN HEMENWAY.

Naturally, the reading of this terse statement cast me into the throes of strong and varied emotions. That which dominated all the others was joy, joy the most extravagant. In the reaction from that acute disgust which I had experienced on first unwrapping the packet, it was as if, indeed, the treasure itself were actually in my possession, and my feeling of exultation,

of triumph, was unalloyed delight. Reflection tempered this in a measure, but even after sober second thought I could see no further difficulties in the way. The great essential in the acquisition of the fortune had been achieved by me. I had, beyond any shadow of doubt, succeeded in the quest. I had not found the hiding-place of the precious stones themselves as I had expected to do, but I had discovered the cipher which was designed as a guide to their concealment. Despite all his unscrupulous devices, Norris March had been beaten, and he had been beaten fairly. The rubies now belonged to me. Already, legally and morally, they were my property. I scanned the letter a second time, and a third, gloatingly. I rejoiced exceedingly, with self-gratulation that bordered perilously on conceit. I was filled with jubilation over the wealth that was at last mine, but I found a pleasure even stronger than this in the realization that I had won in the battle against mine enemy.

After a long indulgence of this mood, my attention shifted to the paper which accompanied my uncle's statement, and I picked it up and unfolded it. Then, for a time I sat regarding the mysterious writing with a half-reverent awe, although the text of it was quite meaningless to my uninitiated eyes.

The cryptic document was in these terms:

563 72 57 295 556 136 394 160 184 232
 119 6 225 312 120 22 623 10 348 55 463
 73 242 227 192 89 517 228 XXVII. 26 81
 164 557 339 186 44 209 45 625 95 208 28
 427 5 225 207 543 28 241 10 188 358 192
 33 41 31 611 14 219 11 436 47 632 384 258
 61 429 18 81 145 527 4 319 60 627 43 119
 364 48 32 330 1 57 295 323 15 221 29.

I contemplated the astonishing array of figures fondly, inasmuch as this apparent jumble was but an ingenious disguise for the secret of the treasure. I recalled having read of persons who had reduced the interpretation of such ciphers to a science; I had seen statements to the effect that no device, however elaborately contrived, could retain its mystery before the painstaking skill of the experts. I smiled a little in self-mockery, as I realized my own

helplessness should such a task be set for my solving as was contained in the paper before me. Indeed, it seemed to me quite impossible that anyone should possess art sufficient to extract a coherent message from this medley, without a key.

Presently, I recollected the direction contained in my uncle's statement, to the effect that the finder of the packet should make a copy of the cipher, which he must retain for his own use. As I was no whit sleepy, despite the lateness of the hour, I determined to write out this duplicate at once, that I might be free to send on to Appleby the original by the first post in the morning. I got pen and paper from a desk in the room, and proceeded to copy off the numerals in their order. When I had the list complete, I went over it again, that I might verify each item punctiliously. I discovered then that I had made two errors in the draft. In correcting the second of these, I dropped a blot on the sheet. I was so disgusted by the slovenly appearance of the page after this that I tore it up, and threw the pieces into the wastebasket. I used greater care in another attempt, and, on checking up the figures, I found the new copy flawless. Afterward, I wrote a brief note to Appleby, detailing the circumstances of my success. I placed this, together with the original cipher, in an envelope which I sealed and directed. The duplicate was bestowed in a letter-case that I carried. When I had done with these things, I sat for yet a little time before the dying coals, dreaming happily of the things made possible to me by the wealth now ready to my hand; dreaming most, and most happily, of the girl to whom my heart had surrendered so swiftly and so completely. But, finally, the chill of the night, no longer mitigated by the fire, penetrated me, and I rose from my chair, shivering. A glance at my watch showed me that it was three o'clock. I yawned, and slapped my chest to arouse the sluggish currents of my blood. I was about to turn out the lamp, preparatory to quitting the library for my chamber, when my ears caught the sound of a movement in the hall.

The noise was of the slightest—a faint thudding, as of a careless footfall. Although I listened intently for a few seconds, it was not repeated. Nevertheless, I was sure that I could not have been mistaken. No dog or cat was kept in the house at night; therefore, the movement outside the door must have been made by some person, man or woman. It was far too early for the servants to be stirring; it was extremely improbable that either Mrs. Channing or her daughter should be lurking in the hall thus stealthily, and there was no other in the household save myself. Across my brain darted the memory of how Norris March had skulked in the house on the night of my arrival. It occurred to me now that the villain might have come again, on the same errand. At the thought, I smiled grimly. I was taller than he, and stronger as well. My single recreation had been athletics, and I had some knowledge of fisticuffs as a science. I felt no reluctance to meet my adversary in bodily battle. On the contrary! The mere possibility of such encounter between us, impelled me to act promptly, in the hope that I might catch him spying, and punish him then and there.

I sprang to the door, and threw it wide.

CHAPTER XII

THE FIGHT IN THE DARK

There was a movement that I saw but vaguely in the darkness of the hallway. Something in its furtive swiftness gave me warning of danger, and, as the door swung open, I leaped aside. It may be that this instinctive action saved my life. At least, it guarded my head from the full force of the blow aimed at me. As it was, the stroke fell glancingly from my temple, to crash heavily on my left shoulder.

Even this slighter injury rendered my situation sufficiently perilous for the time being. The shock of it half-stunned me, so that I went reeling against the frame of the door. But, dulled as was my intelligence for the moment, I had the wit to be on the defensive. I half-saw, half-heard the second rush of my adversary. To avoid it,

I swung out into the hall, and ducked. My ears caught the swish of air over my head, and I knew that he had struck at me again, and missed. My brain cleared under the stimulus of this escape. Ere the man could recover from the impetus of his own murderous fury, I had seized him around the middle, holding his arms fast within my grip. There in the gloom of the hallway, it was impossible to distinguish the features of the fellow, but now, as I clutched him, I found my chin at his ear, and so I could judge the height of him. I had no doubt then that it was March himself, and my heart exulted over this opportunity to avenge in a measure the wrongs which I had suffered at his hands. I had no fear whatever as to the result of our meeting thus, for my belief as to my physical superiority over him was now justified by his complete inability to free himself from my hold. He writhed frantically to pull himself from my grasp, but without any success. I held him easily, and even increased the pressure until his breath came in stertorous wheezings.

But I had forgotten one thing: my ignorance of real fighting. It is one thing to box or to wrestle as a sport, for the contest is controlled by decencies of conduct which none may disregard. It is quite another thing to fight in earnest, to struggle for the mastery over an enemy who does not hesitate to use any means of winning. I had had no experience of genuine rough-and-tumble battle. I knew absolutely nothing of those tricks by which the unscrupulous seek to make up for their lack of skill or of strength. And, because I knew nothing of these things, I could not understand just what had happened to me when a wave of torture swept throughout me. My arms fell limply away from March. I staggered back against the wall, sick and trembling from the agony I endured. Afterward, I learned that my antagonist had resorted to a very simple, yet most efficient, method of paralyzing my energies for a minute: He had driven his foot violently against the sensitive ankle bones. Had he followed up his release by an immediate attack, I must

have been overcome at once, but he delayed. I fancy that the pressure of my arms had exhausted him so that, after the vicious effort of the kick, he was himself helpless for a brief interval. In consequence, he waited for a few seconds before continuing the strife. In that period, the first anguish passed from me, and I found myself again capable of action. When, finally, he charged me for the third time, I slipped aside, and in the same instant drove at him with my right fist. The blow caught him in the body. Amid the shadows of the hall, I saw dimly the heavier shadow that was his form wobble backward a few feet, then crumple to the floor.

I waited a little while, but, as he remained motionless, I went presently to his side, and peered down at him. He rested inert still, and soon I began to fear lest I might have done him serious injury. It seemed to me quite impossible that this body blow could have had such disastrous effect, unless, indeed, his heart had been diseased. But, as the moments passed and he continued to show no sign of life, apprehension grew. At last, thoroughly alarmed, I knelt down beside him, and put my hand to his breast. To my infinite relief, I felt his heart beating strongly under my fingers. I was overjoyed by the discovery, for I was not minded to slay any man. It seemed that he had only been stunned by the force of my blow; beyond that, his hurt would hardly prove of importance. I was about to lift my hand from his bosom, preparatory to standing up again, when a great bolt of flame tore through my brain. In the same second, the blazing train of it vanished altogether, and blackness closed down on me, a blackness overwhelming, complete.

When consciousness returned to me, my first knowledge extended no farther than a realization of pain. Little by little, I became aware that the chief source of the hideous sensations was my head, which seemed bursting with a throbbing fierceness of pain. I lifted one hand feebly, and put it to my skull. It came away with fingers stickily wet, and even my clogged wits were able to guess that this was from blood. By degrees, memory asserted itself, and I

could understand what had occurred. It was certain that, at the last, March had been shamming in order to catch me off my guard. I had easily fallen a victim to his artifice. As I crouched over him, with my hand to his breast, he had silently raised the black-jack, or whatever was the weapon he carried, and brought it down over my head with fatal force. Under that impact, I had sunk unconscious. Afterward, he had made his escape at leisure.

How long I had lain there lifeless on the floor of the hallway, I did not know, but, as my head cleared bit by bit, I finally sat up, and I then became aware for the first time that a glimmering of dawn was stealing in through the windows. The fact spurred me to endeavor. I had no wish that my plight should become known to the household, and I knew that at any moment now the advent of the servants might be expected. It was necessary, therefore, that I should bestir myself with what speed I might. So, with much stifled groaning, I managed to get on my feet again, and clumsily and shakily to make my way into the library, where the lamp was still burning. I extinguished the light, but, when I was come out into the hall, again, I struck a match, and glanced about. Luckily the space was very sparsely furnished, and in our struggle March and I had wrought no injury save on each other. I even examined the spot where I had been lying, to make sure that no tell-tale blood-stains were on the carpet. I was very thankful that the fighting had left no traces in the place, for I wished with all my heart that the unsavory incident might be kept a secret known only to the two most concerned. I felt a vicarious shame over the event. Fortunately for my desire, neither of us had cried out, and the contest throughout had been carried on almost noiselessly. By reason of this, it seemed that none of the others in the house had been awakened.

I went on upstairs softly, and into my chamber, where, after bathing my head, I tied it about with a handkerchief. The wound, so far as I could determine, was not of a serious character, although it pained me abominably. I

hoped that by morning I might dispense with the bandage, for my hair grew so thickly that it would hide the bruise. It was only when I had quite finished the treatment of my injury that I remembered the cipher. Hitherto, my thoughts had been concentrated on the fight and its immediate results on myself and the place where it had occurred. Now, of a sudden, came the recollection of my discovery of the cipher. I put a hasty hand to the inner pocket of my coat; it came away empty: Both the letter to Appleby with the original cipher and the case containing my copy were gone!

CHAPTER XIII

THE FITTED FRAGMENTS

The hour that followed was the bitterest out of my whole life. I have been face to face with death more than once, without experiencing anything to equal the dreadful emotions that now possessed me. Always, the sting of my suffering lay in the fact that, after all, March had won in the contest with me. Whatever the future might bring to us, I could never forgive him this time of triumph over me. I almost disregarded the loss of the fortune involved by the losing of the cipher. In this interval, rage against the victorious foe and chagrin over defeat dominated my mood, to the exclusion of all else.

I had no doubt as to just what had happened. March had spied upon me; it was probable that through the key-hole or a window he had made out my discovery of the hiding-place. Thereafter, he had lain in wait for me. Finally, during the term of my unconsciousness, he had searched me, and had found the letter to Appleby and my copy of the cipher, and had taken them. Now, therefore, he had in his possession both the original and the duplicate, so that I was left helpless. At first, I had some thought of invoking the law against him, but a short reflection showed me that I had not a shred of evidence to offer in substantiation of any accusation I might bring. I had no witness to a single act of wickedness on his part, except Ruth, who had seen him at the end of the

bridge over the falls, and concerning this I had promised secrecy to her. In view of this condition, it would be useless to carry my cause into court, where he would have only to deny whatever I might allege. I decided, however, that I would send a telegram to Appleby as soon as possible in the morning, explaining to him something of the robbery and bidding him withhold the key of the cipher from March until the tangle should be straightened out. I was cognizant of the fact that here, as in an appeal to the law, I had no scintilla of evidence for the final conviction of the thief, but I felt sure that the receipt of this telegram would at least delay the consummation that I feared. There could be little doubt that March would forward the original cipher to Appleby at once, with a request that the key be sent to him as the finder of the hiding-place. So, unless the lawyer were warned, his response would be immediate, and on receipt of it my enemy would hasten to secure the treasure which was mine of right.

I felt vaguely thankful for the matter of time involved by the necessity for this procedure. Even should Appleby pay no attention to my telegram, it would still be impossible for the robber actually to have the key in his hands within the next three days. That interim was mine—mine in which to plan and to execute something whereby to wrest victory from defeat.

As I reached this period in my reflections, I grew calmer. But the passing of my first fiery rage left me in an abyss of discouragement. It was all very well for me to congratulate myself on the delay that must ensue ere March could actually lay hold on the treasure, but there my satisfaction ended abruptly. For the life of me, I could hit on no expedient by which to offset the disaster that had befallen.

There was no sleep for me this night. The hours as they passed found me wide-eyed, revolving ever the facts of my situation in the desperate hope that somewhere, somehow, I might chance on a hint toward the possibility of securing my rights. In my extremity, I even bewailed the loss of the duplicate cipher. I dared to think that with it in

my possession I might possibly have solved the riddle before the whereabouts of the gems became known to my rival. I confessed to myself that the difficulties in the way of such a result appeared insuperable; but, none the less, I mourned my lack of the paper. At least, it would have offered something as an outlet for my energies, which were fretting horribly at the prospect of total inactivity in this emergency. It was now that a memory jumped in my brain—a memory of the first draft of the cipher in which I had detected the errors. I had corrected those mistakes, and blotted the sheet in so doing; then, in disgust, I had torn it up, and thrown the pieces in the waste-basket before undertaking a second copy. It occurred to me that I had not torn the fragments hopelessly small, that it might be possible to rearrange them so as to form a legible writing.

Forthwith, I was in a tremor of nervous anxiety. The day had already dawned, and I could hear the sounds of the maids moving about below stairs. I was fearful lest even now I might be too late. My heart was beating fast as I hurried from the chamber and down the stairs. In my haste, I quite forgot that I wore the bandage about my head, and, as I heard the noise of someone moving in the library, I fairly ran into the room. For the matter of that, my alarm was justified: at the very moment of my entrance, one of the servants had the waste-basket in her hands, and was carrying it toward the fireplace, with the obvious intention of dumping its contents into the ashes of the grate, which had not yet been taken up. The girl turned in surprise, startled by my unexpected arrival on the scene at such an hour, and stared at me curiously.

"It's—it's a—letter," I lied, stammeringly. "I tore up the wrong one, and threw the pieces in the basket. I want them—I must have them. Let me take the basket, please."

I almost snatched the receptacle from the bewildered servant, who regarded me so intently that, in spite of my absorbing interest in the bits of paper, I became self-conscious, and was re-

mindful of the handkerchief tied about my head. I flushed with embarrassment as I wondered what she must be thinking of me. But, notwithstanding, I wasted no time in the execution of my purpose. I swept the contents of a table to one side, and poured out upon the clear space the litter from the basket. Fortunately, there had been little in it beside the fragments of which I was in search. It was only the work of a minute to separate these and gather them together. I then placed them in an envelope, after making sure that no minutest piece had escaped me, and put this in an inner pocket of my coat. Thereafter, I told another lie for the maid's benefit, to the effect that I had bumped my head against a door in the dark. To insure her sympathy, I bestowed a two-dollar bill on her, which she received very civilly.

Again in my chamber, I cleared off a stand, and then emptied out on it the contents of the envelope. My watch showed me that there still remained a full hour before breakfast-time, so I set to work at once. The paper on which I had written was of ordinary letter-size. After blotting it, I had folded it twice, and then torn it across four times, in each instance laying the two halves one over the other, which was a habit of long standing with me. An experiment with a similar sheet proved that the resulting number of pieces should be forty-four. I then counted the number of fragments which I had brought from the waste-basket, and found, to my infinite relief, that the tally was complete: there were forty-four pieces.

I perceived now, however, that my habit of thus folding the paper twice, once across the middle and then again at right angles to the first crease, was the cause of a serious difficulty in the task before me, inasmuch as it resulted in many twin pieces, pieces of identical form. I could only hope that in the writing itself might be found guides for the proper differentiation of these.

By a lucky trick of mind, I remembered the first two numbers in the list: 563 72; and these gave me a free start on the working out of the problem, since I had only to fit blank pieces

above these, and those with writing below and to their right. Indeed, I proceeded with more ease and speed than I had ventured to hope, and, well within the hour, I had the entire page reconstructed and legible. This accomplished, I took pencil and paper, and made a copy, in which every item was carefully verified. I was at pains, also, to number the fragments in their order from one to forty-four, so that, in case of need, I might arrange them again without any loss of time. Finally, I replaced the pieces in the envelope, which I sealed, and returned to my pocket.

The breakfast-bell rang as I made an end of the labor. I hastily bathed my face, and took off the bandage from my head. To my satisfaction, I found that the bleeding had ceased, and, with some difficulty, I was able to brush my hair in such fashion as to hide the wound completely. As I looked into the glass, I saw that I was flushed. The strain of the day before, the blow in the night, and the sleepless hours of excited thought since, had given me a touch of fever, but it was not enough to disturb me seriously. On the contrary, I rather welcomed it, because it gave a color to my face that belied my racked body and buzzing brain. I looked not at all as I felt, and I took comfort from the fact, since it would save me from the probe of kindly questioning by my hostess.

Before descending to the dining-room, I scribbled a telegram to Appleby. To avoid the indiscretion of mentioning March by name, I put the body of the message in these words:

"Do not send key to any other person than myself. The original cipher which I found has been stolen from me. Will write you name of thief and other details."

With Mrs. Channing's permission, this telegram was dispatched to the railway station by a servant, after which I joined my hostess and her daughter at the table. The meal passed off pleasantly enough, save that I was in a fit of impatience to begin my attempt at translation of the cipher. Ruth retained her manner of the evening before, yielding me a consideration that pleased me mightily, but with a

baffling suggestion of artificiality in it. As soon as the breakfast ended, I excused myself, and went into the library, where I wrote a full account of my miserable experience to Appleby. With the letter off my hands, I was about to leave the room when I remembered that I had seen among the books a set of encyclopædias. It occurred to me now that the work might contain a descriptive article on ciphers, from which it would be possible to gain guidance as to the proper method of procedure in the task confronting me. I took it as an augury of success that, on searching for the word, "cipher," I found it, with the reference. "See Cryptography." I turned quickly to this heading, and read the article with close attention. To my disappointment, it was very short, and, as it seemed to me, lamentably lacking both in explicitness and in completeness. Out of the whole account, I gleaned only one definite bit of information: to the effect that the interpreter of a cipher should consider the fact that "e" is the vowel occurring most frequently in English; that "ea" and "ou" are the commonest diphthongs; that "r," "s" and "t" are the consonants oftenest found at the end of words; that a single letter must represent either "I" or "a," that "an," "at" and "on" are the leading recurrent words of two letters, while "the" and "and" are of like importance in the class of three letters. Here was something in the way of precise information in the science of cryptography, and as such I welcomed it. And, too, a statement following this enumeration was of a character to hearten me in my undertaking. The sentence ran in this form:

"By taking advantage of these few obvious principles, a skilled decipherer will read almost any such piece of cryptographic writing in five minutes."

Here was a promise of success, indeed! Of course, I lacked that skill which is only to be derived from long practice in such arts, but, if one after a period of training could achieve an almost instantaneous success, I, notwithstanding the obstacles interposed by my ignorance, might hope to accomplish the interpretation of a single

page during two days of unremitting toil. With this reflection to encourage my spirits, I betook myself again to the chamber, where I spread out the copy of the cipher, and started in on a study of that puzzle for the solving of which the reward would be a collection of rubies valued at more than two hundred thousand dollars!

CHAPTER XIV

THE CRYPTIC WRITING

With the learning which was become mine since reading the encyclopædia, I entered on the examination with confident zeal. To follow the scheme of solution suggested, it was necessary first of all that I should know which of the figures in the list occurred oftenest, since this must correspond with the vowel "e," the commonest in our tongue. Therefore, I carefully counted all of the numerals from one to zero. As a result, it appeared that the figure one was repeated thirty-five times; two, forty-two times; three, twenty-seven; four, twenty-three; five, twenty-four; six, eighteen; seven, twelve; eight, seventeen; nine, fifteen; and the zero, nine times. Here, then, was a demonstration that the figure two in the cipher stood for the vowel "e," and my joy was keen over this speedy laying of a foundation for the reconstruction. Next, I would be able to trace the representatives of the diphthongs, "ea" and "ou," and the final consonants, "r," "s," and "t," and the words of a single letter, "i" and "a." But, before proceeding, I bethought me of verifying the fact as to the figure two being the character serving in the stead of "e."

With this in mind, it needed no more than a cursory glance over the list of numerals to fill me with alarm. There in the second line of the cipher loomed the number twenty-two! According to the theory on which I was working, the interpretation of this must be, "e" "e." And that stood as a complete word. Manifestly, the thing was impossible. So far as I was aware, our language contains no word composed merely of double "e." Nor could the difficulty be obviated by reading the cipher backward, inasmuch as double "e" it must

remain. A moment later, further confirmation of my suspicion that this first effort of mine had failed was given by the discovery of five words—if, indeed, the groups of numerals represented words—beginning with double "e." At that, I was filled with disgust. Unless, forsooth, the rubies were stored away in the skin of an eel, I had not yet touched on the secret of the cipher.

Once more, I went over my count of the numerals, only to verify my first finding, that two was far in the lead over any other figure as to the number of repetitions. Thus, at the outset, I was confronted with irrefutable proof that the scheme of translation promulgated by the encyclopædia was utterly worthless in this present instance, whatever it merits on other occasions. As I conceded the collapse of the hypothesis, my hopeful mood passed, and I fell into the throes of despair. Nevertheless, a dismal obstinacy possessed me and drove me on to read and to reread the page, always without the least glimmer of an idea as to what manner of thing it might be. I strove my hardest to recall all that I had ever seen or heard concerning this sort of code-writing, but the mental groping brought no succor.

When it came time for the mid-day meal, I tried valiantly to dismiss my preoccupation sufficiently to converse with Mrs. Channing and Ruth in such fashion as to conceal the depression of my spirits, but I fear they must have guessed that something was amiss. They were considerate enough, however, to forbear questions, for which I was most grateful. A great feeling of weariness had fallen on me now, and, when I left the dining-room I sought the library, with the idea of lounging for a time in an easy chair before the fire. My brain was too fagged for further study of the cipher for a while, yet my nerves were too tensely strung to permit of sleep. I hoped that the gentle charm of the crackling logs might soothe me to tranquility. And so, indeed, it came to pass. The fire was burning cheerily, and the dancing of the flames abated the virulence of my emotions. I watched the ever-changing play of movement within the grate for a long

time, until calmness stole over me once again. Then my eyes drooped shut, and I dozed for an hour or more.

On awakening, my first thought was one of hot indignation against myself for such self-indulgence in this crisis of my life. But, in another instant, I smiled disdainfully over the folly of the self-reproach. Of what avail to worry my wits over the cipher, since I had no slightest idea of a means whereby to attack its mystery? I got up, and strode to and fro, impatiently. It seemed to me that I must go mad in the clutch of this dilemma. I could not endure idleness when confronted with an issue so vital to my happiness; yet, I knew not whither to turn. I was impotent, fettered by circumstances, so that I must remain passive, without stretching forth a hand the while my fortune was stolen away. My wrath against the fate that beset me so sorely grew until I was half-crazed by the might of it. A sudden perception of the intensity in my feeling led me to fear for my sanity should it continue. I determined to put all thought of the matter away from me for an interval in order that the turbulence of my spirits might subside. To aid in the diversion of my thoughts, I decided to read for a time. I chose a volume of Tennyson, and with this open in my hand I began to recite favorite passages, glancing occasionally at the printed lines.

It was while I was thus engaged that a dim recollection began to form in my brain. For many minutes, the exact idea refused to define itself, but eventually it took shape, and stood forth a precise memory. Somewhere, some time, I had read of the book cipher, and it had been stated that this was one of the simplest and one of the safest kinds to be found among the various cryptographies. Now, that the fact was recalled to me, I straightway set forth to recollect the details of the system, and, after a little effort, I was able to do this. I guessed that my occupation with a book at a time when the matter of the cipher was paramount in my consciousness had sufficed, by an easy association of ideas, to make me reminiscent of the method, while the simplicity of it explained why I should re-

member the manner of it in its entirety.

In this system of secret writing, each of the two parties to the correspondence possesses a book the exact duplicate of one held by the other. The writer of the letter hunts through the pages of his volume until he has found all the words necessary for the message he wishes to send. Each of these words is designated by two numbers, of which the first indicates the page of the volume on which the word is printed, while the second shows the position of the word on that page, by a count from the first word. On receiving this cryptograph, the interpretation is readily effected by having reference to the duplicate book, as each successive word is revealed by the successive pairs of numbers. Many variations of the method are possible, but this illustrates the essentials of it.

On the moment when this system was recalled to my mind, I became all anxiety to test its applicability to the present case. My first action in execution of this desire was to count the numbers. I found to my relief that the tally of numbers was eighty-eight: therefore, they ran in pairs, as was necessary in the book cipher. I was at a loss to understand the presence of the Roman numerals in the body of the cipher, but I decided to disregard that question for the time being. I had before me the probability of a great amount of labor ere I could even decide whether or not my new fancy were justified. For there can be but one way of reading a code thus arranged. The interpretation must resist any quantity of scientific analysis such as that exploited by the encyclopædia. The one means of reading the message is by the book which had served the writer in his composition. In speculating on the subject, I came to the conclusion that, since Nathan Hemenway had secreted the gems hereabouts, he had probably worked out the cipher while in this very room, which was his accustomed haunt during his visits to the house. If such were, in truth, the case, he must have employed some one of the books contained in the library itself, a duplicate of which was in the possession of Appleby. In consequence of this rea-

son, my course was clearly marked. It became my task to search the books from these shelves one by one until happily I chanced on the proper volume. I groaned in contemplation of the toilsome prospect. It might be that, were my theory correct, the required book would be the very last to engage my attention—and already the first day was almost gone. I was aching throughout every inch of my body; my eyes were smarting from the lack of sleep, and my head was throbbing outrageously. With all the desires of body and of mind, I was longing for the luxury of bed, but I vowed nevertheless that I would not yield me to the weakness of fatigue. If need be, I would hold unremittingly to the investigation throughout that night and throughout the whole of the day following. I was determined that I would not relinquish my efforts so long as any atom of strength was mine, until the trial of the books was completed or victory attained. Feebleness on my part now would mean triumph for the scoundrel who had robbed me.

I went to my bedroom, where I bathed my head for a time, and then, somewhat refreshed, I returned to the library. For a minute, I stood in the center of the room, staring ruefully at the array of books that covered three walls of the room; there were at least two thousand of them on the shelves. The examination of them all would be onerous almost beyond endurance. Nevertheless, I set to work with what confidence I could muster. I provided myself with pencil and paper, that I might write down the title of each volume after consulting it. My purpose in doing this was to avoid the possibility of confusion as to those books which had passed through my hands, for I had no intention of taking the books one by one in their order as they stood on the shelves. Rather, I deemed it wise to make a first essay of such volumes as might, for any imaginable reason, have appealed particularly to my kinsman. As the result of this resolve on my part, when my wandering gaze fell on a well-worn Bible, my attention was at once arrested, and I took it down to make a beginning.

This was the edition printed by George E. Eyre and William Spottiswoode, in pearl *duodecimo*. A glance at the cipher was not needed to tell me that the first pair of numbers was 563 72. I therefore turned at once to the page indicated by the first number, and then, beginning at the upper left-hand corner of the first column, I counted the words in this column down to the seventy-second, which was, "the." This result filled me with exultation. I had not a doubt now that not only had I hit on the sort of cipher, but also by a wondrous freak of fortune on the key book in my first attempt. I had only to continue the process, and the secret of the rubies would be delivered up to me. Hurriedly, then, I passed to the second pair of numerals, 57 295. I hunted out page 295 of the Bible, and again I counted down the column as before. To my surprise, the two hundred and ninety-fifth word was, "her." Obviously, there could be no sentence beginning, "The her." Yet, in spite of the excellent result obtained in the first trial, the second interpretation of the numbers was plainly impossible. It occurred to me that I might have made an error in the counting, and I therefore glanced at the words on either side of the objectionable "her." Alas, the possibility of mistake was not to be considered, since the words adjoining were "wife," "and," "children," and "shall," none of which seemed at all applicable to the reading of the cipher. With a sigh, I restored the Bible to its place on the shelf. I knew that I must search further.

I next selected a worn volume of Cooper, "The Red Rover," in the edition published by W. A. Townsend, half a century ago. But, when I would have turned to the page of the first numeral, 563, I perceived that the total of pages in the book was only five hundred and twenty-two. Nor was there anything to be gained by reversing the order of the application of the numbers, so that the seventy-two should stand for the page, while the five hundred and sixty-three should mark the position of the word: a count of the words on the page showed them to be fewer than five hundred. "The Red

Rover" was not the key to the cryptograph.

The third book on which I fixed my choice was the first volume of Gibbons's *Rome*, which showed abundant signs of having been often studied. And here, yet once again, disappointment awaited me: The seventy-second word on the five hundred and sixty-third page was, "magistrate." Assured of this, I shut the book, and replaced it.

As I did so, my eyes fell on the volume standing next to it. This was Morell's *Abridgment of Ainsworth's English and Latin Dictionary*, published by Uriah Hunt and Son, at Philadelphia. I had been reflecting incidentally on the composition of a cipher such as this, and I had concluded that it must present a task of considerable difficulty, inasmuch as the desired word might not always be found readily. Now, it occurred to me that the tediousness of long searching might be done away with entirely by using a dictionary as the key, on account of the alphabetical arrangement of the words in it. It was quite possible that the same idea had come to my uncle. I felt a glow of enthusiasm at the thought, and pulled the book from its place hastily. With great hopefulness, I counted down the words on page five hundred and sixty-three, and the seventy-second word was, "oblique." Whereat, I sighed again, and promptly closed the volume.

Discouraged by these repeated failures, I gave over work for the time being. The supper-hour was close at hand, so I repaired to my chamber, where I bathed my head again in cold water, and made a few alterations in my dress. The distraction thus caused did me good. When I appeared in the dining-room, my manner was not so constrained as it had been at noon, and the time spent at the table still further relieved the gloom of my spirits. Again, for a blessed interval, I was dominated by the spell that the girl cast over me; the secret of the cipher no longer absorbed my whole attention. Indeed, I wondered at myself that I could ever, even for an instant, care for aught beside the witchery of her face, the melody of her voice, the heaven of her smiles. I must have revealed in some

measure what was the nature of my feeling toward her, for she blushed rosily as she met my longing eyes. But it seemed to me that, in her expression as she looked away so quickly, there was no reproof for the boldness of my regard, only a maidenly confusion, at which my soul overflowed with joy.

After the meal was ended, the three of us went together into the library, where we remained in conversation for the best part of the evening. It was then that I learned from Mrs. Channing of March's presence in the house that day. From her account, it seemed that he was ostensibly engaged in making a thorough search of the attic. In my devotion to the cipher, I had been ignorant of his nearness. At first, now, I was puzzled to account for his coming after he had possessed himself of the cipher. I could not believe that he had done this in the hope of deceiving me as to the identity of my assailant. In the end, I decided that he had chosen his course thus in order to make any complaint of mine against him less credible, should I ever publish the story of his thievery.

The mention of my enemy by Mrs. Channing immediately revived my dormant desire to wrest its secret from the cryptograph. Again, the baffling mystery of it possessed me. But now the presence of Ruth Channing suggested to me a ruse whereby she might be made involuntarily to help me in solving the riddle. I had not the least compunction in trying to win her innocent assistance, for I felt it a duty, as well as my desire, to foil Norris March by any means available. So, presently, I led the conversation to the subject of my uncle, who had been known to Ruth Channing as he had never been known to me. Naturally, since she had no suspicion of an ulterior motive on my part, she answered me freely, without hesitation. After she had entertained me with some account of his likes and dislikes, I made an inquiry tending directly to my purpose:

"Was he fond of reading?" I asked.

"Oh, yes; very!" Ruth replied. "He would sit in his chair before the fire here the day through, with a book as his companion."

"He had his favorite authors, of course?" I hinted.

"He was very fond of reading Gibbons," the girl said, meditatively. "He had that in his hand, I think, oftener than anything else except the Bible, over which he used to pore for hours at a time."

"But, surely, he read other books beside those two," I ventured in a voice as casual as I could make it.

"No," Ruth declared, shaking her head. "I don't believe that he had any other great favorites. At least, I remember nothing else."

At her answer, my hopes again dropped to zero, for the two volumes named by her had been examined by me already—and fruitlessly.

But after a brief pause, she spoke once more:

"I can remember seeing only one other book in his hands," she said, her brows drawn thoughtfully.

"And that?" I demanded, in an agony of suspense. I realized that, should she say, "The Red Rover," all my hopes of aid from this quarter were vain.

But Ruth had not referred to the novel by Cooper.

"I have seen him sometimes—more than once, I know—with a volume of the life of Andrew Jackson."

The girl's indifferent announcement affected me so strongly that I could not even wait until I should be alone before putting this new clue to the test. With an assumed air of nonchalance, I rose to my feet, and crossed to the book cases, where I remained, scanning the titles until I came on the work to which Ruth had referred. Then, I took out the first volume of the set, as if from idle curiosity over the caprice of my uncle. The title-page set forth the fact that this was, "The Life of Andrew Jackson," in three volumes, by James Parton, published by Mason Brothers, in 1860. But I did not tarry at this time over the title-page. Instead, I turned with all haste to the five hundred and sixty-third page, and there, yet once again, I counted until the seventy-second word was reached. That word was, "the," even as it had been found in my examination of the

Bible. Then, and many a time since that night, I have wondered over the curious coincidence, for the chance that this combination of numbers should produce the same word in two different books was one out of many thousands. But, now, astonishment could not delay my devouring anxiety. While the ladies continued chatting, and I gave mechanical replies at intervals to their questions, I turned to page fifty-seven, and counted down the lines of words to the two hundred and ninety-fifth:

That word was, "stones!"

CHAPTER XV

THE READING OF THE CIPHER

I could look no farther just then, for my memory carried only the first two pairs of numbers, and to consult the cipher would draw attention to me. But I felt that I need interpret no more to know that, at last, the key to the cryptic writing was in my hands. It seemed to me that the one word, "stones," was a final proof of this: the volume for which I had searched was Parton's "Life of Andrew Jackson." Triumph and peace mingled to fill my soul. I returned to my chair, carrying with me the precious book, which I fondled lovingly. Then, for a half-hour, I continued in the company of Mrs. Channing and Ruth. In my happy and excited state, my spirits were fairly bubbling, so that I conversed with a vivacity new to me. The contagion of my mood spread to the two women, who talked and smiled with sympathetic enjoyment. During this delightful evening, I progressed swiftly toward intimacy with both mother and daughter; it was as if, of a sudden, they had opened their hearts to welcome me as a friend. Doubtless, my elation over success in the matter of the cipher colored all my view to rosy tints; but, too, my feeling of delight was so radiant, so pervasive, that it penetrated their reserve, and made them innocent sharers of my pleasure. Ruth, as she became more animated, grew also in loveliness, so that I had much ado to restrain my ardent admiration within the bonds of decorum. Moreover, now the curious

artificiality which had distressed me, vanished wholly, and she was revealed in her true nature as a beautiful, glad-some girl, healthy of body and of mind and of soul alike.

As we were about to separate for the night, I made a remark that was an equivocation, although literally the truth. I gave a glance toward the "Life of Jackson," which I had retained persistently.

"I should like to take this up to my room with me, if you don't mind," I said to Mrs. Channing. "I wish to study it a bit. I fear that I am shockingly ignorant as to the details of General Jackson's history."

"Oh, by all means," my hostess answered, cordially. "You must remember, Mr. Barclay, that you are at home in this house."

"You can hardly imagine how much that word, 'home,' means to me," I said, sadly; "for I can recall scarcely any memory of mine."

"We must do our best to make up to you for that," Mrs. Channing answered, with a gentle tenderness of voice and manner that touched me deeply. "Your uncle was our dearest friend. We shall be glad to have you for our friend as well." Her voice was very sweet as she spoke the last words, and in her soft glance there was a grave kindness. Her graciousness moved me so much that my own voice trembled a little as I uttered something in grateful acknowledgement. Then, my regard went to Ruth, who was standing by her mother's side. For an instant, my gaze encountered the full splendor of her violet eyes. As her look fell before mine, the warm color swept again across the pallor of her cheeks, and her scarlet lips were tremulous, as if about to smile. Her magnetism streamed forth and encompassed me round about with a golden glory. The vision of her went with me to my solitary chamber, and it hovered there with me even while I set me to the attack on the secret of the cipher.

For one dreadful second, a fear shook me lest, despite my confidence, I had not really found the key to the cryptograph. But I spurned the baleful suggestion; my soul rejected with dis-

dain any possibility of failure now. So, it was exultantly that I seated myself with the copy of the cipher spread out before me on the stand, and laid "The Life of Andrew Jackson" open beside it. Next, I wrote down on a piece of paper the first two words:

The stones

as the beginning of a line. I stared for a little at the blank space beyond them, wondering, almost with a sensation of awe, as to what words were to be written there in this message from my dead kinsman. And then, finally, I began on the interpretation itself.

The third pair of numbers was, 556 136. Quickly, I turned to the five hundred and fifty-sixth page, and there counted the words down to the one hundred and thirty-sixth. That word was, "are." With fingers that were trembling, notwithstanding my efforts to control them, I wrote it in the blank space. The translated sentence thus read intelligibly for three words:

The stones are

With a feverish impatience, I noted the couplet of numbers following, 394 160. I discovered that the one hundred and sixtieth word on the three hundred and ninety-fourth page was, "down," and forthwith I wrote this in its place, whereby the sentence became advanced to read:

The stones are down

I paused for a minute to revel in the feeling of victory that was thrilling through every fibre of my being. I could not doubt, now. The smoothness of the sentence to this point was proof a-plenty, and its applicability to the situation made the evidence doubly sure. I had forgotten fatigue, the burning of my sleepless eyes, the aching of my side where the rock in the river had struck me, the rhythmical pain in my head from the blow in the dark. All these things were become as nothing to me now, for I had won the fight. In spite of his diabolical ingenuities, his complete unscrupulousness, March was beaten at last. I had mastered the secret; it was mine by the turning of a few leaves in the book at my elbow. I

have known many joys in life, but only one greater than the bliss of this hour in which I wrote out the secret of an old man's whim, and, in so doing, felt that I had won in my battle against a crafty, a subtle, and an evil man.

Presently, I passed on to an examination of 184 232, which the book showed to mean the word, "in," and this was duly set down. I guessed that the next word might be, "the," or, "cellar," but, to my surprise, 119 6 stood for, "a." And the next pair of numbers aroused me to a great astonishment, so that I went over the count a second time to assure myself of its correctness, for the word was, "pit." By these additions, the sentence was made to read:

The stones are down in a pit

As I contemplated this writing, a shiver of apprehension went over me. Somehow, the words had in them a suggestion vague, yet insistent, sinister. Nevertheless, I continued my work steadfastly, and, as the interpretation lengthened, so my wonder swelled.

For, in its entirety, the cipher message was as follows:

The stones are down in a pit at the end of Hunter's cave about thirty-six feet lower than the mouth of the pit is a spur descend to it by a line in a hole there is a wallet with the stones in it.

In this completion of the task, I met with no very serious obstacle. I found easily enough that the Roman numerals, which had caused me some misgivings, had been employed in numbering the preliminary pages preceding the body of the text in the history of Jackson. On two separate occasions, I became involved in error by reason of a difference between my reck and myself in our fashions of reckoning hyphenated words. And once, to my satisfaction, I found that Nathan Hemenway himself had been guilty of an undeniable mistake in his enumeration, for the word next the one designated by the number was obviously that to which he had reference. With this full translation before me, I had now only to separate the phrases into sentences, and there was a triumphant end to the whole mystery of the cipher. In such final form, the reading of the crypto-

graph afforded me amply sufficient information as to the hiding-place of the rubies:

The stones are down in a pit, at the end of Hunter's Cave. About thirty-six feet lower than the mouth of the pit is a spur. Descend to it by a line. In a hole there is a wallet, with the stones in it.

I reread the concise description again and again, until every word of it was graven enduringly on the tablets of my memory. And then, because I had come through sad experiences to know that my enemy, Norris March, was a most dangerously resourceful scoundrel, I carefully burned every scrap of the paper on which I had marked down the words of interpretation. Should my recollection fail, I could turn again to my copy of the cipher and the history of Jackson. But there must be no further opportunity offered to my foe.

When, at last, I got to bed, I was very worn and weary, and very joyous as well. On the instant my head touched the pillow, I went sound asleep. And I dreamed the night through of bottomless abysses, wherein shone the flaming radiance of innumerable rubies.

CHAPTER XVI

IN THE PIT

I awoke next morning to find my vigor restored. The aching of my head had ceased altogether, and there remained only a slight soreness in my injured side. All in all, I felt myself quite fit for adventuring into the pit of rubies, as I had named the hiding-place of the gems. I had already determined not to lose an instant before seeking possession of the precious stones, since in promptitude lay the best hope of success. On this account, I was at pains during breakfast to make a reference to the falls an excuse for some inquiries concerning any other distinctive features of nature in the neighborhood.

"We have nothing else of unusual beauty," Mrs. Channing said.

"But perhaps there is something in the way of curiosities," I suggested.

"No, we have nothing of the sort," my hostess declared.

But now Ruth intervened.

"You forget Hunter's cave," she remarked, smiling.

At that careless speech, I could have shouted in triumph, for it proved that the depository of the treasure was near at hand. But I held my face as expressionless as possible, and waited in the hope of learning more without the necessity of interrogation.

"Oh, that!" Mrs. Channing exclaimed, contemptuously. "It is merely a small cave, with nothing particular about it. And I have no doubt that it is very dirty."

Ruth laughed lightly at her mother's earnestness.

"Anyhow, it has a bottomless pit in it," she explained to me. "Perhaps, that would interest you."

"Yes," I agreed, hastily. My voice sounded strained in my own ears, for the unconscious aptness of her speech seemed to me like divination. "Yes, it would interest me."

A few inquiries elicited the information that the cave was situated in a ledge at the base of a mountain spur, a little more than a mile away. With this knowledge in my possession, I lost no time in carrying out my purpose of immediate action.

"I am tired of hunting about the house," I announced, truthfully. "I believe I'll take a vacation to-day."

A few minutes later, Mrs. Channing went out of the room, and Ruth and I were left alone together. The girl addressed me at once:

"If you visit the cave," she said smilingly, "you must be very careful not to fall into the pit."

"No fear of that," I answered, confidently, with no premonition, concerning the deadly peril that was to confront me there. "But," I continued, and my voice softened to tenderness with the simple words, "I shall take no chances, since you will not be there to save me from any danger."

As I spoke thus, the smile faded from Ruth's face, and a look of dread showed faintly in her eyes. She regarded me intently for a moment, and then addressed me with a gravity that astonished me even while her apparent anxiety filled me with happiness.

"I—wish you to—promise me something," she said, with slow emphasis. "Promise me that you will keep watch in every direction to guard yourself from harm."

Her solicitude, delightful as it was to my self-esteem, puzzled me greatly.

"I do not quite understand," I replied, hesitatingly.

"I shall say no more," was the firm answer. "Only, promise me that you will take every precaution for safety. Will you promise me that? I ask it for your own sake, and—for mine!"

And, in supreme content that she was thus interested in my welfare, I gave her the assurance she desired.

It was clear that by the word, "line," in the translation of the cipher was meant a rope. As I did not care to make explanations of my plans at the house, I decided that I would visit the village store and there equip myself with fifty feet of half-inch rope and a dozen candles to serve me in the cavern. Since this preparation would take time, it seemed best to advise Mrs. Channing that I might remain absent throughout the day. On hearing this, my hospitable hostess insisted on having a lunch put up for me. The result of all this was that the noon hour found me stretched at ease on a grassy slope at the foot of the mountain, eating sandwiches. In my pockets were matches and candles; beside me lay a coil of rope. A rod behind me, the mouth of Hunter's cave gaped blackly.

When I had made an end of the meal, I proceeded, without a moment's delay to the final phase of my struggle for the possession of the treasure. Carrying the coil of rope on my arm, I stepped within the darkness of the cavern's mouth.

The width of the passage in which I now found myself was some six feet, and it rose, narrowing, to a vaulted roof a dozen feet or more above my head. The rocky floor was smooth enough to permit of easy walking, but, only a short distance from the spot where I stood, the light failed almost completely, so, before going on, I got out one of the candles, and lighted it. By its flickering glow, I was able to advance rapidly in safety, and present-

ly I entered into a chamber of considerable size. I made a circuit of this, and crossed it diagonally until I had made sure that the pit I sought was not contained within it. Then, I went on again, by the single passage running from the place. The path was narrower now, and rougher, so that I was compelled to move forward very cautiously; but there was no serious obstacle in the way, and my advance was still at a good pace. Soon, I came into a second chamber, of proportions even more spacious than those of the first. It was at least two hundred feet in circumference; it was impossible for me to determine the height, as the walls extended far above the feeble illumination of the candle. The floor here was very uneven, and it was everywhere littered over with fragments of fallen stone, both large and small. I made a round of the walls, as in the case of the other chamber, without finding any trace of the pit. But, when I would have crossed, my course was abruptly barred by a yawning hole in the central portion of the rocky floor of the cavern. At sight of it, I stopped short, staring with fascinated eyes into this bit of space which was, beyond any possibility of doubt, the pit wherein the rubies lay hidden. My first sensation was wholly one of gladness; but, after a brief contemplation of that weird orifice of the under-world, a chill of foreboding struck through me. The spirit of the place was muttering unintelligibly of things uncanny, dire.

I had wit enough to know that I must not let this mood grow on me, if I would succeed in the undertaking. So, to conquer these vague alarms that were in the air of the cavern, I hurriedly busied myself with the necessary preparations for a descent into the pit. My first care now was to find a secure fastening for one end of the rope, and this was not difficult, since some of the stones lying near the mouth were so shaped as to offer a safe place of attachment, while their weight rendered them immovable by a dozen times my weight. Forthwith, I knotted one end of the coil about a boulder close beside the south end of the pit's mouth. Then, when I had placed the candle firmly in

a few drops of its own grease on the rim of the chasm, I was ready for the venture.

The period of activity had restored my mental poise, and now I was troubled by no least trace of nervousness at the prospect of descending into this abyss. My muscles were in excellent trim, and I had done enough rope-climbing for exercise in the gymnasium to be confident of my ability to do the required distance without undue strain. The cipher had declared that the spur was only thirty-six feet below, and on it I would, of course, find footing and an opportunity to rest myself against the return climb up the rope. Moreover, I had no doubt that I could do what an old man had done, and my uncle had been long past life's meridian when he chose to conceal his gems in this gruesome place. I had learned from Mrs. Channing that Nathan Hemenway had been a sailor throughout a great part of his days, and, too, that he had been the possessor of extraordinary strength. These facts explained how he had been willing to clamber thus through space by aid of a rope. And, as he had done, so I could do, without difficulty, for my strength was greater than that of the average man. So, with a light heart, I carefully lowered myself over the edge of the pit's mouth, and hung swaying above the black depths of the chasm.

A twist of the rope about one leg insured a slow, sliding descent, without any fatigue. Then, I picked the candle from its place on the floor of the cave, and, holding it above my head, allowed myself to go gently down the length of the rope. At the same time, I kept a sharp watch on every side, but chiefly downward, for I was agog with eagerness for a first glimpse of that ledge whereon the rubies were awaiting my coming. The well of the pit was now revealed as an irregular vertical shaft, leading down into the bowels of the earth. Already, I had observed that a few bits of stone, dislodged by my clambering over the verge, gave back no sound of impact anywhere in the void. I wondered a little over this fact, since it occurred to me that they should have clattered upon the ledge, only

three dozen feet below. Yet, I continued free from serious apprehension of disaster, until, of a sudden, I perceived the rope's end dangling only a few feet below me.

At the sight, I was completely bewildered, although, as yet, I was not frightened, for, at the worst, I had but to ascend the rope after a fruitless descent. I was, however, bitterly chagrined over this halt on the road to triumph. And then, before I had recovered from the first shock of disappointment, I observed a small bit of ledge which jutted out from the wall of the pit at about the level of my eyes. I looked about me searchingly, both above and below and on every side, but there was nothing else of the sort. It was evident that the spur to which my uncle had referred was this fragment of level rock just before me. Straightway, I thrust the butt of the candle between my teeth, then mounted the rope swiftly, hand over hand, until my feet were just above the level of the shelf. And there I hung, in impotent disgust, for the spur was on the opposite side of the chasm. Between it and me lay two yards' width of bottomless space.

I understood readily that the cause of my predicament had been in my own self-confidence, together with Nathan Hemenway's lack of detail in describing the manner of the descent. Had I chanced to make my rope fast to one of the boulders on the other side of the chasm, it must have led me down to the desired ledge. Now, however, it appeared that I must inevitably climb back to the cavern, and there make shift of the rope's position before descending for a second time. With a sigh of regret for the time wasted by the mistake, yet still without any suspicion of peril, I idly turned my gaze upward to measure the distance of the climb. At the sight that met my eyes, cold horror fell on me. It seemed to me, as I hung there swaying to and fro in the twisting oscillations of the rope, that my heart had ceased beating, through mortal terror. I was in the crushing grasp of fear, a fear overwhelming, for I saw death reaching out to me here in this hideous gulf. I was

doomed to fall, even as the stones had fallen, into the far recesses of the earth—so far, indeed, that no faintest echo of my passing would ever sound back to the world of men.

For there, a rod above my head, the rope hung taut over a sharp edge which projected a little from the pit's wall. And the swaying of the rope had caused the cutting through already of the first of the three strands. I beheld the pair of frayed ends standing forth at an angle. And, too, that saw of stone had bitten deep into the second strand. Within a few seconds, it must part in its turn. There would remain only the third strand. That feeble cord alone would be powerless to sustain my weight. The supreme malignity of fate had set this trap for me. There was no means by which I could stop the movements of the rope, which writhed and swung like a living thing for my destruction; and every moment of it tore at the fibres of the second strand. At the parting of that strand, I would be hurled into the abyss. By no possibility could I hope to climb above the point of peril in time to escape the catastrophe. Indeed, now, I scarcely dared breathe, from fear lest the motion of my body should snap the weakened fabric. Despair mastered me. It was a ghastly thing to face the end thus helpless and alone in this evil hole. I thought of Nathan Hemenway, and I would have cursed him, but that there was no time for cursing. I thought of Ruth Channing, and I would have prayed, but that there was no time for praying. The second strand was almost severed.

CHAPTER XVII

THE SEVERING OF THE STRAND

Into the blackness of my despair flashed a single gleam of hope. It was a hope altogether unreasonable, desperate beyond excuse, yet, in the light of it, my heart leaped madly. Without an instant of delay, I acted as it bade me.

Below the projecting edge which had eaten into the rope, the wall of the shaft on that side was hollowed for a considerable space, and it was within this that I now swung, close to the

rock. It was that nearness, perhaps, which gave me the inspiration for a last effort toward escape. I put out a foot to the side of the pit, and pushed myself outward with all strength. The arc of the swing carried me half-way across the space. I shuddered at the thought that this agitation of the rope might precipitate me into the void, but I was forced to accept the possibility—even the probability—of a fatal result. As I swung again with the hollow of the wall, I reached out my foot for the second time, and used every atom of power to thrust myself forth. Now, I was carried almost to a point above the shelf's outer edge. As I swept back in the long curve, I looked up, and it seemed to me that the second strand was hanging by no more than a single fibre. Then, for the third time, I pushed myself mightily to the swing, and, as I came to the farthest height of the arc, I let go my hold on the rope. In the moment when I dropped to the ledge, I threw myself flat upon it, clinging frenziedly to the unevennesses of the stone, in a panic of dread lest I should go hurtling into the maw of the chasm. Each instant, as it seemed to me, I felt myself toppling to the fall.

Finally, calmness returned to me by slow stages. I became assured that, for the present at least, I was not in any great peril. The shelf of rock afforded only a tiny resting-place, but it was none the less sufficient for safety. In the first reaction from the danger I had undergone, a wave of nausea vibrated through me, but this soon passed, and I was able to sit up, with my back against the wall. When I had lighted another candle, in place of the one I had dropped in the last swing, I began to take more precise note of my situation, and to consider the prospects of final release from my captivity in the depths. It was, indeed, this subject of the possibility of rescue that was now become my chief concern. There was every likelihood that I must remain immured in this grisly spot until I died of hunger and thirst, inasmuch as an unaided ascent from the pit was inconceivable. The rope still dangled, swaying and writhing gently so near that I fancied I might leap out

and clutch it; but I preferred to die peacefully there on the spur rather than to be cast away into the abominable blackness below. I realized that I had just one solitary chance for my life. It might be that alarm over my disappearance would lead eventually to a search, and, in such case, Mrs. Channing or Ruth would suggest an examination of the cave.

I crouched there on the ledge, engaged in sorrowful musings until the candle burned itself out, and I was forced to light another. During all this time, curiously enough, I had not once given a thought to the treasure of rubies for which I had come hither so blithely. But, of a sudden, I recalled the reason for my presence in this vile spot. And thereupon, despite my plight, I felt a glow of pleasurable excitement creep through me. Here was the hiding-place of the rubies! They lay somewhere within reach of my hand. Immediately, I took up the candle, and moved it to and fro along the surface of the wall, seeking the cranny in which were the stones. Very soon, I espied a crevice, at about the height of my face above the shelf as I knelt on the ledge. I put a hand into this, and felt a soft object there, which, when I had drawn it forth, proved to be a bag of chamois skin—the "wallet" of the cipher! I put down the candle, and untied the leather thong from the mouth of the bag, and poured out a part of its contents into the hollow of my hand. The stream that flowed forth was a living, blood-red fire; the heap that grew within my bent palm was of a wonderful, rosy-flaming loveliness. At last, I held in possession the wealth for which Norris March and I had battled so fiercely. I laughed aloud mirthlessly, even while my eyes thrilled in contemplation of the sensuous splendor that shone from out the gems. I had won only to lose, for a man's life is more than precious stones—more than aught beside, save only honor and love. I had conquered against Norris March; but fate had conquered against me.

I had just replaced the rubies in the bag, when there came a whisper of sound from the distance above me. It was very faint, and, after I had wait-

ed for a long time without hearing any further noise, I was forced to the belief that my ears had deceived me. After all, it was not to be expected that anyone would visit the cave in this time of my need, although for a little I had been deluded by hope. But still I strained my ears there in the silence, and still there was no sound. The second candle guttered to its base, and went out. Yet, for the time being, I had no wish to light another. Instead, I preferred to wait in the darkness, striving to catch once again the fancied sound.

And the sound came. It was not the creation of a fancy. This time, there could be no mistake. I held my breath in the intensity of listening. There was a scraping noise from out the blackness above me. As I realized that this was, in truth, no chimera of longing, my emotion was so great that for a long minute I could neither move nor cry out. I sat there in the impenetrable blackness of the pit, immobile, mute. But, at last, the spell was partly lifted from me. I fumbled in my pockets for candle and match, and in another moment a little gleam broke the shadows. Then, I lifted my face, meaning to cry aloud, but no sound issued from my opened lips. My tongue clove to the roof of my mouth at the spectacle that met my gaze. There, hanging by the rope, about a rod above me, was Norris March, and he was staring down at me with eyes of hate. Even as I regarded him in mute horror, he changed the position of a hand, and began to descend the rope.

I have never quite understood the reason that actuated him in this course, but I am inclined to believe that, when I struck a light, and he saw me squatting on the narrow shelf, he took it for granted, since he could see but dimly through the gloom of the place, that I was on the bottom of the pit; that by descending he could kill me at his pleasure, as, doubtless, he carried a weapon, and guessed that I did not. But, whatever the nature of his reasoning, I knew that he was ignorant concerning the frayed rope. It was my duty, therefore, to warn him, notwithstanding the ills I had suffered from his malignity. So I cried out.

"Go back! Go back!" I shouted. "The rope is cut through, just below you!"

Within the shaft of rock, my voice rang out hollowly, and was tossed back in a jumble of gibbering echoes. I shrieked again and again, but the man continued without pause to move downward toward inevitable death. One of his hands was now on the rope below the point of its contact with the cutting edge of stone. I shook with the dreadfulness of it, and screamed madly at him to go back. He gave my warnings no heed whatever, except to focus his evil gaze on me whensoever the twining of the rope permitted him. Once again, I shouted fiercely at him, as I saw his upper hand lifted from its clasp on the sound portion of the rope. And, once again, he gave no heed. I am sure now that he did not understand just what I was crying there, by reason of the multitudinous reverberations that made my voice mumbling to my own ears. Or he may have thought that I tried to frighten him away. I beheld for one grim instant that upper hand in the air, whereby the full weight of the man was on that part of the rope below the severed strands. There followed a swift, convulsive movement of the free hand as he clutched on emptiness at the parting of the last strand. A shrill clamor smote my ears. A shadow flitted down through the space before me. Echoes of the scream crowded up from far below. These died slowly to silence. And that was all. Huddled on the shelf of stone, I waited in trembling terror for some further thing, some faintest sound from the mysterious abyss; but there was nothing.

Such was the passage of my enemy, Norris March. Much as I hated him, I, who had so narrowly escaped his doom as by a miracle, was now moved to pity him, and to forgive him his sins against me.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE WOMAN FAR ABOVE RUBIES

I shall pass over the time immediately following the death of March. Even now, I can scarcely bear to recall the hateful thoughts that pressed upon me

there within the pit. They came to a somewhat petty end at last in a fit of spleen against the rubies, which now reposed in my coat-pocket. The lure of the blood-like stones had brought one man to crime and to death, and held another, myself, at death's portal. I was minded to cast them from me into the gulf. It appealed to my rancorous mood as a gruesome jest that they should be thrown by me to March, dead in the secret place below. It was only the apathy of my misery that stayed my hand from flinging them forth.

I looked at my watch, and found that it was four o'clock. It had been only four hours since I entered the cave, where I had endured æons of torment. I wondered dully when, if ever, the search for me would be begun. Certainly, my reason told me, it could not be for a weary while yet, at the best. My absence would attract attention first when I failed to appear at supper-time; but, in all probability, no investigation would be attempted before the next day. The prospect of such tardiness appalled me. For now I was oppressed by fatigue after the varied emotions through which I had passed, and the desire of sleep was heavy on me. Nevertheless, I dared not yield to it, lest in slumber I should roll from this scant place of refuge.

So, I sat wretchedly blinking at the shadows, when suddenly I heard a voice call softly, yet with perfect distinctness:

"Norris!"

At the sound of it, I became rigid with amazement. And then, after a slight interval, the cry came again, a little louder than before:

"Norris! Norris!"

Plainly, the thing was beyond belief. I pinched myself viciously to make sure than I was not dreaming. But, in another instant, my astonishment was lost in frantic hope. In my turn, I shouted, wildly:

"Help! Help! Help!"

I paused to listen; and at once the voice came clearly:

"Is it you, Norris?"

I was able to hear perfectly, despite the echoes, for the voice was strange-

ly penetrant, and now I answered eagerly:

"No, no! It is I—Barclay. I am down here in the pit. My rope had frayed out. I must have help in order to get out."

"Oh, you are alive—safe!" the voice came swiftly, impetuously.

"Yes, I am alive," I answered. "But, tell me, who are you?"

"I?" came the repetition, hesitatingly. "Why, I am Ruth Channing."

I made no reply to the announcement, for I could not. There within the reverberating rock, I had failed to recognize her voice. Ruth! She had come again to me, to save me for the second time. Before the blessed mystery of her presence there, I was moved so deeply that for a space I could not summon a word. But I controlled my emotion after a little, and addressed her once more:

"Ruth," I called, "are you alone?"

"Yes," was the answer.

"And can you hear me easily?"

"Yes," she replied. "And you need not speak loudly—only, slowly."

"It is better, for reasons that I shall tell you by-and-by," I continued, "that you should say nothing to anyone else about my being here. Are you willing to trust me now, and to do as I ask?"

"Yes," the girl declared, promptly.

"What do you wish me to do?"

"Do you understand how to knot a rope?" I questioned.

"Oh, indeed, I do," she assured me.

"Your uncle amused himself by teaching me the various kinds."

Her statement gave me vast satisfaction, and I went on with my instructions hurriedly.

"This is what you must do: You must first unfasten the rope from the rock where it is tied now, and then carry it around to the other side of the pit.—But you have no light!"

"But I have a candle," Ruth retorted. "I put it out."

"Have you matches?" I demanded anxiously, since it was necessary that she should have some illumination for her task.

"Yes, I brought matches," the girl informed me.

"Then, make a light," I bade her,

"and untie the rope. When you have gone to the other side of the pit, find a point just above this ledge where I am. Then, select a boulder around which you can fasten the rope. The rock must be as heavy as the other was, and of a sort not to let the rope slip off it. Do you understand, Ruth?"

"I understand perfectly," was the answer. "And I shall be as quick as I can."

There was no more speech between us for a time, but I could hear her moving about in the cavern, and, after a tedious waiting, her voice came again.

"It is done," she announced. "I am ready to let the rope down to you."

At that, for the first time since I had been on this shelf of rock, I rose to my feet, and stood staring upward toward the golden glow which shone softly from the girl's candle.

"Then, let it down to me," I cried, eagerly. "You are sure that it is fastened safely?"

"I am quite sure," came the quiet answer. And somehow, as I listened, I, too, knew that the rope would not fail my need now.

In a moment more, the end of the rope came dangling down toward me. To me, that awkwardly writhing line was the angel of salvation; and, as I watched it, the joy of life surged hotly in me once more, for I was about to flee from the menace of death. Soon, the full length of it had been paid out; it hung there swaying gently, as if awaiting me.

"You are not hurt? You are able to climb up to me?" Ruth questioned, tremulously:

"I am not hurt in the least," I declared. For I had forgotten everything except the opportunity of escape. I had no more memory of an exhausted body and mind. Even, I gave not a thought to the dead man sepulchred in the distance beneath. And, forthwith, I laid hold on the rope, and went up it quickly, mounting hand over hand. And I drew myself out from the abyss to the floor of the cavern, where I stood before the girl who had rescued me. I put out my hands to her then, and she yielded hers to mine, and smiled on me, gravely.

"You are safe, quite safe. Thank God!"

Her voice was very low, scarcely beyond a whisper, but the melody of it to me rang through the universe.

I drew her to me gently, and put an arm about her, and held her tenderly, in rapture. With the passing of a few seconds, I had come out of hell, and entered into heaven.

"I am safe, yes," I murmured, at last. "Tell me, Ruth: Did you care?"

"Ah, so much, so much!" she answered, vehemently. And, as she spoke, supreme happiness filled my heart. Then, suddenly, the red flamed over her face; she drew away from me. "But you must not ask me such questions; say such things, to me," she continued, naïvely.

"Not now, perhaps," I agreed. "But some time, Ruth," I continued with passion, "I shall tell you many things; I shall ask you a question, too. Will you listen then, Ruth?"

"Yes," she said, very low; "I will listen—then!"

An instant later, she raised her head, and regarded me intently:

"But I—I must tell you that—I knew," she said, faintly.

"That you knew?" I repeated, greatly wondering.

"Yes," she went on, speaking rapidly; I knew of his—of Norris'—crimes against you. I saw him at the bridge, beckoning you on. And—I heard you when you fought in the hallway. I came out of my room. Oh, I was so frightened! I thought that he—that you were killing each other. I listened from the corridor above. After the silence came, I waited for a long time. Then, I started to go down. I thought that I should—find you—dead! Oh, it was dreadful! But I heard you move. So, I waited again. And, at last, I heard you get up, and come to the stairs. Then, I fled back to my room. To-day, I saw you start in this direction, and, somehow, I was afraid. You see, in some way, I have felt that your danger was my fault."

"No, no!" I protested.

But she continued without heeding my interruption:

"It was in our house that you were

thrown in contact with him. You were our guest; he was my lover. It filled me with shame that you could be exposed to such attack. So, I believed it my duty to protect you—if I could. And, too, you had done so much for me!"

"I!" I exclaimed, astounded. "But what can you mean, Ruth?"

"I mean," the girl answered, softly, and her smile was very tender, "that you willingly went in peril of your life constantly, and that you knew the danger, and this was because I asked it of you—that is to say, I asked you to keep Norris' crime a secret. And you promised me, without any hesitation, and you kept your word, in spite of the risk you ran. Why, you had only to go to the authorities, and tell the truth, to be safe. You had me for witness."

"Heaven forbid!" I cried. "I am not such a cad as to have involved you—ever. But you misunderstand—"

Ruth made a gesture to silence me.

"Let me finish, please," she urged. "I feared to-day that he might still attempt to—injure you, and on that account I watched. You will understand why I believed him utterly reckless when I tell you that I had already broken my engagement with him, and he had raved then—about you and—" The girl broke off, and she was wordless for a minute, while her color deepened. But, presently, she resumed her explanation, resolutely. "I knew that he was more than ever determined to get the treasure, for he has only a very little money of his own left. He believed that, once you were out of the way, he would be able with a little patience to find the rubies. I understood all this from what he had said. Well, I saw him follow you secretly to the cave. And I followed him. And, at last, when the suspense was more than I could bear, I entered after him. The rest you know. Oh, I was so afraid!"

"For me?" I questioned again, reverently.

"For you," Ruth replied, bravely. But, once more, the crimson mantled cheeks and brow. And my joy was full.

"Tell me of him," the girl bade me. "Where is Norris?"

Standing there beside her on the verge of the pit, I told her the frightful story, for it was imperative that she should know the whole truth. There was a period of silence when I had come to the end. It was broken by Ruth.

"Once, I loved him," she said, sadly. "Rather, I loved the man I thought he was. Let us hope that—somewhere, somehow—he will be able to purge his soul of its stains. And we—we must forgive him."

"I have already forgiven him," I told her.

"And I—why, a minute ago, I hated him, with my all my heart," the girl mused, wonderingly. "And now I—forgive him." And, after a brief pause, she added—this time, without question from me: "I hated him at the last for my own sake—and for yours. Let us go from this dreadful place!"

I picked up the candle from the floor of the cavern, and went with it to the boulder where the rope was made fast. When I had untied it, I let it slide away, down into the pit. The girl and I stood side by side, listening intently, but there came up to us no lightest sound from its falling into those depths.

When we were out of the cave, I addressed Ruth, tentatively:

"We must tell your mother of all this," I said. "But, beyond that, it would be unwise to spread the story of his death abroad."

"Yes, it would be unwise," the girl acquiesced, somberly. "But my mother must know. Norris was erratic—he was mad, perhaps. He was often away from home for long periods. I do not think that anyone will be concerned over his disappearance. But, should the need ever arise, I can tell the truth."

We had passed through a bit of woodland, when I turned and saw that the gaping mouth of the cave was shut out from our view. With a sigh of relief, I stopped short, and faced Ruth.

"Do you know," I said, smiling, "that once I was on the point of throwing the rubies down the pit, because I was in a rage over the evil for which I held them responsible?"

"Oh, oh! Have you found them?" the girl gasped. On the instant, she was become all feminine eagerness of expectation. The violet eyes deepened and sparkled; the scarlet lips curved happily. "Have you really found them? Tell me, sir!"

In my account of the day's happenings, I had made no mention of the cipher or of the rubies, and she had supposed that my descent into the chasm had been merely for the sake of adventurous exploration. So, now, she was all aglow with delighted anticipations.

"Show them to me, this minute!" she exclaimed, imperiously.

"Hold out your hands then," I directed, as I loosed the fastening of the chamois-skin bag.

Forthwith, I poured out the two palms full of the ruddily shimmering gems, while Ruth stared down at the radiant mass in a rapture.

But, for myself, I had eyes only for the greater loveliness of her. After

all, it was Ruth who was my fortune, which Nathan Hemenway had unwittingly bestowed on me. I had, indeed, found that virtuous woman whose price is far above rubies. She had led me to the treasure of the precious stones; she had saved my life—twice. And, finally, she had given me the gift of gifts—her love. There was no need of words between us: heart sang to heart.

For a long time, the girl contemplated the rubies in delighted appreciation of their roseate, burning beauty. Then, at last, she raised her eyes, and her lips parted for speech.

But I forstalled her utterance:

"Ruth," I said, "sometime, you will wear these."

There was a short silence between us, the while she emptied the gems back into the bag. Then, she voiced her rebuke:

"You must not say such things to me," she commanded. "At least, not yet!"

The Magnet

By EDWARD COURTENAY CLARK

A DENSE fog had settled over the East River. The hoarse whistles of tugs and ferry-boats sounded on all sides, punctuated by the monotonous clanging of the ferry-slip bells.

The Blackwell's Island boat was discharging her last load of passengers for the day. Jack Miner, a hard-featured boat trusty, detailed from the penitentiary, eyed their departure wistfully. Leaning on his broom he thought of the month intervening before he would walk up the dock—a free man. Only one month more to serve, he thought bitterly, and as yet no word from Mamie; not a line in answer to all the

pleading letters he had sent her. He knew her people were against him, but she might have written, if it was only to say she was through with him.

A voice from the pilot house commanding,

"Cast off there," aroused him from his reverie.

A few minutes later the boat was headed up the river, and he resumed his sweeping.

"Say, your name's Miner, aint it?" inquired a deck hand, coming up to him. "Well, here's a letter for you. A kid gave it to me on the dock. Better get under cover if you want to read it

right away. Don't let the old man see you," he cautioned.

Miner took the envelope and walked to a secluded corner of the boat. He glanced around cautiously before he ventured to look at the letter. He gave a startled exclamation as he recognized the writing. It was Mamie's. His pale cheeks flushed as he read the few lines written in lead pencil. He read the message again, this time more slowly. A resolute expression came over his face as he secreted the letter in the folds of his cap.

Looking across the river he observed the fog obscured both shores. The boat was running slowly, blowing her whistles at intervals, and a hasty glance around showed the deck was deserted.

Miner paused for a moment, his hand on the rail.

"One month," he muttered, "I can't wait—I wont wait."

Climbing swiftly over the rail he dropped into the river, and was swept away by the strong ebb-tide.

Richard Mostyn glanced over the rail of his yacht anchored out in the river. Something floating past attracted his attention. In the uncertain light it resembled a man's head and shoulders. He got up from his chair to take another look, but the object had disappeared. A minute later a shout, and a voice giving orders sharply, attracted his attention. Shortly afterwards a blue-clad man came aft.

"Well, captain, what's the trouble now?" asked Mostyn, testily. "Some of the men coming on board drunk?"

"No, sir. Nelson just pulled a man out of the river; an escaped convict from the penitentiary. I should judge. He's in pretty bad shape, sir, but the men are doing their best to bring him to. I came to ask what your orders were concerning him."

"Oh, send him ashore and notify the police," said Mostyn, indifferently. "I suppose they will bring a host of reporters with them, but it's the only thing to do."

Half an hour later Captain Wood knocked at the owner's state-room door.

"He's come to his senses, Mr. Mostyn," he reported. "He begged me to

let him go, and tried to jump overboard when I refused."

The captain hesitated for a moment.

"I don't like to trouble you, sir, but the fellow told me a queer yarn that I'd like you to hear before I take him ashore."

"Bring him aft," ordered Mostyn.

Miner shuffled unsteadily aft, supported by two sailors, his water-soaked garments leaving a wet trail on the immaculate deck. Mostyn eyed the striped-clad figure with curiosity. It was the first time he had seen a convict at close range.

"Now, sir, what is it you want to tell me?" asked Mostyn, sharply, as the convict made no effort to break the silence.

"What I've got to say wont take long," said Miner in a sullen voice. "I suppose you're wise to where I come from. I made me getaway about an hour ago, and tried to make the New York shore. The fog got me puzzled, and I couldn't tell where I was at. I was all in when they hauled me into this boat."

"That's all very interesting," exclaimed Mostyn, impatiently, "but if that's all you wanted to speak to me about, why I—"

"One minute, boss," interrupted Miner. "I'm coming to that as soon as I can. I guess the water's got into me pipes for I can't talk as fast as I want to."

He was silent for a moment, leaning heavily on the sailors' arms.

"I suppose you're going to hand me over to the cops," he continued, hopelessly, "but before you do I want you to read something I've got here. You'll see I've got a reason for doing what I've done."

He took the letter from his cap, and handed it to Mostyn. Mostyn put on his eye-glasses, and carefully opened the damp sheet of paper. He read the few words, and looked up at Miner with a new interest.

"Let him sit down, men," he ordered. "That's all, you can go forward."

"How long have you to serve?" he inquired, sympathetically, as the sailors departed.

"One month," answered Miner.

Mostyn looked at him in amazement. "Good Heavens!" he cried, "couldn't you wait a month?"

"I was overboard a minute after I read it," replied the convict, simply.

"Now, look here," said Mostyn, after a short period of reflection. "You can't stay here, that's certain. A man in my position cannot afford to take any chances. I will do what I can to help you, but that will be very little. I can provide you with an overcoat, and a hat, and have you rowed ashore. That is as far as I care to go. After that, you will have to look out for yourself."

Mostyn stood up and took out his pocket-book.

"Take this," he said, handing Miner some money, "you may have use for it."

Mostyn called Captain Wood and gave him some brief directions. Shortly afterwards a boat left the yacht with Miner in the stern. Mostyn standing at the rail gazed at the receding figure thoughtfully.

"A damned fool," he commented to Captain Wood, "and I suppose I'm one, too," he added.

In a few minutes, the dim outlines of a dock loomed in front of Miner. It was low tide, and the dock floor was several feet above the boat. Miner tried to climb up. In his weakened condition he found this impossible, and gave up after a few attempts.

"Row around to the side, will you?" he requested. "There may be some canal boats tied up."

"I'm a good guesser," he said to himself, as they rounded the dock, and saw several boats moored there.

Thanking the men for their trouble, he leaped aboard a low-lying canal boat. As he did so, several buttons on his rather tight overcoat snapped off with the strain, exposing his prison garb.

"What's that?" cried a voice in the darkness.

Miner saw a light come bobbing towards him. He could not return to the boat, for it had left immediately on his departure. The light was between him and the dock. Pulling his overcoat together he resolved to face it out.

"Who's there?" cried the voice coming nearer.

Miner heard the sharp click of a revolver.

"Say, sport, come over here with that lantern, will you," he called. "I'd like to find out where I'm at."

The watchman came towards Miner cautiously.

"What are you doing here?" he demanded sharply, throwing the rays of the lantern in Miner's face.

"I got on this boat by mistake, I guess," nervously explained Miner. "I'm looking for some friends of mine around here. What dock is this, anyway."

"Twenty-first Street," replied the watchman.

"I'm in wrong then; I wanted Twentieth Street."

"Say, young feller, that bunk don't go with me," said the watchman doggedly, as Miner attempted to push by him. "I've seen penitentiary duds before."

"Caught!" said Miner to himself.

"Quit your kiddin'," he returned. "I—I'm going to a masquerade ball."

"All soaking wet?" inquired the watchman, incredulously. "Come on, now, you walk ahead of me till I find an officer. Tell your story to him. Don't try to start anything now, I've got a gun here."

On the dock Miner faced around to the watchman.

"There's no use stalling any longer, I'm a con, all right," he admitted. "I suppose you'll think I'm stringing you," he went on, "but I'd have finished my bit in a month if I'd wanted to stay."

"If you aint lying, you must be crazy," commented his captor.

"No, that's God's truth," asserted Miner. "One month, but I couldn't wait; I had to go. Take a flash at this," he requested, handing the watchman the letter. "Wouldn't you do the same if you was me?"

The watchman read the letter slowly by the light of his lantern. Suddenly he put his revolver in his pocket, and shook hands with Miner.

"You bet I would," he said warmly.

"Live around here?" he asked a moment later. "Over on Eleventh Avenue?"

Say, you can't walk across town in those duds."

"Any chance of getting a cab at the ferry house?" inquired Miner, "I've got some money."

"You wait here and I'll see what I can dig up," directed the watchman.

There were no cabs for hire at the ferry-house. The watchman stood thinking out a plan of action, when a waiting automobile, close by, gave him an idea. The automobile had only one occupant.

"These chauffeurs are pretty good guys," he said to himself. "I'll take a chance and ask him."

"Say, friend, I want to ask a favor of you," he began as he neared the automobile.

The man in the driver's seat turned around and looked at him quizzically.

"What is it—a wife and ten children, all starving?" he inquired, smiling.

"I'm no panhandler," retorted the watchman. "I've got a job for you if you're not in a hurry."

"Well, I can't say that I am. You see, I'm my own chauffeur to-night. By the way, allow me to introduce myself, Willard Buchanan, at your service," bantered the stranger.

"My name's Healy," said the watchman, briefly. "I'm a watchman on the docks here. There's a young friend of mine, anxious to get across town, and he can't very well walk over there, not the way he's fixed."

"Drunk?" inquired Buchanan, smiling.

"No; here's the way it is," explained Healy. "This man escaped from the penitentiary to-night. He's still got the regalia on him, and he wants to get home quick. I can't get a cab, and I thought you might help him out."

Healy searched in his pockets a moment, and produced a crumpled sheet of paper.

"There's the whole thing in a nutshell," he remarked, handing it to Buchanan.

Buchanan's face showed his astonishment as he read the note by the flickering light of a match.

"Where is this idiot?" he asked.

"Only two blocks from here," Healy informed him.

Buchanan looked down the forbidding stretch of water-front indicated by the watchman, and hesitated.

"How do I know but this is some plan to entice me down there and rob me," he asked, doubtfully.

"What I'm telling you's on the level," assured Healy.

There was a ring of truth in his voice that impressed Buchanan.

"I'll run the risk; jump in," he ordered. Five minutes later, Miner was being carried across town at twenty miles an hour.

Patrolman Hennessey, turned the corner and looked inquiringly at an automobile drawing up to the curb a few doors from him. Automobiles were not very common along Eleventh Avenue.

Hennessey observed the two occupants shake hands. One of them jumped out. As he did so his overcoat caught on a projection and drew back, showing a broadly striped suit. The wearer jerked the coat free and ran into a house. The light from a store window gave Hennessey a hasty glimpse of his features, as he dashed in.

"Scrappy Miner, by all that's holy!" ejaculated Hennessey, running to the nearest telephone.

Under a detective's leadership the reserves silently mounted the tenement-house stairs. They paused outside the Miner apartments. Hennessey rapped loudly on the door with his club.

"Good-by, Mamie, they're here already," cried a voice.

The policemen looked at each other in astonishment. The door opened, and Miner came out smiling, his hands elevated above his head.

"Put away the guns, boys, I'll go quietly," he assured them, putting out his hands for the handcuffs.

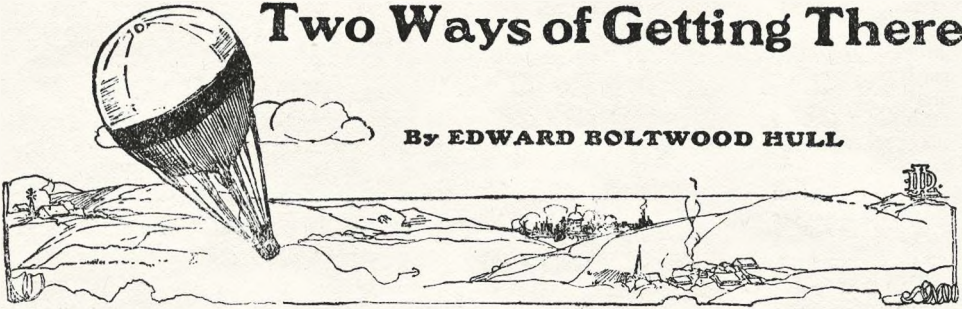
Aroused by the noise of the departing party, the tenants swarmed out into the halls. The children gazed wide-eyed at the striped-clad man and his escort.

There was a joyful note in Miner's voice as he talked excitedly to the impassive detective.

"I've got the finest kid up-stairs you ever laid your eyes on. Weighs nine pounds, and Mamie tells me he's got my eyes," he declared, proudly.

Two Ways of Getting There

By EDWARD BOLTWOOD HULL



ARTHUR LONSDALE whistled softly three times, and then drew a little closer to the veranda steps. The sun was just beginning to dispel the morning gloom and across the wide expanse of lawn Arthur viewed the beauty of a country summer dawn. He whistled softly three times again.

The door behind him opened quietly, and a small gray-clad figure slipped to his side. He felt the excited pressure of a little hand upon his arm.

"Oh, Arthur, I'm so excited I can hardly breathe. Where is the car?" a feminine voice inquired.

"It's by the service entrance, Dorothy, dear. I didn't dare bring it nearer the house. Let me carry your cloak. Hush!"

And like two frightened children they ran hand in hand down the grass margin of the gravel walk. Dorothy Marvin turned as she reached the hedge-guarded gate and threw one last kiss to the sleeping house behind her, with its shuttered, dreaming eyes, and then with a suppressed cry of delight bounded into the seat of the waiting motor-car.

"Oh, Arthur, how dear of you!" she murmured, through a fragrant bunch of sweet-peas she had found waiting there.

Then with a lightning feminine change: "But I'm so scared, Arthur, I almost think we ought not to go. Don't you think father *might* change his mind? He's such a good Daddy that I feel sinful running away from him—even with you."

The last phrase was added when she saw her lover's falling face.

"Nonsense, Dolly, it's the only way. We might have to wait months, even *years*, to get his consent, while this is such a simple way out of it. We can be married in Treddleston, and be back here to ask Mr. Marvin's pardon by four this afternoon—and we'll be Mr. and Mrs. Lonsdale then."

The delightful promise contained in this last statement was sufficient for Dorothy. She burst out:

"What are you standing there for, you goose of a boy? Of course I'm going with you. Hurry up."

The command to hasten was evidently discomposing to Arthur. He must have "hurried" something too much, for when he had jumped into the seat by the side of Dorothy and excitedly attempted to start the car, there was first an awful jerk that elicited a terrified "Oh" from the girl and then a report like that of a pistol followed by a blinding, odoriferous cloud of smoke from under the rear of the car.

"Only a back-fire," explained the young man reassuringly, but the back-fire had been sufficient, it seemed, to attract the attention of one early riser, for as the car finally glided off down the green country lane it was watched by at least one pair of Hibernian eyes.

"Begorra!" exclaimed Peter, the groom, "if that aint Miss Dorothy going off with that bye, Lonsdale! Mebbe the boss'll loike to know about ut."

So presently, when the early-rising Mr. Marvin came down for his matutinal stroll, he heard a tale from Peter O'Herron which interested him greatly.

For some time the motor-car, which

the groom had seen disappearing down the lane, sped on from Pendlenox toward Treddleston without adventure. The freshness of the early morning and the excitement of their errand had put a bright fresh color in the young cheeks. They were very young, this pair, and that is the only excuse which can be offered for them. But when one is twenty-two it is very hard to have one's love lightly spoken of by the father of its object, and in fact forbidden, and then this is always such an easy way out of it. It is very easy to call around in the early morning with a borrowed motor-car, and steal off in that dawn, which in July at least is never gray, and have a friendly and not over-scrupulous parson in the county-town link you in the everlasting bond of matrimony. At such a time the responsibilities of that state you are entering seem very small, while its delights look very big. Afterwards, perhaps, the proportion between the delights and responsibilities becomes more normal, but then it is "roses, roses, all the way."

And at the present time Arthur Lonsdale was too occupied with the erratic behavior of his borrowed motor-car to bother his head with responsibilities which might well have given him pause. He was only vaguely aware that it would be necessary for him to support his wife after he had got her, and at this moment it was doubtful whether he could qualify even for the position of chauffeur let alone any other. Whether the first error in starting the car was the cause of the constant annoying delays to which he was now subject he could not tell, but he was certain that of all the things in the world a mechanical education was what he now most desired. He knew something about automobiles, but evidently not quite enough, for it took him twenty minutes to remedy a trouble in the sparker which he had often seen chauffeurs correct in two, and though he had always considered himself quite a hand with a tire, he found that it was much slower and much hotter work to put on one alone than he had ever imagined.

So it happened that when they had

left Pendlenox twenty miles behind and were passing through Killurin, they were already an hour and a half behind the schedule he had set for them, and at Intervale Crossings, fifteen miles beyond, it was almost noon, while he had planned to be there at ten. It was, however, not more than ten miles further to Treddleston, where he knew that young Theobald was probably already waiting and wondering.

Dorothy was a delightful companion, for, though she sometimes gave terrified expression to the fear within her, she was so cheerful, humorous, and gay, that Arthur would have thought it treason to be discouraged.

But just after passing Intervale Crossings they made a discovery which filled both with alarm. They had just reached the top of the hill coming out of that village, when, as they were looking back over the valley to admire the view, Dorothy suddenly exclaimed:

"Oh, Arthur, do you see that car just coming out of the Crossings? I believe that is dear old Daddy. Oh, what shall we do?"

With a piteous wail she clung to his arm.

"Oh, thunder?" was all that Arthur said as he started the car full speed ahead for the long "coast" he knew they were approaching.

"That big-six can take that hill behind us as fast as we can come down it, Arthur. Oh, oh, oh, what *will* become of us?"

There was a suspicion of tears in her eyes.

"Steady, old girl," spoke young Arthur, reassuringly. "We're all right. Don't you worry. There's not more than six miles left, and he's nearly three quarters of a mile behind us still. On the down grade we're as good as he is, if not better. See how she takes the curve."

The little car in a cloud of dust swooped around the high banked curve like an eagle.

"The deuce!"

Crack, shrrr—the emergency brake went down hard.

"Wall, young feller," spoke the driver of the load of cordwood, which had caused the trouble, "I reckon you came

mighty nigh gettin' yours then. Yer might ha' shook me up considerable, but I weigh near a ton, and I'm pretty solid at that. I hev an idee yu'd ha' never druv and *automobil* agin."

As they passed this obstruction, which had so nearly wrecked the whole enterprise, a bright idea occurred to the young Lochinvar. He stopped the car, and ran back to the driver.

"I say, if you'll just keep in the middle of the road, and hold back a machine that's right behind us, I'll be awfully obliged—and here's five dollars for your pains."

It was a very clever expedient, and it saved the young people several minutes. But not a *great* many, for when the big-six had hooted and squawked at the sleeping driver ahead of them for a few minutes, Mr. Marvin suspected something—and what's the use of being at the head of one of the biggest bond houses in America if you can't outbid a young whippersnapper of twenty-two? At any rate, one wood-chopper's wife was a happy woman that night.

As the shining roofs of Treddleston, and in the fore-ground the ugly tanks of its gas-works, came into their view, the boy and the girl looked back to see the terrifying spectacle of the touring car with its two occupants, Mr. Marvin and the chauffeur, not more than half a mile behind.

"Never mind, Dorothy," spoke Arthur Lonsdale bravely, "he can't take you from me by force."

But even in the brave words there was a tone of despair.

A large crowd of people gathered at the foot of the hill drew their gaze.

"What's going on?" asked Dorothy, her attention for a moment distracted from the impending danger. "What's happening by the gas-works?"

Arthur started with excitement.

"I believe—oh, Dolly, the *deus ex machina!*—they're about to have a balloon ascension! See the yellow envelope sticking out from behind the gas-holder. It's full now, and they're just balancing the basket. There's one more chance. Oh, Dolly!"

The car instinct with the young man's enthusiasm seemed to leap forward, and for an instant to increase

the distance between it and the pursuing big-six. Then it dashed into the crowd, and with a final gasp, as if, duty done, it was resolved to move no further, came to a sudden stop.

"Now, dearest, run."

Seizing his companion's hand the boy plunged running into the crowd.

The great envelope swaying in the rising breeze tugged at the hands of its human captors. Already the three occupants of the car, the pilot and his two passengers, were in their places, and the last photograph of the "start" had been taken.

"Here, fifty dollars for your places in the basket—a hundred."

The startled occupants looked at the excited faces of the boy and girl in wonder.

"A hundred dollars for your places in the basket," went on Arthur. "A hundred dollars, do you understand?"

One pale faced passenger turned an inquiring countenance toward the other.

"I say, Bill, I don't see but what a hundred dollars—"

"Yes, yes," the other's leg was already over the edge of the basket, "It's getting kind of windy, anyway."

"Hurry, for heaven's sake, hurry," the young man shouted, as he stuffed the yellow-backed bills into the waiting hands. "Now jump in Dolly, dear."

The eager, interested crowd pushed around the basket as the two climbed over its edge.

"Now, pilot, cast off. We're ready."

"Oh, Arthur, I'm afraid," faintly protested Dorothy.

A big touring car had dashed into the crowd, and a tall, powerful man was pushing his way through the throng.

"Stop them, stop them, I say. Five hundred dollars for stopping them."

But the bribe was offered too late. "Cast off!" Dorothy had said, and the pilot had given the order, "All hands off."

For one hesitating instant the ground swayed beneath them and then dropped away with a surprising rapidity.

Dorothy gave a little startled gasp, and then clinging alternately to Arthur's arms and to the edge of the basket, peered with a fascinated, terrified

gaze at the crowd below. There she saw her father gesticulating wildly to an unheeding lilliputian multitude already making off across the checker-boarded park to a long line of waiting electric-cars. The balloon was still swaying uneasily, and the world beneath seemed swinging in a huge, dizzying arc.

"Here, help with this drag rope," she heard the sharp command of the pilot, and then Arthur and the man cast overboard a huge coil of rope, which, unwinding as it fell, dropped like a plummet toward the earth. Then the ground ceased its pendulum swings, and dropped off more evenly.

The space beneath them assumed, as they rose, the regularity of an architect's drawing; the drives ran with artificial symmetry between solidly green fields; men moved like toys across this strangely miniature world, while Tredleston began to look like a plaster cast exhibit of the Acropolis.

For a while the pair watched this wonderful scene in silence, but as the strangeness of their position wore off they began to ply the pilot with a hundred technical questions. Were they going up or down? How did he measure the height in the air or determine the direction in which they were being taken? How long could they stay up, and why was there no perceptible breeze? And a hundred such.

They were moving rapidly, and Tredleston was being left far behind them.

Arthur suddenly burst out laughing.

"Think of old Theobald!" he exclaimed. "He's waiting there still, I suppose, and here we are running away from him. What's that place we're approaching now, pilot?"

"That's Intervale Crossings, sir. We're about two thousand feet above her at this minute."

The two young people gave each other a look.

Then Dorothy exclaimed:

"Oh, Arthur, I believe we are going right back the way we came," and quite unaccountably she burst into tears.

Arthur Lonsdale looked helplessly at his companion.

"Oh, Dolly, what is the matter?"

His strong arms afforded her some comfort, for presently she dried her tears, and confessed that she was tired.

"But I don't think we ought to have come. I feel perfectly wicked, Arthur, dear. And it doesn't seem quite fair to dear old Daddy, either."

"Yes, Dolly, but—"

"Did you see his face as he came through the crowd after us? I felt so sorry for him, Arthur."

"I thought," ventured the young man, "that he looked very angry."

"Yes, he did, and that's why I felt so sorry for him. Don't you understand?"

Arthur confessed he didn't.

The basket of a balloon is a mighty small place, and the third occupant of this particular one had been an enforced listener to a conversation which, however, seemed to interest him a good deal. He now broke in with:

"Oh, you *are* running away to be married, are you? I thought so."

The pilot was a tall man of about thirty-five, with a much weather-beaten face and a kindly expression.

"Now, you know, I wouldn't do it if I was you, and I think I understand what the young lady means by being sorry for the old man."

"Oh," said Dorothy, weakly.

"My name's Patterson, and I ran away with my wife, myself—so I know."

"Did you?" asked Arthur, very much interested.

"Yes, and we've been sorry ever since. Her old man didn't quite like me, but the real trouble was, I guess, that he just didn't want to lose his daughter—his only one she was. But we took the bit in our teeth, and ran away and did the trick."

He stopped to adjust a rope.

"That's Killurin—dead ahead, you might say, if this thing *had* a head."

"And you've been sorry since that you married her?" inquired Dorothy, not willing to drop the subject.

"Bless you, no, but I'm sorry we did it just that way. We're up all of five thousand feet now, and covering ground, too."

He was peering at a little dial in a leather case.

Arthur thought Dorothy very pale, and he saw with some consternation with what vigor she pushed the subject.

"Yes, Mr. Patterson, but tell us what was the trouble."

"Oh, well, it hasn't been much, but marrying's like other things; being born for instance, which people want done regular, like other folks. Most people are only married once, and they usually want it done according to rule—veil, and bridesmaids, and ring, and the old folks about, and jollyfying afterwards—and all in the light of day, too. My wife hasn't never said nothing, but I see she'd ha' liked it that way best, and so would I. Besides, the old man didn't really mind, I think, after all. It would ha' took time, that's all."

He stopped to point out a single distant hill.

"That's Whitetop, the highest point in the state."

"So it is," exclaimed Arthur. "Why, we *are* coming right home, I do believe. How long have we been up, Mr. Patterson?"

"Pretty near two hours, sir. Here, eat a little lunch. I find ballooning hungry work."

Arthur ate his sandwich with considerable relish, but Dorothy, he saw, just nibbled at hers.

"What is it, dear?" he asked, "are you afraid about coming down?"

"No—oh, no," she said, and lapsed into silence.

"Your speaking of coming down reminds me, sir," spoke the pilot, "it's about time we came down. In fact, the balloon is dropping rather fast as it is, and it's best to land before the ballast is all gone."

"About where will we land?" Arthur inquired anxiously.

"This is Southbridge below us, sir. Allowing for drifting we ought to fetch it in Pendlenox."

"Pendlenox! Why that's where we started from! Dolly, did you hear? That's Pendlenox right there."

He pointed.

And then they began to drop. There was something fairly sickening about this falling through the air, and Dorothy was inclined to be terrified. Patter-

son was as cool as a philosopher, and his calmness reassured Arthur, who otherwise might have felt a trifle concerned.

Suddenly he heard Dorothy exclaim: "Arthur, look, there is our place, and we're driving straight toward it."

The pilot laughed.

"I'm trying to land in the open pasture behind the house."

"Why then," burst out the girl, "you've brought us home," and was silent again.

"Here help with this sand!" came the sudden order of the pilot.

Arthur turned to his side with ready assistance. As the sand drifted down in a dispersing stream below them, the balloon ceased its rapid drop, and as if falling upon an air-cushion commenced to sink very slowly yet a little lower.

A crowd of excited men and women were running across the field below them, and among the foremost the boy and girl recognized Peter O'Herron. Many strong hands grabbed the drag-rope, and in half a trice the balloon was made fast to a young sapling.

Then Patterson pulled the rip-cord, and in an instant they were on the ground.

"Bedad, Miss Dorothy, who would have thought to see you coming home this way?"

It was the hardy Irishman who greeted them.

They left the emptying balloon, the busy pilot, and the crowd, and pushed their way out toward the house.

Arthur turned to Dorothy.

"Now, Dolly, there is still time to made a 'get-away' if you say the word."

He waited a moment.

"Well?"

"Arthur, dear, you know I want to marry you, but—don't you see—it seems to me—after all that's happened—that it would be sinful. Let's try Daddy just once more. Like Mr. Patterson's wife, I want it done regular. Don't you?"

So, when half an hour later the big-six touring car drove up the graveled roadway to the house bearing the weary Mr. Marvin, an astonishing sight greeted his eyes. It was the boy and girl sipping afternoon-tea on the veranda.

“Hello, Daddy, where have you been?”

“Where have I been!”

“Yes, Mr. Marvin, we’ve missed you,” chimed in Arthur.

“And I’ve missed *you*, young man,” thundered the dusty gentleman, removing his goggles.

“Besides, sir, I want to ask you a question. Dorothy and I would like to be married. What do you say?”

For one terrible moment the head of the largest bond house in the country looked as if he would burst. Then he broke into a loud laugh.

“Arthur, I’ve a proposition to make you. I admire your nerve, and especially your ability to get about the country. How would you like to try a year peddling bonds for our house?”

“Oh, sir, thank you, sir—I’d love to—and what about Dolly?”

“Well,” said the big man reflectively, “you come to me at the end of the year, and I’ll discuss that with you,” and smiling he left the young people to themselves.

Half an hour later he stuck his head out of the door only to catch these words:

“And Helen can be maid of honor, and the reception can be held here. We’ll get Jones to cater, and with decorations and a few hundred dollars this place can be made perfectly beautiful. The lawn with a row of lights—”

He waited to hear no more.

“A few hundred dollars! A few *thousand!*” he muttered. “Why the deuce didn’t I let them alone?”

“The Last Hundred Yards”

By BRUCE FARSON

BILLY came off the track and walked weakly toward the “Gym.” At every step, his toes, aching from the backward strain of his spiked shoes, flinched from touching the ground. His knees wobbled and bent under him as if they were rubber. He slumped down on the steps that led to the basement shower-baths and with trembling fingers fumbled at his track-shoes. When he straightened up with them in his hand, his overworked lungs expanded painfully. His head roared like escaping steam.

Inside the half dark bathroom, he sank upon the nearest bench and began stripping off his sticky track-suit. It clung soggly to his shoulders and he swore fretfully under his breath. Dully he heard a voice say:

“Wha’d you make it in, Bill?”

“Dunno!” he snapped.

He wanted to lie down on the wood-

en bench, but he knew that would stiffen him up, so he made his way to the shower-bath and stepped under its cold flood. The icy water jolted his weary brain and muscles into shuddering activity. When his teeth began to chatter themselves loose, he dodged out and hurried to the rubbing table, where “Smoked” Joe, who from time immemorial had kept the varsity’s men in shape, pounded and slapped, and kneaded him.

While Bill was dressing the Old Man came in, and, leaning over him said:

“Marshall, that mile of yours was two seconds slow. If we are going to win this meet, you must take second place and Halloran and Dean are both beating your time every day, to leave out of consideration some dark horse who may jump in and win. Remember, the varsity needs your three points, and if you don’t show ‘yellow’ you can

win them. Go to bed early to-night, and don't worry. That's all."

Bill finished dressing and left the stuffy room for the cool air of the spring evening. The setting sun tinted everything with long, slanting, ruddy beams. The trees were green with new leafage and the sod was damp and springy under foot from a thunder shower of early afternoon.

One phrase of the coach's rankled in Marshall's brain—"If you don't show 'yellow.'" He took a big gulp of the sweet air.

"I'll let him see whether I'm 'yellow' or not, and I'll win that mile to-morrow if I have to run my legs off."

Then his shoulders drooped and he jammed his hands viciously into his trousers-pockets.

"But I can't! I couldn't have run a bit faster to-day to save my life. I guess I'm not varsity class."

Bill followed the Old Man's advice and went to bed early; but sleep would not come. Through the open window floated the voices of some of the fellows singing under the big maple in front of the Girls' Hall. Low voiced strollers passed. He could hear the frogs in "bone yard pond" where the freshmen were always ducked on the night of the Faculty Reception. He wondered if Alice Perkins would be at the meet. Ever since she had gone into the best sorority and had led the Pan-hellenic with a senior, she had sort of looked down on him. To-morrow she would probably be sitting in the grandstand with some upper-classman, when he finished third or fourth, and would laugh and say,

"Oh, yes, indeed, I know the little Marshall boy. We're from the same town."

He had always cared a lot for Alice, but it was enough to make any fellow sore, when he rushed up to a girl he'd always known and said:

"Hullo, Allie," and she froze him with "Good-morning, Mr. Marshall," and before a whole crowd, too.

He would like to win that mile just to spite her.

Gradually the croaking of the frogs changed to the thud of spiked shoes, and then he was bowing and shaking

hands with a long line of people, who were congratulating him on having been made dean of the varsity for winning the mile and making Alice call him Billy.

The next thing he knew, he was angrily smothering the whirring alarm clock with the bed-clothes and debating whether to get up for breakfast or take just one more nap. Breakfast won and he struggled sleepily into his clothes.

Later, he strolled down the street to the Howard House, where the "dope fiends" always congregate before a big meet or game, and where most of the bets are placed. The lobby was filled with a swaying crowd that tripped over suit-cases, swallowed up bell-boys frantically trying to answer calls of "Front," and maimed patent leather shoes and derby hats with perfect good nature. He elbowed his way toward the desk, glancing this way and that through the haze of tobacco smoke for a familiar face. Suddenly a voice at his elbow held his attention.

"Marshal ought to win the mile, don't you think?"

Another voice answered.

"Marshall? Ha! Ha! Why man, he's no more in the class with Halloran of Madison and Dean of Mishington than I am! He wont last the first three-quarters. On the quiet, Dean says he's going out for the Intercollegiate record to-day, and if he does, you watch something drop."

"Is that so?" said the first voice with respect in its tones.

Billy longed to see who had spoken; but shame held his neck as stiff as a ramrod. So he was outclassed, wouldn't last the first three-quarters! Well, it was true! He couldn't run. He'd never get out another year. The Old Man probably wouldn't want him any way. He pushed his way out of the hotel and walked up the street. It was an ideal day for the intercollegiate; sunny, cool, and with no wind to mar record breaking. Already, though it was only ten o'clock, the streets were thronged with rooters. Tin horns blared, colors waved, and college yells rent the air wherever any number of students assembled. A wave of nervous fear submerged Bill. He saw himself distanced

at the end of the first three-quarters and heard a great cruel roar of laughter from the stands. He had seen that happen once when he was in prep. school and the memory of it still lingered. He saw himself giving up at the last sprint and crawling off the track a "quitter" and a disgrace to his university.

Unconsciously his steps had turned toward his fraternity house, and now before he realized it he was before the very door. He hesitated, debating whether he had better go in or slink away. Just as he was deciding that the "bunch" were already ashamed of him, Chuck Riley burst out of the door, and taking the front steps at a leap almost knocked him down.

"Well, look who's here! Bill, the Athlete, b' Gosh!" exploded Chuck and then, turning to the house, he yelled:

"Hey, fellows, here's Bill, the man that's goin' to win the mile to-day."

The fellows piled out and surrounded Billy. Before he knew it they had dragged him up on the porch and Chuck was yelling:

"Nine long ones for Bill! Now, boys, One! Two! Three!

The old yell sent a thrill through Billy's blood. The fellows crowded around, congratulating him on his victory in advance, for they took it for granted he would win, and when he protested that he had no chance, they only laughed. Gradually he began to feel inspired. Of course, he would win with the best fraternity and the best old varsity in the world back of him! He must! He would run to-day as he had never run before. What was two seconds? He could make that up in the first half-mile. He'd show them whether he'd last three-quarters or not and Dean would have to run right down to the tape, if he set a new record.

During the light noon meal at training quarters Marshall was pre-occupied. He did not see the tense, strained faces of some of his team-mates or notice the over-boisterous unconcern of others. He was too busy mapping out how he would run his race to beat Dean. The running of this mile had become a personal matter between him and the Mishington star.

The meet was half over. The sprints and hurdles had gone according to "dope." Carston had fallen down in the shot-put and only taken second, but good old "Legs" Meeker had won the high jump when he was only expected to get third.

Bill sat on the floor of the dressing-room with his back against a locker. His skin burned from the rubber's hard hands; but in spite of that he shivered and sunk his chin into the collar of his bathrobe. For the hundredth time he made sure that his spiked shoes were still on the floor beside him. Ten minutes more and he would be on the track. Andrews came in from the "quarter." Every sporting-editor in town had conceded the varsity a first in this event. Josey Andrews had never lost a quarter mile since he had been in college and had gone East three times on the relay team. He staggered now, though, and his face was dejected. He threw himself limply upon the table and drew shuddering laborious breaths, while "Smoked" Joe tugged off his sticky jersey. The men who were waiting their events looked at him anxiously.

Suddenly, in a husky voice, he called "Marshall!"

Bill jumped up and went across to him.

"I got my cork pulled. Best I could do was second. If you don't win, we lose—"

"All out for the mile!" bellowed the caller.

Bill hurried to the door.

"Good luck, Old Man," some one called; but Bill hardly heard.

He stepped out of the dark room heavy with the smell of sweat and liniment into the bright sunshine. The light, the cheers, and the fierce blare of rival college bands struck him like a blow. His knees wobbled as he jogged across the field. His breath came hard as if he had run a long way. Suddenly the fear that his wind had given out, sickened him. As he neared the starting line, the stands resolved themselves from a black mass into a sea of faces with crested waves of color.

Bill squatted cross-legged on the grass and adjusted his shoes, tying the laces with great care. Then he drew his

bathrobe closer and analyzed the crowd. To the right of the line, a blue splotch of banners marked the Mishington rooters' section. Mishington College was the varsity's great athletic rival. Billy thought of the shock it had given him when he had come to the varsity as a freshman and had seen terse phrases in which Mishington was consigned to a warmer clime, carved deeply on the desks and the chair-arms of lecture rooms. His sense of astonishment had soon given place to an almost religious endorsement of the desire expressed in these carvings. Dean was Mishington's hope in the mile, and even now, here and there in the blue phalanx, cries as to what he would do to the others spurted out. These were directed at the Madison rooters, who sat next to them. Madison retorted by derisively calling Mishington's attention to the fact that Halloran was entered in the mile, too.

With Halloran,
We'll tie a can
To Mishington,

they sang.

The varsity's rooting section was next to Madison and right on the line. The boys were not entering into the joshing of Mishington and Madison; but sat silently with tense faces. The cheer leaders leaned idly on their big megaphones.

"I guess the boys feel pretty blue over Andrews getting his cork pulled. Looks like we'd lost the meet," Bill muttered.

He felt detached, like some utterly unprejudiced observer. A hand on his shoulder recalled him. The Old Man was standing over him. His mouth was drawn down a bit at the corners and his face was grim.

"Time to get on the track, Marshall," he said. "Now, just remember this mile will be won in the last hundred yards."

The hand on Bill's shoulder tightened and then gave him a little push, as he rose and stepped toward the track.

A long yell thundered from the Mishington stands as Dean limbered up in a jog down the cinder path. The Madison rooters took it up like an echo as Halloran followed him. Bill came close behind Halloran. Out of the cor-

ner of his eye, he saw the lolling cheerleader straighten up, signal the yell number to his lieutenants, and then bellow his hoarse instructions to the stands.

"All up; all up! One! Two! Three!" Bill heard, and then the old varsity yell, with his name at the end, split the air.

A grim determination stiffened him as he trotted back to the start.

From the runners groped around the tape, Bill picked out Dean, in a blue jersey and Halloran in the bright red of Madison. Some one with a paper and pencil rushed past him and began to call numbers and names.

"Dean, number three, Halloran, number nine," he cried.

Then a dozen other entrants.

"Marshall, number seventeen."

"Here!" shouted Billy, frightfully worried lest he be overlooked.

A far away voice droned something about a pistol-shot at the last lap. They were in line now.

"Get on your marks!"

Billy seemed hemmed in by rank on rank of crouching figures. He touched elbows with the entrant of some freshwater college down the state.

This man threshed his arm and growled fretfully:

"Can'cher gim'me some room!"

Bill began to think that the starter had forgotten them.

"Get set!"

Another year of waiting. He shook like a man in a chill; his muscles ached, and he held his breath. The man from the freshwater college sprawled nervously to his knees.

"Bang!"

Blindly, with elbows flying, Bill leaped into his stride. He drew his breath in choking gasps, and held it as long as he could. His mouth was dry and wouldn't stay shut. His trained lungs soon began to work naturally, however, the beat of his feet grew mechanical, the fog before his eyes dissolved, and he found himself sliding around the first turn of the track. Just in front of him bobbed a blue jersey with a square of cloth between the shoulders stamped with a black "3."

"That's Dean," muttered Bill. Farther ahead, he saw another blue jersey.

"Their other man is setting the pace for him and setting it fast," he reasoned. "Oh well, this mile'll be won in the last hundred yards. I'll just stick," and gluing his eyes to the blue jerseys he followed steadily.

As they swung into the straight and ended the first lap, a roaring filled his ears and he knew dully that the crowd was cheering. They rounded the turn again and kept on up the back stretch. Bill was running like a machine. His mind was concerned with nothing but following those two blue jerseys. For some time he had faintly heard a low "pad," "pad" behind him. All at once it grew louder and resolved itself into the thud of a runner's feet. A hand, then an arm, then a head and shoulders came into his range of vision. They were passing the stands for the second time and the roar of the crowd was in his ears again. The other runner had drawn slowly past him and shut off his view of Dean. He recognized the red jersey of Halloran. Bill drew himself together to spurt hotly and pass this hateful red jersey; but a still voice within him kept calling "Keep cool, keep cool! Remember this mile will be won in the last hundred yards." and he kept doggedly to his stride. A blue jersey fell back to the red one. Dimly Bill saw a figure with wabby knees and pumping arms. Then he ranged alongside and the figure dropped back out of sight.

"Dean's pacemaker," he gritted.

A great wave of weariness rolled over him. Each step became a separate effort. His eyes came back to the red jersey in front of him. It rose and fell with machine-like precision. No weariness there! Then the still small voice within him said:

"He's probably as tired as you are. Keep on! you're not yellow."

An immense sense of irritation filled him. He felt that he was being badly treated. The red back in front of him had turned into a lamp on the rear of an elevated train. What good did it do him to be running down the track after it. He never could catch it and he might fall between the ties.

"Bang!"

The jarring report rings in Billy's ears. It brings him to himself. Every-

thing clears up. He is in a race and there is only one more lap to go. That red spot is not a lamp. It is Halloran and Dean is up in front somewhere. If he can catch the red jersey maybe he can see him. His legs ache and it hurts to breathe, but he spurs himself on. He is gaining on the red jersey. It does not rise and fall mechanically any more. Now it is beside him and he catches a glimpse of a white face and open mouth as it slips behind. Only one ahead! What does Dean look like? Oh yes, a blue jersey. He turns it over and over in his brain till his head aches, "A blue jersey, blue jersey, blue jersey." It swells to a great song that hundreds of people are singing. "Blue jersey, blue jersey." His feet keep time to it.

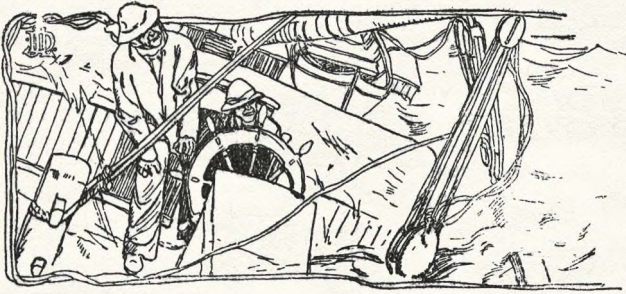
An unused ounce of strength comes into play. He plunges forward. No blue jersey to be seen. His knees begin to wobble and his elbows are working like pump handles. The chorus about the blue jersey dies away. Red and black spots swim in the air and burst in front of him. He closes his eyes. His feet slip and turn. Dimly he thinks he must be running in sand. Why not sit down and rest. How quiet it is. Suddenly the peaceful quiet is shattered by a shrill girlish voice. "Oh Billy, Billy!"

Billy opens his eyes dazedly. Right in front of him bobs a hazy blot of color. It doesn't burst like the other blots. He draws every muscle together in a last effort to leave this awful thing behind. It is close at hand now, right at his shoulder. Then it disappears and he is alone. He sees the track at his feet. It flies up toward him, he dodges to escape being hit, and then all goes black.

The next thing Billy knew, someone was shaking him and trying to make him wake up. He didn't want to; but finally he opened his eyes. The fellows on the team were crowding round him and trying to shake his hand. What for, he wondered. High over the noise about him came the varsity yell, with his name three times on the end.

Then Billy understood; but he only grinned and said to himself:

"Alice, I'll have to go round to see you and let you get a little more practice on the Mr. Marshall business. You clean forgot it the last hundred yards."



The Degree of Courage

By JOHN BARTON
OXFORD

ALL day long the barometer had been dropping steadily. On board the three masted schooner, *Emily Dean*, poking along in the light air with her cargo of paving blocks, Captain Harding watched nervously that black hand creeping ominously lower on the dial.

Nor were his many trips down the companionway to the after cabin, where the barometer hung on its hook just beneath the skylight, made without a certain disquieting sense of covert shame; for Captain Harding was acquiring along the coast a reputation for caution which was rapidly becoming a most unenviable thing. Indeed, in many quarters it was no longer called by the euphemism of caution; in the offices of the ship-brokers ashore, where master mariners congregate and such things are wont to be threshed out, Harding was credited with old-womanish timidity.

Even his own mate was not without an inkling of the truth, and to-day, as he watched his superior making his frequent trips below to read the falling barometer, his eyes narrowed and the corners of his mouth were drawn downward in an expression of scornful disgust.

With the *Emily Dean*, similarly freighted and bound to the same port of discharge, were two other schooners of the same tonnage. Harding watched them, coming on astern of the *Dean* with all sails set, and their presence filled him with a sense of irritation. If they held on when the blow that was surely coming arrived, he for very shame must do as much. Forty miles back along the coast lay Dead Inlet harbor. If it wasn't for those other two

schooners he would turn about now and run for Dead Inlet before the barometer went any lower. Harding looked again at the two craft, slopping along in his wake, apparently unconcerned as to the coming blow. He set his teeth grimly. He most devoutly wished at that moment that he were alone, and free to run for harbor as his judgment bade him do.

But the other two craft held on doggedly to their course, and even when fan-shaped cirri clouds came poking up above the southern horizon and the wind, which had been the lightest for the past twenty-four hours, suddenly freshened and began to whistle its warning through the rigging, the other craft showed no signs of shortening sail.

Harding kept his eyes glued to them, the while his fingers drummed a nervous tattoo on the rail. Now and then he shot an anxious glance at the fan-shaped clouds, widening and darkening above the horizon. Oldring, the mate, was watching the skipper covertly, and not without a certain scornful pity on his big homely face.

The fan-shaped clouds sped to the zenith with amazing rapidity; momentarily the sea rose and began to hiss angrily as the wind freshened. The sun went out in a drifting spume of haze.

Harding turned from the rail. "Take in the tops'ls!" he called to the mate.

The latter glanced at the two schooners astern. They were coming on smartly, and evidently their respective skippers had no idea of shortening sail until necessary. There was a knowing grin on Oldring's features as he called out the crew.

"In with the tops'ls!" he ordered,

and somehow his tones seemed subtly to convey the information that the order was not of his choosing.

Harding sprang to the wheel. "Get for'ard and lend a hand," he shouted to the helmsman. "I'll take the wheel."

There was a creak of blocks, interspersed with the mate's voice shouting his orders. The topsails came in with a rush.

"Now your jib-tops'l and your flying jib," the skipper ordered, "get 'em in!"

Scowlingly the mate repeated the order, and the sails came rattling down.

"Aft, here, Mr. Oldring, and lower the spanker," Harding shouted. "The fore and main will do for the weather that's coming," he added, as if by way of vindicating himself.

With shortened sail the *Emily Dean* bumped over the rising seas, while the two other schooners went heeling past her and were lost in the gray mist ahead.

Oldring, standing by the rail, grunted under his breath. Shortening sail before it was necessary, was in his eyes little less than a crime. He spat angrily on the deck and turned on his heel, but even as he did so the first real breath of the coming blow struck them. The *Emily Dean* lurched over a heavy sea, banged into the trough of it, and shipped a goodly portion of the following sea over her port bow.

There was a roar from the skipper at the wheel. "Get them boom takles over to starboard!" came the order, and then as the tackles were shifted. "Hard a lee!"

"Darned old woman," the mate growled under his breath. "Blamed if he aint goin' to run back before it for Dead Inlet!"

He watched the schooner's bow come about and bear nor'-nor'-west for the Inlet harbor. His teeth came together with a resounding click.

"Now aint that the limit!" he grumbled to himself. "Runnin' back there in no more of a blow than this! Well, let him! He's puttin' the noose round his own neck. Them other two, the Grayson and the Babbitt'll keep right on, while he's sneakin' into port. Owners aint goin' to stand for many more of these doin's. About once more of this

and I'll get the master's berth on this schooner, see'f I don't!"

He moved forward, and stationing himself by the fore hatch, he stood looking speculatively at the tumbling, hissing gray water.

"They've asked me to let 'em know the next time he got timid—the owners has," he meditated. "Good as told me if he wa'n't capable of makin' good trips on her, irrespective of weather, they'd give me a chance. Darned if I don't let 'em know about this. I might just as well have her as him. I wouldn't be hikin' for harbor every time it breezed up a bit, that's certain. Yep, I'm goin' to send the owners word. That's what!"

Just after dark they raised the light at Dead Inlet, shot in behind the breakwater and anchored in smooth water.

"Maybe it aint goin' to be any sight of a blow," the skipper observed uneasily to the mate, as they sat at supper below, "but I aint taking no unnecessary chances."

Oldring said nothing, but after supper, when the steward had cleared the table and the captain had gone to his berth in the after cabin, he brought out pen and paper and sat painstakingly inditing his missive to the owners.

The blow was of short duration. Morning came with clear skies and a dead calm. Moreover, the calm continued for two days, which necessitated their laying at anchor behind the Dead Inlet breakwater.

"This'll fix him," the mate chuckled to himself. "Two days wasted, and if he'd 'a' had the nerve to keep on as them other two did he'd 'a' got to the capes and 'a' been up to the dock by this time. Owners aint goin' to stand for such doin's as this! I guess it's me for his berth, all right."

"I dunno but what maybe I made a mistake, comin' in here," the skipper confessed uneasily to the mate at breakfast the third morning, when day broke with only the lightest of air from the south'ard—not enough air, indeed, to warrant getting up anchor.

"I guess like enough you did," Oldring agreed, with a meaning smile.

It was well towards evening of that day before the wind canted to the west

and freshened sufficiently for them to start down the coast once more. Harding was openly worried; the mate was filled with a certain covert satisfaction, bred of the thought of the letter he had despatched from Dead Inlet to the *Emily Dean's* owners.

It was a trying run down to the capes. The wind was light and fickle, and they were three days making what ordinarily could have been accomplished in twelve hours.

Once they had towed up the river and docked, Harding made his way, apprehensively and rather shamefacedly to the brokers, who handled the *Emily Dean's* cargo in that port.

A letter from the managing owner was awaiting him. He read it with troubled brows, for its import was only too clear.

CAPTAIN JOHN B. HARDING,
Schooner Emily Dean.

DEAR SIR:

We understand you put back into Dead Inlet on the afternoon of the 24th, when two other schooners—the Frederick Grayson and the Thomas Babbitt made a run to the capes with no difficulty whatever.

We appreciate conservatism and caution in *their proper places*, but we also feel there is such a thing as overdoing these excellent qualities.

Very kindly report to this office as soon as you return here with your next cargo. We wish to hear your side of the story before we make any radical move in the matter.

Harding's face reddened beneath its heavy coat of tan. A lump rose in his throat. The laughing, chattering groups in the broker's office seemed very far away. Dazedly he sat there fingering the disturbing letter. Well, it had come at last! Nor was this blow wholly unexpected. He had had the grace to realize to some extent his limitations.

Oldring was after his berth. He was perfectly aware of that. And now Oldring seemed in a fair way to land it. For what could he say of that run back to Dead Inlet the day of the blow—what, indeed, save that he was scared—scared, as he always was in every blow? He was aware of a sudden fierce rush of anger. At first he thought it was anger against Oldring; then he realized it was anger against himself. He was a coward—that was it, a cow-

ard! The word, now that he directed it openly against himself, after all these years of careful self-deceit, stung and rankled him cruelly.

Then he came suddenly out of his bitter musings, aware that his name had been spoken.

"I wouldn't take it for double that freight-money," he heard Richardson, the skipper of the Thomas Babbitt, saying, "but maybe Harding here will."

There was an audible titter from the group about the broker's desk.

"There's good money in it for you, Harding," Richardson went on, with a covert wink to the others. "Two dollars a ton."

"And it's been laying here for over a month now, awaiting shipment," the broker put in.

"What's been waiting?" Harding asked quietly.

"A cargo of dynamite," said the broker. "Six hundred tons of it for the Consolidated Quarries at Northport."

The smiles about the office broadened. Harding clutched the letter in his hand and drew himself up in his chair. He glared savagely about him, and cleared his throat.

"Two dollars a ton?" he demanded of the broker.

"That's what."

"Where is it?"

"At Carey's docks, on the other side."

"When can I have it?"

"Eh? What? You aint in earnest?"

"When can I have it?" Harding repeated.

"Any time. But—"

"We'll be unloaded to-morrow morning at ten. Draw up your consignment papers and have a tug ready to take me over to Carey's docks. I'm going to take that stuff."

Then before the astonished group could utter a word, Harding had arisen and stalked stiffly out to the sidewalk.

With erect head and squared shoulders he stalked down the sunlit streets towards the water-front.

"Two dollars a ton," he mused, "and the best you can do on coal now is ninety cents. That ought to go a little way towards squaring me with them. It ought to show them, if I take this

freight, that I aint gone all to the bad in the matter of nerve!"

Two days later the *Emily Dean* towed down the river to the capes and headed eastward with her undesirable cargo stowed in her hold.

Harding, pacing to and fro by the wheel, was smiling grimly to himself.

"Wouldn't touch it, not one of 'em!" he mused, with a glow of satisfaction. "Call me an old woman for runniti' to harbor before a blow, will they? Well, when it comes to takin' a cargo like this looks like the shoe was on the other foot."

They made a good run of it up the coast. With fair winds and a smooth sea they were standing in for Northport at the end of the fifth day.

Harding well satisfied with himself and the world in general, had gone below to snatch a nap in his berth. Oldring, relief in every line of his face now that they had sighted Deep Bank lightship, and the voyage with the precarious cargo was nearing its end, was leaning on the rail idly watching a school of porpoises rolling about on the long, glassy swells.

Suddenly forward there was a commotion, a yell of fear. A purling column of smoke drifted out of the galley, and up the companionway, his eyes bulging from their sockets and his white apron smoldering, darted the cook.

"Skillet of fat upset," he gasped. "The galley's all afire!"

With an oath Oldring leaped forward, yelling to the men on watch as he ran.

"Fire! Fire!" came booming out of a half-dozen throats, choking with fear as they thought of the freight in the hold.

Harding, aroused by the uproar, tumbled from his berth and stumbled in his stocking feet up the companionway to the deck.

The smoke, pouring from the galley, had grown more dense. A tongue of angry, twisting red flame leaped up the galley companionway and crackled on the hatch.

Simultaneously, with a wild yell, Oldring and the men, who had been trying to smother the blaze, dropped their buckets and came tearing aft.

"Into the boat!" Oldring was bel-lowing. "No use!" he shouted to the skipper. "It's got beyond us. Get the boat down, quick!"

Harding's eyes blazed. He leaped forward and caught Oldring by the shoulder in a grip that made the mate wince.

"You give your orders when you've got your master's berth," he roared. "I'm onto you. I know what you've been up to. I know all about that letter you wrote from Dead Inlet. Get back to that galley, damn you! You haven't half tried yet."

One of the men sprang to the boat, swung on its davits just above the taff-rail. The man at the wheel leaped to his aid. The schooner, left to its own devices, came into the wind with a great flapping of the sails.

There was a bellow of rage from the skipper. Quick as a flash he sprang to the davits. Two quick darts of his big fists and the men, who had started to clear the falls, went down like logs.

In another instant Harding had whipped out his knife, and slashed the davit ropes. The boat splashed into the water and went drifting away astern.

"Take that wheel," he yelled to Oldring. "Keep her dead before the wind. That will keep the fire from coming aft. I'll show you who's master of this craft. Jump lively now, boys. The boat's gone and our only salvation is to put that fire out. Come with me!"

He darted forward and dazedly the men followed in his wake.

"Fill your buckets, quick, and pass them to me," he commanded, and jumped to the blazing companionway.

Grimly, silently, with the men scooping up water overside, Harding fought the blaze. Now he seemed all but defeated; now he attacked it with yet fiercer courage.

At the wheel a white-faced mate, his knees shaking beneath him, watched, dry-lipped, that unequal combat. Against the rail he had set the cover of the lazarette hatch, to be used in the moment of emergency, and now and then his eyes sought it hungrily; but from very shame he gritted his teeth and stood at his post, while the flames from the galley now died down, now

burst forth again with an ominous roar.

At last, however, Harding's relentless attacks began to tell. With many sputtering hisses the flames died out altogether, leaving a thin brown smoke drifting up the companionway. Blackened, scorched, his hair and eyebrows singed away, the skipper gave instructions to the men to flood the galley with water; and with a light of triumph in his smarting eyes he stalked along the deck towards the cabin.

Three days later, Harding, rather disfigured by the many blisters on his face, entered the office of the managing owner of the fleet of coasters, to which the *Emily Dean* belonged.

"I got your letter instructing me to report," said he.

The managing owner glanced at him keenly. There was complete understanding in that glance. He arose, smiling, and held out his right hand to Harding.

"Jim," he said, looking thoughtfully at the battered face before him, "I guess I've misunderstood you a bit; I guess we've all misunderstood you. That two-dollar a ton freight you've just brought in is all the report we need.

"It means we can pay a dividend where we didn't expect to, and it also means—well, lots of other things. Only," he paused and one hand went to Harding's shoulder almost affectionately, "for heaven's sake, Jim, don't do it again."

The Bright Eyes of Danger

By W. BERT FOSTER

I

TANNARD saw her first in the final dash of the motor-boat for the great hulk of the *Princess Therese*, and her bright eyes smiled down into his own with something like satisfaction in them, he thought, that he should have won.

It had been a pretty race down the lower bay, for the fleet of newspaper-boats had all gotten the start of the *Star* representative; but Tannard had driven the motor till she looked like a shark cutting the surface of the calm sea, and now he was in the lead.

Danielson was aboard the *Princess Therese*, and Marcus Danielson was a man who would talk to but one reporter at a time. He played no favorites; with Danielson it was always "first come, first served." And this was a matter the several New York papers were not willing to combine upon. It

was sure to be a beat for one, and the others must be content with the crumbs.

Danielson had been lost sight of on the other side, and only an innocent wireless to one of his partners had chanced to reveal the fact that he was coming in on the *Princess Therese*.

Tannard gave up the steering wheel to the machinist and stood balancing himself on the "whaleback" in the bows. A rope ladder swung from the rail of the steamship, which rolled slightly to the groundswell.

Above, the girl, in her gray habit and red Tam-o'-shanter, leaned over the rail, earnestly looking down upon him. Her eyes were brilliant and wide open; but they expressed no anxiety—only exultation in his leap which secured him a footing on the ladder.

The steamship rolled back, and Tannard braced his feet against the hull, walking up the side agilely. He lost sight of the girl on the upper deck as

he was helped off the ladder by a grinning seaman.

The reporter pushed his way through the little group of interested second-cabin passengers, and caught a passing steward by his blue sleeve.

"There's a two-spot in it for you, if you take me to Mr. Marcus Danielson before those other chaps get aboard, old man," he whispered, and the steward nodded and led him away to where Danielson and his party was ensconced on the sun-deck. Tannard had interviewed the steamship magnate before and knew that Danielson's surprise and disgust were not feigned when he found that his approach to the American shores had been heralded.

"I have nothing to say at present to any newspaper," he declared, brusquely, and eyeing the *Star* man with a cold glare.

"Will you answer one question, Mr. Danielson?" asked Tannard.

"About what?"

"Regarding the choice of this new entry-port for your Atlantic steamships."

"If I *can*," replied Marcus Danielson, after a little reflection.

"Where will the new docks be built—in Jamaica Bay, or behind Fire Island?"

This covered the pivotal point of the matter that had so excited New York newspaperdom. Under Danielson's lead all the European-New York steamship companies had been combined, and the congestion in New York harbor was to be relieved by the liners docking somewhere along the Long Island coast. Besides, half a day in the ocean-trip could be gained thereby. The choice of a site for the great docks was keeping the reading public on the *qui vive*.

Danielson eyed the reporter reflectively, and said: "It is not decided yet. Another conference is to be held. That is the reason I am over here."

"Thank you," said Tannard. "And where will that conference be held?"

"That is a second question, young man. I only agreed to answer one," returned Danielson, and turned his back on the reporter.

That ended the interview and Tannard knew there was no use in press-

ing the question. Marcus Danielson was very secretive in his methods, and his confrères always took their cue from him. The reporter, too, turned away—turned to find himself looking directly into the wonderful eyes of the girl in gray again.

She was one of the Danielson party and was walking at that moment with a tall, dark girl in rather a dowdy coat and hat tied on her head with a bedraggled veil. Everything about the gray girl was trim and fresh; she looked as if she were at the beginning of the voyage rather than at its end.

An impersonal smile curved her lips when their eyes met—neither a bold nor a sly glance; and as he passed her with a respectful bow, he saw her lips move. She did not look at him again, but somehow Tannard believed her whispered words were meant for him!

In his surprise, and the confusion of mind caused by the unexpected incident, the reporter did not understand them. He could not turn back and ask her to repeat the brief sentence which she had evidently intended him to hear.

But he asked the steward who had shown him the Danielson group:

"Who is the young lady the old man has with him this voyage?"

"That's his pet niece, Miss Ardelia Danielson. She is to come in for a pile of his money, they say, sir; and he trots her about with him wherever he goes. Mr. Danielson has no family of his own, you know."

Tannard was more than a little interested by the girl in gray; and he was sorry to learn of her relationship to old Marcus Danielson, for that put her in quite another world from his. His was a very active work-a-day world in which the niece of a multi-millionaire could have neither part nor interest. And he wondered what the deuce it was she had tried to tell him when he passed her!

II

It was mid-winter and despite the sunshine the open bay was bleak; he was glad to get back to the shop. But his boss was inclined to be fretful when Tannard turned in his story.

"Seems to me this is 'Great cry and little wool,' as the fellow said when he sheared the pig, Tan," declared he. "Can't you say something definite? We're just about where we were when you started to meet Danielson and get his story. I suppose you see that?"

"I realize that it is not wholly satisfactory; but if I had remained there until to-morrow morning it would have been no different. You know what Marcus Danielson is. Those other fellows won't get a word out of him—and he doesn't indulge in a secretary who 'leaks' information."

"And all you say is, that he is over here for a conference with his partners—and even the time and place of the conference is not divulged!"

"That is all the information Mr. Danielson was willing to give out—" began Tannard, when Old Hemminbrich, one of the proprietors of the *Star*, who was forever fussing about the offices, butted into the conversation.

"'Danielson'—who iss dot Danielson?" he demanded, his merry eyes twinkling through his round spectacles.

Mr. Julius Hemminbrich was a jolly old fellow, sometimes given to tedious stories, but kind of heart and rather a favorite with the younger reporters. Bloom, the city-editor, had no use for him, however, and he said, rather shortly:

"I was discussing his assignment with Mr. Tannard."

"Do you know Marcus Danielson, Mr. Hemminbrich?" asked Tannard, believing that the old German had many ways of meeting people big in finance and politics that Bloom knew nothing about. "I was to interview him on a most important matter, and Mr. Danielson refused to talk. You know—Danielson the ship-trust man."

Mr. Bloom scowled and tapped his desk impatiently; he scarcely hid his contempt for the apparently simple old German. But the latter was looking at young Tannard.

"I wonder," he said, slowly, "if it was *that* Danielson. Wait till I tell you, yet! That name, Danielson, reminds me—yes. You know my grandson, Carl?"

"I know you have a grandson by that

name, Mr. Hemminbrich," admitted Tannard.

"Dot Carl—he iss a wonderful boy—a won-der-ful boy!" declared the old gentleman. "You see, he iss not like odder young fellows—no, no! He does not gif his mother anxiety, or waste his father's substance; but he iss no—vot you call?—*sissy boy, ach!*"

"He iss studying, studying, all the time—yes! and on the roof of the hotel where we live he and his chum-friend, they build them a wireless receiving station, and have a transmitter in the tank-room. That iss a won-der-ful t'ing, that wireless," said the old fellow."

"And what has that to do with Danielson?" asked Tannard, seeing that the city-editor was growing vastly annoyed at the interruption.

"Why, that Carl iss catching messages, now and den, that don't belong to him at all," cried the old German, laughing. "And there was onc yesterday to my friend, Mr. Gilman Halleck, making a date for him to sail with a party on the yacht *Pequot*, for Fire Island. It was signed 'Danielson'—the message, you understand?"

Tannard believed he *did* understand. He turned eagerly to the vexed Mr. Bloom.

"That gives me an idea, sir!" he cried. "I believe Mr. Hemminbrich has solved the riddle for us."

"How?" demanded Bloom, tartly.

"Mr. Gilman Halleck is interested in this ship pool."

"That may be only a coincidence. It may be a message from an entirely different Danielson—providing the boy caught the words correctly."

"More than that, Mr. Bloom," declared Tannard. "The *Pequot* yacht is the property of Mice . . . Clarry, Marcus Danielson's chief representative on this side of the pond. Don't you know that?"

The city-editor began to show interest.

"There may be something in it, Tan. But do you think the conference of the powers will be held on that yacht?"

"I shouldn't wonder—and down at Fire Island, too."

"It may be a wild goose chase—and

the time! *When*, is the important question."

"I got dot, Misder Bloom!" cried Mr. Hemminbrich, eagerly. "It was in dot message Carl receiv—yes! Ten o'clock to-morrow at Fire Island—the date was plain in the message."

"Say! That's going some!" shouted Tannard.

"Are you willing to try it, Tan?" queried Bloom, still with doubt. "Of course, we might verify the message. There are ways to find out if Danielson's friends have gathered on the *Pequot*, or if she starts out to sea."

"And meanwhile I'll be down there, and waiting for them," said the reporter.

"Well, you can go and draw some expense money. Of course, Bay Shore is the place. Get a launch of some kind and go off to the island. There is a telephone communication with the lighthouse, but it is handled at Bay Shore and the local correspondent of the *Universe* has a terrible drag with the telephone-people down there. Our local man isn't worth a pint of weevil peas!"

"If there's anything doing," declared Tannard, confidently, "I'll get it, and it will come over the wire without the *Universe* getting wise, Trust me."

"It seems a ridiculous place to have a business conference in mid-winter," grumbled Bloom.

"I don't know. Now that the Montauk scheme is given over, the choice lies between the back of Fire Island and Jamaica. Besides, I've got a hunch that the conference *is* to be pulled off down there."

"How's that?" asked the city-editor, but Tannard simply looked wise and shook his head.

Secretly he would not have told his "hunch" for a good deal! It had suddenly come to him, now that Hemminbrich's story had spurred his wit, that the girl in gray with the wonderful eyes, who had smiled so pleasantly at him on the steamship deck that day, had given him a direct clew to the locality and time of the conference of the steamship magnates. Tannard believed now that her whispered message, which had so puzzled him, had been:

"*Fire Island—ten a. m. to-morrow.*"

But this hint he kept to himself. The fact that the sea-going yacht *Pequot* was under steam and several of the ship-trust agents were preparing to leave town, seemed to verify the clew the *Star* had got hold of.

Tannard left by the evening train for Bay Shore.

III

It wasn't a season for pleasure sailing on the Great South Bay. There was much ice, but it was broken and continually shifting in great, sullen, grinding fields.

Two weeks before the baymen had been running over to Fire Island light on their 'scooters,' but Tannard found it difficult to get a craft of any sort for the passage now. No boat-owner cared to risk a jam in the drift-ice, and of course, to use a scooter was out of the question.

Finally he got hold of a launch; but he had to call up the *Star* office and get Bloom's permission to guarantee the owner against loss or damage, ere he would agree to let the reporter have the craft. Unfortunately this created some talk about the village, and the *Universe* man—a freckled faced, squint-eyed individual whom Tannard had sized up already as a "sharp rube," was made wise to the fact that the rival paper had sent down a man who wanted to go over to the inlet the next morning.

It might puzzle the *Universe* man some to know *why* Tannard had expressed that desire; but he had evidently made the wire hot into his own paper's office on Park Row, inquiring about it, for at dawn Tannard himself was awakened by a call from his boss again.

"Get busy down there," he was advised, "A sea-going tug has been chartered by the *Universe* and has started for Fire Island. The *Pequot* passed Coney before midnight, bound east. Make good—never mind what it costs. Get your stuff on the wire first and see that it is exclusive. This is your chance, Tan," advised the city-editor, in a tone that the young reporter could not mistake, even over a telephone wire!

He learned by telephoning to the light that there was a yacht just inside the inlet, having arrived but a short hour before—doubtless the *Pequot*; the lighthouse keeper thought she had merely run inside to escape the heavy weather that was promised. The reporter hunted up the owner of the launch he had engaged, determined to start for the inlet at once, and so be in season for the conference, if so be it was scheduled for that forenoon.

And here Tannard ran up against an obstacle that he had not foreseen. The launch owner was suddenly disabled by rheumatism. He could not rise from his bed!

Not a soul else could the reporter find, especially at this short notice, to accompany him across the bay.

To venture forth in the frail launch spelled danger in any event; to do so alone was foolhardy in the extreme; But Tannard was one of those fellows who see the ground at their feet, and then another spot—their goal—as it might be, a great way off. All that lies between is only something to be overcome. He put out from the sheltered dock alone.

There was an open track of water near shore; later the channel branched into a dozen pinching cracks between the slushy icefields.

Because of his low seat in the launch, he could not easily pick out the best route to the inlet; but he saw the funnels and short spars of the *Pequot* plainly enough, and steered as direct a course as might be.

The tide was on the turn and this fact added to his danger, for the broken floes were continually shifting. And not in one direction.

Diverse currents widened the passages unexpectedly, or quite as suddenly shut the launch out of desired openings. Tannard's course across the bay was most erratic, and now and then he came near to running the nose of the boat into some icy barrier.

To be caught in a "squeeze" out here in the broad day, absolutely out of the reach of rescue, was to court certain death. No swimmer could live in the icy sea, and the broken, grinding blocks offered no foothold to a castaway.

Back in his mind the *Star* man knew all this—appreciated his peril and saw that it was a mere toss-up for him between life and death; but the principal thought surging in his brain, however, was the fear that he might be delayed in reaching his destination.

Duty drove the young reporter into the strait; nothing could, or would, drive him back. Retreat was more reckless than the advance, and he drove the motor-boat on at a speed which promised nothing but total wreck of both boat and plans if the craft ever collided with a good-sized cake.

It was mid-forenoon ere he beheld an open reach ahead of him leading to the pool in which the anchored yacht swung at her moorings. A nasty, cutting wind had risen and the murmur of the grinding ice grew in his ears, its threatening voice drowning all other sounds.

The tide-currents and the wind made the movements of the ice floes most uncertain. It was doubtful if this open strait would be passable ten minutes hence!

And with that in mind, Tannard put on all the speed the shaky little engine would stand. The launch quivered from end to end, and fairly galloped through the choppy sea.

Down bore the ice upon him on either hand, and down bore the flying launch on the black-hulled *Pequot*. It was still early in the day for the passengers of a pleasure-yacht to be astir—especially the female passengers; but when Tannard raised his eyes to gauge the distance between him and the yacht, he caught a glimpse of a blotch of red at the *Pequot's* rail.

Was it the girl in gray again? Momentarily the question flashed through Tan's brain; but the situation called for his closest attention and he could not keep his eyes upon the growing patch of color.

On dashed the quivering launch, while the ice-fields shut in steadily, remorselessly, the edges crashing together behind him and the shake and roar of it echoing flatly across the bay.

He gave no heed of sight to what followed him, however. He was too wise even to glance behind. To see his

peril would not aid him in the least to escape it, and like the man who walks the high frame-work of a bridge and refrains from looking down for safety's sake, so the reporter did not wish to tempt Fate by viewing the snapping jaws of the ice-pack behind him.

Spitting like a cat the launch's engine beat to faster time than was its wont. The rush through the water and the keen, cutting air, would have been exhilarating at another time. Now Tan only wished the confounded thing would heave along faster yet!

Ahead, the strait seemed perilously narrow. He wondered vaguely that the ice did not crash upon him, and he once more glanced up at the yacht's hulk.

A crowd had gathered at the rail, watching him; there were both men and women, but he saw only the red Tam-o'-shanter, with the vivid face under it, and the eyes that blazed with excitement as they watched his race.

The day before it had merely been a question of speed—a race of boats for the huge *Princess Therese*; but here Death followed close in the wake of the flying launch and its single occupant. And the racer must win or lose his life!

Suddenly, because of some flaw in the wind, perhaps, a huge mass of the ice-field on the left broke off from the main body and swung in before him, crashing against the opposite field, and closing the strait effectually.

It was a most unexpected happening. Beyond the crashing, heaving mass of ice lay the open pool, defended from the ocean by the narrow sand-spit of the island, and cleared by the swift current of all ice-litter. There the yacht swung in safety while the reporter was shut off from it.

All about him now crashed the ice-blocks; the flying particles cut his face; the roar of the battle deafened him completely.

Another fellow might have leaped up—jumped overboard—done some foolish, hysterical thing. Not Tannard. And yet he was not held to his seat by fear.

He expected each second that the ice would crush the frail launch and that

he would be borne down by it, and drowned; but his only hope was to cling to the boat, and to the steering gear. He did not for a single instant lose his head!

An ice block plunged against the side of the launch and almost capsized it. The craft drove to the opposite side of the narrow lane and there, opening, as if by magic, or divine command, a stretch of water lay before the nose of the launch.

Tannard shifted his wheel ever so little. This new strait was so narrow that the boat's sides actually scraped as she shot into the cleft; but it was widening while the older channel was fast closing in.

He reduced speed, seeing the crack open out ahead of her nose, gamely keeping on without once sending a glance behind him. It took coolness and self-possession to do this. It was like turning your back on an enemy with a loaded gun in his hand, and walking composedly away!

The freak channel split open clear to the pool where the yacht was. The instant Tannard saw his way clear, he opened her up and the imperiled launch shot out of the jaws of the ice.

There was a chorus of congratulation, of cheers, of good-natured railery when the reporter brought the little craft under the rail of the *Pequot*. But the girl in gray was silent. Tannard, however, looked into her eyes again and this time he beheld there more than mere admiration of his success.

IV

Even the grim Marcus Danielson had more than a passing word for the *Star* man. He had done something that made the blood flow faster in the veins of the on-lookers. And he shook off the comments of the yachting party with perfect coolness.

"We don't often have to run such chances in a day's work," Tan said, mildly. "But this, I take it, is a big thing. At least, my paper seems to think so."

"If we come to a final conclusion, young man, you shall have an interview," said Danielson. "But I warn you

that if we do not, you have had your work for nothing."

"That will be the fortunes of war," said Tannard, shrugging his shoulders.

The steward took him below and made him comfortable; he was not accepted on the footing of a guest of the owner of the yacht, and that shut him out of any introduction to the girl in gray. But she and her friends (there were several young ladies aboard the *Pequot*), eyed Tannard, when they had the chance, with much admiring curiosity.

On his side, the reporter would have given a good deal to know the owner of those bright eyes, in spite of the fact that he realized they were "the bright eyes of danger" for him. A multi-millionaire's niece could have nothing but a patronizing interest for a young man in Tan's position!

And it began to look soon after he arrived at the yacht as if the uncomfortable situation would continue for more than a few hours. The wind had risen mightily and outside the sea was beating furiously against the barriers that defended the bay.

When once the reporter was recovered from the strain of his struggle with the ice, he began to look for the tug chartered by the *Universe*. But even a man with half a sailor's eye could see that the gale would drive back that expedition.

He was congratulating himself that, even if he were unable to get back to the mainland that day and send in his report of the conference, no other paper would be likely to get the story, when one of the seamen sang out:

"Boat coming off from the light, sir!"

Tannard was possibly the most anxious person aboard until the light dory, worked by two of the assistant keepers, came under the yacht's rail. He feared that the *Universe* had sent its Bay Shore man over to the light by some means he wot not of.

But the man who clambered aboard asked promptly for "a fellow named Tannard." "There's a telephone message come for you to the light," said the web-foot, grinning, "and as they said it was important at the New York end,

Bill and me thought we'd come off here and see just how important it was. We seen you come across in Si Corliss' launch. Guess you're stuck here, heh?"

"It looks that way," admitted Tannard. "Who's the message from?"

"The New York *Star*. Say! you're a reporter, aint you?"

"Admitted!"

"You know Bloom?"

"Mr. Bloom is my city-editor."

"Just so. It was Bloom that called you up at Bay Shore. They heard you'd started for the light, so the head operator over there put us on the wire. The Cap., he writ down what Bloom said. Here it is," and the man handed Tannard this message:

The tug has been turned back. Storm signals all along coast. We have wind that the *Crier* has reporter on scene, and in communication. Look out for him.

"What's it worth, Pop?" queried the web-foot still grinning.

Tannard dug down for some of the office money. He thought the news was worth a good deal, although he did not see how the *Crier*, not at all a hustling paper, should have got ahead of the other metropolitan dailies. Nor did he see anybody aboard the *Pequot* whom he had ever met on Park Row.

But even while he was paying the lighthouse keeper, one of the yacht's officers came up and said:

"Have you got to return at once, my man?"

"There aint no kids at home squallin'—if *that's* what you mean."

"Somebody may want to go over and use your 'phone in a little while. There'll be something in it for you both."

"This is our busy day—heh, Bill?" said the web-foot to his mate. "I guess we can spare some time."

Tannard listened with interest. When the ship's officer turned away he made up his mind that, whoever went ashore to use the telephone should not get the better of him. Some member of the crew, or one of the guests on the yacht, was the secret emissary of the *Crier*.

"I suppose the *Crier* and the *Universe* have combined to beat us," was Tannard's unspoken argument. "I wonder that this message got through to

the lighthouse for me at all. Still, the telephone company would not stand for holding a message, although some of the operators might be dishonest enough to give information to that fresh rube in Bay Shore.

"If I sent my story over the 'phone from the light, I could expect to see it duplicated in half the New York newspapers by the time the *Star* was out. No, sir! the telegraph for mine!

"I've got to make that run back in the launch, if I want to have an exclusive story. Hullo! and how am I to have a 'beat' if the *Crier's* man has access to the telephone wire?"

He turned on his heel and went back to the two men from the light. "Is there safe anchorage for my launch over there at the foot of the light?" he asked.

"Sure," they said. "Si often comes over in her."

Tannard dropped down into the shaky old boat (but it had brought him well to this goal!) and went over the machinery with care. An hour later, when he was at last wiping his hands on a bit of waste, one of the seamen put his head over the side.

"The boss is ready to see you, Mr. Tannard. The conference is over," he said.

The *Star* man found Danielson smoking on the after deck, with several of the other gentlemen nearby. The great financier spoke quickly, jerkily, as was his wont; not because he lacked words to express himself, but because most of his speech for years had been to stenographers or into the recording phonograph.

When he had succinctly stated the conclusions to which he and his associates had come, he said:

"Let me hear your notes, young man."

Tannard read them off promptly. Danielson reached for the papers and signed his ugly scrawl at the bottom.

"You're honest, I think," he said. "I'll stand by what you write from those notes. Good-day!"

Again he turned his back upon the reporter and his thanks, seemingly having lost further interest in the matter.

Tannard discovered then that the

lighthouse tender was already on its way back to the light, beside the two men who had come off in her, he saw one of the guests of the yacht's owner, and by his side in the stern sat the girl in gray!

"Maybe she didn't feel so friendly to me, after all," thought Tannard, and that was really his *first* thought! "But I'll swear she *did* give me the hint about coming down here. So that is the fellow who works for the *Crier*, eh? It's the tall man with the side-tabs and the gold eyeglasses. Looks 'literary,' but not exactly like one of my breed. I wonder what Miss Ardelia Danielson is going ashore with him for? For a lark, perhaps. Or maybe she's going to telephone, too. H'm! how about it?"

He dropped down into the launch again, tossed a coin to the sailor who cast off for him, and in a moment the *ssp't! ssp't!* of his engine broke in upon the clatter of the ice and the more distant moaning of the breakers at the inlet's mouth.

Instead of heading back toward the mainland across the bay (and between the yacht and Bay Shore the drift-ice was now more dangerous than before, because of the risen wind), Tannard turned the launch toward the landing for which the lighthouse boat was aiming. Yet he had no intention of using the telephone himself, and every minute to him was precious.

To send his story in by telegraph from the Bay Shore railroad station was his determination; but to leave the *Crier* correspondent free to use the 'phone, and so beat him out, was far from Tannard's intention. The plight was desperate, and the *Star* reporter, was ready to use desperate means in overcoming the obstacles which confronted him.

V

Tannard ran the launch into the landing ahead of the smaller boat, and hopped ashore. He felt that the eyes of the girl in gray were on him, but he did not look around. She might be much more interested in the *Crier* correspondent getting his story in than she was in *his* making good for the *Star*, and Tannard did not want to *know* this

before he did what he had in his mind.

When he left the launch he carried something in his hand, well concealed from any person who might have been watching him. He had been to the light more than once, and that recently, for he had "covered" the steamship trust assignment almost from the first.

Instead of taking the most direct path to the entrance to the light, Tannard passed around the structure. At one point, quite out of sight of the people in the other boat, or from anybody else, he halted and used the article he had brought with him from the tool-chest of the launch. Then he went on into the light and was interviewing the head keeper when the girl and the supposed reporter of the *Crier* came into the big living room.

"The folks want to use the telephone, Cap," said one of the boat-men, who introduced them into the building.

"All right. There it is," and the light-keeper indicated the instrument on the other side of the room.

The man said something to the girl, and she nodded, biting her lip and looking, Tannard thought, somewhat anxious. She cast more than one curious glance at the *Star* man, too, as if wondering why he was talking with the light-keeper instead of using the 'phone.

The assistant keeper was curious enough to ask Tannard this.

"I reckoned you was going to be glued to that telephone, boss, when we got here," he said.

"I'm going across to Bay Shore again where I can get to the telegraph-office," explained Tannard.

"Sho, now! you wont do that?" cried the light-keeper. "If it was nasty coming over, you'll find it a whole lot worse going back. The ice is piling all up along the mainland shore."

As he spoke the man at the 'phone looked around and asked:

"Is anything the matter with this wire, keeper?"

"Not to my knowledge, sir. We used it a couple of hours ago."

"Well, I can't get an answer. I don't hear a thing!" said the other, fretfully.

The keeper waddled over and took the receiver himself. He bawled "Hul-

lo!" into the transmitter in stentorian tones, and rattled the hook up and down; but the blank expression that dawned on his face showed that he got no reply.

"That's the darndest thing!" he grumbled. "We was using it all right a while ago! That's always the way with these contraptions. When ye want 'em most they don't work."

"It can't be possible that the telephone is out of order—and just at this time!" cried the girl, her evident anxiety opening her lips. "Can't you make central answer, Mr. Towney?"

"Not a sound," confessed the man who had come over with her, as he took the receiver from the keeper's hand again. "By jove! that's vexing."

"Vexing!" repeated the girl, angrily. "It's awful! I've just got to use a 'phone. Can't it be repaired?"

The keeper shook his head slowly. "They'll find it's out of order on the other side—probably the break is there, anyway; and they will repair it."

The girl looked from the light-house keeper to Tannard suspiciously.

"It seems very strange that the wire should be broken just when we needed it so."

Tannard did not look at her, and the insinuation went over the head of the keeper. Her companion said:

"It's too bad the *Pequot* is not fitted with wireless."

"It would be if Mr. Danielson owned it," said the girl, sharply. "Now, what will you do, Mr. Towney? And you wanted to use the telephone so much!"

"I shall have to wait," said the fellow, with a sigh and a shrug. He was evidently a man who gave up easily. Tannard had a pitying smile only for the *Crier's* correspondent.

"I thought he looked too darned literary for any use," the *Star* man muttered.

But the girl was of different caliber. She turned, her face now flushed and her great eyes a-glitter, to look again at Tannard. He was pulling on his coat, preparatory to facing the bitter air.

"What will you do, sir?" she asked him, directly.

"I'm going to try to get across. I want to get my story in in good season

for the morning-paper; it's too late now for the evening editions."

"If the telephone had been working you might have got your news to your editor and he could have got out a special," said Towney, "couldn't you?"

"I don't trust to telephones," said Tannard, briefly; but to himself he thought: "If *that's* all you know about the newspaper trade you're in wrong!"

"And you are going to give up, Mr. Towney?" cried the girl.

Then she looked confidently into Tannard's face again.

"Will you take me back with you?" she asked.

Mr. Towney expostulated; even the old light-keeper said: "Miss, not ter say it's dangerous, the trip wont be for ladies, even if he gits through!"

Tannard could not help admiring her more than ever.

"You're plucky to suggest it; but wont your matter *keep*?" he asked her. "I'll report the trouble to the telephone company just as soon as I can after getting ashore."

She ignored everything but the fact that she had some deep-seated reason for getting into communication with New York herself.

"I want to go with you," she declared, following him to the door where he stood hesitating. "The trip can be no worse than it was coming over—and you came safe."

"By the skin of his teeth!" muttered the assistant keeper, in the background.

"I do not believe it is so dangerous—" she began again.

Nor did Tannard see the peril now; it was behind him and forgotten. That was his way. There was another thing, however.

"What will Mr. Danielson say?" he asked, slowly.

"Mr. Danielson has nothing to do with it!" she exclaimed, sharply. "I am my own mistress, I hope."

Tannard wondered if she had quarreled with her millionaire uncle; but this thought was fleeting. He had to hurry away himself, and he saw he had to decide for this girl.

"I believe I shall get across safely," he said, looking at last straight into her bright eyes. "But unless your need is

very, very urgent, I ask you not to go."

"Refuse to take her, sir!" cried Towner, earnestly.

"I have no right to refuse her a passage," declared Tannard, shortly and they did not know why; but *he* knew.

"I'm going, then," was her prompt declaration, and she hurried out of the lighthouse with him.

VI

Not until they were really aboard the launch, and he had carefully packed her about with wraps and had cast off the painter, did Tannard look at her again. She was smiling, her eyes looking at him roguishly and with an expression that he could not fathom.

"I am sure we shall have a good trip," she declared, cheerfully. "You are a fine boatman, Mr. Tannard."

Evidently she had learned his name somehow, but the reporter made no comment on this fact. His mind was at once given entirely to the running of the boat. He scarcely had a word for her.

As the lighthouse keeper said, the ice was driving straight across the bay now, and at first they had only small floating fields to dodge. The state of the tide made it less perilous than when he had come across in the morning—for the first half hour, at least.

And then they began to get in among the thicker floes. There were not many channels, and those were filling, it seemed, rapidly. Standing on the decked over portion of the launch, having brought the craft to a stop, Tannard gazed shoreward.

There was a maze of channels inshore, it seemed; but between their place and the docks of the little town there was not a single continuous strait!

Tannard was sorry now he had not forbidden the girl coming, in spite of his conscience. If he was thwarted in getting ashore, and had to run back to the yacht, *she* would be the cause. He felt himself afraid to venture boldly because the responsibility of her presence weighed upon him.

She had not interfered with him, nor scarcely spoken, since they started; but she seemed to read his intent face as he

stood there staring over the heaving, moaning ice-pack, and now she declared:

"You are to act just as if I were not with you, Mr. Tannard. I have forced myself upon your boat, I know; I must not hamper you."

He hesitated and looked down at her. She showed no more fear than he felt himself! It was inspiring, after all, to have such a comrade.

"All right!" he exclaimed. "I'll risk it."

"We'll risk it," she corrected, still smiling at him.

He started the boat again and it began to bore her way through the slush ice that masked the edge of the closer-packed floe. When they reached the most promising opening he had seen, Tannard steered into it.

This was the Rubicon. There was no retreat, once they had ventured into the field. If there was no escape ahead, it would be impossible to turn the launch and go back, and both the reporter and the girl knew it!

The speed of the launch was only nominal; to dash ahead in the way Tannard did when he had driven out to the yacht would have been suicidal. They had to creep along—to feel their way, in fact.

Now and again the boat's nose would bump shakingly against some solid block; but Tannard would reverse and save the fragile craft from serious damage. The ice field was still far from compact and unless the launch charged a heavy cake these collisions would do little harm.

They got into a pocket, however, and were a long time backing out and maneuvering for another channel. Meanwhile, the wind blew harder and the cold increased. Incidentally Tannard wished for heavier wraps for his comrade, and wished he had demanded a spirit lamp and provisions when he engaged the launch.

The afternoon began to wane and as the sun was already hidden there was the promise of early darkness. Secretly Tannard grew worried; but he refrained from revealing the fact to the girl, who was still as cheerful as ever.

The air was bitter and both had to

keep their extremities in motion to keep the frost out of the parts. Toes and fingers ached with the cold, and wherever the water splashed aboard the launch it froze immediately into an icy scale that made moving about perilous.

A web of frost was forming between the hummocks and cakes of the field; it was plain that soon all would be welded together in one impenetrable mass.

"And what then?" thought Tannard. "We can't get a transfer. Shall we be booked here until the tide turns again and possibly breaks up the field as it was before?"

He did not express this fear audibly. And there was another trouble in his mind. Suppose they were so delayed that he could not get his story of the conference on the *Pequot* to the *Star* office before midnight?

He was pretty sure that, before long, some other newspaperman would get an account of what had been decided upon by the Danielson crowd. The *Pequot* itself might put back to New York in spite of the gale. He could not understand this niece of Danielson being allowed to take the risk she had, if that were the case, however.

Before all, he feared that communication would be reopened between the lighthouse and the mainland. He had merely scraped away the insulation of the telephone wires where they entered the building, and attached a wire from them to a lightning-rod that ran up the shaft nearby, thus "grounding" the electric current. One of the lighthouse men was likely to find out the trick at any time, and then the *Crier* correspondent would be able to open communication with his office, if he had been wise enough to linger ashore.

Tannard's feelings were of an indigo shade. In spite of his natural optimism he could not but fear failure at this point. And after he had been inspired to such heroic measures, too!

VII

The launch suddenly bumped solidly into the floe; he reversed, but her bow was stuck and the next instant the crushed ice lapped against the stern.

It was a veritable "squeeze," and he wondered, momentarily, if the force of the driven ice would lift the launch completely out of the water.

He turned, however, to reassure the girl and found her smiling!

"You can do no more, Mr. Tannard," she said. "I am going into the shelter of the cabin. If there is a lantern there we might light it and it would, I believe, help us to keep warm. We are castaways, are we not?"

"It looks so—for the time," admitted Tannard, ruefully.

"Then we must display our ingenuity and rise to the dignity of other castaways," declared the girl, creeping into the cuddy.

The *Star* man found the lantern and lit it. Fortunately there was a supply of oil in a corked bottle; but there were no other stores—not a crumb to eat.

The temperature of the close little cabin rose immediately and the girl expressed herself as comfortable. Tannard could not be content to remain inside, however, when for so serious a reason he desired to reach the shore.

When he ventured out again he found the wind had fallen, but the ice field was a more immovable mass than ever. The launch was solidly packed in by the drift and the field was welding together so that a "scooter" would have been of more service to them just then than a water boat.

And then suddenly a new idea smote the troubled mind of the reporter. Jack Frost was fast making a bridge between the launch and the shore. Why could he not walk to land, get assistance for the girl, and wire his story before it was too late for the early morning editions of his paper?

He tested the ice alongside with an oar. It seemed firm and he leaped out upon it. He ran all around the launch, and then went a little way inshore. The idea seemed practicable. The launch lay only about a mile and a half from the land.

But he would not go without warning the girl and telling her why he would try this venture. It would look like desertion did he do so; but he feared her objections, too.

Nevertheless, she had shown so much

pluck and good sense already that he looked into the cabin and broached the idea with some confidence. He would try walking ashore, as the whole field seemed now pretty solid. He would send back help to her at once, even before he wired his newspaper.

"It's a splendid idea, Mr. Tannard!" she declared, beginning to wrap herself up again, preparatory to going on deck. "I had no idea it would freeze so quickly."

"It is very cold out here," he said. "You would better stay where you are. If the ice is ordinarily smooth I think I can get some kind of a sled out here in a couple of hours, and men to draw you ashore."

"Why, you don't think of leaving me behind!" she cried, smiling.

Tannard was speechless. He had never in his life seen such an obstinate female!

She was ready in a moment and stepped confidently down upon the rough ice before he could aid her. What could he say? Refuse to bear her company? That would indeed have been foolish. And how could he restrain her if she wished to make the trial.

He took her gloved hand and they started forth from the launch in the most direct line he could choose for the shore. There was light enough still for them to see the way clearly.

And a rough way it proved to be. There were open pools to circuit, too; and some patches that were merely scaled across and would not bear their weight.

Once Tannard stepped upon a crust of slush and slumped through to his knee. It was the only time the girl showed the least dismay; but she screamed when he sank beside her, and her vigorous grasp on his shoulder helped raise him up!

The cold was more serious, however, than the perils of the ice field. The frozen bay was as exposed as a wind-swept mountain-top and the air seemed to cut through their garments, warmly as both were dressed. The girl's face grew pinched and wan long before they drew near to the shore, and she finally had to cling to his arm that he might the better guide her stumbling feet.

Their approach on the ice was sighted by a number of people, and finally several more venturesome men and boys came out to meet them. But the girl would not let Tannard leave her and hurry ahead.

"No, no!" she cried. "I can trust *you*, Mr. Tannard. You must take me to the hotel—where I can get at a telephone, too."

And he did so, even before he hurried away to the station to send his report to the paper. He was more than an hour doing this and making sure that the stuff was on the wire, having to bribe the operator to stay on duty after hours to get the message through. It was good stuff and he knew his city-editor would say so!

Then he went back to the Dominick House to inquire for Miss Danielson. To his amazement she was entirely recovered from her exposure and was making ready to take the late train to New York. Tannard was taking that train himself, but he had had no idea she would go with him.

"So, Miss Danielson, you found that telephoning would not do after all?" he said, diffidently, when they were seated together in the train.

She looked at him rather oddly for a moment, and then said:

"I did not telephone, Mr. Tannard."

"Indeed? You did not find communication cut off between Bay Shore and New York, did you?" he added, feeling some shame at the trick he had played with the wires.

"I do not know. I did not inquire. But, I tell you frankly, Mr. Tannard, I felt that it was due to *you* that I should not 'phone, after all."

He looked at her in blank amazement and a little smile hovered about her lips again.

She went on to explain:

"You really saved my life, Mr. Tannard. What should I have done alone out in that launch? I would have been there yet had it not been for you. *I could not spoil your beat after that!*"

"What's that?" gasped Tannard.

"I fancy that you are mistaken in

my identity, Mr. Tannard," she said, laughing aloud. "What a disappointment to learn that instead of being a millionaire's niece, I am only plain Miss Brown—Susette Brown. I chanced to go to school with Ardelia Danielson; it was she you saw me with on the *Princess Therese*. She is a good sort, is Ardelia.

"I had been over to London for a short visit and was coming home on the same steamship. The *Crier* wired me to interview Mr. Danielson when it was learned he was aboard. But he would not talk with *me*; he does not approve of female reporters.

"Ardelia invited me to remain with her and go on the *Pequot* last night, so I agreed to cover the conference today for my paper. Mr. Towney was kind enough to tell me all that the gentlemen decided on—"

She broke off suddenly, seeing Tannard's face. Then she laughed again.

"You are surprised, Mr. Tannard? I know the ethics of journalism perhaps demanded that I should let you take me ashore, save my life, and then I should have stolen your thunder by telephoning my story in ahead of yours. And I *did* start from the lighthouse with that determination.

"But, you see, this is really out of a woman's sphere, *this* kind of reporting. I shall tell my editor so. And you deserve your beat, too!"

Tannard was suddenly conscious of a heart-felt delight that she proved not to be the millionaire's favorite niece. He said so, and perhaps he said it so warmly that *that* was the reason for the blush that stole over Susette Brown's face.

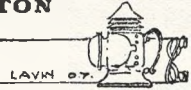
However, they grew very friendly on the slow train into town and Tannard earned an invitation to call on her mother and herself. He is calling yet. When he feels himself to be even better acquainted with Susette than he is already, he is going to ask her why she tipped him off that day on the *Princess Therese*, to the time and location of the conference?

It would be interesting to know that.



The Adventures of Bromley Barnes

By GEORGE BARTON



No. I.—THE CASE OF THE MUTILATED BIBLES

BROMLEY BARNES will appeal to the reader as a new character in fiction, associated as he is with the Customs Service, a branch of the Government with which the story writers have, singularly enough, concerned themselves but slightly. MR. BARNES mingles a reading of the great American humorists with his digging into the core of mystery, and the contrasts afforded are no less whimsical than they are astonishing. The records of BROMLEY BARNES' exploits, each complete in itself, will appear month after month. If you read this story you will want to read all the others.

BROMLEY BARNES sat in a cosy chair in his handsome bachelor apartments overlooking Washington Square, complacently chewing away at the end of an unlighted cigar. His friend, formerly a chemist and fellow employee in the Customs Service, but now a lawyer, had been scolding him for leaving the Service but the old man smiled and said he was having, for the first time in his life, the luxury of an uninterrupted reading of the books in his collection of the Great American humorists.

"Have you heard from the authorities since you resigned as Chief Investigator of Customs?" asked Forward.

"No," retorted the veteran, "and what's more, I don't want to hear. I'm satisfied to sit in front of the open fireplace and read Artemus Ward, Josh Billings, Bill Nye, Eugene Field, and the rest of 'em. Let others do the work. I'm getting older every day; I'm moderately well-to-do, and there's no reason in the world why I shouldn't spend the remaining years of my life in peace instead of rushing about in pursuit of rascally smugglers."

Forward shook his head very skeptically.

"There isn't another man in America who could solve the problems you've solved. You've saved millions for the government. Who else could have foiled the filibustering plot in the 'Cargo of Mixed Pickles?' Who else could have uncovered the mystery back of the 'Missing Suit Case?'"

Barnes chewed savagely at the end of his unlighted cigar. He spoke in short, jerky, sentences.

"You overrate me, Forward. I simply used common-sense. Ninety-eight men out of a hundred are grossly careless. They're devoid of the sense of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and feeling. I use 'em all, and cultivate the habit of observation. But I've done my share of work and now I want to enjoy a sixth sense—the sense of rest."

A clattering noise on the stairs and the hurrying footsteps in the hallway interrupted the talk.

Barnes arose, with a frown.

Forward's look was a question.

"Yes," answered the old man, with a sigh, "it's Clancy, and he's coming

here with a smuggling case that's so bad the Customs' people can't do anything with it."

"Take it then; take it by all means!" cried the lawyer.

"It's all right for you to talk that way," retorted the chief, "since you've been admitted to the bar and appointed United States Attorney, you hand out orders like a judge on the bench."

"I wish you would take it," said Forward, appealingly. "I can try these cases so much better if I take part in developing the evidence."

"But I'm not a detective," insisted Barnes, doggedly.

"Of course you're not a detective," said the lawyer, humoring the whim. "You're a Specialist."

"Specialists don't handle every case that comes along," commented the old man, half mollified.

"No," was the shrewd response, "only the curious cases."

"That don't sound bad," mused Barnes, 'Specialist in Curious Cases.'

At this point the door opened and Cornelius Clancy, disheveled and out of breath, hastened into the room.

The chief waved his hand toward a chair.

"Take a seat, and when you've recovered, tell me all about the case."

The little man looked at Barnes from out of bulging eyes. For a moment he was speechless.

Finally he stammered:

"Why—how—how did you know there was a case?"

Barnes chuckled softly, and murmured:

"Never mind about that; get rested and then tell me about it as intelligently as possible."

"It's about Sam Mills, who came on the *Oceanic*," sputtered Clancy.

"What about him?" asked the chief.

"There didn't seem to be anything wrong with him. He only had one steamer trunk; it was searched and contained nothing dutiable. So we passed him."

"How was he dressed?"

"He wore a big storm ulster, a fur cap, and boots that came to his knees"

"Oh, Con! Oh, Con!" interrupted

Barnes, with a gesture of whimsical despair. "A man wearing Siberian clothing on a balmy day in October, and you passed him!"

"Why, chief, we never thought—" began the little man.

"Of course you didn't think," interrupted the old man. "That's why you're here now to get my help. But go on. What was the sequel?"

"The sequel came an hour after Mills landed. It came in the shape of this telegram from Washington," and Clancy handed Barnes a little slip of yellow paper.

The chief read it at a glance. The typewritten message said:

Arrest Samuel Mills, a passenger on the *Oceanic* due at your port this afternoon. Suspected of smuggling.

"When did he land?"

"Yesterday morning. The *Oceanic* arrived twelve hours ahead of time."

"What have you done since then?"

"We've arrested Mills; found him at an apartment-house in Harlem this morning. He's in a cell now."

"That's something," commented Barnes.

"It's something, but it's not much," moaned Clancy. "We've searched Mills, made him strip to the skin, and all that sort of thing. We went through his rooms, too, but there isn't a shred of evidence against the man. He calls his detention an outrage on an American citizen and threatens to sue the collector for false arrest. We were strongly tempted to release him."

"You haven't, have you?" cried the veteran.

"No; not yet. You must help us out with this case."

"What did he do after he was arrested?" inquired Barnes.

"He asked for a Bible—said he'd have to have something to relieve the horror of his situation."

"That don't sound much like a thief or smuggler," interjected Forward.

"Did he get it?" asked the chief, ignoring the interruption.

"Yes, sir, they got him one."

"What else did he want?"

"Pen and ink."

"What then!"

"In a half hour he asked me to take

a message to a friend—William Turner, of West One Hundred and Thirty-Fifth Street."

"What was it?"

"Simply his visiting card. He slipped it in this envelope."

Barnes reached over, and taking the envelope, tore it open and took out the card.

"Is that according to the code?" asked Forward, who watched the movement interestedly.

"Absolutely," rejoined the chief. "There may be honor among thieves, but the men who pursue them can't indulge in such a luxury."

Barnes walked over to the window to get a better look at the card.

Over the engraved name was penciled:

Have been arrested. Come to see me at once.

Under the name was this jumble of letters and numerals:

R A E B V C X D X E I F X G I H X

The chief looked at this long and earnestly, and then turned to the little man.

"Clancy, go back to Mills and tell him you've delivered his message. After that, by hook or crook, get possession of the Bible and bring it to me."

The assistant departed without a word.

Barnes sat down before a little table in the corner of the room.

"Forward," he said, "kindly hand me that deck of playing cards."

The chemist did so.

Barnes shuffled the cards and began to lay them down one at a time.

"What's that?" queried Forward.

"Solitaire."

"But why are you playing it?"

"It's my mental cock-tail," was the smiling response.

"Your mental cock-tail?"

"Precisely. When I have a problem to solve, I stimulate my brain by indulging in a game of solitaire. I find it a bully thing to sharpen my wits."

"What particular form of the game are you playing now?"

"This is called 'Anno Domino.' It takes one entire pack of cards. The tableau is formed by the four founda-

tion cards you see here—one of each suit. Each suit is so selected that if the families are successfully completed, the result will be the date of the year."

"That looks good."

"It is," said the chief, indulgently.

"Now, Forward, if you'll kindly leave me to myself for a few minutes, I'll be obliged to you."

The chemist walked to the window and gazed out at the big marble arch in Washington Square while Barnes concentrated his mind upon his game.

A little more than half an hour passed and the chief arose with a shout of triumph. Almost at the same moment Clancy burst into the room carrying the coveted Bible.

The chief grabbed the volume from his assistant and turned the pages hastily.

"Mutilated!" he muttered. "Just as I thought—mutilated!"

The others looked on amazed.

"Forward," called the chief, after a moment's thought, "go to that bookcase over there and get me a copy of the Bible."

The chemist obeyed.

"There are several Bibles here," he called out.

"That's so," assented Barnes. "Bring me the Douay version."

Forward did so.

The chief opened it at a certain page and rapidly scanned the printed words.

He gave a cry of joy.

"It's all right! Clancy, order an electric cab at once. We've got to do things this afternoon, and we've got to do them quickly."

Clancy started off at a run. Before he had reached the bottom of the stairway Barnes appeared at the landing.

"I say, Con."

"Well?"

"While you're out, you might buy a spade, too; it may be a handy thing to have in the cab."

"A spade?"

"Yes," chuckled the chief, "an ordinary, every day, common garden spade."

As his assistant disappeared, Barnes returned to his room, rubbing his hands together and talking to himself more than to Forward.

"My," he muttered, "how commonplace things do disturb some people. I call for a spade and the whites of Clancy's eyes come out like two fleecy clouds in a blue sky. I s'pose if I'd sent for Cleopatra's needle it would have seemed perfectly reasonable."

He walked up and down the narrow apartment with his hands behind his back and his head sunk between his shoulders, wrapped in deep thought. Five minutes passed in this way, and at the end of that time, Clancy came clattering up the stairs with the announcement that the cab was at the door.

"Did you get the spade?" asked the chief.

"I did," grinned the little assistant.

"Am I to go along?" asked Forward.

"Assuredly," laughed the old man. "We may need a doctor before we get through."

"And might I ask—" began the chemist.

"What we're going to do first?" interrupted Barnes. "Certainly." "I've put this card in a fresh envelope and Clancy is going to carry out his promise to Samuel Mills by delivering it to Mr. William Turner at his rooms on West One Hundred and Thirty-Fifth Street."

It was dusk when the cab left Washington Square. Broadway was reached at a time when the enormous traffic of the metropolis was at its height. But the chauffeur was a trained operator and he guided the machine in and out of innumerable lanes of wagons, trucks, carriages, trolley cars, and pedestrians without an accident and indeed without so much as scratching the paint on the highly polished electric cab.

It was quite dark when they arrived at their destination. The cab was stopped three or four doors from the house of which they were in quest. Peering through the window, Barnes noticed that a real estate agent occupied the lower part of the large apartment house.

"Clancy," he said, "what floor does your friend Turner occupy?"

"Fourth story back."

"All right; you take Mills' card to

him. Keep your eyes open. Note the contents of the room; in fact, note everything. Then come back to us and await further developments."

Clancy alighted from the vehicle and entered the One Hundred and Thirty-Fifth Street house. As he did so another man came out, and while he walked past the cab, the lights from the electric lamp shone brightly on his face.

"By George!" gasped Barnes, glaring at the stranger, and gripping Forward by the wrist, "but the game is working out to perfection."

"What is it?" asked the chemist.

"Nothing—at present," answered the chief, and he lapsed into silence.

In a few minutes Clancy returned to the cab, and after the door had been pulled to, Barnes turned to him with a significant

"Well?"

"I handed him the envelope," reported the little man, "and when he opened it and read the card he was very much agitated. After awhile he told me it was all right and that there would be no answer."

"What did you observe?"

"The room was barely furnished. On a table were some papers and a Bible."

"Fine! Fine!" ejaculated Barnes, unconsciously grasping Forward by the wrist.

"I learned something else," ventured Clancy.

"What was it?"

"Mills had this same room the day before Turner came there."

"Very good, and where might you have learned this interesting fact?"

"From the housemaid," was the answer, with a sheepish expression.

"Oh, you rogue. Turner will leave soon. Now, I suppose if it were necessary for you to go back to that room, the housemaid might be of some assistance."

"That's what I thought, sir."

"Bully for you, Clancy."

For ten minutes after that the trio in the cab sat in silence.

"Will he come out soon?" ventured Forward, after a while.

"That depends on his own wit," replied Barnes. "If he has ordinary in-

telligence, he should come rushing through that doorway within the next thirty seconds."

The words were scarcely out of his mouth when the door was flung open and Turner came hurrying to the sidewalk. He paused for a moment and then hastened in the direction of a drug-store on an adjoining street.

"He will try to get a cab," whispered Barnes. "If it is drawn by the usual broken-down nag used by the night-hawks, all will be well; if not, we have a wild race ahead of us."

"What shall we do first?" queried Forward.

"I must see his room," said the chief. "Come with me, Clancy. If there's any trouble in getting in you may have some influence with that housemaid."

The chief and his assistant opened the door and started for the fourth floor back. The staircase was dark and narrow and their progress was slow. As they reached the fourth floor they were almost dazed by the glare of the light. Turner, in his haste, had left the door of his room wide open and the gas on at full flow.

Before Clancy could speak, Barnes was in the room and making a bird's-eye survey of its contents. He made a rush for the table, and grabbing up a book, turned the pages with great rapidity.

"A Bible!" he ejaculated. "Another Douay Bible! And mutilated, too! This is luck."

A blue print containing tracings stood on the table. One part of it was marked with a pencil. With a grunt of satisfaction Barnes picked this up and thrust it into his pocket.

The torn half of an envelope lay on the floor, and this, too, Barnes picked up and scrutinized carefully.

The fragment was as follows:

nson erly rica.

The old man turned it upside down and sideways, but could make nothing of it.

"Come!" he called suddenly. "We have no time to waste here. We must hurry or we'll lose this game."

As they stumbled down the stairway,

a little white object on the third step attracted his attention.

Barnes stooped down and picked it up. It was another torn half of an envelope.

He compared it with the fragment in his hand, then gave a shout and struck Clancy a resounding whack on the back with the palm of his hand.

"What—what—do you mean?" stut-tered the young fellow, breathless and red in the face.

"That's sheer joy, my boy!" cried the old man, gayly. "Our case is complete—only stupidity can now rob us of the victory."

In another moment they were in the electric cab. Barnes called out to the chauffeur before he pulled the door to.

"Go straight south and stop at the first telegraph and cable company office you reach."

As the cab moved noiselessly along the asphalted streets the old man pulled out two fragments of paper and put them together in view of his companions.

Six eyes came together in the cab and this is what they read:

J. K. Johnson,
Kimberly,
South Africa.

"What does it represent?" asked Forward.

"A link in the chain," was the terse response.

The cab came to a sudden halt. The sound of ticking telegraph keys sounded on the night air.

Barnes leaped out of the vehicle and in four or five strides was at the desk writing a cablegram. It was directed to the United States Consul at Kimberly, South Africa, and instructed him to arrest J. K. Johnson and to hold him a prisoner pending further orders. This disposed of, he began writing a telegram to the Superintendent of Police of New York City. It instructed him to arrest Isaac Marconi, jeweler, of Maiden Lane.

Clancy, who had slipped into the office and was looking over his shoulder, said:

"Where does Marconi come in in this adventure?"

"Did you notice a man coming out of Turner's house as you went in?"

"No."

"Of course, you didn't. Well, I did. The man was Marconi. He's a shady character. He's been on my books for some time. So we'll just lock him up on suspicion."

The cable and the telegram dispatched, Barnes and Clancy returned to the waiting Forward.

As they entered the cab, the chief called to the chauffeur:

"Now for Utopia as fast as electricity will carry you."

The operator sat motionless with a stupid expression on his face.

Barnes broke into a hearty laugh.

"I forgot; maybe you never heard of it. Well, it's a city—a boom city. Five dollars down and five dollars a month."

"How do I get there?"

"Cross the Williamsburg bridge and after that go like fury until you get into the outskirts of Brooklyn. It's almost a straight line, but if you're in doubt, I'll guide you all right."

The man asked no further instructions but pulled the lever and the cab was soon whizzing down the street.

It seemed but a few minutes before he reached the entrance to the bridge. He put on more speed at this point and the machine whizzed over the river like some great bird—regardless of speed laws. The lights on the bows of passing steamships below flickered uncertainly, and before the astonished riders realized the fact they were speeding through the streets of Brooklyn, and heading for the suburban city of Utopia.

Barnes put his head out of the window from time to time and instructed the chauffeur.

As they passed the paved streets of the city and struck the dirt roads of the country, Forward began to show signs of impatience.

Finally, he said, with a tinge or sarcasm in his tones: "Barnes, you haven't been drinking?"

"Not if I except the glass of sherry I had with my lunch."

"And, of course, you're not losing your mind."

"Heaven forbid!"

"Then why this insane ride into the country? Why this spade in the cab? Why this whole preposterous performance?"

The old man chuckled with glee. He put his hand on the chemist's knee.

"My friend, you're a learned man, a scientific man, but there are things going on in the world about you of which you are in complete ignorance."

"What do you mean?"

"Be patient for a few minutes and the problem will solve itself."

There was dead silence in the cab for fifteen minutes.

After that Barnes shouted to the operator:

"Stop here!"

He did so, and the three men alighted.

A great barren waste of land confronted them, but it had all been carefully laid out in building lots. A big wooden sign informed the wayfarer that this was the site of the city of Utopia, and that the low price of the lots made an immediate purchase imperative.

Barnes stood gazing over the land.

"What are you looking for?" asked Clancy.

"The City Hall," was the grinning retort.

But the idle jest only momentarily covered his real purpose. He pulled the blue print from his pocket and scanned it carefully.

"Where's the foundation walls?" he muttered half to himself. "Where's the corner stone—every city has one."

The others followed Barnes as he potted from one lot to another. Presently they came to a plot of freshly disturbed earth.

The chief gave an exclamation of satisfaction.

"Quick!" he cried. "The spade!"

Clancy brought the implement, and at the command of his superior began to dig. The earth flew. One spadeful after another was tossed into the air. It was a cloudy night, but the chauffeur backed up his machine so that the glare of the headlight fell full upon the operation. They presented a curious sight as they stood watching the lusty young Irishman at work.

"Whose grave are we digging?" asked Forward, with a feeble attempt at humor.

No one answered. There was perfect silence save for the dull echo of the clods of earth as they were thrown out of the rapidly deepening hole.

Presently the spade struck a hard substance and the thud aroused the instant attention of the curiously assorted quartet.

Clancy, in his excitement, jumped into the hole, and in half a minute was out again with a big square wooden box in his two hands. It was fastened with brass hooks.

Barnes tore them off with his clasp knife and opened the wooden box. Within it rested one of the velvet covered cases commonly used by jewelers. It bore the name of "Marconi," of Maiden Lane.

The lid was lifted and the contents caused the four men to start in amazement. There, reposing on a downy bed of soft satin was the most magnificent collection of precious stones they had ever gazed upon. Diamonds, pearls, garnets, sapphires, and emeralds lay in reckless and elegant profusion.

Before they recovered from their astonishment Barnes whispered sharply.

"Quick, hide! Cover the headlight of the machine."

There was a scampering, followed by silence.

Just as they were securely hidden behind the cab, a big ulstered figure emerged from the darkness.

Barnes and Clancy recognized it immediately as Mr. William Turner, of One Hundred and Thirty-Fifth Street. The man carried a dark lantern.

As the bull's eye struck the empty grave of the gems, he gave a cry of anger. He moved over to look into the hole and at that moment Barnes was behind him, clapping on a pair of handcuffs.

He made no struggle, but as they placed him in the cab, said with a forced smile:

"It is fate."

That night, Turner, Mills, and Marconi were placed under lock and key, charged with being the principals of the biggest smuggling syndicate of

their generation. Thanks to the promptness of the American consul at Kimberly, J. K. Johnson was placed in a South African prison before the close of the same day, thus shattering a gigantic conspiracy which had one end in Kimberly, and the other in Maiden Lane, New York.

It was quite late when Barnes closed out all of the details of the case and arranged the evidence for the convenience of the United States Attorney.

Clancy and Forward accompanied Barnes to his Washington Square apartments. After the old man had gulped down his two cups of coffee and started to chew upon an unlighted cigar, Forward ventured to ask him how he had worked it out.

Barnes chuckled.

"I scarcely needed a game of Anno Domino to brighten my wits for this case. Old Maids would have done. After the first move, it was plain sailing."

But how did you get your first start?"

"When Clancy mentioned the Bible, I felt satisfied Mills was a professional, and professionals don't read the Bible for a pastime. When I saw his card with its queer jumble of letters and numerals on it, I was sure the combination represented a code. The Government has its code, business men have their codes—why not smugglers? This one was beautiful in its simplicity."

"How?" cried Forward and Clancy in chorus.

"This is the thing as it is now," replied Barnes, holding it up to view. They nodded and looked at the card.

R A E B V C X D X E I F X G I H X

Barnes pulled out a soft lead-pencil and erased every second letter.

The result was as follows:

R E V—X X I—X I X

"It did not take a Biblical student," said the old man, "to know that that meant Revelations, chapter the twenty-first, paragraph the Nineteenth.

"I was anxious next to find what Bible he had utilized—you know there are many versions of the Scriptures. Well, Clancy brought me the book—it was the Douay Bible—and it was

mutilated. The page which should have contained Revelations XXI-XIX was torn out.

I referred to my own copy and found that the quotation was as follows:

And the foundations of the wall of the city was garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald.

This was Mills' notice to his accomplice, Turner, that he had buried the smuggled stuff.

But where?

Our visits to Turner's apartments revealed that.

When the rascal paid five dollars on the first payment of the lot at Utopia, he made the mistake of leaving the plan of the town—with the lots marked—in his room. Marconi exposed himself by being seen coming from that house. Turner gave his Kimberly confederate away by the torn envelope, half of which I found in his room, and the other half on the stairway. The find-

ing of the second mutilated Bible was literally confirmation as strong as Holy Writ."

"How did a shrewd fellow like Marconi get caught in such a game?"

"Why, Mills gave him the precious stones to sell as soon as he got off the ship. Marconi heard the police were after them, and he, panic stricken, returned the gems to Mills, who barely had time to bury them before he was arrested. Turner knew that his pal owned the lot at Utopia. He only needed the cipher message to realize that the precious stones were hidden there."

"They were certainly careful," murmured Clancy.

"They were too careful; that's what brought them to grief."

Forward looked at Barnes with undisguised admiration.

"How do you account for your great success in these affairs?" he asked.

The old man chuckled as he replied:

"Nine-tenth's common sense reasoning; the other tenth's lucky chance."

From the Ledge

By JULES VERNE DES VOIGNES

LIGHT that lantern!" There was a touch half of command, half of entreaty, in the words, though the low vaulted tunnel sent them back in a muffled echo like a mutter. A sallow flame, blue from the dank, flared up for an instant; then, sputtering, went out. A second stick snapped short with a click that was audible to Donough above the far away booming of the surf. With the striking of the third match, the wick of the lantern ignited, smoked an instant, and fell to a steady, luminous glow.

The light revealed Vreeman's huddled

figure bent over the wooden stair on which the lantern rested. The man's face was drawn and colorless; the glint of resentment in his slit-like eyes had given place to a certain craven fear of their mission. He took up the relighted lantern and stumbled gropingly after Donough down the steps.

The spirit-like dance of Donough's light, ahead of him in the darkness, whirled suddenly, and the sturdy form of the young Westerner faced the other man, his lips, in the faint reflection of the light, setting rigidly. At the sudden movement, Vreeman halted, his

eyes dilating now as the sullen, continuous breaking of the surf below them grew louder.

"I want you to tell me where you think she went!" came Donough's voice imperiously. "Was it around toward the Slide or—"

"I think—yes, it was toward the Slide. You see, I didn't happen to be looking—"

Vreeman's unsteady voice fell to a whisper. He stood there confronting the other man stupidly, his gaze held, in spite of him, by the accusing face before him.

"Can't you think, man? There isn't any time to spare!" broke out Donough's hoarse tone. His lithe figure seemed to lift itself and wrap about Vreeman like a vice. "When was it that you first missed her? Speak quick, man! We won't be able to talk when we get beyond that door."

Vreeman did not move. Something clicked in his throat like a mutter that has failed of articulation.

The younger man bent toward him almost threateningly.

"My God, man, are you dumb?" he cried. "How long was it after you got to the hotel before you called me?"

"An hour," gasped the other. "I—we all thought she'd come up ahead with some one of the others. I never dreamed—"

"Never mind—*that!* Where did you see her last?"

Vreeman pointed impotently downward.

"She was down in this first cave for awhile, sitting on a big rock. Then, finally, I saw her wandering off toward the Slide just as we—"

"Did you see her go in any of the other caves along the tier?"

"No. I thought she'd come back and gone up."

"Where were you?"

"We were taking some flashlights in this first cave, and when the guide called us she wasn't to be seen, and I thought—"

"You *thought!* Is there anything you *know?*"

There was overwhelming scorn in young Donough's voice. He forced it back determinedly. There was no time

now to think of aught but the task before them.

"Can't you remember whether she went into the first opening?" he demanded.

"She may have. I don't know," answered Vreeman with dry lips.

"Then we've got to chance finding her there. Are you coming?" Donough's watch flashed close to the light. "We've got an hour to look. After that—"

He felt the other's frightened clutch on his arm.

"An hour? You mean that the tide—"

Donough turned upon him almost savagely.

"It'll be high tide in an hour," he said roughly. "And at flood the water washes every cave in the tier—every cranny—"

Vreeman's whitening face stared back at him.

"But there is some place—a ledge she could climb to—where she would be out of danger?"

"Yes, there are ledges—if she could find them, or didn't get cut off from them by the water. If she went as far as the Rainbow, there is nothing of the sort."

Donough realized that there was brutality in his tone, but harsh thoughts had been welling up in him ever since Vreeman, nerveless with apprehension, had pounded on the door of the little cottage close to the tunnel's mouth, calling out that Miss Hamilton was not to be found—that she must have been left in the sea caves. It was then near midnight, and the moon had gone down, leaving the little, sleeping village a black silhouette above the cliff. Coiling a strong, light rope about his waist, Donough had led the way to the shack which was built over the mouth of the shaft. It was this long, diagonal bore into the heart of the cliff which formed the only accessible means of ingress to the caves.

The little party of tourists, ten in all, had taken advantage of a full moon to explore the caves at low tide—a time which left the moss and shell-fish covered bowlders lining the sea approach dry except for the accumulated slime washed up by the surf. At nine

they had gone down through the tunnel, and at eleven they had straggled up again, in groups of two and three, Lehman, Donough's helper and their guide for the evening, coming last. Donough had sent the man down with them for a reason about which he had not cared to think. It was that Eleanor Hamilton was in the party, and the current rumor up at the hotel was that she was engaged to Hubert Vreeman, a man who was supposed to dabble successfully in stocks and bonds, but whose first meeting with young Donough had disposed of the Westerner neither to confidence in his business skill nor his character.

Donough had known the girl a year before, the summer, indeed, preceding her first season in society. She had been frank and unaffected then, a mere girl who was cottaging for the first time at La Jolla with an only aunt, and was openly delighted with the little town on the Pacific Coast where Donough had gone into the business of making the famous sea caves attractive and easily accessible to tourists. He had bought the strip of cliff commanding a landward approach to the caverns, and with the few thousands he possessed had sunk the shaft a half mile to the sea level and built the tunnel-house, offering personally conducted excursions for the purpose of exploiting the wonders of the caves.

As for Eleanor Hamilton, she had admired him for the type of man he was—bronzed, handsome, chivalrous to a fault, frank as only a man can be who has lived the impressionable years of his life in a big, free country where there is room and to spare. And he, forgetting that many things might stand between her and him, had gone farther than admiration. They had parted with the belief, mutually shared, that she would return the following summer, after her last year in college, and that then—

They had written—occasionally. Donough was not much of a correspondent; he had a good education and inherent promise of ability, but his tongue did him better justice than his pen, whereas Eleanor wrote with ease and he read her letters until they fell to

pieces from sheer handling. Gradually, however, these letters had grown less frequent, and at last, when she returned to La Jolla with her aunt and Vreeman, Donough realized that she had changed.

He was thinking of that change now, as he went on quickly toward the big door at the bottom of the shaft which communicated with the first cave in the tier, and it seemed to him that it must be Vreeman who inspired it. The man was not a type which Donough could admire, and now his rising disgust at the fellow's insidious excuses for his conduct of two hours before had driven him away even from toleration. The thought that Vreeman, blatant and uncaring, heedless of everything but the young women with whom he was bandying words, had returned to the hotel without a thought for the safety of Eleanor Hamilton, whom he had escorted on the down trip, stung young Donough to anger.

His lantern flashed upon the broad, heavy-timbered door before him. It marked the end of the tunnel, and its massive hulk attested to the might of the sea which sometimes sluiced far enough within the cave to break and hurl its spray against it.

He set the lantern down and, wheeling, faced Vreeman's vacillating figure, measuring the slickness of the man's attire, which was strangely incongruous with the ashy hue of his skin and his trembling hands. As they stood there, the trickling of water running from the crevices in the rock beyond the door, with the regular boom of the rising tide like a muffled drum, came only faintly to their ears; yet in it was a suggestion of the powerful maelstrom which was churning up faster and faster within the caves.

"Listen!" came Donough's hoarse tones. "When we're on the other side of that door, we won't have much time to waste in speculation. We'll have to act, even while we're thinking how to act. We won't be able to hear each other unless we shout, and what I decide to do to find her goes. You're to obey me! You understand?"

Vreeman nodded. He did not appear able to speak.

"You understand?" repeated Donough, harshly. "You're to obey. No questions. Have you thought out where you saw her last—exactly?"

Vreeman's lips moved almost inarticulately. The younger man's blazing eyes seemed compelling him to speak, whether he would or no.

"I think—I think it was the first opening she went into—the first toward the Slide," he got out. "I don't know the name of the cave. I—I didn't see her come out."

"How long was that before you came up?"

"I don't know. Maybe a half-hour. We were taking pictures—"

Vreeman's whining excuse goaded Donough to a sudden loathing of the man.

"I wish to goodness," he cried out suddenly, "that I knew where she is. If she's gone farther than the first cave joining this—there are six of them in all, and to waste time in searching—it won't be long before minutes will reckon high!"

A spark of sullen resentment shot from Vreeman's eyes. Through his dazed brain there began to burn a slow suspicion of the strong emotion in Donough's voice. He leaned forward, his jealousy getting the better of his fear.

"You—you seem a good deal anxious—"

His sneering tone was lost in the in-rushing water, as the big door swung slowly open on its well-oiled hinges. Donough, picking up his lantern again, gave a sharp order.

"Come on! Look out where you step, and keep your light out of the wet by all means!"

The long flight of wooden steps had ended, and they stepped beyond into a huge, vaulted cavern to the top of whose high arch the lanterns sent flickering beams of light. Monstrous boulders, coated with slippery sea-weed and slime, floored the cave. The mounting shadows of deep fissures, like black, marble columns, led the remoter recesses of the cavern, but ahead, through the great V of the seaward opening, loomed an illimitable field of white foam, the hiss of its millions of bursting bubbles a continuous undertone to

the thunderous crash of the surf as it rolled in upon the reef.

Donough halted a-top a big boulder and raised his lantern aloft, calling out the girl's name as he searched the cave with the light. The echoes of his shouts were drowned almost instantly in the roar of the breakers. But there was no answer, though he waited tensely, straining every sense to pierce the blackness, for many minutes.

"Bring that light here!"

With the lightness of a cat, he had leaped from rock to rock until he stood just within the seaward opening of the cave. The foam curlers lapped at his boots as he raised his own lantern, peering out around the point; the surf was breaking higher with each in-rush. Minute by minute, it was becoming more dangerous to pass the jutting pillar of granite which divided the first cave from the second in the tier. And there was no certainty that, once within the cavern beyond, he would find the girl. She might easily have wandered on, he knew not how far.

As he crouched there in a torture of indecision, with Vreeman's taut, cautious figure creeping over the rocks toward him, he thought of her face as had seen it that afternoon. She had passed him, driving in a showy trap with Vreeman, who had scarcely lifted his eyes as she bowed. It was the second glimpse Donough had had of her since her arrival, and he had not cared to think how much her coldness had hurt him. From the first, before the report of her engagement to Vreeman became widespread, he had shrunk from calling upon her at the hotel. The punctilious, exclusive deportment of the party with which she was had repelled his simple tastes, vastly different as it was from her cozy cottage home of the previous summer. And the idea had generated quickly in his mind that Vreeman must have been engaged to her at the time that her letters had ceased to come.

He had longed unspeakably for some word from her. Somehow, he had almost believed that she would come down to the shaft-house where he spent his days—would make some effort to see him alone. But she had not come;

she seemed inseparable from Vreeman. They drove together; made excursions along the beach; or bowled the afternoon away and danced in the evening. Donough, who before had mingled in the gayeties of the cottagers and hotel guests, was no longer seen. Vreeman had become distinctly repulsive to him. Yet Eleanor's face, despite its seeming coldness, had not lost the infinite sweetness and womanliness which it had always possessed.

He whirled now, with that face before him, and looked at Vreeman. The man's immaculate clothing was wet and saturated with slime where he had slipped in climbing over the rocks and splashed headlong into the accumulated pools between. His dread was lapsing more and more into a cowardly helplessness which showed in his eyes. He confronted now a situation alien to his world—a crisis in which he must trust to the courage and quick action of a man whom otherwise he would not have noticed.

Donough read this more and more, in the brief glance which flashed between them before he spoke. Involuntarily, and as if by contrast, his own muscles tightened perceptibly and a hundred impulses raced through his brain. The man before him could not think. He must!

"Vreeman!"

Donough's voice shot out harshly. It brought the other man's head up with a jerk, his lips mute and questioning.

"Vreeman, I'm going to get around into the cave next to this. There's a chance that she's back in there somewhere. Tie an end of this rope around you and stay here; likely I'll need a line to pull me back. Keep your lantern out of the wet. In ten minutes, if the line's slack, you'll know—"

He leaped quickly back against the wall, a breaking deluge of water washing to his boot-tops and all but extinguishing the lantern he had thrust high above his head. It passed, and he looked toward Vreeman who, drenched to the waist, was struggling for footing. Donough's timely tug on the rope which already encircled the man's body had saved him.

"You'll have to look sharp for rol-

lers!" shouted Donough above the churning of the water. "Put your back against the wall, and brace your feet. I'll need a sound anchor in getting back. D'you hear?"

He was edging cautiously about the rearing pillar of solid rock as he spoke, paying out the rope foot by foot as he went. In another minute, his lantern, shielded from the spray under his coat, had vanished around the point, leaving Vreeman alone.

The peril in which he now realized the girl was, the greswome contrast between the caves at low tide and bathed in tranquil moonlight and this rushing, hurtling deluge of water which drove in at their mouths, the cold, accusing eyes of young Donough—all the unnerving details of the midnight trip numbed the sensibilities of Vreeman, as he waited, staring with fascinated gaze at the white-tipped walls of surf as they rolled in upon the reef.

He stood knee-deep in the water now, with the breakers, their force broken by a protecting boulder in front, washing sometimes to his hips. In the flickering lantern-light—he held the lamp in the crook of his arm—the cave floor gleamed a dirty white, a hissing inferno of bursting foam bubbles. Without, the warning boom of the surf was rising.

Above it all, his straining ears caught the raucous shouts of Donough, calling out the girl's name in the adjoining cavern. He felt the tension of the line lessen, and took it as a sign that the younger man had reached securer footing in the second cave. Fumbling in his pocket with his free hand, he brought his watch close to the light. It was half after the midnight hour. At one o'clock the caves were a maelstrom of lashing waters. Eleanor Hamilton must be found within a brief quarter hour. If not—

The cold perspiration, breaking from every pore in the man's body, set him shivering. Though he listened tensely, Donough's muffled shouting seemed to have ceased, or perhaps he had penetrated farther into the cave or the pounding of the surf, grown louder, stifled the sound. The sudden thought that the cessation of the calling might

mean that the girl had been found off-set, for an instant, the leering terrors of the blackness around him.

The pull on the line began once more, tightening steadily second by second until Vreeman's breath came hard and his muscles were taut under the strain. Pantingly, he wrenched at the rope with his free arm, striving to ease off its crushing draw, his eyes fixed on the jutting pillar about which he expected Donough to appear. Then, unexpectedly, the line slackened; he reeled back against the rock wall, shattering the glass globe of the lantern on the jagged granite. The flame, exposed now to the stiff breeze from the sea, flared up, smoking, and went out. The faint glow of Donough's light, hidden a bit by his coat, hesitated for an instant; then came on precipitately. His deep-chested figure showed disheveled and dripping as he stumbled up, thrusting the lantern out in front of him to pick his way.

"Where's your light?" he panted, splashing to the place where Vreeman stood, cursing in the darkness.

He had seen the lantern apparently extinguished, though the thunder of the surf had drowned the crack of splintering glass.

Vreeman thrust out the chimney-less frame.

"Broke it against the wall when you let loose!" he croaked, his face a sickly white as he lunged forward, clutching Donough's sleeve. "You—you didn't find her?" he choked.

"She wasn't there!" Donough's voice was toneless. "I couldn't get in the third opening—the surf would pound a man to death. If she went that far—"

He leaped, covering the lantern with his coat, to the top of the boulder beside him, and flattened against the wall. A heavy wave drove in, sending up a drenching deluge of spray as it slued against the rocks. Vreeman, wallowing in the slough, sputtered and shook himself free of the foam like a rat. He hurled the ruined lantern from him and clambered upon the stone where Donough stood.

"She wasn't there, you say?" he almost screamed.

Donough's eyes burned back at him.

"No! You understand? I couldn't look farther—couldn't get through! Even where I went, if I hadn't had the line, I couldn't have made it."

Vreeman's lips were moving impotently. Realization was creeping over him at last like the awakening to a crime committed in drunken stupor.

"Then there's no chance—no chance!"

"One!" The hoarse voice of the young Westerner, even in the bitterness of his despair, was steady. "There's the chance that she went the *other way*—along the cliff."

Vreeman's tapering fingers, blue with the cold, clawed again at Donough's sleeve, his gray face relaxing.

"Then there's a ledge *there*—high enough?" he got out.

"Yes, but the surf washes it for ten minutes at flood tide. She couldn't stand—"

Vreeman's fingers tightened.

"Can you get to her before—before—"

"Can I?" bellowed Donough. "Man, are you asking *me* to risk my neck for the woman you're going to marry?" He jerked out his watch, and thrust it savagely before Vreeman's eyes. "D'you see? It's fifteen minutes till high tide. If I got there with the rope—found her there—I wouldn't have time to tie both of us to the ledge. One or the other of us—maybe both—would be pounded off!"

Vreeman's lips had begun to work convulsively, but he could not speak. A growing horror of the situation flamed in his eyes, and his stricken senses seemed unable to grasp the significance of Donough's words. Then a quiver shot through him, and he clambered blindly down from the rock.

"Which way?" he gasped.

Donough pointed out a white line of breakers beating in at the opposite edge of the cavern's mouth.

"Can't you remember?" he demanded. "You were along that wall two hours ago dry-shod."

The man did not answer. He was plunging ahead, with the water rising to his hips, in the direction Donough had indicated. He had asked for neither lantern or rope, without which he could

hope to do nothing. It was shame which was driving him now,—a shame unpurposeful and unreasoning but lashing him on like a whip. Donough, shielding their one remaining lantern from the spray with his coat, followed.

They reached a half-sheltered bowlder, and Vreeman dragged himself atop it pantingly. The man was exhausted, wasteful as he had been of his strength in the crossing. His eyes had the senseless stare of a man who is scourged on by the very fear he is fighting. Donough's disgust struck him a-fresh. In that moment, all the execrable weakness of Vreeman's mind and body seemed wrecked upon the man himself.

But it was not this which brought back Donough's decision. It was the face of a girl—simple, sweet, tender,—as he had known it before the corroding foppery and selfishness of Vreeman and his kind had tried to stamp her with their mark. And it needed but that face, undimmed even by contrast with her cold little nods of the past few days, to rouse in him all the love that had grown within his heart and could not be effaced.

He stood there, with Vreeman's twitching face before him, fighting the battle with himself and not counting the cost of his victory. If he heeded the call in his heart and tried, in that whirlpool of waters, to reach the ledge, he might be able to save the girl, but there was no such chance for himself. There would be time enough, perhaps, to lash her securely, to make it possible for her to endure that ten-minute ordeal when the rock shelf would be swept by the surf. But for him there would be no such safeguard. He would have neither the strength to resist the terrific pounding of the waves if he attempted to fight his way back to the cave, nor the chance to remain unscathed on the ledge. And why should he, because he loved, sacrifice himself for the sake of a woman who could care for this wreck of manhood before him—who would marry him ignorant of his craven weakness, the meanness of the love he offered her? For she would marry him, Donough told himself; perhaps without a second thought

for the man who had given up his life.

A sudden chill numbed his limbs, but he shook it off determinedly. Eleanor's face had risen before him once again, and once again it was the face of the trusting girl whom he had loved and who he thought had loved him.

Vreeman's croaking voice was shouting in his ear. The man was pointing out along the surf-pounded cliff. He had not moved from his crouching attitude on the bowlder.

"I can't go out there!" he whined. "There isn't time! I'd be—"

"*You can't go?*" Donough's lashing scorn broke savagely. "*You can't go?* And you're going to marry her!"

It was not the physical scruples of the man from which Donough's white soul revolted; it was his moral cowardice, his groveling, wheedling terror of death, the selfish fear of what that Scylla of the surf might wrest from him. All the concealing veneer with which he had been glossed fell from him like a mask, and the repellent fraud of his manhood lay naked.

Once more Donough jerked his watch close to the light. There were seven minutes left—seven minutes before the heavy surf would wash the ledge along the cliff, sweeping it clean with the hungry power of the sea—seven minutes between the girl crouching helplessly there and—the end!

But was she there? Would he, after all, find the rock shelf empty and his struggle futile? What would it be to fight the grim battle on the ledge alone, knowing that she was imprisoned somewhere back in that yawning tier of caves he had been unable to penetrate?

For a disillusioned instant, the price seemed too great—even the victory uncertain. Then, like the surging of the surf rolling in upon them, he felt his love well up and conquer. He turned, thrusting the lantern into Vreeman's hands.

"Hold it up a minute till I can get around that point," he commanded. "When I'm out of sight, get back to the tunnel. I'll have to do what I can without it."

"You—"

The one, hoarse word shot from Vreeman's twitching lips incredulous-

ly. In a flash, he had read Donough's secret, and his insane jealousy fired his eyes with hatred.

"You're mad!" he gasped.

"I'm going to her! D'you mean to hold that light up?"

Vreeman, struggling to a standing position on the bowlder, obeyed shakingly. He had become an automaton which moved only at Donough's commands. The blazing spleen in his eyes alone related him to a man.

The young Westerner, without a backward glance, had plunged into the blackness and toward the towering cliff. The ledge lay to the south—a slanting shelf in the jagged wall of rock which felt the impact of the surf only at that time of year marking the high tides or when winter storms drove a deluging surplus of water in upon the reef. He knew its location—every foot of its approach—even in the pitch blackness of the night.

A narrow in-cut—a gouged-out fissure in the cliff which was always first to fill with water when the tide rose—lay between him and the ledge. It was this deep basin which Donough believed had cut her off from the cave—frightened her, perhaps, so that she had shrunk from the crossing. He knew well enough the effect of that sly, powerful water upon the nerves of the uninitiated. To have wandered, dry-shod, over the rocks and then to turn, unsuspectingly, back, only to confront a silently-gathered lake, sprung apparently from nowhere, was an experience which constantly exposed the tenderfoot to danger—drove him to a panic in which he feared all and attempted nothing.

It was such a situation as this that Eleanor Hamilton had no doubt confronted. If so, the ledge had probably offered her the only seeming means of escape from the encroaching waters. And it was upon this theory that Donough acted.

Once outside the scant circle of lantern light, he hugged close to the cliff, instinctively calculating the strength of the breakers as they rolled in upon him and making his on-rushes between by feeling, not seeing, his way. He had stripped off his coat, and his heaving

chest had burst asunder his flannel shirt at the throat. At each drenching deluge, he blew the salt water from his lungs; then clinched his mouth and nostrils to meet the next. Strong as he was, the sucking undertow caught him now and then, sweeping him off his feet and all but carrying him beyond his depth. When this would happen, the surf would crush him back again against the cliff with a brutal force that beat his breath from him and left him almost at the mercy of the wave following.

He plunged through the deep water of the in-cut, splashing to his shoulders; in another instant he had come to the place where the ascent to the shelf must be begun. As he sprang up it, drawing in his breath with strangled gasps, he shouted hoarsely, and tried to pierce the blackness obscuring the ledge above him.

An answering cry—distinct yet scarcely articulate—came back above the thunder of the surf. It was a cry born of fear, but not that fear which had showed in Vreeman's craven face behind in the cave. For in it was an out-reaching note of trust and of reviving courage—courage that sent a warm thrill tingling through Donough's exhausted, mutinous body. He clung desperately to the rough, natural stairway as another breaker rolled in upon him and rebounded heavily from the rock wall behind. Then, feeling the girl's presence near him though his eyes saw nothing, he crawled pantingly along the ledge, searching for her huddled figure.

"Eleanor!" he cried out suddenly, and touched her.

He heard her sharp little in-take of breath at his voice—the name he had long since ceased to speak, even to himself.

"You've come—Jerry?" she answered. "Oh, I could see the lights and some one going down the other way! I tried to call, but I knew no one could hear—"

She was trembling hysterically in his arms, and for an instant, while she lay there, he forgot his mission, forgot that he was mad to dream that the danger was over, and that she—

"Listen!" he gasped. "I've got to tie you to the ledge. The water will be up here in another minute—in ten minutes more it will fall again. Will you obey me—quickly? There's a knob of rock above us back a little farther. I must tie you to that with this rope."

"But you?" she protested. "You cannot—"

"I'll be all right, dear," he lied, hoarsely.

The last word fell tenderly from his lips; he felt her warm breath on his cheek, and he dared not think what those next few minutes held for him.

"Will you crawl a little farther up the ledge?" he urged, huskily. "I'll have to work very fast!"

Already, he felt the foam tip of a breaker, larger than the rest, break and hiss about his feet. The girl heard it, too, and strove hard to choke back the cry that rose to her lips. Donough was tying the rope about her waist and under her arms: then, leaping back, he groped for the jutting knob of rock and, finding it, whipped the line round and round just below its bulging end, bringing the rope back to secure it again about her waist. He had allowed sufficient length to withstand the rebuttal of the surf, yet not enough to carry her, in its sucking vortex, over the shelf's edge.

He was double-knotting the back-leash when the first scouring breaker of that fateful ten minutes of flood tide struck the ledge. He had seen its warning, white-capped tip, and had flung himself face downward on the rock not to add his weight to the strain on the granite knob to which the girl was fastened. His fear for the inadequacy of its strength rose above his dread of that terrible suction of the water which seemed to be tearing him from the ledge. Then it had passed, and both of them were dripping, but safe.

"Can you stand that ten minutes?" he cried out, crouching before her. "There will be seven—eight more, perhaps. Then—"

"You—what are you—"

"Never mind me!" His entreaty was a choke now, scarcely intelligible. The surf seemed to have pounded his lungs from him. "In nine minutes—"

The second great wave, crashing in from its clear sweep across the Pacific, swamped the ledge. Like dolls, it lifted them on its crest—higher—higher—then rolled on, flinging itself back upon them in a smothering deluge, only at last to draw seaward again, its sly, powerful undertow sucking clean the shelf.

Again Donough had flattened himself on the ledge, his thought for the strength of that slender rope, not for himself. He realized that he was no longer able to keep his clutch on the slippery rock even before he felt himself lifted like a toy and drawn over the edge. As he shot out with the surf's reflex, he seemed to see the girl's outstretched arms reaching impotently toward him.

It was a long time after that when he found himself battling like a mad animal for air. He had been swept far out; numbness was stiffening his limbs; for one, strange instant, he realized the rigor of his sacrifice and courted its speedy end. Then the young, pulsating life that was in him rose and gripped his courage anew. He struck out slowly, with long, deep strokes, toward a goal still unknown, but toward which all his instincts were guiding him.

It was a buoy which his hands touched at last. He knew then how far he had been carried out—just how meager, also, was his chance of reaching the beach to the south, beyond the cliff. But, even in the dead conviction he faced, his thought was of a slender, girlish figure at the mercy of the surf back on the ledge. Had the rope held? Would she be crushed to death against that jagged wall? What if, after all, he had failed to save her, and his act had been wholly, pitifully useless!

Almost unknowingly, he was clinging to the buoy, with the waves breaking over his head and the placid stars winking above. And then, plunging near him, loomed a black hulk like a blotch, seeming at first only an unreal vision to taunt him. A long time after he had remembered that it was a fishing smack, moored there for a week back, he did not attempt to reach it. He was steeling his muscles for the ordeal. For, once he had left the buoy, he

might never find it a second time. The dory was his last hope.

After another long interval he found himself gazing up at the stars, his body pitching with the motion of some floating thing upon which he was sprawled. As he lay there, the far-off glint of flashing lights on the cliff caught his gaze; he twisted stiffly and watched them as they flickered. One dropped down the side of the wall, and after an instant came slowly up again. Then it was dark once more, and the thunder of the surf was in his ears as he closed his eyes.

The hot, morning sunlight was beating through the windows of the little cottage when Donough stirred and awoke. The fragrant scent of freshly-gathered roses was all about him, even to the hair of the girl bending over the bed. He gazed at her a long while, unable to decide what had happened or why she was there,—why she had come to him at last, as he had longed for her to do.

"You are better?" she queried, bending closer and seemingly oblivious to the presence of the little, self-important doctor who was busily mixing medicines nearby.

"Why, have I been sick?" he exclaimed, confusedly. "I—" he put his hand tremblingly to his bandaged head—"I don't know why I should feel—"

A queer smile sprang to his lips as

the state of his weakness came over him.

The face of Eleanor Hamilton sobered as she gazed at him; she was reliving that terrible night when he had come to her on the ledge. Donough met her look wonderingly, as if what he read there were only a dream like the dory—and her rescue—and love!

"Haven't you been sick?" he questioned abruptly, with the simpleness of a child.

"I was not hurt as you were," she answered, softly. "It's been a day since that night—a day and a night—and I have been resting. They got me off the ledge very soon, but you—"

"You mean that I was not found until—"

"Until the noon of the morning after. You had gotten to a fishing boat—"

"I remember now," he said, dully. "And so—so it was Vreeman who finally got you up the side of the cliff?"

A flash of scorn came into her eyes which set his pulses leaping. He turned his face away an instant, striving for self-control if her words should belie her look.

"He told them where he thought I was—after he had let you—"

Impulsively, Donough reached out and laid her hand unresistingly against his cheek. The scorn died out of her eyes then, and she smiled, tenderly,—the smile of the girl who had given him back her heart and of the woman who had learned many things.

Marooned in Mid-Air

By W. HANSON DURHAM

THE stack of the Wampague Woolen Mills was finished. Straight up into the air it towered with its four brick sides tapering from a twenty-foot base to a four-foot corniced cap ninety feet from the ground. The staging had

been removed the day before and the general clutter of construction was being rapidly cleared away, and Billy Nevins, foreman of the Central Construction Company's crew, congratulated himself that the stack was completed

within contract time and without an accident, and he glanced aloft up along the square slanting sides of the giant stack at the rope which hung swaying in the wind.

One end of the rope was run through a stout stationary pulley block at the top of the chimney and a sling seat or "bosun's" chair on the other end, and by seating themselves in the sling seat the men raised or lowered themselves, hand over hand, to and from the top, and it was in this way that the finishing touches of the cap had been made while the scaffolding was being removed, and Nevins was the last man down, and glancing aloft he was about to pull the free end of the rope through the block and sever the last connection with the top when he stopped suddenly as he remembered, in his hurry to get down, he had left his coat behind him on the top of the stack.

He knew the men would finish by the time the whistle blew, and being Saturday night would expect their weekly pay. He kept their time on the company's regular time sheet and that was in the pocket of his coat ninety feet above.

Nevins glanced at his watch and saw that it was almost whistle time; already the men were beginning to prepare to leave, and as the rope hung a little to one side of the stack, he stepped around and slipped into the sling seat and began to haul himself rapidly hand over hand up the steep side of the stack until he finally reached the top and getting a secure hand-hold on the rope above the block, he leaned over the edge for his coat. It lay where he had left it not five minutes before, but just beyond his reach, so carefully steadying the rope, he rose cautiously to his feet and leaned further over the edge of the cornice and tried to draw the coat toward him. It was a long reach even then, but his fingers were just about to grasp it when the sling seat on which he stood, being partly relieved of his weight, tilted a little and swung quickly around and his feet slipped suddenly from the narrow board and left him sprawling and helpless half way over the outer edge of the corniced cap.

The instant Nevins felt his feet slide

from the sling and felt himself slipping slowly back over the edge of the cap, his first natural movement was to let go his hold of the rope and clutch desperately with both hands at the inner edge of the cap to save himself.

For a second he hung helpless, hardly daring to breathe and in that short but awful suspense he heard the rapid run of the released rope through the pulley block as the sling fell back to the ground drawing the free end of the rope through the block after it, and then he heard it fall with a dull thud to the ground below.

Nevins had slipped back in spite of his efforts, so that his chest now rested across the outer edge of the cornice where he clung fast with both hands, his fingers barely reaching and clutching the inner edge, with the strain of his entire weight upon them with the sharp edge of the new brick work cutting agonizingly into his breast.

It is in moments like this that a man either loses complete control of his faculties or his mind becomes suddenly and strangely clear. Nevins felt himself still slipping slowly but surely back and he realized that he could hold on but a moment longer, for already he felt his aching arms growing numb from the strain upon them and with almost superhuman strength, born of mingled desperation and dread of death, he drew himself forcibly upward almost to his elbows, but the sharp edge of the brick cornice cut deeper into his flesh and he sank slowly back a little farther than before, still clinging and clutching desperately.

He knew that it would be worse than useless to waste his breath calling for help from that dizzy height, but hoping that some of the men had lingered long enough to perceive his perilous plight, he turned his head and glanced downward, but the sight of the dizzy distance beneath only caused him to grow weak and giddy, he quickly raised his head so that now his chin barely rested level with the outer edge of the chimney cap.

In that one quick glance downward Nevins saw that the last man had gone, for there were none now in sight. He knew that a hundred men below could

not aid him now and he vaguely wondered how much longer he would be able to hold on and extend the awful agony; then realizing the utter uselessness of it, he was about to close his eyes and let go quickly and have it over, when almost touching his left knee, he suddenly heard the metallic rattle of the pulley block suspended there from a stout iron hook embedded in the solid brick wall.

If he could only summon strength enough in his arms to raise himself a little so that he could reach out and slip his foot into the curve of the hook for a moment it might relieve the strain on his arms sufficiently for him to make another effort to gain the top. He knew his only chance was in his first attempt, for his strength was now too far gone to make a second attempt if he failed in the first.

Drawing a deep breath of hopefulness, he gathered his fast failing strength for his final effort. Slowly, ignoring the agony of the sharp edge of the bricks still cutting deeper into his chest, he forced his straining, benumbed muscles to lift his body inch by inch, and then with fixed frenzied gaze, he held himself suspended there for an instant and groped blindly about with his left foot for the hook, but in vain. He failed to find it!

He had missed the hook! His last chance was lost, for his strength was gone. He could hold out no longer and he began to slip suddenly back over the edge of the cap and then came to an abrupt stop. His left foot had struck and rested secure upon the hook somewhere below and he drew a deep breath of relief. He had raised himself a trifle too far.

In the sense of momentary security that followed, Nevins came nearer letting go his hold than ever, but catching himself barely in time to save himself, he shuddered involuntarily and rested his weight cautiously on his left foot, still clinging desperately to what handhold he still had, and the relief that followed was inexpressable.

Just how long he stood there uncertain how to move, hardly daring to breathe, Nevins never realized. He felt the rush of relieved blood through his

aching arms and he longed, but dared not even ease his cramped and clutching fingers. He heard from below the sudden blast of the mill whistle and he imagined just how the men were hurrying away unconscious of him clinging to the top of that tall tower.

With a feeling of mingled hope and fear, Nevins waited another moment until he felt the return of life stronger in his arms, then again summoning all his strength, he carefully lifted his weight from his foot with his arms and drew himself cautiously upward once more.

Slowly, painfully, inch by inch, by sheer force of strength he strained until he found his elbows on the extreme outer edge of the cap, and with this slight leverage he lifted and dragged his body gradually up until he felt a rest for one knee, then with a final exertion he lurched face forward and fell flat across the top of the chimney, safe but senseless.

When Nevins finally found his senses bewilderedly and realized his perilous position, his first rational thought was now that he had reached the top—how was he going to get down?

Marooned on a desert island high in the air, it seemed to him as he lay a moment motionless, then working cautiously further over he sat up and looked about. It was cold up there on his airy perch. The wind blew cuttingly about him and a full November night chill was in the air, and through the gathering gloom of early darkness Nevins could see far below him, the distant gleam and twinkle of scattered home lights and he began to wonder again how long it would now be before he would be missed and some search made for him. Not before morning, he knew.

He struck a match and shielding it from the wind, he glanced at his watch and was greatly surprised to find that he had been lying there unconscious and exhausted for more than an hour on the extreme edge of the cap and he shuddered as he thought of it. Knowing that it would be utterly useless to shout or call for help or expect anyone to see his position before morning, he slipped on his coat and crouched flat in a huddled heap to wait for the dawn of day.

The brick work on which he lay was cold and comfortless and he was now beginning to get chilled through to the bone, but by constant vigilance he managed to keep awake. At last he heard the clock in the steeple of the village church far below strike ten—eleven and then twelve—with the half hours far between, and with the great gaping mouth of the chimney yawning at his back and ninety feet straight down to the ground before him, Nevins lay on that narrow ledge, wide awake, but sleepy, through the horrible hours that followed.

Still crouching and clinging, Nevins heard the first herald of dawn in the crowing of a rooster somewhere in the world below, and slowly raising his head he looked long and saw the first faint flush of daybreak along the eastern horizon. For another hour he waited wakefully, still wondering how he was going to get down. All that night, through the long weary hours he had kept himself from sleep by the close application to the solution of that perplexing problem. How was he going to get down!

The sun rose slowly higher and a gray, dismal day dawned. Nevins leaned cautiously toward the outer edge of the cap and looked over and down. Evidently the village still slept, for he could see no signs of life anywhere yet and he was about to sink back and wait another hour, when he saw a man with a lantern come suddenly around the foot of the chimney. It was the night watchman of the mill making his last round, and in desperation Nevins seized a small piece of broken brick and dropped it down to attract his attention.

The missile struck sharply on the frozen ground in front of the watchman and he stopped short and stood looking wonderingly about, and then Nevins found and dropped another fragment and called loudly.

"Hullo—down there!"

The watchman turned quickly and looked upward in surprise and saw him there and he evidently understood the situation at a glance for the sling seat and its coil of rope still lay there on the ground at the foot of the stack.

Setting down his lantern he placed his hands to his mouth and called loudly.

"How are you going to get down?"

Nevins heard him plainly and shook his head perplexedly in reply.

"I'll go and rout out the men!" shouted the watchman, and snatching up his lantern he was about to hurry away, when struck suddenly with the possible solution of the puzzling problem, Nevins, shook his head and called loudly after him.

"Hold on! Wait a minute. I'll tell you what to do."

The watchman turned and set down his lantern again and stood waiting as Nevins drew suddenly back out of sight.

With shaking hands Nevins found the time sheet in his pocket and tore off a small piece and then with trembling fingers, he scrawled hurriedly.

Blow up small paper bag with air and attach light line. Open iron door at base of chimney and let draft carry it up the flue to me. At end of line tie stout cord and then I can pull up rope. Hurry, for God's sake! Up here all night!

He wrapped the piece of paper carefully about another bit of broken brick and dropped it over the edge of the cap and saw the watchman pick it up and read it, and then he nodded his head understandingly and disappeared inside the mill.

For several moments Nevins crouched and counted the seconds that seemed to grow into minutes of misery. He wondered even if his scheme was plausible—and would it work? He began almost to doubt it and wondered why the watchman was so slow in following his directions, and then he heard the slam of the iron door in the base of the stack and with but a slight suspicion of hope, he leaned over the inner edge of the flue and gazed down into the black depths and waited.

A moment passed and then another and then suddenly as he crouched there waiting wearily, with hope against hope for the success of his scheme, he saw far below in the bottomless blackness, a white wobbling something, which even while he watched seemed to shoot straight up into his very face, and with eager hands and hope high in his heart,

he reached out his hands and seized it—a small paper bag inflated with air to the end of which he found tied a stout linen thread.

Stronger in the success of his scheme, Nevins seized the thread almost tenderly and began to draw it up carefully until he came to the end, and there securely tied he found a stouter and heavier cord which he drew up and found heavier, for to the end of that was securely tied the end of the sling rope, and coiling that beside him as he drew it up, he at length had it all and then leaning cautiously out over the edge of the cap, Nevins thrust the free

end through the pulley block and run it down to the ground, then swung the seat around, dangling there high in the air.

Still cold and cramped from ten hours of night exposure on the chimney top, Nevins sat on the edge of the cornice and hesitated almost fearfully; then with calmer courage he slipped cautiously over the edge of the cap into the sling seat and lowered himself, hand over hand, down to the ground, and with a muttered mumbled word of thanks to the wondering watchman, he staggered off towards his boarding-house and went to bed.

The Ascension of Elijah Haskins

By F. P. LITSCHERT

THIS International Balloon contest, said the Timekeeper, pitching his three weeks' old newspaper into the Chagres, takes my mind back to the days when the Americans first took possession of things here on the Isthmus, and that makes me think of the time Elijah Haskins made his great ascension at Bas Matachin.

You see, it was this way. Up at the old French magazine back of Jamaica-town there were a great many things stored that did not go on the schedule of property when the transfer was made from the New Panama Canal Company. Elijah was a foreman in those days and had a big bunch of West India negroes, which was officially known as the "labor gang" and did the odd jobs in helping line things up for a start on the actual work of building the canal. In sorting things over Elijah found a zinc lined box about the size of a coffin, all sealed up just as it had come from France years ago.

After thinking the matter over and wondering if he would disturb the last

repose of some one who had selected the old magazine as his final resting place, Elijah decided to risk it, and accordingly the box was opened. Nothing more startling was revealed than a neatly folded mass of silk. Elijah had it carried into the light of day and spread on the ground. He found it was a large silk bag and, after some study, he made it out to be the gas bag of a balloon. There were no ropes or other equipment than the bare bag, and though Elijah had the contents of the magazine turned topsy-turvy he was never able to find the rest of the outfit.

That night he told me of his discovery and asked me what I thought the Frenchies could have wanted with a balloon on the Isthmus, where it is only thirty-seven miles from sea to sea. I was unable to answer his query and, in order to sidetrack it, asked what he was going to do with his prize. He replied that as it was not down on the list of property that had been given to him for his guidance in checking the contents of the magazine, he had decid-

ed to adopt it as his own, and he said that as soon as he could rig up the necessary ropes and basket he would favor us with an ascension.

I asked him if he was not afraid to go up in a balloon in a country where it was only thirty-seven miles from sea to sea. He did not seem to relish this quoting of his own words, and told me to go to Hades, and then intimated his intention of going to bed, which he did and ended the matter for that time.

Well, nothing more was heard from Elijah on the subject, but I knew he was working on his balloon every night down at the shop.

One evening the old man called me into his private office and asked me if I had ever known Elijah or any of his folks back in the States. I replied that I had; that Elijah, like myself, hailed from the good old Hoosier State, and that when we were both in our natural element he lived in the next township to me. Then he asked me if I had ever heard anything in regard to Elijah's being a little insane—dippy, you know. I said I had not.

Then he came out and told me that Elijah had petitioned him for permission to make an ascension at the shops on the following Tuesday, which would be Labor Day. He said there was no objection, as the men would not be working that day, but what he hated was to lose Elijah just at that time. He said Haskins was a fairly good man (you know fairly good is the old man's limit of praise for anyone), and that he did not like the prospect of his labor foreman being carried out to sea just for the amusement of the sharks.

Finally he called Elijah in and talked to him like a Dutch uncle. But was no go. Elijah said he was a free agent and if he could not make his start from the shops he would make it from Gorgona, which, he reminded the old man, was a half-mile nearer the Atlantic and the aforesaid sharks.

The old man replied that it was a half-mile nearer the middle of the Isthmus and, therefore, safer. Elijah came back strong—said the old man wanted to deprive the men working at the shops of their amusement on Labor

Day, in the interest of which he was bound to make his skyward flight.

The result of their argument was that Elijah got permission to make his ascension from the open ground between the shops and the river and to use some old French scrap iron in making gas to fill the bag.

When Elijah had gone back to work I ventured to approach the old man once more and suggested that there was no use to let him commit suicide.

"How in Colon" (the old man says Colon when he wants to refer to the warmest place the preachers have ever invented), said the old man, "are you going to prevent it?"

I unfolded a scheme that had formed in my inventive brain while I had listened to the old man and Elijah fighting it out.

"I will get Elijah to use a long guide or drag-rope," I said, "and if you will find some way to prevent a start being made before dark on Labor Day, I'll guarantee that Elijah will live to see the old ditch dug or Yellow Jack gets him anyhow."

The old man pressed to know how I would do it, but I declined to give out details at that time, they being but hazy in my own mind as yet.

Well, the day came at last and Elijah was on hand bright and early with his balloon, which he had equipped with all manner of ropes, except the guide rope I had spoken of; he had a wonderful and fearful looking basket constructed of split bamboo, the handiwork of a spiggoty across the river. He spread the outfit over the surrounding territory and prepared to fill her up, but found the supply of iron filings was not on hand, and he was informed by the foreman of the machine shop that none would be available until afternoon, when he would start some machines shaving up scrap and Elijah could have gas enough before night to lift the whole Isthmus if he wanted it. In this delay I saw the work of the old man, who was scheming to hold off the ascension until nightfall.

This I deemed the proper moment to approach Elijah on the subject of the drag rope and I sauntered over to the balloon.

He met me halfway.

"Put out that cigaret, you half-spigoty, you," he yelled. "Don't you know better than come around a balloon with fire?"

I made the best excuse I could and then said.

"I don't see your drag-rope, Elijah."

"My what-rope?"

"Your drag-rope," I replied.

"What's that for," he asked suspiciously.

"Why, man alive," I answered, "do I understand that you are about to take a heavenward flight in this antiquated gas bag and don't know what a guide or drag-rope is?"

He replied that he had never heard of such a thing, and I explained that a properly equipped balloon carried a long rope to be trailed below the basket in the event of coming too near the earth, in which case the balloon would be relieved of whatever rope came on the ground, thereby preventing the premature arrival of its passengers on *terra firma*.

He saw the point, but, looking at the wonderful web he had woven over the gas bag with all the available clothes-line, said that he had no rope left. I told him I thought I could get him a rope and I hunted up the store-keeper's chief clerk, and, signing an order, got three hundred feet of quarter-inch line. I would have taken a shorter length of heavier line, but, for certain reasons, I wanted Elijah to have a long rope with him that day.

Returning to Elijah with a pair of grinning Barbadians bearing the line, I explained to him that I had been fortunate and secured the very thing he needed, except—and here I traveled a little out of my usual course of exact truth-speaking—that it was just a little heavy. He replied that it did not matter, since the balloon was made for two passengers and he would have no companion on his journey.

Finally the iron filings put in an appearance and Elijah was busy with his acids generating gas which slowly poured into the balloon. But the best he could now promise was to be ready by sundown, and the old man managed to throw a few minor delays in his

way, so that it was pretty dark by the time Elijah climbed into his bamboo basket beneath the swaying gas bag and gave the word, a little huskily, "Let'er go!"

At the word the men holding the balloon released their hold and she rose slowly and with much stately grace. I had four burly blacksmiths managing the drag-rope and they let it slip slowly through their hands as the balloon rose slowly over the tops of the buildings. I had cautioned everybody to keep still after the departure of the aeronaut, and Elijah, hearing no voices below, must have figured that he had risen to a good height, when he was really about forty feet from the ground. Fortunately it was a still night and the balloon rose straight from the ground until the end of the guide rope was reached. At the height of three hundred feet the balloon showed only as a dark blotch against the sky, so we knew that Elijah would never be able to see anyone on the ground below, even if his land-lubber's head would permit him to look over the edge of the basket.

The end of the guide rope was then securely tied to a steel dump-car and Elijah left floating in the heavens above us. In the meantime the old man had lighted a lantern and started a negro up the track toward town with it. This was done so that Elijah, seeing the light moving away, would be misled into fancying that he was leaving it behind as his balloon drifted away.

The old man and I waited at the office that night until everybody had returned home and gone to bed. Then we unhitched the rope and gently led Elijah and the balloon over to the railroad, which we followed east for half a mile, and then took a trail off into the jungle. We took him back a couple of miles, away from all signs of civilization, hitched the rope to a palm tree and started chuckling back to town.

On the way the old man suggested getting a lot of Martinique negroes to go out there in the morning, as soon as it was daylight, and impersonate savages, so as to make Elijah think the balloon had carried him to some far distant country.

The idea was a good one, and so at

three o'clock the next morning we routed out the interpreter, and swearing him to secrecy, had him call a dozen of his ugliest men, who when the plan was explained to them, agreed to carry it out for a dollar, silver, each. Then we all took the trail for the place where the balloon was tied up.

We found all as we had left it, Elijah peacefully floating in the air two miles from his starting place.

Just as the sun rose and spread a glow over the gorgeous tropical jungle the negroes, stripped and painted, rushed out and caught the drag-rope, one of them untying the slip knot with which it had been secured. They began to pull the balloon down at the same time filling the air with hideous yells, and the old man and I hid in the jungle grass.

Elijah must have been asleep; at least he did not show himself until his basket, rocking and pitching, was within a hundred feet of the ground. Then his face peered over the edge of the basket, and, when he saw what was happening, he began to yell.

"Here, you blamed copper-lined idiots," he roared, "let go of that rope or I will come down there and pound the stove-polish off of some of you."

The negroes could speak no English, but they jabbered in their *patois* at a great rate.

Elijah swore in every day United States and called the savages all the lurid names he had time to think of, but they kept pulling on the rope just the same and then our amateur aeronaut suddenly dropped down on the bottom of the basket. He appeared again just as quickly with a glittering instrument in his hand, and before the old man and I had scarcely time to gasp in our place of concealment, he severed the rope with one slash and the big bag shot skyward.

Out we rushed into the open air, waving our hands frantically and idiotically shouting for Elijah to come down, but it was no use. The last we saw of our friend was a bald, shiny head, stuck over the edge of the basket, and a clenched fist shook vindictively in the direction of the comic opera savages. Then the balloon seemed to

shrink gradually into a dirty brown sphere out toward the Atlantic coast. We watched the bag until it faded into the blue atmosphere, and then with a broken sob the old man turned to me, and I could see the beads of sweat standing out on his face and forehead.

"Shorty," he said, in a husky tone, "we have seen the last of our old foreman, and I feel as if his blood was on our heads."

I tried to say something in way of reply but the words seemed to stick in my throat and in a minute we were trudging slowly and silently back toward town, with our savages following at a respectful distance, and evidently wondering why we took the joke so seriously.

"Elijah don't know any more about a balloon than I do about preaching," continued the old man, breaking the silence for the first time as we turned into Greek George's cantine, where our subconscious mind directed us after we struck the city limits.

The news of Elijah's strange and untimely departure spread like wild fire, and in a few hours the whole town was in mourning, as the old foreman was a friend to everybody.

That evening the train brought word from Colon that Elijah's balloon had been seen passing over Porto Bello that morning.

The next week dragged wearily along, with the old man and I alternating between fits of hope and despair, and then, on Monday morning, the *Alliancia* came steaming into port, bringing with it the bedraggled remains of the fatal silk bag.

The captain stated that he had picked it up near the Island of Navassa about five hundred miles from Colon. When this sad news reached the shops we resigned ourselves to fate and gave up all hope of ever seeing Elijah again in this mortal vale of trials and tribulations, and I sadly drew a line through Haskins' name on the pay roll.

The next few weeks gradually slipped away. The remarkable tragedy of Elijah Haskins had finally passed into ancient history and the threatened revolution in Costa Rica was the main topic of conversation.

The old man and I were in the office one evening going over a tangled account, when all at once the palm trees in the neighborhood were shaken with a tremendous cheer that seemed to come from the direction of the railway station. The outburst was followed by another volley of wild hurrahs, and then the noise seemed to be approaching the shops.

"In the name of the apostles, what is that?" I exclaimed, and the old man shook his head as he looked out into the twilight over his spectacles.

We were not long in finding out, for soon down the long siding came the wildest procession that had ever been formed on the Isthmus. In the center and toward the front was an imposing looking American dressed in a blue serge suit of the latest English cut, set off by a tall black hat, and by his side hanging on his arm and looking fondly up into his face, tripped a gorgeous young woman decked out in all the trappings of a London belle. Behind and on either side of them came ninety per cent of the white population of Gorgona—blacksmiths, machinists, boilermakers, bartenders, trainmen, and clerks, shouting and cheering at the top of their united voices.

The tall man stepped to the door of the office and held out his hand, and then, by the light of our single lamp, we saw that it was—Elijah Haskins. One faint unintelligible gurgle came from the old man's throat, and he clasped the prodigal in a long embrace. Then I caught Elijah's hand in an impressive squeeze, and we stood at arm's length and looked at him.

There was no use trying to talk. The crowd outside was making too much noise for that. Elijah managed to make us understand at the top of his voice, that he had married an English gentlewoman, that the boys were going to have a reception for them at the hotel that evening, and he wanted us both to be there and hear his story. He intimated also that he wanted a few days off to finish his honeymoon, and then he was swallowed up by the howling throng and the procession started off toward town.

The old man turned toward me and

we silently shook hands. Then I pulled out a bottle from my desk and we each took a long, joyful drink.

"Thank God, we are not murderers," said the old man as he wiped his lips. "Shorty, I feel as if a ton of Culebra rock had slid off my shoulders."

We talked the whole thing over from beginning to end, and decided since we had kept still this long we would never disclose to the public that we ourselves had steered Elijah's balloon out into the wilderness and set up a wild Indian job on him.

We figured on getting up to the hotel early after dinner to have a private talk with Elijah beforehand, but when we arrived the crowd was already there.

Elijah was seated in the center of the office with the throng all around him, and from his hilarious appearance we could tell that the boys had already treated him to some of the best the house could afford, in honor of his unexpected homecoming.

Elijah saw us coming and he met us at the door with outstretched hand.

"Enter, my beloved friends," he murmured, in his suavest tone, "and take the seats of honor at this, the happiest occasion of my life."

And he led us to the center of the floor where he had seats reserved for us on either side of him.

"I was just about to begin the story of my strange and marvelous venture, and I was only waiting for you to come, that you, too, might rejoice in the hearing of my bountiful fortune."

Elijah took his seat between the old man and me and began his story. His easy flow of language and unstudied speech convinced me that Elijah had labored long on his narrative to get it in proper shape for just such an occasion as this.

"You all know," Elijah began, with a sweep of his hand that commanded absolute silence from his audience, "how I, Elijah Haskins, a foreman of the Gorgona Shops, one fateful evening eight weeks ago, clambered into my big gas bag, resolved to win fame in the first balloon ascension ever attempted in Central America; none of you probably will ever forget that occasion. After I had examined my airship and

found everything in good condition I offered up a few words of supplication to Deity and gave the word to let go.

"Immediately I felt a downward rush of air, the earth seemed to drop away from me with appalling swiftness and I knew that the voyage was on. At first I felt a nauseating sense of dizziness, but as I reached the upper and thinner air, this feeling left me and I felt my old nerve and daring return. A strong cold current of air drove me southward through the darkness at a terrific rate, but in a few hours I felt a period of drowsiness stealing over me, and as everything was moving along smoothly I lay myself down in the bottom of the basket to sleep.

"When I awoke it was broad daylight and I found that the balloon for some unaccountable reason was stationary. I looked over the side of the basket to see what was wrong and a thrilling sight met my gaze. I was in the midst of a vast wilderness and my drag rope, which was left hanging, had entangled itself in the branches of a tall tree. But graver dangers surrounded me.

"A horde of naked, howling savages had discovered my ship, and securing the end of the drag-rope they were attempting to pull me down to mother earth. In vain I tried to scare them off and when words were of no avail I pulled my revolver and emptied it in their midst. Three of them dropped and two more scampered away howling with pain, but the rest persisted and I had to sever the rope near the basket and make my escape as quickly as possible.

"Once more the balloon mounted the air like a giant bird and returned to dizzy heights. Soon I could see the Isthmus lying below me in the morning sunshine like a sinuous winding snake. Then the ground slipped from me and I was above the rolling, blue Atlantic. In a few moments I encountered a current of air which wafted me in a northeasterly direction and I was soon out of sight of land and surrounded on all sides by a dismal waste of water.

"All day and night I traveled and the next morning I sighted land, and gently opened the valve so that I might de-

scend and see what kind of country it was and get some refreshments if the prospect looked favorable. Pretty soon I was floating along about three hundred feet above the treetops, but I found that the land was only a barren island a few miles in circumference, and I was just about to heave out a bag of ballast and ascend to the skies again, when down on the sandy shore I espied the figure of a beautiful woman on bended knee, with hands stretched toward heaven as if imploring aid.

"The Haskinses have always been known as a chivalrous clan, and none of them ever failed to fly to the aid of distressed womanhood. 'Elijah, you must do your duty,' I thought to myself, and I gave the valve a desperate pull in an effort to reach the ground.

"But I had miscalculated and before I could reach mother earth the island was gone, and I landed in the water about a mile from land. This distance was only child's play for me, and in a few minutes I was standing dripping on the shore trying to wring the salt-water out of my system.

"Then I looked about me for the woman, and soon I saw the beautiful creature coming toward me as fast as her feeble strength would permit.

"I met her half way, and when I came up to her she broke out into sobs.

"I comforted her as best I could and soon she was composed enough to tell me her story.

"'Oh, sir,' she said, 'you are the first human creature I have seen for three days. I am an Englishwoman of high birth and tender breeding. My father is the owner of a big plantation in Jamaica, near Port Antonio. Last Monday, as usual, I went out into the bay with my launch with only provisions enough for one meal. I am a good sailor and frequently make little excursions by myself. But that was my unlucky day. After I got a few miles down the coast my engine went wrong. I gradually drifted out to sea. An unfavorable current took me to the northeast. All of my efforts to attract attention were in vain and it was not until the next day that I landed in this miserable place.'

"I have subsisted on wild bananas. I was praying for aid a little while ago when you passed over me. I think you must have been sent by Heaven as my rescuer. It was so noble and brave for you to risk your life in order that you might assist me. And you have sacrificed your airship, too."

"Of course, being a red-blooded American, my heart was touched by this picture of beauty in distress, and I soon informed the young lady that I would do everything in my power to rescue her. After I had taken a few of the wild bananas myself, I asked her to direct me to the boat and my practiced eye soon discovered what was the matter of the engine. To put it in running order was only an hour's work for me. By noon we were chugging through the briny deep toward Jamaica.

"We arrived at Port Antonio late that night and the old planter was overjoyed to get his daughter back again unharmed. I was overwhelmed with thanks. The old folks made me stay there a week as their guest. Of course the time flew by very swiftly and when the day for my departure came, Imogene—for that was her name—and I took one last stroll through the gardens.

"So you are going away to-day," she asked as we paused beneath a fragrant orange tree. "Again I want to say I don't know how I can ever thank you enough for saving my life."

"As I heard these words a sudden resolution welled up in my heart.

"Imogene," I murmured, "There is only one way you can thank me, and that is by sharing your precious life with me, and I can never dare hope for that."

"After this declaration had forced itself from my lips I stood for a moment with bowed head. Then a suppressed sob called me to my senses and I looked up. The beautiful creature was swaying to and fro with tears in her big blue eyes. In a moment she was in my arms.

"Well, gentlemen, there isn't much more to tell," continued Elijah, as he drained at one gulp a mammoth gin ricky which had been brought in obedi-

ence to an order he had given by crooking his finger in the midst of the love scene he had been detailing a few moments before.

"We were married by the rector on the following Monday. The old folks tried to prevail on me to stay in Jamaica and oversee the plantation, but I told them that duty called me here where my country had a great work to perform—and this, gentlemen," and here Elijah turned to beckon over his shoulder, "is Mrs. Elijah Haskins, who has come like a true wife to share the trials and dangers of the Isthmus with me."

As he spoke a buxom, radiant looking woman came out into the hotel office from a private parlor and advanced smilingly into our midst. I saw immediately that it was the same woman who had accompanied Elijah in the procession that afternoon. The boys were a little bit timid at first, but the new bride smiled so beamingly on us all that in a few minutes she could have had the shyest mechanic on the canal zone eating out of her hand.

After Mrs. Haskins had been introduced personally to all of the leading citizens in the assembly she modestly retired to her room again and the celebrating was on in full blast. We didn't disperse until after midnight, and by that time Elijah was so gloriously drunk that he tried to kiss me good-night, and even the old man looked a little wobbly after he got out into the moonlight.

Of course Elijah was the hero for weeks to come. We did our best to get him back to work, as we needed his services, but there was no use trying. He had to tell that story time and again, whenever any one struck town who had not heard it, and in this way he kept himself in a kind of continual semi-jag. We discovered a little later that Greek George was boarding Mr. and Mrs. Haskins free of charge. It gave George a feeling of importance to think that maybe he had a scion of nobility in the house, and, besides, every time Elijah told his story the receipts of the rosewood bar were increased to a healthy degree. As for Elijah, the boys soon got to calling him

the Baron, and that was the name he went by as long as he staid on the Isthmus.

Things went on in this way for about two months and the old man and I had about given up hope of ever getting Elijah back in the harness again, when one evening, all unexpectedly, came the shock that put Gorgona back on its natural basis once more.

It was a warm sultry night, but a number of boys were gathered in George's dispensary listening to Elijah's adventures for the hundredth time. The old foreman was leaning against the rosewood with his back toward the bartender, one arm resting on the counter while his fingers toyed lovingly with a glass of rum and gum. He was relating his strange adventures to a couple of civil engineers, who had just come out of the jungle and were willing to put up liquid refreshments for the house while Elijah entertained them.

Everybody had some comment to make on different parts of the story, except one stranger who had slipped in quietly and, all unnoticed, seated himself at a table in a corner of the room. Elijah had just come to the affecting scene under the orange tree—for he never varied his story half a dozen words all the times he told it—when the stranger silently left his seat and, slipping up to the center of attraction, stuck out his hand to Elijah, and said:

"Hello, old Robinson Crusoe, what have you done with my stewardess?"

When Elijah saw the stranger and heard his words he seemed to shrivel up before us and he looked like a man that had been caught stealing in a church.

"Really," he faltered, "y-you will have to excuse me until morning," and he looked at his watch. "I-I will be glad to talk to you then, but I p-promised my wife I would be in this evening by nine o'clock."

With that he slunk sheepishly out of the room, and in astonishment we

turned to the stranger for an explanation of Elijah's unusual behavior.

It was very evident that the two men had met before.

"Sorry to dispel your little illusion," the stranger began, "but that old man who just slid out of here is the biggest fourflusher this side of Hades, and I reckon it's up to me to finish his yarn and it wont be any pipe-dream either.

"I am captain of the tramp steamer *Bulldog*, out of Liverpool. We just put into Colon Harbor yesterday. On our trip out three months ago we picked up a bald-headed old codger off the coast of Jamaica. We found him hanging on to the basket of a big balloon that had just settled down on the water, and he was so scared and so glad to be picked up that he told us to let the bloomin' old bag go to the bottom of the sea. When we put into Kingston he wanted to go on to England with us, but as he didn't have any money and wouldn't work we put him ashore there. That wasn't the worst of it, though, as he talked our only stewardess into elopin' with him and the cook had to wait on two lady passengers all the way to Liverpool. I have been waitin' ever since for a chance to tell him what I thought of his gratitude, and I'll hand it to him good and plenty if I can sight him in the mornin'."

The next day Elijah sent word down to George that he was sick and he had his meals sent up to him, and it was a rather singular coincidence that he didn't get strong enough to leave his room again until the captain of the *Bulldog* had left town.

Then early Friday morning Elijah stood in the door of my office just as I was opening my desk, and informed me that he was ready to go to work again, and we soon had him back cussing the labor gang in his old dogmatic way.

A few days later Elijah's wife started a boarding-house in what is now the California Hotel, and we never heard anything more of the strange balloon ascension of Elijah Haskins.



Adventures of an Errant Soul

By CHRISTINE CATREVAS



MAJOR FARQUHAR, the noted English authority on snakes and reptiles, had just arrived in New York City, preparatory to making an extended trip through the States. His purpose was to investigate the reptile life of this country and in special to study the dreaded gila monster of the West. Mankind in general was his debtor, not for a comprehensive presentation of natural history, but for his splendid study of snake venoms and the discovery of many life-saving antidotes. The Major was well worth putting one's self out to meet, and at the urgent request of several members of the club, Mr. Lawrence Crady, at whose home in Central Park West he was staying, brought him down to spend the evening.

Farquhar, in appearance, was what might be termed a disappointment; for so much celebrity as his name possessed might at least be expected to be contained in more presentable a body. He was rather small in stature; he had yellow-white hair, which gave him a young-old look, and his features were browned and parched, due, no doubt, to exposure to torrid climates. This gave him a seedy appearance, which was further helped out by the brown checked suit he wore. For while other gentlemen wore the formal evening attire, shining with their white expanse of shirt-bosom, the Major asserted himself and his eccentricity by wearing a careless lounging suit—and his host, out of courtesy, had dressed himself in a black suit of no particular formality.

There was one thing about Major

Farquhar that was, however, exceedingly striking—his eyes. They shone out like two electric lamps, darting from one person to another in a restless way as he talked. One was glad to have those eyes shift from him, for they almost made him shudder as they looked into his. It was so like the fascination of a snake; one felt a shiver come over him, lest he fall under the hypnotic spell and be lost.

Mr. Crady himself had met Farquhar while traveling in India, and he took great satisfaction in introducing him to his friends in the smoking-room. The conversation naturally turned toward that country—from its natives to its customs, from customs to superstitions, and thence to that most baffling of mysteries—the astral body. An incredulous smile played on the features of Mr. Crady's club friends when this was alluded to; but they were receptive, nevertheless, and glad to hear any evidence, from so high an authority, for their enlightenment.

There was one exception, however—Harvey Crandon, whose most distinguishing characteristic was the fact that he was chief heir to his father's \$80,000,000 of railroad and steel stock.

"Such a thing is preposterous," protested Crandon, shaking his head. "With all due respect to your vast experience, I must say that I think such a thing impossible."

"Do you really mean to tell us," put in another, "that a person can project his soul, or some other shadow of himself, into space, so that people can see

it, while his earthly body is in quite a different place? Have you ever seen it done?"

"My dear man," said Farquhar, smiling, his eyes lighting up, "I have not only seen it done—I can do it myself!"

"Do it yourself? Oh, come!" protested the company, some of them visibly uneasy under his eyes. "Don't tell us any fish-stories."

"I am not making game of you," said the Englishman. "Mr. Crady here can testify."

"Yes," assented Crady, "I must admit I've seen our friend do some pretty queer stunts. He's a cleverer sleight of hand fakir than many a native can boast of being."

"'Fakir' is good," nodded Crandon. "For you can't get *me* to believe the thing can be done. I will lay a wager on it."

"I'll take you up, Mr. Crandon," said Farquhar, lazily shifting one leg over the other. "Make it anything you please—within *my own* means."

"It's a go," laughed Crandon. "The loser shall—well, let's say pay for a dinner at the Plaza for the crowd. Now, how will you go about to prove it?"

"I accept your wager, and I'll prove it to you this very night. If you will stay in this room after Crady and I go home and get to bed, I'll appear to you in my astral body."

"There's no doubt whatever about it, gentlemen," put in Crady. "Major Farquhar has done the thing before—though I have not personally witnessed it. Why, natives have been known to carry a message over a trackless jungle hundreds of miles in extent in the course of a single night, while their body of flesh was lying asleep on a mat. Moreover, there is said to be this danger about it: If the wandering soul should happen to come in contact with warm blood, whether human or of brute, the spirit becomes fixed in the astral body, which is doomed to wander aimlessly about and can never again return to the flesh—until, perhaps, momentarily at death."

The party were given to laugh at the new development, but felt a certain thrill of loathing creep over them.

"Oh, nonsense!" protested Crandon. "Don't begin to raise our hair on end. We'll exclude the danger in this case. But what I want to know is, how do you know that the fakir hasn't actually moved his body all that distance? I am sure, I'd sooner believe that a living man can traverse an endless desert in a night, than that his spirit can travel it in the course of a million years! That's where the fake comes in. He actually moves his body."

"Nothing of the sort, Mr. Crandon," laughed Farquhar. "You can send one or two of your members to watch upon me, gentlemen, to make sure that the flesh remains at the Crady residence, while the spirit is errant."

One of their number was designated to go with the pair at the time of their departure and the talk shifted to other topics. The party began to take on a gay aspect, for wine and liquors were flowing in plenty. The Major was doing an Englishman's share, and after a time he winked at his opponent under his unsteadily raised glass and said:

"Here's to our wager! I'll visit you when the clock strikes thirteen."

"Thirteen!" laughed Crandon, blowing out a cloud of fragrant smoke from a Turkish cigaret. "Yes, that's just when! And not till then."

The wine being very much to the Major's good taste, he did justice to it, and was soon in a state of "feeling good." He began to get pretty affectionate and confidential, with a prime desire to sing, from which they could hardly dissuade him. Mr. Crady felt rather ashamed of the condition his guest had gotten himself into; but the clubmen only laughed off his embarrassment, and agreed that the only spirits Farquhar was likely to indulge in that night were those he had already disposed of. At last, when he was too far gone to be able to take care of himself, Mr. Crady thought best to take him home, and he was supported down the club steps and bundled into a taxicab by a waiter and the chauffeur.

The Major was dead asleep in the cab, but, when his friend got him up to his room and with the help of a sleepy-eyed butler was trying to put him to bed, he woke up again.

"Watch-er trying do—t' me?" he protested, as his collar was being undone and his waistcoat unbuttoned. "Sh-top thief! Leggo—m' coat!"

He resisted so strenuously, mistaking the good intentions of his friend, that it was thought best to drop him as he was, and lay him, shoes and all, on his bed and turn the lights out.

Farquhar was asleep as soon as the door shut on him—a dull, breathy sleep that nothing could interrupt. It was plain there was no thought of astral walking that night and for nearly an hour he lay thus, dead to the world. Suddenly the clock in a neighboring steeple began to strike the hour—"One—two—three—twelve." Farquhar suddenly stirred and raised himself on his elbow, peering into the darkness through bleary eyes.

"Twelve!" he muttered, and sank heavily back again, resuming his snoring.

It seemed only a moment he dropped off with the confused notion of twelve in his mind. The hour flew like a minute, and the great bell again rolled out: "One!"

The sleeper rose up in bed and rubbed his knuckles into his eyes.

"Thirteen!" he mumbled, trying to recollect himself. "Yes—I had an appointment at thirteen—With those fellows—"

He swayed too and fro unsteadily for a few moments, fingering the button-holes of his vest, and then slipped slowly to the pillows.

II

Do not ask how it came about. It is a thing inexplicable even to those who have experienced it. But as Farquhar slept away, all disheveled on that trim guest-room bed, lulled by the music of his own snoring, another Farquhar was threading his way most remarkably through the cabs and autos down Broadway. A traffic policeman at a crossing first saw the rumpled, collarless, drunken figure in the checked suit dart suddenly, like a phantom, directly in front of a speeding auto, and in a twinkling pass to the other curb and grin and wave his hand at the fright-

ened auto party that were braked-up with a jerk twenty feet beyond. He laughed with a peculiar chuckle as they swore at him and started their machine again.

The next moment Farquhar came noiselessly up to a party of two couples, just coming out of a café. The men were smoking, and before they noticed the stranger, he had the lighted cigaret out of the mouth of one of them and tossed among the mass of plumes on his lady's hat!

"You damned—," cried the insulted man, pulling out his cigaret and giving Farquhar chase. "I'll break your neck—"

Like the wind his insulter was gone, laughing over his shoulder. But the policeman who had seen his performance half a block down, held out his arms to intercept the fleeing figure as he came up, and shut them—on nothing.

"Lord!" muttered the policeman, as the thing went beyond him. "Was that anything?"

"Guess you're drunk, me b'y," came back a chuckling answer.

"Drunk, is it?" cried the policeman, setting out in pursuit.

In and out among trolleys they wound, the fugitive allowing the officer to get within arm's length of him, and the next moment streaking off with a maniacal gurgle the breadth of the street. Idlers joined the pursuit, but suddenly this thread of humanity was disrupted and came to a halt; the fleeing man had darted down a dark side street to the east and was lost sight of.

Two other policemen offered their brother officer help.

"What are you chasing?" asked one of them. "And what for?"

"Fellow with a brown checked suit—crazy—drunk—disorderly."

"Isn't worth your while," counseled the other.

"Maybe not, but he's dangerous. My conscience! T'see 'im streak along in front of the very headlights of the trolleys and me havin' all I cud do t' keep from gettin' run down. Come on, I've got t' get 'im. He's not right in 'is head; I tell you, and he's drunk. Scatter and beat about."

And for five minutes they beat aim-

lessly about the block and then went toward the east.

Meanwhile the fugitive, having had enough of the game, had turned into the cross-street. He was well beyond Fifth Avenue, when suddenly he saw a face peer up at him from the iron railing around a dingy areaway. He stopped short and looked over; a frightened silhouette sprang up the steps from the dark and flew before him. That figure, too, was thinking of flight—but the thought came to Farquhar that to him the safest refuge was that very areaway the man had quitted, where he could hide until the crowd passed by. In a moment he glided down the steps and—Horrible! a groan came from the bottom of the area, and Farquhar saw the body of a man stretched helplessly before him.

Instinctively he bent down to see what he could do for him, and noticed the clumsy handle of a jack-knife sticking out of the man's chest. Turning him on his back, he reached and plucked the knife from his bosom, when of a sudden he felt his own body stiffen and a peculiar tremor seized him. He gazed open-mouthed down at the steel thing in his hand and at the horrible daub of blood it left on his palm.

The man at his feet was quite dead now. The hurried tread of the police, left behind some minutes before, was heard approaching again. They passed him. A block away, they had seen the other fugitive as he left the vicinity of the area, and thinking it was their man had given chase. But in a few minutes Farquhar heard their steps coming back—perhaps to the very area he had fled from. But he felt no power or desire now to flee. His feet were heavy as ship's anchors. He only contemplated the sticky blade in his hand, and flattened himself against the wall with a hope of remaining unnoticed.

A moment later he heard an officer stumbling down the steps.

"Gee!" cried the policemen—and, drawing his revolver and his club, he beat and beat on the stones for assistance.

The others crowded down after him; but they drew back as they saw the body of their fugitive flattened against

the old brownstone, confronted at a respectable distance by their fellow officer. With a sudden movement, the latter sprang forward, and clutched his man by the coat collar.

"You scoundrel!" he cried. "I thought you'd do somebody before mornin'! You got to work mighty quick."

Farquhar shrank from him and cringed under his grip. The officer's hand held solid. It was a confirmation of his shapeless fears, a sudden revelation of his position to him. For, worse than all, he had been caught red-handed—Red-handed! That greasy smear! What was the old Hindu superstition—Good Heavens!

III

The creature that appeared between two policemen in front of the captain's desk at the station-house was pitiful to see. A shiver ran through him, so that he shook like a wind-blown vine. Two thin hands clutched at the desk feverishly and every lineament in the face spoke of utter terror.

"What's up, officer?" asked the captain.

"Murder—down Forty-third Street, sir."

"Eh?—Tsch-tsch-tsch!—Take your mucky hands off my desk!"

Farquhar jerked them back. But that gruff order brought him to defiance and self-possession; in a moment of calm, the whole desperation of his condition ran in review through his mind and caused him to heave a sigh of a man facing an insoluble destiny.

"Name?" snapped the captain, beginning to enter the case on the blotter.

"John Smith," said Farquhar, with a sarcastic smile in the corners of his mouth.

"Smith is a very common name. Can't you do better than that?"

"Spell it with a y, Samivel," retorted Farquhar, dryly, raising his eyes to the gas-jets.

"Where do you live?" flashed the captain.

A gurgle that might have passed for a chuckle shook the throat of the pris-

oner. He brought his eyes to the level of the captain's and whispered mysteriously:

"Put it down 'In the land of the Dead.'"

"Come, no more of that!" thundered the police captain. "Don't give me none of your fooling—and don't play loony on me. It don't go!—Business?"

"Catching snakes," laughed Farquhar.

"Oh, Lord!" cried the captain, flinging down his pen.

The pedigree was clearly unsatisfactory, and in a short time Farquhar was bundled into a cell for the night and left to his own counsels.

The next morning he was conveyed in a patrol wagon to the Yorkville Court, where the magistrate committed him to the Tombs to await the verdict of the coroner. Indeed, there was no doubt in the minds of the police as to the decision of the coroner. So perfectly clear was the case that it saved Farquhar a lacerating third degree that he could ill endure. In their good time, the wheels of the law moved; the coroner brought his verdict and the grand jury heard the witnesses and issued an indictment, turning the case over to the General Sessions.

The black-gowned judge of the Criminal Court looked down at his papers and then over his spectacles at the man on the bridge below him. The case was as clear as day, and yet who could blame a man for clinging to the last thread of life?

"You are charged with murder in the first degree. Are you guilty or not guilty?" said the judge.

"Not guilty, sir," was the firm response.

"Not guilty!—Where is your attorney?"

"I have none, your honor."

"Then get one."

The accused shook his head. The idea of a lawyer to defend him had never once entered his mind. The evidence against him was so absolute, that it could never be explained away—and even if it was, and he were free—?

The judge nodded his head in half pity at this shrinking figure before him and assigned him a lawyer at the ex-

pense of the city. He was held without bail and was led back to a cell in the Tombs.

He had been caught red-handed—that was the great thing about it all; and that spared him further annoyance at the hands of the police. But the "third degree" through which he put himself was even more horribly tormenting and heart-rending than any the police might contrive.

To the one man who might have helped him—his lawyer, he had nothing to tell—nothing except what the police already knew. He had merely been enjoying himself on Broadway at the expense of pedestrians and others, and had been chased by a police officer and a crowd. He had finally fled down some side street and for several minutes had been lost sight of by the pursuers. Seeing a man dart up from an area-way, he thought this would be a good place to hide and ran down it. What he encountered there was a groan and a body—out of which he drew a knife. And then the police.

The lawyer went away disgruntled at his client's lack of confidence in him, and he felt, that, in view of the facts—in view of the few precious minutes the accused had managed to keep hidden from the eyes of the police on that fatal night—it would be impossible to prove him not guilty and the only hope lay in the plea of insanity!

And, indeed, this plea could easily be borne out by the Tombs guards and attendants in the weeks that followed. For this man refused to eat or drink, and sat all day on his cot, rocking his body to and fro like an old crone. He was speechless when addressed and only mumbled to himself when he thought no one about. He frequently looked at his hand—his right hand—on which a dull brown smear remained as if engraved upon it. His one zeal for the first few days had been to get that smear off. The guards humored him and brought him soap and water; but nothing could efface it.

He fell into a helplessness of despair after that. The chaplain came and tried to console him; to no avail. He came every day—and the little accused man seemed never to have moved from the

spot where he had left him sitting the day before.

He refused to eat—literally, he could not; but to please the chaplain he made a pretense at it when his meals were brought. He hid away the provisions and poured the coffee and water out of the barred window. The bread and meat followed at night, when they fell on a small shed and were picked up by grateful sparrows before anyone was stirring the next day.

But the little brown figure of the man became browner with each week. He dried and wrinkled like a forgotten apple. This fast enfeebled him and an occasional empty cough now shook his whole frame as a blast of wind might a dry stalk. The cough brought him to his bed, where he lay for hours, with wide eyes staring at the vacant white-washed ceiling.

One day the chaplain brought the Tombs physician with him. This professional man shook his head when he heard the cough; but he nevertheless went on with his examination. He took the man's wrist, and his fingers went here and there in search for the pulse.

"Heart bad," he muttered and, after a few minutes of fruitless search, gave up and listened at the chest. His brow clouded oddly and he was heard to say "Queer." Then he made the man take deep inspirations while he listened with his stethoscope at the lungs.

"What is this anomaly you have here?" he said to the chaplain. "No pulse, no heart beating, no evidence of respiration. No temperature, either, I'll bet."

And his little glass thermometer told him that this was so!

He threw his instruments into his case, and shut it with a slam.

"This is work for you, sir," he said to the chaplain. "This man is a specter!"

And two more odd tests may be recorded here. When they took him, at the early part of his imprisonment, to be measured by the Bertillon system, they made him stand on the scales to be weighed. The scales never moved as he stepped on, nor as the officers slipped the weights from pound to pound; the balance beam only stirred when the

small weight on the upper beam was set at thirteen ounces.

Again, with a bit of humor lighting up his eyes, the lost man sat for his picture. The photographer cursed his luck; for he spoiled five plates that only turned out a dim blur. At the sixth one, he got a faint picture—the figure of a man lying on a bed in a strange room!

Four weeks after his capture, this peculiar criminal was languishing alone on his cot, when a passing guard threw in an old morning paper. This landed on the man's hand as it lay outside the blanket, and woke him from his reverie. He mechanically took up the newspaper and turned it over to the first page. There, upon his sleeping consciousness, burst the flaring headlines of the sensational journal:

"SLEEPING MAN STILL IN A TRANCE"

What had this to do with him? And yet he felt impelled to read it, for it seemed personal.

"The strange case of Major Farquhar, the celebrated English authority on snakes and snake venoms, is still arousing the utmost interest and curiosity throughout the whole country. Physicians and psychologists have come from Chicago and St. Louis to view the peculiar phenomenon and can make nothing of it.

"This man, who had made a wager to visit friends in the spirit at the thirteenth hour, still lies prone. The body does not move, the heart does not seem to beat, nor is there any movement of respiration from the lungs. There is no response to the mirror test or the candle test on the eyes; yet the body does not decompose, and a pin prick—the final test of death—leaves no hole, but the skin closes and resumes its normal condition. They feed him through a tube with liquid nourishment.

"Strange to say, the physicians that surround the sleeping man were startled yesterday to hear an empty, dry cough issue from the patient's lungs, which has been repeated several times since. While they do not know what to attribute it to, they feel that the patient has still a chance for life, and have redoubled their efforts to arouse him."

The emaciated figure on the Tombs cot dropped the paper, but the eyes that stared at the ceiling were now brilliant and a smile played in them.

He had thought of his unfortunate position until he was dizzy. Here he was lying in this prison awaiting his trial for life—a trial that could end only in one way. If he were to claim identity with the celebrated man who, as he had expected, lay in a trance in another part of the city, it would only be to exchange a prison for a mad-house—which was far worse than death. And finally, if all were known, what would it profit him? Who but the Maker could reunite his soul with his clay? He had trifled with the combination and paid the penalty—a deathless life of wandering on this earth and, if some chance should kill the body and thus, according to the Hindoo superstition, at once liberate the spirit, it would only set it free again to suffer the penalty of eternal damnation for the real crime he had committed.

This dead and alive man felt something like the shriveled chrysalis in an ugly cocoon, to which, after much darkness and cold, the sun finally gives life to emerge a beautiful butterfly—only to be the next moment captured, and pinned and labeled on a board as part of a collection.

Farquhar laughed hideously till he coughed, and, out of a whim, asked the guard for a mirror—one of the few requests he had made since his imprisonment. The horrible image that met his gaze made him shudder with a disgust that nauseated him, and he dropped the mirror on the blankets and told the guard to take it way. He looked like a fawn or a goblin: he felt like a Medusa's head that was likely to turn the blue-coated guard to stone.

This state of affairs could not last for long. The creature in the Tombs lost strength and mind each day. He bore himself in a sort of resignation of despair that seemed to pray for the end. Physically he was nothing but a pair of eyes that flamed in a crabbed body—eyes that looked gray to some and brown to others. He became less and less every day. He had no visitors except the chaplain who came to console.

Not even curious reporters came to call or interview; for the case was one of those obscure ones which are so evident that they do not excite the least interest or comment in the papers, where mystery is read with a watery-mouthed relish. Here guilt pointed like a finger and justice was ready to transport from the court to the electric-chair in a day, without tear or pleading.

To the chaplain this emaciated body expressed only one wish—that his trial be over in the near future. But the course of the law is long, and it would be yet many months or a year before his case would be reached. Then that good man, the chaplain, did the holy thing of his life, when he went to the district attorney and begged a speedy trial for the cough-racked unfortunate in the Tombs prison, who was not likely to live to the time set for his trial. And that keen man, who held the destinies of many in his fingers, granted the plea and transferred the trial to a near date.

IV

Leaning on the arm of the chaplain, this rattling shadow of a man came into court. The jury was not hard to get, for few felt any repugnance at depriving such an ill-looking being of his life. He sat and stared vaguely as each of his twelve judges were examined and accepted. His lawyer felt little inclined to challenge any, for it only delayed the case. Speedy as the turning of the works in a clock, each formality was gone through, and the black-robed judge at the raised desk, grave and silent, seemed rather a monitor of ceremony than an instrument of justice.

The evidence was droned through like so much court routine; no interest or emotion roused any feeling—not even in the accused, who acquiesced in silence. The various police-officers came to the stand and gave their testimony. The knife was brought up and bore mute witness before the eyes of the jury. The condemned man—for he was condemned from the moment of his arrest—sat through all with a fishy coldness that only confirmed the evidence.

The lawyer of the accused, infected with the indifference of his client, had

prepared only a weak defense. Although he denied it, said he, the luckless, friendless man sitting there might indeed have committed the crime, under the goad of lunacy that could neither reason nor remember. In fact, there was no denying that the police had arrested him with the knife in his hand. But look at the creature that was almost double in his chair, knees to chin! Could any reasoning man believe him in his senses? Would they not rather hesitate where they saw so much abnormality displayed? The lawyer had not taken much trouble to have his sanity tested. The medical man of the Tombs testified as to what he had found on his examination. The chaplain and those who guarded the prisoner bore their evidence, and even the policeman who had first pursued him on that fatal night, was forced to admit him "queer." But in spite of all this, the defense was so weak that it crumbled in the hands of the prosecuting attorney, and the case was closed with but a short turning up by the defense and the attorney for the state.

It was evident that the testimony for the accused had made little impression on the minds of the jury and, thinking to give the defendant every chance, the judge asked him if he had anything he wished to say. The man, addressed, looked bewildered, as if starting out of a sleep, and the judge repeated his words. He nodded his head in assent and strove feebly to his feet, pawing the table before him.

"I have not much to say," came in broken accents, with the same apathy that marked the whole trial. "I haven't, because I will not be believed. I did not kill that man. I'd never seen him in my life before and I don't know who killed him. I found him dying, and I took the knife out of his breast. Then he died. I heard the policemen running past and tried to hide—for I realized then what it would mean to be caught red-handed—"

At that word he stopped and his eyes became fixed on the rusty blotch on his right hand. He sank shivering to his chair, shrinking in its depths till he felt the compassionate arm of the chaplain steal around him, and heard the encour-

aging words in his ear. Then he became himself again, and from his chair cried out hoarsely, his eyes glowing like coals:

"I am not insane. My misfortune has stolen my wits. I cannot tell you, because you will not believe. I did not murder the man; my misfortune is greater than that, for I murdered *myself!*"

He broke off in a fit of coughing, and hid his face in his hands. The jury were dismissed and filed out of the room. Those in the court room kept their seats, expecting a quick verdict, and the papers of the next case were being prepared—so little time had been consumed by the hapless trial. And indeed, no one's patience was exhausted with the waiting, for the jury after a quarter of an hour returned to their places with the verdict—"Guilty."

What can a helpless man, with no money to buy him a good lawyer's defense, expect else? A change came over him. He seemed relieved when he heard that six-lettered word. He even smiled at the foreman and laughed at his lawyer, and begged the justice not to defer his sentence but to have it over with at once. His wish was granted. And he laughed again.

V

That very afternoon he was put on board a train for the upper Hudson and before night he occupied a cell in the death house. Five weeks of life—life?—were to elapse before the final trial of the death-chair. What did it matter? A few weeks more or less were nothing to a being who was not even a proper shadow. He seemed like a broken mechanism which had gone awry, which no hand knew how to readjust, and which had been thrown aside as useless. His life had ended on that fatal stroke of thirteen. He had meddled with it and it was broken, and could not again be set to rights. He thought vaguely of the death-chair that awaited him, and wondered if that would have any effect. How could it further injure him, since he was now injured beyond repair? Perhaps the result would tell on the prostrate body in New York City. But

what would that matter? It only meant release and he welcomed it.

None came to visit him in his last resting house. The warden of Sing Sing came once, and occasionally the chaplain. Once the good Tombs angel came to bid him farewell. A guard sat now all day within sight of him, and when that man's time was up another came. This kept him from feeling lonely. Two men in cells adjoining his own, whom he had heard singing hymns and street-songs intermingled, came to the door of his cell on separate days and called "Good-by, comrade!" Then he never heard them singing again.

Time elapsed, but he did not know it; the coldness of death was already part of him. They brought him many good things to eat and tried to make him comfortable. They might have spared their pains; his lack of gratitude only piqued them. The time drew near, and a tailor came and measured him for a suit of black clothes. The prison chaplain came many times a day now and tried to induce him to make his peace with God. But he only replied: "I have meddled with His ways and He has punished me. I did not commit the murder of which I am accused. I murdered myself—literally—and my punishment will not end in the electric chair."

One day the chaplain stayed all day, and he prayed with the unfortunate man far into the night. He knew that was the last. He slept feverishly for a few hours, and woke to find an early morning sun coming through the grated window up in the wall.

He sat up and looked at it—it was the last sun, which had exerted itself to be especially bright to-day to please him. They brought him water and he washed. The food he did not touch. He refused to put on the black suit which they laid on the cot. The warden came with the chaplain, and two guards stood at attention by the door. The warden read him the sentence once more and the chaplain read a prayer from a little black leather book he carried, from which hung a small silver cross on a white ribbon. How pretty the little silver cross looked hanging there! He wanted to put out his hand and fondle

it. But the warden made a sign and he was led out into the corridor. Why did that tiresome chaplain insist on walking by his side? Why, the man was actually as pale as a ghost! He told him so to his face and laughed.

A heavy grated door at the end of the corridor opened to receive them. A dozen men stood about the stone-lined room, all their curious eyes fixed on him. He looked away with disgust and his eyes fell on the terrible instrument that had filled so many with countless hours of torture. The torture it really brought was momentary. He put his hands to his face with a sudden shudder at the nearness of death, but laid them at his side again and walked over in front of the chair. A man stepped up to him and cut slits in the legs of his trousers. Why was everybody so silent? How funny this all was! He laughed again.

They bade him sit down, and adjusted the straps. He shut his eyes and waited. Then the warden raised his hand solemnly to the electrician in the next room. The switch for the electric current was drawn down and set to. All was—A flash of blue flame spat up and flung the handle of the switch back into the electrician's smarting fingers. A smell of scorched air filled the two rooms.

For a moment the electrician was stunned; but he quickly recovered himself and sprang through the door into the other room to see what had happened. Warden, chaplain, witnesses were as in a trance. The thing that a moment before was strapped in the death-chair had arisen and was smiling. It laughed at their dumbness over its shoulder, and walked to the door. None tried to hinder it.

The electrician's cries of alarm aroused the others. They ran to the chair and found only the straps, collapsed, and smelling of burnt insulation. Nothing else.

VI

At that moment, with none to bear witness of the coincidence, the physicians and friends at the side of a stricken man in Central Park West, heard a

stir among the sheets. With a sigh the unconscious man opened his eyes and tried to raise himself on his elbow. But the sigh tickled his throat and he coughed harshly.

His host stepped eagerly to him and raised him up with his arm, and Farquhar looked about him evidently much bewildered.

"How are you, old man?" said Crady gently. "We've had a lot of worry over you! Where have you been all this time?"

"I've seen much," was the slow, hoarse reply; "but where I've been I can't tell you, because you won't believe. But tell those fellows I tried to keep my promise."

The Added Luster

By RICHARD BARKER SHELTON

IN an inconspicuous corner of the smoke-filled front room of the Ward 7 social club, Martin Toomey sat huddled dejectedly in a chair, smoking innumerable cigarets, the while he meditated with more or less bitterness of soul on the fickleness of womankind.

All about him at the little tables beneath the flaring gas-jets, noisy groups wrangled good-naturedly over cards or dominoes; but to Toomey, immersed in his own gloomy thoughts, it was quite as if the room were empty.

To be sure, his name was shouted boisterously from a group of newly-arrived members, who pulled out the last table and started a game of smudge; but the noisy invitation to take a hand in the game—and smudge was ordinarily as meat and drink to Toomey—fell upon deaf ears.

"Aw, what's eatin' him?" an impatient voice inquired, when the repeated invitation was still unheeded.

To which one of the group at the next table replied sotto-voce and with an enlightening drooping of one eyelid:

"Let 'um alone. He's got troubles of his own, he has. His girl's handed him the frosty mitt—see?"

Therefore the smudge game came into its noisy being with no assistance from the huddled young man in the

corner, who, with a heavy sigh, lighted yet another cigaret and resumed his unpleasant speculations as to the vagaries of all things feminine.

Up to a week ago, Toomey had been reasonably sure that he was holding his own with the other suitors, who flocked nightly to the rather gaudy little front parlor of the Doyle flat, where pink-cheeked, red-lipped Maggie Doyle dispensed her smiles with an impartiality, which was at once the wonder and the despair of them all. Indeed, up to that crucial moment a week since, Toomey fancied his chances were rather more than even. On two different evenings, when he was bidding her good-night, her hand had rested in his own decidedly longer than a formal good-night hand-shake demanded, and on both these momentous occasions—Toomey recalled it now with a sickening sense of self-pity—she had flushed beautifully at the pressure he had given the little hand within his own.

Moreover, her brother, Jim Doyle, was a member of the Ward 7 social club, and he and Toomey had been the staunchest of friends since the days they had fought side by side in routing the old element that controlled the club and putting it upon the present exalted basis which it now boasted.

But at the very moment when hope

sprang highest in Toomey's breast, when it really seemed that Maggie Doyle was about to show him the preference over the other suitors, which somehow seemed his by right, his cup of joy was suddenly upset and its contents rudely spilled to earth.

Mr. McNeil—of all the suitors, big, clumsy, freckle-faced McNeil!—had rescued a kid, who had tripped and fallen in the path of a speeding motor-car. Moreover, Mr. McNeil had chosen a most felicitous place for his little exploit—directly in front of the Doyles' flat, with Maggie herself watching it all from the parlor window.

Then, too, Mr. McNeil had had the enviable fortune to have his coat torn and his arm bruised by the flying car, as with the kid in his arms, he leaped aside just in time to avoid going under the wheels. The result of it all was only too obvious. Maggie had mended the torn coat, and bandaged the bruised arm, and told Mr. McNeil meanwhile what she thought of him and what a splendid thing he had done.

That was a week ago, and since that moment Maggie Doyle had lavished her smiles upon McNeil in no uncertain manner, and McNeil, as was only human under the circumstances, had assumed a subtle air of proprietorship over the girl, which was simply intolerable, but which, none the less, she accepted with evident signs of pleasure.

To go to the Doyles' front parlor each evening and see the erstwhile impartial Maggie hanging upon McNeil's every word, and favoring him solely with her matchless smiles, was out of the question. What had become of the other suitors Toomey neither knew nor cared. He only realized that one after another they had dropped away; they could take an open hint when they came face to face with it.

He had been the last to leave the lists uncontested to McNeil. But even Toomey tired of playing a too obvious second fiddle for three successive evenings. Therefore, he had sought this inconspicuous corner of the club, where he perched, a veritable death's-head of gloom in the feast of joviality all about him.

Toomey had just opened his second

box of cigarets, when he was aware some one was standing before him. He glanced up with a scowl to find Jim Doyle looking at him with more or less disgust.

"Been 'round to the house this evenin'?" Doyle inquired, succinctly.

"Yep," said Toomey with a weary smile.

Doyle's frown became more pronounced.

"Why'n't you stay?" he demanded.

Toomey took a deep inhalation of the cigaret smoke and then blew it forth with a sudden contraction of his lungs. His eyes glittered coldly.

"Yah! Why didn't I?" he grunted. "I aint hangin' round watchin' the other feller get his, when there's nothin' comin' to me. I'm sick of it—sick of seein' McNeil the whole show every night. I know when I got mine, all right."

He huddled down in the chair again, puffing away once more in stolid gloom.

Doyle looked at him with narrow eyes.

"You're a bunch of quitters!" he exploded at length.

"Who?" Toomey asked with no particular interest.

"The whole blamed lot of you," said Doyle. "You with the rest. If I was stuck on a girl—"

Toomey turned to him with a slow shake of his head. "You'd do just as we've done," he declared. "You wouldn't be hangin' round to hear McNeil gettin' the whole of it."

"I'd get a share myself," Doyle maintained.

"Oh, you would, would yer?" Toomey mocked. "How'd yer do it?"

Doyle drew up a chair, helped himself to one of Toomey's cigarets, and nodded his head sagely.

"There's ways," he suggested.

Toomey sat up. "Yer mean—" he began.

"I mean I wouldn't quit till it was time to," said Doyle.

"It's time now," said Toomey, heavily.

Doyle hitched his chair nearer his friend. "What gives McNeil the call with Maggie just now? Huh? What? I'll tell yer," he went on, answering his own query. "It's because she saw him

pull that kid from under that auto the other day. Them's the things that gets you solid with a woman, and he's solid with her because he done it and none of the others of yer have had a chance. That's why he's ringin' in with her just now. But let any of the rest of yer do as well or better and it's back to the tall grass for him. Aw, dead sure it is. Don't I know? You can't fool me. I'm on, I am. If you was to stir round and do somethin' in that line yourself, instead of mopin' round here like this, you'd have as good a call as he's got. That's what!"

Toomey meditated in silence. The scheme seemed logical enough. It had, too, all the fascination of one of those ideas so simple that the wonder of it all is you did not think of it yourself. His somber face lighted with a slow smile.

"Say, that sounds good," he observed, not without a certain almost tremulous eagerness. "There might be somethin' in it, at that!"

"Dead sure there is," said Doyle. "You're my friend, aint yer? Well, I don't want to see you get turned down like this, not while there's a chance for yer. McNeil's got in on a fluke. It's up to you to get busy an' do somethin' that will show up as well as what he done."

Toomey was thoroughly interested now. He was leaning forward and in the tension of the moment the unheeded cigaret in his fingers was scorching his trousers.

"That's all right," he declared, with a puzzled frown, "but how's a feller goin' to get a chance like that. Kids don't tumble down in front of autos every day."

Mr. Doyle made a weary gesture, indicative, seemingly, of his impatience at his friend's lack of imagination.

"If the chance don't come your way, make it," he counseled.

"Huh?" Toomey inquired, completely mystified.

"Make it," Doyle repeated. "Look! To-morrer the Emmets has their clam-bake down to Cedar Neck. They're goin' down on the old *Maybud*—see? Maggie's goin' with McNeil. Well, what's the matter with this. I'll get a couple of tickets for me and you. We

go along, too, on the *Maybud*—get it? Goin' down the harbor I falls overboard and you dives after me and holds me up till they lowers a boat. Aint that all right? You'll be fixed after that. It's a blamed sight better than pullin' a kid from under an auto. That stunt'll have McNeil's skinned a mile."

"Aw say," Toomey objected, "you can swim like a duck. Maggie knows it, too. What'd be the sense of me goin' after you if you can take care of yourself?"

One of Doyle's eyelids closed meaningfully. "Cramps, old boy, I gets 'em bad—see? I hollers and thrashes about and screeches."

Toomey grinned. "I'm on," he chuckled. "Say, that's all right. That had oughter make McNeil's little turn look like a punched nickel, hadn't it?"

"Yer see what usin' your head a little'll do for you," said Doyle, severely. "I want to see you solid with Maggie. That's what I been thinkin' this over for."

Toomey reached out a hand and gripped Doyle's in a mighty clutch.

"I won't forget this, Jim," he said, with deep feeling. "Will you get them tickets? All right. You say the boat starts from Gerry's wharf at nine? I'll be there."

When the *Maybud* steamed away from the wharf at nine next morning with her two decks crowded with the chattering groups of Emmets and their friends, Doyle and Toomey sat on the after rail of the lower deck, talking in low tones, and now and then chuckling like a pair of mischievous boys.

"I'll flop off when we get down to Little Island channel," Doyle was saying. "'Tis a good current there'll be there—enough to make it spectacular-like. We want it the best we can get."

"Sure thing! That's right!" Toomey agreed. "Mind yer holler 'Help!' and 'Cramps!' good and loud."

"Just watch me," said Doyle with a wink. "'Tis every livin' soul on the boat'll know what's the matter with me. You've not many clothes on, I see," he added to Toomey, whose teeth were chattering in the brisk east wind, blowing up the bay. "A wise boy you are.

'Twill be much more real if you go over with the most of your clothes on. This takin' off your shoes looks too much as if you knew beforehand what was comin'. Them sneakers is the very thing. You wont have to take them off at all."

"There they are," said Toomey, with a nod of his head. Doyle's eyes traveled in the direction indicated. Seated close together by the opposite rail was Maggie and the ubiquitous McNeil.

"Little does he dream of the finish he's goin' against to-day," Doyle chuckled, and Toomey grinned so broadly that he found it necessary to turn away his head.

Forward, the orchestra hired for the occasion, struck up a lively two-step, and a committeeman began bawling a strident invitation to all who wished to do so to enjoy the dancing on the upper deck.

McNeil and Maggie arose, and Doyle and Toomey, with an exchange of meaning nods, followed in their wake.

"Off the upper deck will be even better," Doyle whispered, as they elbowed their way up the crowded stairs.

"Stand up on the rail, like you was lookin' for somethin' over on the island, when we get there, and lose your balance," Toomey instructed.

"Sure! That'll be about it," Doyle replied.

With flags streaming out in the wind, the orchestra working overtime and the shuffle of dancing feet sounding from her deck, the *Maybud* went puffing and wheezing down the harbor, the churn of her paddle-wheels and the clank-clank of her crazy old walking-beam all but drowning out the music. The upper deck swarmed with waltzing couples, good-naturedly colliding with one another, when they came abreast Little Island, with its deserted fort and the small white tents of the squatters, who each summer camped upon it, dotting its green surface.

Doyle arose from his seat by the rail and strolled unconcernedly aft, while Toomey, with quickened pulses, followed in his train.

Doyle began pointing towards the island, meanwhile arguing some point with unnecessary heat.

"The one with the flag," he said to

Toomey. "That one just by the southwest corner of the fort. Look where I'm pointin'."

As if better to point out the place indicated, he sprang to the rail and extended his arm.

Then he slipped, strove vainly with outstretched arms to recover his lost balance, and shot downward to the water. There was a splash, a choking gurgle, succeeded instantly by wild yells from the men and screams from the women. Life-buoys flew overboard in a veritable shower, and a woman was screaming above the din for some one to stop the boat.

In the midst of all the confusion Toomey leaped to the rail, balanced there for a moment with his hands clasped dramatically and suggestively above his head and then dove downward in a long, graceful parabola.

He came to the surface, puffing and blowing the water from his lips. Ahead he could make out Doyle's black head, spinning seaward in the strong current that runs in the Little Island channel.

Even as he looked Doyle essayed a most realistic twisting and gasping, as with a violent attack of cramps, and his big voice boomed out:

"Help! Help! Cramps!"

Then he went under.

Toomey could hear the yells from the boat, as with tight shut lips, and long, easy strokes, he pushed on towards the spot where Doyle had disappeared. Something like a concerted cheer arose from the deck of the *Maybud*. He could hear a woman's hysterical voice crying: "Look at him! Look at that man going after him!"

He felt his heart warming within him. This was undoing the usurping Mr. McNeil with a vengeance.

And then, suddenly, unaccountably, Toomey's legs seemed rent in twain with a spasm of pain. It shot to his arms, to his chest. His throat seemed to contract and his lungs shut up like a pair of bellows.

Something beneath the surface seemed to clutch at him with mighty hands, that dragged him down relentlessly. His whole body was racked with a veritable acme of torture.

Blindly, chokingly he realized that he

had been seized with cramps, and in the helplessness and fright of the moment he let out a yell of mortal terror.

Ahead he saw Doyle, who had come to the surface, lift his head and look inquiringly back. He saw Doyle turn and strike out in his direction, but with the current against him, he could make but little headway. Toomey's every muscle now seemed utterly paralyzed. Again he sent up that choking cry of fear.

A cold fear gripped his heart; he felt his head going under the surface. Madly he strove to work his stiffened muscles, but with no result. With a groan he closed his eyes, prepared to sink like a stone.

Then close beside him he caught a churning of the water. A strong hand gripped his hair, then his shoulder. His head was once more above the surface. A life buoy was slipped over his head and beneath his arms. Dimly he heard a voice, which seemed to come from a great distance, saying:

"Courage, old man. You're all right now. You wont sink with this buoy on you. Take it easy. I'll get a buoy on the other chap and then come back to you."

At the sound of that voice Toomey opened his eyes. There beside him, swimming easily, was McNeil.

He saw him strike out towards Doyle, who was struggling might and main against the current to reach Toomey's side. Then there was a splash of oars. Strong arms lifted him into the boat, which had been lowered from the *Maybud*, and away they shot towards the point where McNeil was putting a buoy over the head of the all but exhausted Doyle.

An hour later, Toomey, wrapped in blankets, lay on the locker of the chart-room. Beside him, in a suit of the captain's—a man of considerable girth—sat Doyle.

They had sat thus silently ever since Doyle had come up from the boiler-room, where he had changed his dripping garments.

Toomey stirred uneasily and sat up. "Well," he groaned, "between us, I guess we've done it now, eh?"

Doyle mournfully shook his head. "The crowd is makin' a fool of him," said he, "and Maggie's the worst of the lot. They're signin' a petition to have a medal sent to him."

He glared savagely out of the chart-house window.

"Aw, what's the use. You can't buck such luck as he's got. Have a cigaret, Toomey, and try to forget her."

The Posting of Pickpocket

By ANDREW COMSTOCK MCKENZIE

ON the sudden death of Jared Hale, his one son, Allan, came blinking from his books to inherit such great wealth that he hardly noticed his ownership of ninety per cent of the stock of that modest corporation, "The Pickpocket Gun Club." Trace back this thread into the weaving of the past, however, and you will find that Jared Hale's ripping of Pickpocket Plantation from the part it played in the life

of a certain Col. Middleton, well nigh ruined the fortunes of that fine old South Carolina family.

Thirty thousand other acres had Col. Middleton when he turned his back on Appomattox to ride home to his wrecked plantation on the coast of South Carolina. But the labor was gone from the fields. Always there was the land, and never anything but the land; for the Colonel's planting on credit and

turpentine on borrowed capital resulted only in the loss of a pledged plantation or two. Yet the pot must be kept boiling; so into the pot went acre after acre, while the Colonel grew gray watching his holdings boil away to a pitiful nothing. Until, in the fulness of time, there was left to the white-haired Colonel only the seven thousand acres of Pickpocket Plantation, the manor house of Middleton Hall, with its twenty acres of gardens and quarters; and, dearest of all, Mary Middleton, youngest, most winsome of the four Middleton girls.

With Mary, and with Pickpocket to make safe his old age, the Colonel had settled down quite comfortably when the radiant girl, just entering womanhood, fell ill of that strange malady which set Dr. Seabrooke to shaking his head so sadly. Only a long and expensive course of treatment in the private sanitarium of a famous northern specialist could bring back health to Mary Middleton.

Then it was that Jared Hale, riding his one hobby of quail shooting, had brought his dogs to Middleton. Troubled though he was, the Colonel had promptly rescued the northerner from the village tavern and had made him free of the fat covies which lay so thick in the woods and fields of Pickpocket. At which the Colonel's guest had grown thoughtful, and, learning of the Colonel's need of money for Mary's sake, had offered to lend his host twenty-five hundred dollars on the "merely nominal" mortgage of Pickpocket—a mortgage which a snappy New York lawyer brilliantly foreclosed before the bewildered Colonel could rally his friends, some two years later, when his joy in Mary's recovered health and his embarrassment over a bad cotton crop had caused the Colonel to let slip a single payment of interest on that "merely nominal" mortgage. So quickly was it all done that Col. Middleton could hardly believe his senses when, riding over his own plantation road a few weeks later, his eye caught the white of a cloth sign, tacked to a tree, which forbade even Col. Middleton to hunt, fish or trespass on the grounds of "The Pickpocket Gun Club."

But Jared Hale was to have only a short gain of his posting of Pickpocket when death took a snap shot at the old millionaire and brought him down neatly. So young Allan Hale, summoned from brooding over his studies at Oxford, came soberly back to New York. When he had finished wearily counting out his money and had found himself thirty times a millionaire, he put his hand to his throbbing head and decided that the first use he had best make of his money was to buy a little medical advice in regard to nerves worn ragged by years of growing absorption in studying the course of man's growth through law towards justice. So he arose and went to his father's one intimate friend, a certain Dr. Danforth.

"Yes, yes, Allan, it's plain to see that you are on the verge of nervous prostration," the dapper little doctor had broken in upon Allan's long list of symptoms. "Your nerves have been starved of a young man's normal rations of fresh air, exercise, and fun. With all his passion for hard work, your daddy took care to make no such mistake as that—which is why you inherit the Pickpocket Gun Club. He's already provided a better cure for you than any other I could prescribe. It will never do for you to keep on hot-housing yourself in New York the rest of this winter. You go straight to Pickpocket, Allan, and spend a couple of months tramping those woods with a gun and a dog or two. Oh, I know you don't shoot, but it is time you did learn to kill something. Get those neat shoes wet, tear those precise clothes of yours, and be brutal for a bit. That will make a new man out of you, my boy, and you'll come back prepared to enjoy the big, powerful life that your wealth will open to you."

The young man plainly winced at the doctor's frankness. He had a sensitive, pale face, dreamy eyes, and the forehead of a scholar. But his lips were somewhat thin and straight for so young a man, and his chin had Jared Hale's aggressiveness.

"I suppose you are right, doctor," he admitted, wearily. "All my money is not going to do me any good if I continue to feel this morbid and tired."

"I'll tell you another thing, Allan," burst out the energetic old physician. "And I tell you this as your daddy's friend, one who knew how anxious he was about your narrowing yourself just to books. Do you know what he said about you the last time he sat in that chair there?"

"Al's suffering from ingrown youth," he said, deeply troubled. "It's all wrong for a young man to settle down without ever having been shaken up. Take the matter of girls, Doc. A young man can't learn to love the right kind of a girl too soon, because he's liable not to have time enough to learn how to love her right and to make her as happy as he ought even if they grow old together. I can't forget how it was with Margaret, Danforth." He was speaking of your mother, Allan, and of her death when you were born. "Al's twenty-six years old," he went on, "but so far as Al really *knows*, there just aint any girls in all the world. It's time some girl did make him sit up and take notice, even if she half-killed him in doing it. What he needs is to get his eyes opened before he has squandered on books the youth which is given us chiefly so some good woman will want to love us."

The doctor stopped abruptly, with an angry little sniff, as he saw how listlessly the young man was listening in spite of his polite silence. But, after a moment, he grinned again.

"Oh, well," he said, coming around his flat desk to shake hands with his friend's son, "I guess your case will be attended to all in good time. You go to Pickpocket just as I told you to do, and I'll add only one thing to my prescription. See if you can't find some nice girl to play with you down there."

"Silly old ass," muttered the tired young millionaire as he came down the steps to his waiting cab; and his irritation grew in the days which followed when he found that the doctor's words would cling to him. Then there came one February day when disgust with the whole slushy city and all the cares which it contained for him grew so strong that he curtly announced that he would go to Pickpocket, wherever that might be.

Even as the train sped across New Jersey, a new restfulness stole over him. He felt that a hush had come upon his restlessness, and he caught himself listening. By and by he smiled at himself; for he realized that he had been listening for the sound of a girl's voice calling him to come and play with her. Nor was he longer irritated by the thought. He needed no trional that night, but slept so soundly that he did not know that his car had been shunted onto the gun-club siding. When he did awake, his usual morning depression was replaced by a vague excitement. He was tantalized by elusive memories of a certain dream, the details of which he could not recall but which left him thinking of dim pine forests and of a certain blue gown which fluttered between slender tree-trunks. He dressed hastily and hurried onto the platform of his car, to stare eagerly about him.

But the scene on which he gazed was pleasantly calm. Gone was the damp chill of a New York winter. In its place a warm, soft air caressed him, the salt smell of the coast blending with the pungent odor of pines.

Allan had eyes only for the woods, however. So straight grew the pines, so bare were they of lower branches, so free was the forest of underbrush that long, straight aisles appeared to narrow into a dim perspective, no matter from what point of view one looked. An odd bewilderment came over the young man as he searched these paths, obeying some uncanny instinct which set him to watching for the flutter of a certain blue gown. His eyes remained dreamy, but his face lit up with a whimsical smile as he suddenly realized the absurdity of it all.

"My nerves must be in a bad way," he murmured, but still he smiled happily to himself.

Soon a bearded young man swung himself on the car to introduce himself pleasantly as Boykin Pritchard, superintendent of the club and manager of the sawmills, turpentine camps, and cotton planting, by which Jared Hale had made even his playing profitable. At first, it stung Allan a bit when Pritchard told him that several of his father's old friends—members of the

club—had left on the very day in which a telegram had announced his own coming. But he liked the soft-voiced young Southerner, who mingled hospitality with deference, and was glad that they had the whole place to themselves. Pritchard came to count on finding Mr. Hale stretched in a long wicker chair, located in a certain sunny nook of the rear veranda, gazing dreamily down those bewilderingly forest vistas which could be so readily seen from this vantage point. With some unerring instinct, the old English setter which had been Jared Hale's favorite dog had sought out Allan. Pritchard was sure to find The Wizard lying beside Allan's chair, gazing soberly into the young man's face or staring with inscrutable eyes down those same forest paths which had such a fascination for his master's son. Several times Allan had started into the forest, but The Wizard had growled warningly, and Allan, laughing, yet feeling the compulsion of some strange influence, had strolled back to his chair. So, three weeks had passed, new strength coming to his tired nerves as the days went by in restful silence.

Then came that wonderful morning when Allan awoke with his heart beating fast once more. This time his dream was clear to him, or, at least, the end of it when he had found himself standing imploringly before a girl in a blue gown, whose hand was resting on the head of the old setter. He seemed to be in a well-defined road, on both sides of which was the pine forest. Where the straight lines of the road converged into a narrow perspective he had seemed to see the pillars to the portico of one of those old southern mansions which were so often modeled after Greek temples.

So completely did he surrender to the reality of his dream that he was not in the least surprised when he heard the patter of a dog's feet coming down the hall and recognized Wizard's whine as the old fellow scratched vigorously at the bedroom door, a thing he had never done before. He splashed through his bath in great haste and donned for the first time a hunting suit of brown tweed, lacing flexible boots to his knees. He selected a light little Parker from

his father's gun-rack and put a few shells in his pocket, but so little were either he or The Wizard interested in birds that the champion setter of barely four years ago romped through a covey like a pup, while Allan did not so much as raise his gun from his shoulder as the partridges whirred away to a neighboring thicket. So he tramped down the aisles of his magical forest, Wizard sometimes leading, sometimes following reluctantly, until, late in the afternoon, he threw himself down on a bed of pine needles, having utterly exhausted himself without so much as catching a glimpse of a blue gown. The dog, however, plodded on and was soon lost to sight amid the trees.

Now a bird-dog in the field is absolutely mute, so Hale was astonished when The Wizard began to bark loudly. A moment later the old setter came bounding back, frenzied with excitement. He grabbed Allan's sleeve in his teeth, lay back hard and fairly jerked the young man from his resting.

"Oh, very well," sighed Allan. "I'm dreadfully tired, but since you feel that way about it, I'll make one more hike before I call it a day's work."

The dog gave a sharp bark, turned from him, and ran back the way he had come. Following more soberly, Allan saw the dog leap over something, turn for an impatient glance, then dash down what was evidently an open space, though to Allan the forest seemed unbroken. He, himself, began to run, came to a ditch, took it with a rush, and landed in a grass-grown road, the pines closing in on the far side once more.

"At last!" he cried, exultantly.

For he saw the pillared portico of an old mansion squarely blocking the perspective of one end of the road.

"At last!" he cried again, still more joyfully.

For he had wheeled about to catch the flutter of a certain blue gown.

The girl was leaning against the stub of a dead pine, the white of the peeled trunk making an effective panel to emphasize the dainty coloring of her costume. Beside her stood The Wizard, wagging his tail and gazing up to her adoringly. Straightway Allan came and bowed before her. He was breathless,

not only from the exertion of his run, but also with some strong emotion which kept him silent at first, as he bent his bared head before her with a courtesy that was almost reverential. She, too, gazed open-eyed, startled by his sudden appearance, yet unafraid; for there was a wistful tenderness in his eyes when he raised them timidly, and the pallor of his weariness lent a touch of pathos to his evident appeal for tolerance. She let her hand fall affectionately on the head of the fawning dog, and the beginning of a tremulous little smile gave Allan courage.

"You *are* my Dream Girl, are you not?" he implored. "This must be the forest road of which I dreamed so often. Why, there is the very House of Pillars, and your gown is blue and, now that I see your face, I know you *are* my Dream Girl."

At this the girl broke into a rippling little laugh, so soft, so musical that Allan glanced about his magical woods, half expecting to see fairies dancing to the echo of it.

"And so I am only a Dream Girl?" she answered, mournfully, but with so winsome a smile that Allan was made bold to smile back. "You must be very careful you do not awake to lose me before we have time to get acquainted."

"I love to see you smile," he broke out, boyishly, "but I hate to see you smile at the possibility that I might lose you."

There was something so delicate in her beauty, something so frail in her rounded slenderness, so clear a transparency in her coloring, that Allan was honestly troubled by the fear that she might vanish at any moment she willed. She had stopped smiling, too, and had fallen to studying him with so thoughtful a scrutiny that Allan felt he was being weighed in the balance. He did not falter, however, but stood patiently deferential before her, with a yearning in his eyes which he took no pains to hide. Suddenly the red began to deepen in her cheeks and she let her own eyes flash away from his steady gaze, blushing strangely.

"Oh, well," she said, hastily, "since I am only a Dream Girl there can be no harm in your staying a while in this

Sleeping Forest to tell me how you came to find me."

"How I came to find you?" he repeated. "Why, I've been thinking of you ever since you first came to me weeks ago. And I've been searching for you all day—The Wizard and I."

"You do look tired," she admitted.

"Well, you see, I've been sick and I'm not very strong yet," he explained.

A look of quick concern made tender the girl's face.

"I am too thoughtless," she cried. "Come!"

She led him to a fallen log, and insisted that he make himself comfortable beside her. His heart beat fast at the unconscious tenderness of her voice, and he had to steady himself before he could speak again.

"I guess I did wrong in not merely following the old dog," he began. "Never before has he been willing to guide me to you. But, of course, you know all about it without my telling it, don't you, Dream Girl?"

"Of course," she assented. "Still, you may tell me how it seemed to you and why you came."

"Surely, you must know why I came," he replied, incredulously. "I came to ask you to play with me, of course. I have been dreadfully lonely for a long time, Dream Girl, only I buried myself in books and did not know how lonely I was till you came to me in my dreams. It was just after dad died and I returned to New York, more than half sick and weary of it all. I went to see old Danforth about my nerves. Danforth is a doctor, you know. He was dad's closest friend and told me how my father had been troubled about my mooning around alone. It was Danforth who sent me down here to this gun-club, which I sort of own."

"I know," she broke in, and there was a sudden coolness in her voice which made him wince as from some hurt.

He looked at her in a troubled way, then put out his hand, his fingers just touching her own for one timid second, as if in vague appeal.

She turned back to him impulsively.

"Go on, Dream Boy," she said, softly, and the sun shone for him again.

"It was Danforth," he went on, "who first told me that what I most needed was a girl to play with me. Do you know, I really called him a silly old ass? Then," and his voice grew more tender than he knew, "I began to dream of you. At first, I could not remember just what it was that left me so happy on waking up when I had gone to sleep so horribly depressed. After a while, the vision staid with me. You let me see you plainly as I now see you, Dream Girl, here in this wood road with the pillars of the portico at the end of it. Then, Dream Girl, I knew how lonely I had been, and Wizard seemed to know, until, at last, I came searching for you, just as soon as it was permitted, you know. Please, wont you play with me? Never in all my life did I have a girl to play with me."

"What shall we play first?" she demanded.

"Well," he began, doubtfully, "I don't exactly want to play games, unless it is Twenty Questions. You'll have to teach me how to play, I fear; you see, I am ever so ignorant about lots of things which most fellows know. I wish you'd tell me something about girls, for instance. Take yourself, now. What do *you* like in a chap? I mean, what sort of thing shall I do to make you like me? I do want you to like me, Dream Girl, yet I'm dreadfully stupid. But I'd like to be what you want me to be if only you'd please play that I *could* be something to you and tell me how to go about it."

While there was a boyish frankness in the eagerness with which he talked about himself, yet his voice had so deep a tenderness and his eyes were so filled with yearning that the girl's own heart was stirred within her in a way that startled her, even while it moved her with sweet wonder. As he talked he had been staring into the far forest, but when he ventured to turn toward her he saw that her eyes were veiled by their long lashes, her breath was coming faster, and her hand trembled as she hastily brushed aside a dainty lock which trailed itself across her cheek.

"Oh, Dream Girl, you *will* play with me, wont you?" he cried, and again he shyly touched her hand.

"Yes, Boy," she answered, softly.

For a little while she let Allan talk unrestrainedly, but the shadows in the road were lengthening now, and the dusk was creeping toward them under the trees.

"And now it is time I vanished and you woke up," she exclaimed, rising abruptly.

The Wizard, too, began to show signs of impatience.

"See," she added, "your guide is ready to lead you out of your dream. You have only to follow him through the woods."

"But will he lead me back to you?" he asked. "And will you be waiting here to play with me again?"

"If you are good, Boy," she declared, gravely.

So he obediently followed the dog who had already leaped into the woods, not permitting himself a single glance back. But the girl stood watching them wistfully until their forms were quite lost in the dusky pines.

"And I was lonely, too," she whispered.

Allan awoke the next morning wondering if the whole thing had not been another precious dream. Absurd as it seemed in sober reality, yet he listened eagerly, hoping he might again hear the patter of a dog's feet, coming to guide him once more through the bewildering pines to the magic road where stood the enchanted house with the pillared portico. He was conscious of a touch of awe when he heard a low whine at his door and found The Wizard as eager as himself. This time he did not bother to take a gun but plunged into the forest as soon as he had finished a hasty breakfast.

Giving himself up to the guidance of the setter, he was hurrying straight through the woods when he heard the report of a gun a little to the right. The Wizard paused, lifted his head, then bounded toward the sound. Allan followed and came to where a white-haired gentleman, with drooping mustache and imperial and pleasant gray eyes beneath shaggy brows, was sitting on a gray horse, putting fresh shells in his gun. A pointer stood beside his stirrup,

wagging his tail violently and holding a dead quail in his jaws. And yet, there was a sign tacked on a tree almost immediately over the rider's head which forbade hunting on the grounds of The Pickpocket Gun Club.

Allan's face hardened with sudden irritation at the audacity of this poaching. Nor did it lessen his anger that his own dog had obediently followed the imperious wave of the old gentleman's hand, had trotted over to a patch of broomgrass, and had stiffened into a magnificent point.

"A very pretty point, suh," the old fellow remarked, genially.

But Allan ignored the friendliness.

"See here, my man," Allan ripped out. "You don't seem to realize that you are shooting on posted ground."

Without waiting for a reply, he turned toward the crouching dog.

"Come here, Wizard!" he called, sharply. "Heel, sir! Heel!"

The Wizard turned his head stiffly, cast one reproachful glance at Allan, then resumed his point.

The old gentleman drew himself up in the saddle and glared wrathfully down at the young man.

"By the eternal, suh!" he roared. "What do you mean by calling off a gentleman's dog when he is at a stiff point! Why, that dastardly old Yankee, Hale, was too much of a gentleman to do a thing like that, suh."

As the elder man flared red, Allan's face became grimly white. He strode close to the horseman and held out an authoritative hand, speaking in a quiet, cold voice.

"You will give me that bird your dog has and all others you have poached," he commanded. "And you will get over the boundaries of my land as quick as your horse will carry you."

The rider stared down at him incredulously for a moment, he stooped, took the bird from the dog, thrust it into his own pocket, then spoke in a voice which trembled with suppressed fury.

"Yankee though you are, young man, I am going to give Jared Hale's boy one chance to apologize for his presumption in ordering Colonel Middleton off Pickpocket Plantation."

Allan shrugged his shoulders.

"You heard what I said," he demanded.

"Yes, I heard what you said," the old gentleman answered, contemptuously. "And now you hear what I have to say, suh. I hunt these covies to-day and every day I choose to kill birds. So long as you presume to follow me I shall shoot but one barrel, reserving the second one to blow your damned head off if you lift a finger to interfere with me or my dogs."

Without another glance at Allan he rode slowly to where Wizard was still pointing, flushed a single partridge, cut it down neatly, then wheeled about to Allan again.

"Oh, there's no need for melodrama," snapped Allan. "Now that you have admitted who you are, the law will give me my redress."

The colonel bowed gravely, turned his horse, and trotted through the trees, the pointer coursing swiftly in front of him.

Allan called impatiently to The Wizard, but the old dog quite ignored the call and deliberately turned back toward the club-house.

Allan followed moodily.

He made a few curt inquiries from Pritchard that noon, then ordered a buggy to drive him to Scriven Hall, under the old oaks of which Judge Scriven served as local magistrate, a crumbling brick law-office being all that was necessary in the way of court-house.

"Are you quite sure you wish to push matters to so severe a conclusion?" asked the justice, stroking his gray beard thoughtfully. "Perhaps you are not fully informed on certain matters."

But Hale curtly insisted, so the old Judge sighed and told him to return on the following morning. He seemed hesitating as if to say something more, but Allan's cold courtesy dissuaded him.

So Allan drove back the next morning to find gathered in the little room not only the justice and Colonel Middleton but also half a dozen other gentlemen whose demeanor added to Allan's resentment by making him feel as if he, himself, were on trial.

So he spoke with considerable heat when he stated his case.

To his surprise, Judge Scriven mere-

ly turned to the red-faced old colonel and asked mildly:

"Is that about right, Heyward?"

"Oh, I reckon so," the colonel answered. "You know, Dick, I promised Mary I wouldn't say a single word more than was necessary. You all know why I hunt on Pickpocket."

The justice turned inquiringly towards Allan again, but the young man sat stiffly silent.

"Well, Heyward," the judge said, gravely, "I reckon I'll just *have* to fine you fifty dollars."

"You couldn't do anything else, Dick," the colonel assented, cordially. "I'll see Willie Colcock to-morrow and fix the matter up so as to pay you."

"And now, suh," he thundered, turning to young Hale.

One of the other men put a restraining hand on the colonel's arm, who stopped immediately.

"You're right, Pinckney," he sighed. "I wont do it."

None of them spoke to Allan, who bowed to the justice and walked away to his buggy.

No sooner had he driven from under the oaks than a sudden reaction came over him. Nothing seemed worth while. Why had he wasted all this time making so great a fuss over so small a thing? Why had he let bitterness dwell in his heart and keep him from hunting for his Dream Girl these two wretched days? She seemed to have withdrawn from him, and The Wizard slunk away at his approach, and he was altogether miserable.

He passed a restless night and arose early to search out The Wizard and to coax him into the forest again, but the old dog stared mournfully up at him and refused to move from where he had stretched himself across the path which led into the pines. So Allan trudged away alone, only to return worn with futile wandering.

The next day and the next he searched vainly, his heart aching with longing once more to find himself in the road that led to the porch of pillars. He could not force himself to make inquiries about his Dream Girl, but he did decide to ride down into the village in the despairing hope that he might

chance upon some clew which would guide him to Her.

But when he had ridden only a little ways, he met the courtly old justice, who was himself coming to the club on the bare possibility that he had done the young man an injustice in not making sure he knew certain things.

Allan received him with that boyish friendliness which could make the young millionaire so attractive, turning back and insisting that the judge dine with him that night. Even as they rode side by side the judge gently told Jared Hale's son the whole truth about the ownership of Pickpocket Plantation.

Very thoughtful and quiet was Allan that night as he played the courteous host to Justice Scriven. When they had adjourned to the smoking-room, Hale determinedly called in Boykin Pritchard and unfolded to both men certain plans which had been forming in his mind. Books were produced, and Pritchard was set to work making estimates of the profits of saw-mills, turpentine-camps, and planting, the figures setting Judge Scriven to staring in amazement. The profits of planting could be increased enormously, Pritchard explained, if sufficient capital were placed in the hands of some manager who understood cotton culture and the handling of negroes.

At this Allan smiled, well pleased at his own thoughts. The judge acted as notary and witnessed several papers which Allan drew up. Allan also wrote a check in five figures to pin to one of the papers, then sighed contentedly.

"And now, judge," said the young man, "will you ride with me to Middleton Hall to-morrow?"

But the judge shook his head. "You had best go alone," he replied. "This is a very noble thing you have done, Mr. Hale, but you have still to be very careful, very patient. The colonel has a great heart, but you have hurt him sorely. All he had left with which to support Mary and himself was a few acres connected with the Hall which he worked with one horse. Your suit compelled him to sell this one horse just as spring ploughing is necessary, so you must expect to find him despairing, suh. Be patient, very patient."

But Jared Hale's son found no signs of despair in Colonel Middleton when he had driven to the Hall by a road which approached the fine old house from the rear. As he reached the few acres which must be ploughed some way for Mary Middleton's sake, he saw the colonel and a grizzled old negro so busy in an open field that they did not notice his approach.

With muttered protests the old negro stood before the colonel, holding some sort of harness in his gnarled fingers.

"It suddenly aint fitten fo' no Middleton, Marse Havie," he was protesting. "I jus' aint gwine ter do it, Marse Havie!"

"Put that on me this instant, you old rascal," the colonel blustered. "Do you want me to break every bone in your worthless body?"

Then Allan saw the colonel bow his white head while the negro adjusted the straps to his master's shoulders. Looking closer, Allan noticed that the harness led back to a light plough, one of the kind usually used for weeding flower gardens.

"Now, then, William Rufus!" the colonel called, cheerily, and the servant went back to take hold of the plough handles with trembling hands. So the colonel bowed his back and trudged sturdily across the field, a wobbling furrow trailing its shallow course behind them.

Before they had turned, the buggy was gone, and Allan, inconspicuous against the woods, stood waiting by the furrow. There were tears in his eyes, so greatly was he touched by the sheer manliness of the pitiful scene which these two brave old men were acting so unconsciously before him. Through misty eyes he saw the colonel, who had changed places with William Rufus for the return furrow, halt the faltering old negro when his task was but half done and take on his own shoulders the yoke which had proved too heavy for the servant. It was only when the master had doggedly dragged the plough to the very end of the furrow that he straightened painfully to see Jared Hale's son standing before him with outstretched hand.

"Col. Middleton," he faltered.

There was a long silence, the colonel ignoring the young man's hand.

"Col. Middleton!" he implored again, then braced himself for the explosion.

But no explosion came. This was Col. Middleton receiving at Middleton Hall even the enemy who asked his hospitality.

"Mr. Allan Hale, I believe, suh!" he answered, gravely, regarding Allan from level brows but appearing not to see the outstretched hand. His face was graven deep with lines of fatigue, but he had drawn himself up so very erect that the harness had slipped from his shoulders. "May I ask what brings Mr. Hale to Middleton?"

The icy coldness of the colonel's voice made Allan wince, but he went on bravely, gazing unflinchingly into those contemptuous old eyes.

"I have come," said Jared Hale's son, "to apologize to Colonel Middleton for presuming to order a Middleton from the grounds of Pickpocket Plantation."

The colonel bowed, but remained silent. His eyes, however, became more kindly as Allan continued:

"I can add only that I did not then have the least inkling of certain things which I have since learned. I earnestly hope that Colonel Middleton will continue to hunt not only on Pickpocket but also on the entire preserve of the club."

"While I consider this a very manly apology," began the colonel, ceremoniously, "yet I have always maintained as my right what you now offer as a privilege, and your father, suh—"

"Indeed, colonel," broke in Allan, boyishly, "I meant only that I hoped you would unhesitatingly exercise what I know is justly your right. As for my father, sir—" Here his voice almost broke, for he was sorely hurt by the colonel's disregard of his offered hand, "as for my father, he is dead, Colonel Middleton. He was a good father to me, thoughtful and loving and generous, and I cannot bear that even you should speak ill of my father. Pickpocket was a small matter to a man of so large affairs. Engrossed in making a great fortune, he may have become thoughtless of others, but, indeed, Col. Middleton, my father—"

His voice faltered, and he turned abruptly, only to feel the colonel's hand instantly on his shoulder and to hear the colonel thunder:

"Not another word, my boy, not another word. Your sentiments do you honor, suh. And they shame me, suh, shame me, I say. I apologize, suh, I apologize for attacking the father in the presence of the son."

It was now the colonel who was holding out a friendly hand.

"First, there is one thing more I must do," went on Jared Hale's son. "It is that which I feel sure would now meet with my father's approval."

He took a long envelope from his breast-pocket and handed it to the bewildered old gentleman.

"These papers will make everything quite clear, I think."

"But, how?" demanded Colonel Middleton, as he fumbled with the papers which he took from the envelope.

"That," explained Allan, "is a statement of the profits made on the various industries connected with the Pick-pocket lands since it passed into my father's control. The check represents the one-half interest due you as equal partner, my father furnishing the capital and management, and you the land. The second paper conveys to you forty-five per cent of the stock of the club, of which I owned ninety per cent. May I express the hope that you will join me in buying the other ten per cent, for, indeed, the profits may be greatly increased by extensive planting. In the future, I earnestly desire that you, yourself, will resume the active management of the plantation, counting on me for ample capital."

The colonel started to roar something, then, choked up suddenly, quite turning his back on the young millionaire. Then Allan had a sudden inspiration. Very gently he came to the colonel and slipped the harness from those shoulders.

"Let me prove myself, sir, before I ask you to trust me with that friendship which could so help a young man who has few friends and large responsibilities."

Quickly he adjusted the straps to his

own shoulders, swinging around into the field.

"Come on, William Rufus!" he called to the chuckling old negro, who clung to the plough-handles to keep himself from being fairly pulled off his feet by the stride with which Allan started his new furrow.

When he tramped back, laughing boyishly, Col. Middleton stood awaiting him with outstretched hand, his eyes frankly moist, yet shining with a tenderness which suddenly set Allan's heart to beating fast with thoughts of his Dream Girl.

As they slowly made their way to the Hall, at the colonel's suggestion, the old man talked eagerly of new plans, but Allan listened in an absent-minded way.

He was thinking of his Dream Girl. Would she not approve of what he had done? Would this not open the path to her once more? Would not reproach leave the somber eyes of the old setter, making him once more a willing guide to the House of the Pillars? Dream Girl! Dear Dream Girl! How his heart did ache with longing for his Dream Girl!

They had approached the rear of Middleton Hall by a path which led through the cabins of the ancient "quarters" and curved on through ragged borders of box until it disappeared around the corner of the old mansion. As they approached the corner, a white setter bounded into view from the front of the house to greet Allan with every manifestation of joy.

"Wizard!" Allan gasped, starting back in amazement.

He stood for a moment, trembling with growing excitement.

"Dream Girl! Dear Dream Girl!" he whispered, yearningly.

The dog dashed back around the corner, and Allan, quite forgetting the colonel, came around the house on the run—to stop abruptly, staring.

Down the steps between the pillars of a porch came the winsome maiden of the woods, her blue gown fluttering with the haste of her coming to him.

"My daughter, Mary, suh," said the colonel's kindly voice behind him.



Wings unto the Peacocks

By
EMMA S. ALLEN



I

ALHAMBRA Villa came into view, a spick and span and presumptuous, a marvel of cream-colored plaster and red tiles.

"Ye gods!" exclaimed the man from the East. "'Fools rush in where angels fear to tread!'"

Atherton smiled as he twisted the propeller and sent his runabout slowly between two square stone towers that marked the imposing entrance to an ultra-Spanish mansion of the Moresque-Algerian-California-Mission type of architecture, beyond.

"Shades of Boabdil!" muttered the Easterner, again. "From petroleum to this—in two years! It's a worse paradox than the extract-of-beef man's palace, 'La Granada,' with its sign, 'beware of the dog,' to keep off tourists—worse, even, than the sticky-fly-paper man's villa and your Greene Hotel, with its aromatic breath of magnolias and—cough syrup!"

Atherton laughed.

"Bear in mind, young man, that most of these barbarians are, like yourself, Easterners—come out here to bask in our Elysian airs—though a jollier, more enduring sort than you Raymond aristocrats, who go about with your noses up, believing that you hold a mortgage on the aestheticism of the earth. One might as well make a few millions in condensed milk, or insect exterminators, patent medicine, or California pe-

troleum, as to turn a fortune in Wall Street, or get rich out of Pennsylvania grease-spots. As for the hotel you sneer at, what could be more appropriate than a winter palace built for the enjoyment of consumptives on the proceeds of cough-syrup? Now, I say, you old snob, get your face ready for an unpatronizing smile, before that Feudal-castle door opens to admit us, through a hall draped in Bagdad stuff, to an Arabian-Nights' drawing-room full of American furniture—or, by all the murdered goddesses of good taste, I'll whirl you straight back to the Raymond, where you belong—without a glimpse of Paula! I brought you out here, not to laugh at old Pemberton and his architectural jumbles, but to meet his daughter."

Adrian Van Aylmer's handsome face, of the type hackneyedly called "patrician," expanded in a good-humored smile.

"You remind me of a talking-machine, wound up," he laughed. "But observation has taught me—like house, like inmates."

"Don't you fool yourself, Mr. Globe Trotter," and Granville Atherton sprang to the driveway, a broad ribbon of pale-yellow stone-chippings, lying hot in the February sunshine between stretches of newly-sodded lawns. "You can't always tell the character of people by the houses they live in, any more than you can tell what's in a man's head by the bumps on it; for the

chances are, the ones that give the clearest impressions of cultured inmates are not paid for—or else are brought with money wrung from the pockets of the 'great unwashed,' who have to live in hovels. You Easterners bow down to our millionaires who go to New York with money dug out of California gold-mines or lumped out of continental railroads, then come out here and patronize the ones who get it in liquid form out of ill-smelling oil-wells, because, perchance, they set out an orange-grove and build a Moorish villa. Down with the aristocrat!"

And he rubbed with a protesting hand the offending nasal member of Van Aylmer's countenance.

"Your friends will think there is a French guillotine in operation outside their Alhambran walls," the young tourist observed, following his friend to the piazza, a monstrosity composed of early Mission pillars overtopped by a Moorish roof of red tiles, beneath which peered two wide, impertinent windows of plate-glass curtained with coffee-colored Arabian net, one on either side of a weathered-oak door grated to simulate a mediæval prison entrance.

An electric bell-button yielded to the pressure of Atherton's thumb, and presently they stood, in a dim, mysterious light, on a costly Persian rug in the hall, surrounded by luxurious or oriental splendor suggestive of a Turkish bazaar.

A Japanese servant in a starched white apron took their cards to regions above. As he vanished up the velvet-padded, mahogany-railed staircase, Van Aylmer rolled his eyes around at Atherton.

"They should dress him up in a Moslem's toga and fez; as a Mongolian, he is a misfit," he murmured.

"Just step into the drawing-room, Van," muttered his friend, "Paula still calls it the 'parlor,' just as she used to designate the neat little room that held her old square piano when I first knew her. Anything wrong, here, Mr. Critic?"

Van Aylmer sniffed the air.

"It needs toning down," he affirmed. "Everything is too new—smells too strong of—of money."

He was going to say, of crude oil, the infernal stuff these western barbarians smeared some of their roads with, to lay the dust; but he caught the warning gleam in his friend's eye.

"Yes," Atherton admitted, apologetically, "rather 'high scents'—sandalwood-attar-of-roses-Turkish-punk—"

"A hundred 'scents' to the dollar," his friend interposed, "or, more correctly speaking, a hundred dollars a 'scent,' sort of costly deodorizing process, to eliminate the petroleum!"

Their low voices were not distinguishable in the adjoining "music-room," which was separated by oriental draperies hung from an ebony pole and grille, and a sharp, execrable sound kept on, harrowingly—the wailing protest of piano-keys smitten by the hands of an assassin of melody.

"Your divinity 'plays'?" suggested Van Alymer, cynically, his face assuming an expression of torture.

"Hang it! that little wretch is her sister," muttered Atherton. "Paula never made a discord in her life; she is the one harmonious note in all this jumble."

The youthful inquisitor suspended atrocities, at the sound of his low, familiar whistle, and bounced from the music-seat as if it contained an automatic spring.

"Oh, goody," she exclaimed, appearing at the draperies. "I'm awfully glad you came! that lets me out of any more practising to-day. Did you come in your new motor? I'm going out to see it."

Van Aylmer caught the flash of a black-ringed miss darting through the room, and heard an exclamation in the hall as the Feudal-castle door banged. Then a vision drifted between the curtains.

Rising, he emerged from the deep cavern of a voluptuously draped "cozy-corner," where he had buried himself amid a score of pillows, each a costly creation of the upholsterer's made-to-order workmanship, and rested his hand on the shoulder of a bronze Abyssinian prince, who guarded the cave.

"Paula, this is my old Harvard chum, Mr. Van Aylmer, who has been traveling in the Orient, and now comes to California, last of all, on his way back

to New York—Miss Pemberton, Mr. Van Aylmer.”

Paula Pemberton was neither “divinely-tall,” nor “most-divinely-fair,” being, not a daughter of the gods, but of a California oil-king; she was not conventional, for she knew nothing of the laws laid down by the Medes and Persians of society, yet she was just as far from being provincial. In the brief space of a second or two, while Van Aylmer was murmuring some polite drawing-room phrase to which his tongue was habitually trained, he realized that she was not anything he had fancied her to be, from his friend’s eulogies; and a vague wonder possessed him as to what she really was.

As he released her white fingers, his glance ran swiftly over her—from her rolling rim of her jet-black hair that waved above a low, white forehead past the challenging brightness of her deep, blue-gray eyes with their dilated pupils, and the wine-red fullness of her smiling lips, down the rich softness of her pale blue house-gown to the toe of one dainty shoe beneath its hem.

“Natural!” was his inward comment; and, unconsciously, he thought of the half-blown rose he had observed blooming on the plastered pillars outside.

She had not a single affectation, nor did she seem conscious of the house in which she was set, like a misplaced jewel; therefore, she made no apologies for its inconsistencies: indeed, she would have made none had she suspected their existence, if an expression of criticism would have wounded, ever so slightly, the big, kindly heart of the unsophisticated parent who heaped such a heterogeneous mass of luxuries upon his family.

“You are going to stay for luncheon, of course,” she said to Atherton, seating herself in a backless Roman chair and drooping her arms over its carved ebony sphinxes, without a thought that she was making a picture of herself.

“Of course,” said Atherton, “I brought Van out to see Alhambra Villa and all the ‘villains’.”

Paula laughed, softly, but looked a little ill at ease.

“There are only mother and Jess and

I at home,” she apologized. “Father and the boys are in town all day, you know. But we will try and do the honors. You see, Mr. Van Aylmer, it is an unusual honor for us to entertain a real, live New Yorker; Mr. Atherton doesn’t count, he has been in the West so long.”

Van Aylmer looked full into her beautiful eyes, captivated by a nameless charm in her manner, her voice, her sparkling brightness.

“Then you regard us as a formidable species?” he hazarded, wondering if she could fence with the small sword of badinage, so sharp and deadly a weapon on the tongues of smart society girls, in which engagements he had grown invulnerable.

“I am terribly afraid of you all,” she laughed. “Last winter, when we were in New York for two months, you impressed me, as a class, as the most unapproachable beings in the world. At the theatres and grand opera, and ever so many places where we looked upon you from afar, you seemed the flesh-and-blood images of all the society novel heroes we read about. It was hard to believe that you were made of clay, like the rest of us. One lady told us that the New York men are the most magnificent specimens on earth—and we believed her, for she had been in London and Paris! I wonder if I shall retain my awe of them after we have been abroad. We are going in April, Mr. Atherton, did you know that?”

After this delightful bit of hero-worship, offered at the altar of that divinity of sex which he felt to be eminently deserving of adoration, Van Aylmer was conscious of a slight twinge of chagrin, that she gave him no opportunity for direct reply—cutting him out of the tilt by an appeal to his friend on a merely personal matter.

“No, I had not heard that,” Atherton responded, in surprise. “So the French and German are done to a turn, are they?”

“No,” answered Paula, “they are not half done; but Mrs. Dumont is going with us, and she speaks both languages fluently, you know; so I am going to put on the finishing touches, over there. Mrs. Dumont, you see, is my ‘coach.’”

And she turned again to the awesome

guest, of whom she seemed as unafraid as of Atherton, himself.

"She is training us all for the big game we are to play in high society—me, in particular—preparing me to hold my own against the girls whose fathers get rich slowly and gracefully—the sort who come out here to the Raymond and laugh at us and our 'western newness.'"

"Take care, Paula; Van Aylmer is one of the Raymond aristocrats, himself," laughed Atherton.

"Now, that is a most unfair insinuation, Miss Pemberton, against one who predicts that you will win in the big game all the pleasure that this old world has in store for you," murmured the New York man, with his usual lightness of tongue.

Paula's bright eyes sparkled, as she smiled her thanks for so polite and meaningless a speech.

"Did Mr. Atherton tell you what beautiful plans for a useful career my father spoiled for me, by prospecting in our Los Angeles block of unreclaimed land?" she asked, with charming frankness. "No? Hasn't he told you how poor we were, before the 'gusher' spouted? when he used to come—"

"Paula! do keep still! Why must you always drag that in?" blurted Atherton, really vexed.

"Because, I am not ashamed of it, if my mother is—and I can never forget what you did for me, in those days, if you *do*. He used to come, Mr. Van Aylmer, to our little house in a big, desolate block down near the railroad flats, where the forest of oil-derricks now rises, to get the dainty dresses that my mother used to make for his sister's children—his sister—the one woman in that world I want to be like; and there he heard me singing, one day, and playing on my old piano—and they thought they had made a discovery, and put me under the instruction of the best teacher in the city. That was five years ago, when I was a sophomore in the University of Southern California, and the derricks had only begun to sprout in people's back-yards. I was ambitious, then, to become a fine singer; now, I can be one for the asking, without thinking of the expense—and it doesn't

seem half as desirable as when it looked like an impossible dream."

Granville Atherton, a man ten years her senior, happily married to a democratic little woman who cherished all his highest ideals, came and stood beside the quiet figure in the quaint Roman chair, and laid a hand on her shoulder.

"Paula, in only one way can you purchase my forgiveness for this—go into the music-room and play a Chopin nocturne that will make Adrian Van Aylmer weep—and then sing: '*O, that we two were Maying,*' till you break his steel-clad heart."

The girl looked up and smiled, then allowed him to lead her by the hand, as a proud elder brother might have done, into the music-room. As Van Aylmer was ushered before them by his friend, he felt himself translated. Here, indeed, harmony was undisturbed by a false note of color, design, or furnishings; it was the "golden room in the wooden house."

Unconsciously he drew a deep breath of relief, as the restfulness of the sunlit apartment awakened him from the nightmare of its environment. The inlaid floor of hardwood was strewn with a few rich rugs, and the walls were hung with pictures of musicians and two or three rare and beautiful etchings. Beside the grand piano, in a mahogany case, a music-cabinet of the same wood, a few quaint, Mission-style chairs, and a divan, there was no other furniture; and a broad, deep window-seat, set with one or two choice plants in Indian jars, gave evidence by a few scattered books and simple pillows of a home-made look, of frequent occupancy.

"This is delightful!" exclaimed the guest, dropping on the window-seat and throwing his head back against the plain net sash-curtain. "*You* furnished *this* room, Miss Pemberton! I assure you, I am now ready to weep—and to have my heart broken."

Paula sat for a moment on the music-seat, eyeing him, quietly, a puzzled glint in her dazzling eyes.

"Yes," she said, glancing about the room, "I furnished it, with suggestions from Mr. Atherton's sister. Somehow,

I like simple arrangements best. In New York, the apartments we rented were so magnificently furnished that father and mother got their ideas exalted to the highest pitch and bought everything that caught their fancy. But they let me have my way about this room—and my bed-room.”

Atherton eyed his friend through slits in his eyelids.

“One gets barbarous ideas from New York apartments!” he observed, sententiously. “Most of them are regular exposition-booths—cluttered up to beat the art-shops. Now, Paula, please play my beloved ‘Number Twelve!’”

Van Aylmer watched her, dreamily, as her fingers reeled off the sweet, singing nocturne, and something in the deep, pure quality of her tone-expression, rather than her technique, which was imperfect, told him that she was a clear interpreter of the great master. If he did not “weep,” his eyes expressed the genuine pleasure her music gave him; and when she sang, in a rich contralto, the sad little ballad of the “Maying” if the sobbing tenderness of the song did not “break his heart,” it at least unriveted some of its “steel bands” of prejudice.

“I’m going out to see if that madcap, Jess, isn’t fooling with my motor,” muttered Atherton, springing up, at the conclusion of the song, as the familiar “chug-chug” smote his ears.

Paula rose, quickly, and pulled aside the sash-curtain, near which Van Aylmer sat watching her with mingled curiosity and fascination.

“She is running it down to the garage!” she exclaimed, without alarm—rather with a smile of amusement.

Atherton was out of the house in a twinkling, racing after the machine, bareheaded, calling wildly, as to a runaway horse.

Miss Pemberton sank on the window-seat, her hand still parting the net curtain, and laughed, softly, at the spectacle. Van Aylmer moved nearer to her and peered out of the same pane, his quick eye taking in much more than the unequal race—the sunlit aisles between the rows of young orange trees; the flaming borders of scarlet and pink geraniums; the fluttering young vines

beginning their charitable draping of the glaring new pillars supporting the side veranda; and, last of all, where his glance lingered, the white hand that held the scrap of lace—a hand that any New York beauty might have been proud of, unjeweled, save by a single diamond of purest water.

“You do not seem to be alarmed over the result,” he remarked, as the car steered straight for the door of a well-stocked carriage-house and garage in the distance.

“Oh,” laughed Paula, “she will stop it all right; she runs our machine, half the time, and as well as my father or brothers can. Nothing that Jess does alarms us.”

“Except her murderous attacks on piano-keys,” laughed Van Aylmer. “There! she’s turning round—coming back to pick up the owner.”

They both waited, expectantly, until the machine stopped, and Atherton sprang into it; then Paula dropped the curtain.

“He will give her the lecture she deserves—and a little shaking, perhaps—but he will end by letting her take the machine out in the road for a ten-mile spin; he will only come in for his hat, to go along as passenger. So you think the poor child had better let the piano alone?” and she smiled up into the eyes regarding her with a not altogether curious glance.

“I am as sure of it as I am that you had better not,” he answered. “When we came, she was extracting unearthly wails from the strings that have just spoken like angel voices, in response to *your* fingers. I have not thanked you, yet, for your beautiful songs—the one without words, and the one with such sad ones. Which do you prefer—vocal or instrumental music?”

“Neither,” she answered; “they are inseparable, to me. I never expect to excel in either, now that the incentive to make my living out of music is taken away; but I hope to get a great deal of pleasure out of the study of both. Wouldn’t it be unfortunate for me, situated as I am, if I did not have a talent to develop?”

“How so?” he asked.

“Why, don’t you see, all there would

be for me to live for would be the small ambition to climb into the rank of society that bars me out because I belong to the 'new-rich' class that is trying to elbow its way into old, established circles. It has not taken me long to learn that money will not buy everything; and that there are two ranks of society between which we find ourselves placed—the higher, which looks down upon us because of the mushroom growth of our wealth, and the lower, which looks up to us and claims the privilege of lionizing us because of the accident of our good fortune: we can't attain to the first, and I, for one, will not stoop to the second. It seems so sordid to be looked up to on account of having struck oil in a piece of supposedly worthless land: yet any number of ordinary people, who had the same fortune that we had—though in a less degree, perhaps—are holding their heads as high as any of you New York aristocrats hold yours above *us*, and never speak to their old neighbors: we, ourselves, were coldly snubbed by the first oil-millionaires — until *our* 'gushers' spouted. Isn't it absurd, from highest to lowest?"

Van Aylmer was compelled to admit that the whole system of social prestige, from the Parnassus heights of his own high-walled citadel to the mole-hills of California oil-kings and patent-medicine millionaires, was a "ridiculous farce." When he had consigned Fifth Avenue to the same level of insignificance as the main arteries of swelldom in Los Angeles, he delivered himself of the metaphorical statement:

"On any plane whatever, a peacock attempting to fly is an anomalous spectacle."

Paula laughed, softly.

"Because it has too long and gorgeous plumage on such inadequate wings?" she asked. "And oh, what ugly feet the poor bird reveals, in its futile attempts to fly! Moral: Birds not made to soar should be content to strut in fine feathers."

She crossed her hands in her lap and sat looking down upon her one sparkling ring, thoughtfully.

"Then you have no social ambitions?" he sounded, quizzically.

"I think not."

"And your parents have none for you?"

Paula's face flushed.

"On the contrary, they have unlimited ones; they are, I am afraid, the 'Peacocks'—and confidently expect to soar to the eagle's nests of swelldom. Indeed, there is a dilapidated old nest already waiting for them, high up in the lofty mountains round about Jerusalem—I mean New York—which they expect to refeather, luxuriously. This Mrs. Dumont, who is with us, training us all in the art of living according to prescribed standards, is a New Yorker—the widow of a man who exhausted a fortune in trying to escape the doom of so many who come to California—consumption; he died at The Raymond, in Pasadena, about the time we came into our possessions in the land flowing with—not *exactly* milk and honey!"

And Paula smiled, so archly, and yet so honestly, out of her brilliant blue-gray eyes, that Van Aylmer's heart snapped another rivet of its armored, arrow-proof vestment, and received a wound.

"He left her stranded," Paula went on, "with only enough money left to put him snugly and comfortably in his grave and pay up their heavy board-bills; so she advertised for a place to teach in a private family—a lady of culture and refinement, of one of the oldest and most exclusive families in New York City, and so forth—and my mother at once saw invaluable service to be purchased from such a source; so we secured her. Really, we are all very fond of her, and she has eliminated the crudeness from our manners, wonderfully—so that we are now ready for the refining process."

"Pardon me, Miss Pemberton," Van Aylmer interposed, laying a hand over the one that was kneading a sage-green cushion on the window-seat between them, "may she never refine away any of the refreshing frankness and originality, in constructing *you*, along her own tiresome lines, into a woman of the world; it will spoil you."

"She is fledging 'wings unto the Peacocks,'" laughed Paula.

"But *you* are not one of them; you

are a lark; be yourself, and sing your way to—"

Van Aylmer lost himself in his vague, poetic metaphor, at the closer touch of the white fingers he had taken in his.

"—'to everlasting bliss,'" suggested Paula, taking her hand from his and smiling up at him, again, with the same frank sweetness. "Oh, I do mean to sing my way in the world, and be happy in my own way—if that is what you mean; it is my only hope of escape from the remoulding process through which the Pembertons are to be melted and poured. Mrs. Dumont is going to Europe with us, to show us precisely how you New Yorkers do things over there, and we are going to come out of the refining mill as near like you as two peas in a pod. Then, in return for her valuable services to us, my father is to rehabilitate her fortune, and she will return to her 'exclusive set' in your city—the abandoned nest from which the 'Peacocks' are to 'mount upon wings as eagles'—and with a lavish expenditure of his money, deodorized in the refining process of transmission through her social filter, she will reënter society as merrily as if she had never dropped out of it—in quest of another husband! Isn't it a beautiful plan?"

Van Aylmer threw his head back and laughed.

"You are a hopeless satirist," he declared. "One would think you had already seen the world, shorn of its 'aprons.' You are going East soon?"

"Yes, next month."

"And you will be in New York until you sail?"

"Yes. Will you—"

Then Paula caught her breath and stopped.

"Will I—what? Come and see you? Please ask me to. Where will you stay?"

Paula hesitated, flushing and biting her lip.

"I actually forgot that I was talking to a real New Yorker—one of the 'most magnificent beings on earth,' she laughed. "It is hard to realize that I have had greatness thrust upon me—here in my native state. In New York, I'd be afraid to say six words to you."

"Heaven keep us here, then!" he murmured. "If I were not due there in ten days, to attend my sister's wedding, I would wait and make the trip with you: or, do you go in a private car?"

"Oh, dear, yes! my father bought one, over a year ago; we have been all over the United States in it. But I am sure he will be glad to give you a compartment, for the distinction of your company. So you have a sister?"

"Three of them; this one is the last to be married. She is about your age."

Paula's dazzling eyes flashed a look of persistent amusement into his; she seemed to enjoy holding her lowly ground.

"Your sisters would not approve of your calling on the 'Peacocks' before their wings are fledged—or afterward, either, for that matter; neither would your mother—I am sure *she* would consider my poor little uneducated mother utterly impossible: and I couldn't bear to have her snubbed—she's so genuinely good. It has been the saddest experience of my new life—teaching her simple lessons in English grammar, for it has made me feel so guilty, to think that I did not do it long ago, and keep it up as I went through high school and college, when she was working so hard to give me advantages that *she* never had. Oh, no, you must not think of calling on us in New York. I am certain that Mrs. Dumont's 'exclusive set', into which she expects to steer us, is very, very much lower than yours."

"You take too many things for granted, my dear Miss Pemberton," Van Aylmer told her, his face turned grave, "*My* mother has long been beyond the reach of such trivial matters as social distinctions. Where she is, there is no line drawn, except the impassible one between good and evil."

Paula looked up, again biting her lip, in the delightfully-unconscious way she had.

"Oh, forgive me," she said, softly. "I didn't think—of that possibility; I was only certain that she must be far superior to—to us."

"Not to *you*, child!" the man's low voice murmured, strangely tender. "But she was superior to most women. She

was long an invalid, but never a narrow-minded worldly woman. If she were living, to-day, she would tell you, as she told her own children—that there is no sin so unpardonable as the sin of pretense; and there is certainly no pretense about *you!* Whether you ask me, or not, I mean to call on you in New York; and I promise that you shall not be afraid of me, or of any of my kind."

Paula's serious mood melted into a smile, as a faint cloud dissolves in the blue of her California skies.

"I shall be glad to see you, of course," she told him, naturally, without a glimmer of elation. "We shall be at the Waldorf-Astoria—though I don't like it there: the servants seem suspicious of every one who isn't placarded a foreign prince, and act as if it were a great honor on our part to have them wait on us. We expect to be there about the middle of March. Two dressmakers are upstairs, now, getting us ready—mother and me; the younger children are not going abroad until they finish school."

"How do you like our Paula?" asked young Mrs. Atherton, that evening, in her Pasadena home, of her husband's guest for the night.

"Not at all," said Van Aylmer, positively.

"Like' is too weak a word, Edith," interposed Atherton. "He is in love with her."

"Is that true, Mr. Van Aylmer.

"Perfectly."

"And her mother?"

"A nice, cushiony, little body—delighted to wear purple and fine linen every day; no worse than hundreds of fat dowagers seen in New York, squinting through lorgnettes at eligible suitors for their daughters."

"And Jess?"

"No worse than our Eastern tom-boys; she will make a greater 'social hit' than her superior, true-hearted sister."

"But—her *father!* Isn't he simply impossible?" and dainty Mrs. Atherton put up her white hands in a gesture of hopeless pity for poor Paula.

Van Aylmer smiled, inscrutably.

"We saw him for only a few moments, as we were leaving," he said. "But he seems a kindly, big-hearted fellow, who loves his family better than himself—and is tickled to death because he can trick them out in sumptuous raiment; no worse than hundreds of men pumping money from the Stock Exchange for New York women to dress on. In fact, I'm sure I've seen men in Wall Street who could put it all over the old chap for coarseness."

Atherton applauded his friend's progress in democracy by tapping a silver spoon on a cut-glass tumbler.

"Well," his little wife kept on cat-echising, "what of Mrs. Dumont?"

"A typical woman of the world, well-educated, and fairly good-looking; obviously intent upon revamping her own shabby fortunes with Pemberton's money, very clever in disguising her own ambitions under Miss Pemberton's new cloak."

Mrs. Atherton leaned back in her chair and smiled, arching her delicate eye-brows, inquisitively, as she put her last query—

"And now—Paula?"

The man whose face she watched sat for a moment silently studying the rainbow tints quiver through the glass of water in his hand.

"Only a scientist can analyze a sun-beam, or define a dew-drop," he said, with such deep earnestness that Atherton, who was eyeing him, quizzically, suppressed the jest on the end of his tongue.

II

Two months later, Paula Pemberton stood on the deck of an out-going steamship, bidding Adrian Van Aylmer a frank, friendly good-by.

"You have made these few weeks the most wonderfully delightful of my life," she told him, "I want to thank you, again, for the days and nights of enchantment you have opened up to me—to us all."

"It is I, who have to thank *you*, Miss Paula. It has been enchantment for *me*—seeing Vanity Fair regilded, through your clear-eyed enjoyment of it all. I am only sorry that it has been the dull Lenten season, when New York's

choicest sinners are in sackcloth and ashes, recuperating for the next campaign."

Paula's sweet, clear laugh, still as unaffected as a bird-note, went to his heart. How he should miss it! He held her hands in his own, while she was looking up at him and saying:

"If this has been the *dull* season, what must a gay one be?"

"You are not afraid of New York men, now?" he asked.

"Not of *one* of them; you, at least, have come down from your pedestal. But now, I think, you had better go back again."

"Why?"

"Because—don't you see? When we come back, next fall, and enter Mrs. Dumont's set, you will be in another clique entirely outside and above hers. Haven't you observed how fluttered she has been over the temporary presence in her elliptical plane of a star from another constellation? Such migrations of heavenly bodies cause needless disturbances in planetary systems. In her wildest flights of ambition, I am sure she never dreamed of cropping clover in the Four Hundred patch. And my poor father and mother! they are simply getting dizzy-headed with gazing from the temple-pinnacles you have taken them to."

Van Aylmer boldly lifted her ungloved hand to his lips. The gong was sounding for people to go ashore, and half a dozen who knew him were smiling at each other over his "latest flirtation."

"My dear little girl, your metaphors are as sadly mixed as your logic," he told her. "It is not a question of Mrs. Dumont's 'planetary orbit,' or of mine—or of Andalusian clover-fields—or of Satanic temptations; it is *you* who are the 'heavenly body' that attracts me—whether out of my orbit, or not, I do not know, or care! May I write to you—dear?"

"No, no!" she answered, quickly, taking away her hands.

"Why not?"

"I'm going to devote all my time to my music—when we are not traveling. I tell you, you must get back on your pedestal."

"I tell you, I will not! I am coming over, next fall, to meet you, somewhere. You will, at least, send me postals, from time to time, so that I may locate you?"

She shook her head: crowds were surging past them to the gang-way.

"You are very kind—" her lips murmured.

"Hang kindness!" he broke in. "Will you write?"

"No. I am altogether out of your world. I have had a dazzling, head-spinning glimpse of it, but I know I do not belong there. After poor mother tries her over-plumaged wings, next winter, trying to fly—and fails—she will be glad to go home and strut in fine feathers amid her kindred flock. And that is where *I* shall shine best, where Providence placed me. Good-by. Remember me to your sisters; they were very kind to call: and to your father—he was so gracious in asking us to dinner in the Van Aylmer mansion."

"They were none of them truly kind, confound them!" muttered the young man. "They coldly intimated that you could not 'play in our yard,' and you are punishing *me* for their snobbishness."

Paula laughed, a little nervous flutter showing through her assumed calm.

"They saw the poor, ugly feet of the 'Peacocks,' who are trying to fly," she reminded him. "They are right in believing, as I do, that we should go back and 'scream among our fellows'—like Bryant's water-fowl. Please go, now. You will have to wait until we get to Liverpool before you get off, if you don't hurry—and you haven't even a suit-case."

Desperately in earnest, now, the flickering desire for her sweet, sincere friendship suddenly flamed into a passionate longing for something dearer. He caught her hands again and crushed them against his breast, as he looked deep down into the crystal pools of her true eyes.

"I shall see you again, before the summer is over, Paula; for you are the dearest, most sincere little woman I ever knew. Do you think I mean to lose you, dear-heart, now that I've learned to love you?"

Long after he had gone, with the last remnant of the crowd, Paula stood watching the black spot on shore that marked his standing-space amid the multitude who waved farewells—and on her face was the “light that never was on sea or shore.”

Her father came up, at last, and broke into her reverie, clumsily.

“Looks as though we wouldn’t have to go fishing in Mrs. Dumont’s pond to catch a big fish for *you*—eh, Paula?” he chuckled, glee suffusing his florid, expansive countenance.

Poor Paula! Her sweet face turned crimson, then went white to her forehead. How dreadful upon the mountains were the feet of the “Peacocks,” as they poised for flight to the Eagle’s nests on the unattainable heights above! She shrank back, repelled.

“Don’t ever say anything to me like that, again!” she blazed. “As Mr. Atherton’s friend, Mr. Van Aylmer has been kind and courteous to us; but that is all. Can’t you see how far above us he is, socially?”

“No,” said her father, bluntly. “My Paula’s good enough for the swellest New Yorker on Manhattan Island—and a heap *too* good for most of ’em! Van Aylmer’s a fine fellow—no blots on his character—no fool stunts in his plain way of treating his equals: I like him. But he’d best not waste any funny-business on my little girl!”

Paula took his hand, gently. How good he was to her! How good he had always been, even in the hard years of poverty, when he had denied himself every comfort to give her an education, and to foster her pathetic longing to sing! Would the day ever come when she would be ashamed of him? God forbid! She would go back to the birds of her feather and be a “Peacock” with her own, always—never to soar on the wings of a lark—before she would forget that “kind hearts are more than coronets.”

III

In Venice, the following October, Van Aylmer just missed his undaunted quest: the Pembertons had left the ducal palace that now faces the Twentieth Century as a grand hotel only the day

before he wrote his name in its register—whither, no one could tell him. He engaged the suite they had vacated, and picked up every trifle he found lying about that suggested Paula—a violet-scented handkerchief with an embroidered “P” in one corner—a white neck-ribbon that had circled her throat—a discarded glove.

Putting in the coat-pocket over his heart these fragments of a shattered longing to tell his love in a gondola on the Grand Canal, he wandered north, by degrees, through Germany, and embarked for home—just in time to encounter the fierce Equinoctial gales that churned the Atlantic from sea-board to sea-board for twelve days.

On the sixth, two reeling figures, on deck for the first time, ran into him as he rushed out for a breath of fresh air, in an hour of comparatively decent weather.

They were Paula Pemberton and her father.

“Thank Heaven!” he cried, catching her hands. “I have found you, at last, my Will o’ the Wisp!”

He buffeted the wind and spray for a turn on deck, with Paula firmly wedged between himself and her father, shouting his joy at seeing what little of her face was visible above the high collar of her steamer-cloak of fur. In ten minutes, they were alone together, in a luxurious nook of the grand saloon, and Pemberton had gone, chuckling, to his wife’s state-room, to counteract that lady’s prayers for death to end her internal disgust of life, by imparting the news of Paula’s “swell beau turning up in mid-ocean.”

“And you have been deathly sea-sick, all these awful days?” Van Aylmer asked, when the fur was thrown back, revealing her pale, lovely face, just then flushed with a more subtle accelerator of maiden blood than the encounter with a North-Atlantic Equinoctial had given, on deck.

“*Sca-sick?*” she gasped, “I have prayed to *die*! Do you think we shall ever reach New York harbor?”

“I don’t know, dear: if not, I’m glad I got aboard this boat, to go wherever it takes you. I’ve lived without you long enough to know that it would be

bliss to die with you! Paula, dearest! see what I found in the Danieli suite, in Venice. I took the rooms you had, to catch, if possible, any faint trace of you that had fallen behind. I wanted to tell you, in a gondola, how much I love you, dear; but this tumbling old monster of a groaning ship will do just as well, now that I've found you."

A lurch of the vessel tipped their seat at a convenient angle and Paula slid into his arms, to catch the whispered words that brushed her cheek. It would have been useless to deny him the privilege of kissing her face at any alluring spot his lips found irresistible, since it was utterly impossible for her to get to her feet and walk two steps without assistance. But between the delectations of his happiness—and hers, which she would not concede—she advanced some very strong arguments against his suit.

"We saw your sister in Paris—the newly-married one—and my father had the audacity to speak to her and claim acquaintance, on the strength of your friendship. She cut us dead!"

The arms about her did not relax; they even held her closer.

"It's a poor sword that can't cut both ways," he retorted, stung to anger that his own foils, with which his sisters fenced, had wounded him, at last.

"But I am not going to make trouble in your family—old, patrician, blue-blood stock that it is," declared Paula. "Don't urge me; it is impossible. My poor father and mother can never be anything but 'Peacocks'—and I can't bear to see them ridiculed because they can't fly."

"They will live in California, where we can spend a part of each winter with them; and they can come, occasionally, to New York," he argued.

Paula sat up straight.

"May God keep me from ever being ashamed of them!" she cried, softly. "If you really love *me*, you must not despise the dear old birds who have feathered my nest."

"My darling, I shall never despise anyone who is dear to you; but isn't a woman justified in forsaking her parents for the man she loves? Or, *don't* you love me, Paula?"

She was silent for a moment; then the blue-gray eyes looked up into his, shyly.

"I'm afraid—that I do," she admitted. "You have, somehow, made all other men seem small—unimportant—nothing at all."

"The rest of those New York fellows, on their pedestals?" he suggested, "the ones who never got down to be sociable—because I never gave them a chance."

"They never wanted a chance," amended Paula, seriously. "As to forsaking my father and mother in the way that your family would insist—I will never do it, not even for you—though I do love you! I may be lowly-born and bred—they may be hopelessly uncultured, in the midst of their increasing millions, but we are a loyal brood, true to our feather."

"Then your feather shall be mine; I will annex myself to your flock," he declared.

"*You* a 'Peacock'!" and Paula laughed, miserably happy. "No, *no!*"

For six days, at intervals when she could be seen—between her periods of fasting and the deadly consequences of eating a few morsels of food—Van Aylmer pressed her for her promise to marry him, until, in sheer weariness and exhaustion, she exclaimed:

"Oh, yes, yes, dear—if we ever get to shore—which seems less likely every day."

On the thirteenth day of the voyage, within reach of the bellowing fog-horn's note, had not the gale driven its incessant barking inland—shrouded in the double blackness of early morning and thick storm-clouds that no light could penetrate, the vessel, deflected from her course, suddenly went on the rocks and began, slowly, but steadily, to sink.

The captain and crew, prepared by the terrible voyage for the worst, were instantly in firm command of the panic-stricken passengers. One after another, in quick succession, the boats were lowered and filled, first with women and children, until a dozen had pushed off into the inky depths.

Through it all, folded in her fur

cloak and girdled with a life-preserver, Paula clung to her lover, choosing to go down with him, rather than embark with her mother, who had been lowered, frantically wailing for her "babies at home," into one of the first boats, with Mrs. Dumont.

Overhead, the signal rockets of distress shot into the clouds and a cannon boomed its call for help to the life-saving crew patrolling the beach—only a mile away!

"God help us, Paula!" muttered Van Aylmer, "you *must* go, now, darling. She's sinking, fast. When the end comes, I may be able to swim and float until the lifeboats pick us up."

The girl's cold lips were lifted to his. "If I did not love you well enough to die with you—Adrian—I would go. But I *can* forsake father and mother—in *this* way—for you, dearest."

In that moment, it seemed to him that death itself were a small price to pay for such an assertion, linked with his name for the first time on her lips.

Boat after boat was filled and swallowed up in the darkness, as foot by foot the vessel settled on the shoals.

"Paula!" cried her father, when the ranks of women had thinned to a dozen. "Come! You can both get in the next boat: these other women, here, are made of the same stuff that you are—they won't go without their men. Two by two, is the next order. Take my place, here, Van."

"But you, daddy?" cried Paula.

"I, little girl—I'll get to shore, some way, if God wills it; if not, be good to your mother. Kiss me, now, dearie."

Van Aylmer caught the big hand in a convulsive grip.

"My God! I can't take your place, Pemberton."

"Yes, you must! God bless you, my son! Make my little girl happy. Swing her over, now. Don't be afraid, Paula—I'll see that he comes next. Good-by, darling!"

"God forgive me! you can't swim, Pemberton—and I can," groaned Van Aylmer, "Heaven never meant me for a coward."

"You're not one, if you do as I say! Over the rail! Quick! I promised her—"

His mighty arms of iron forced the young man over the side of the vessel where he caught the rope-ladder that lowered him to the boat, and in a breathless space of time they were off into the trough of the deadly sea.

The last Paula saw of her father, he was swinging a lantern to aid the crew in manning the next boat.

"God save his noble heart, and keep you from despising me for this!" groaned Van Aylmer into the ear on his breast.

In the gray dawn, Paula found her mother beside a huge bonfire on the beach, and for an hour, as one by one the boats of the life-saving station came back with the last survivors of the wreck, she waited for Van Aylmer to return in the one in which he had volunteered to go back, with his hands to an oar, as soon as he reached land.

He had not rowed in a Harvard crew for nothing, and the furious spur of a great determination to redeem what seemed to him a cowardly weakness, lent power to his strength and skill and seemed to command the very waves to obedience—for at sun-rise, there was a calm.

Before embarking for home, Van Aylmer had cabled to his father the date of his sailing on the ill-fated steamer; and when the vessel was five days overdue, gloom reigned in the Fifth Avenue mansion where he was an idol not to be cherished lightly. After a wakeful night of anxious forebodings, tortured by the roar of the storm, the old man felt a sense of relief when the morning dawned sullenly calm; but hope died, instantly, at sight of the paper a servant brought to his room.

"God help us, sir, she's on the rocks," the man sobbed, pointing to the enormous headlines that flung their message of death to thousands of agonized eyes.

Dressing in frantic haste, the stricken man rushed from the house and joined the stampede of frenzied people to the company's office.

"Merciful God! not Adrian—my only son!" the choking cry kept gurgling in his aching throat.

As the boats came in along shore, the

news was telephoned to the office and the names of the saved chalked on the bulletin-board, line after line.

"Miss Paula Pemberton, California," the writing hand scrawled, rapidly, as it listed the latest arrivals, in the gray daylight.

The man whose "Family Tree" was his proudest boast, whose choicest fruit he had guarded with jealous care, started—gasped—and waited, breathless, for the next name.

With a flourish, an "A" appeared—then resolved itself into a dazzling line of light across the board:

"Adrian Van Aylmer."

"Oh, thank God!" and the father sank on his knees, there on the flooded pavement.

At nine o'clock, after he had returned home, in a transport of joy, and eaten his solitary breakfast to the jubilant accompaniment of the butler's tearful thanksgiving, the long-distance telephone spoke to his listening ear,—

"Hello! that you, dad?"

"Yes, Adrian—my son! I'm on my knees, thanking God!" rang back the answer, choked with a sob.

"Not an ordinary attitude for you, father," spoke the distant voice, like one risen from the dead.

"I fear not, son. God is better to me than I deserve. I saw your name on the bulletin-board—the fairest sight my eyes ever beheld. Tell me, were many lost?"

"Comparatively few. Such splendid self-possession I never dreamed could be exhibited in such an awful hour. The noblest hero I ever knew voluntarily offered his life for mine. It was no fault of his that he isn't at the bottom, this morning—and small credit to me that I rowed back with a life-crew in time to save him, with a few others, as he bobbed about in his cork-jacket, with only life enough left to clutch a piece of timber. He is Paula Pemberton's father—among the last men to jump from the ship before she went down; and—I say, father—"

"Yes, son."

"May I bring them home—to you?"

Paula would have died with me—rather than go in any of the first boats, with her mother. In the face of death, we were not divided—in life, we shall never be."

"God bless them all! Yes, Adrian, bring them home—to me," answered the proud man with the blue-blood of many generations surging in his veins.

That evening, in the library, Paula's father smoked a cigar complacently with Van Aylmer Sr., and wore the honors of his first deal in heroism as awkwardly as he wore his host's borrowed clothes. Up-stairs, in bed, rapidly recovering from the terrible experience of the night, his wife, with the assistance of Mrs. Dumont, was hastily listing her necessities of wardrobe to be purchased the next day, as contingencies for an expeditious flight to California—which land of Canaan, once regained, she vowed never to leave again.

Among the silken pillows of a couch in the room beyond, with just a touch of fever in her wan face, Paula was experiencing the ecstatic sensation of having soared to a region beyond the flight of an eagle's pinions.

"Adrian—the wings of the 'Peacocks' have been clipped effectually; they never want to attempt another flight. The precious old birds are going back to their home nest, out in the dear, peaceful West, to strut and be happy in their own garden. They have consented to leave me here with Mrs. Dumont, for the winter."

"Paula, my love—the Parent Bird shed his feathers, last night in Atlantic brine—and sprouted the wings of Gabriel. Whenever his snowy pinions bear him here, to *our* nest, his Archangelship's seat will be waiting for him, in state."

And down in the library, the "Archangel" threw the stub of his cigar into the fire and got up and stretched—not his wings—but his exceedingly stiff and cumbersome legs, as he declared,—

"*Jerusalem!* that fellow rowed to beat the whole life-saving band, the men told me—and just to save an old cuss like me! Glory! I'll make Paula's dowry a million!"



A Com- pulsory Elopement

By HOWARD DWIGHT
SMILEY

THE sun was shining and the birds were singing and the jack-rabbits cavorting gaily around the budding alfalfa, and me and Highwater Schuller and Henry Clay Juckett were having the times of our lives cutting hay down on the Willow Creek bottoms, when Buck Miller came along with the news of the circus over to Gimlet.

"She's sure going to be a whopper," he informed us. "The whole town's plastered with red, white and blue show-bills, as big as barns, depicting marvels and other interesting facts too numerous to mention.

"Amongst the other nature fakes they've got an elephant of such mammoth proportions that it makes any other cayuse of that breed look like a tin toy in comparison. According to the picture, this critter has an upholstered wagon-box, with a canopy top, cinched on its back, in which any and all may ride twice around the arena for the small sum of ten cents per."

"That sounds some interesting," says Hi. "A little tame for a bunch o' old bronco-busters, like us, but fine for the ladies. S'pose you'll be taking Sally for a ride on that elephant, Buck."

Buck blushed like a Nevada sunset and scowled.

"Aw' what's the use o' rubbing it in?" he grumbled. "You know blame well that I can't take her."

"Why not?" inquired Hi, innocently. "If I had a gal you can bet I'd take her. Gals just dote on circuses."

"Oh, well, you know I'd do it if I could," growled Buck, shortly.

Sally was a touchy subject with him.

"Let's see," Hi relentlessly continued,

"it's been nigh close to a year that you've been a courting her, aint it? You don't mean to say that you aint even reached the circus-going stage in all that time! You must be slower'n cold molasses! First thing you remember somebody'll be roping her away from you."

"Oh, blame it all! You know well enough why I can't take her. I'd do it if I could, but—" began Buck, but stopped short as he caught the twinkle in Hi's eye. "Say!" he yelled, kicking his cayuse in the ribs, "you go to blazes, will you!" and away he went, mad as the little wet hen we read about.

The three of us leaned on our forks and watched him top the rise and disappear in the direction of the Lazy L. Then Henry Clay spoke.

"Pears to be uncommon cranky on the subject o' his gal. What's the rip there, anyhow?"

Hen had been in the community only four weeks and it was hardly expected that he'd be up on *all* the current gossip; still, it did seem curious that he wasn't posted on this particular tid-bit.

"Why," says Hi, "it's the same old story that's been handed down to posterity ever since Noah' second wife's sister eloped with the porter of the Ark poop-deck. Just a plain, ordinary love affair, with the principals given to living on half rations and looking solemn-choly and moon-eyed, dreaming of the time when two fond hearts shall beat as one in a little cottage built for two, while the old gent, on the petticoat side, is dead sot that they sha'n't do no such thing, and so forth, *et cetera*."

"Why don't they run off and elope?" inquired Hen.

"They've taken three cracks at that game, but the old man was there, Johnny-on-the-spot, every time. He 'lows that the next time they try it he's going to take his daughter East and put her to school in a convent or something, where she'll be made to mind her business."

"But, what's the trouble, anyhow? Aint Buck good timber?"

"He's as likely a young feller as ever roped a maverick, but the old man just wont have it, that's all."

"Has he got designs to hook her up to a dook or markis or something like that?"

"No, don't reckon it's that bad. He just don't take a notion to Buck."

"How 'bout the old lady?"

"Just as dead sot as her husband, and mebbe more so."

"It sure do look dubious for them young uns," says Hen, drawing a plug o' tobacker from his behind pocket and reflectively biting off a chew. "Oh, well," he added cheerily, "they'll find a way o' it somehow. They always do. They can poison the old folks if nothing handier turns up—but I aint advising that, o' course."

The morning of the circus the Willow Creek gang went on an impermanent strike. We weren't supposed to take a lay-off—there wasn't time for that—but were expected to work straight through the week, Sundays, legal holidays and all, from sun-up till dark.

Did you ever tackle a job of cutting alfalfa? It's like trying to dig two holes in quicksand. You work like a house afire getting the first hole excavated, and then dig the second. When that's finished you find that the first hole has filled up, and you start all over again with the same results, vice versa.

Sounds foolish, doesn't it? But that's just about the size of the alfalfa game. Take a medium-sized field—say two-quarter sections. You jump in and see how quick you can cut one quarter, and then fly over and see if you can't cut the second one a little quicker. When that's done you hurry right back to the first quarter and find that it's grown a full crop in the meantime. Seems to

grow at the rate of a half a crop every twenty-four hours, and when you take a day off the boss figures that he's lost just that much hay, and hollers accordingly.

Howsomever, we weren't going to miss that circus, hay or no hay. We figured that we could cut alfalfa any old time, while a circus happens along but once a year or less, and we were going to this one if it cost us our jobs.

It's a good three hours' ride in to the ranch house, and another three from there to Gimlet, and we quit the bottoms about six o'clock that morning, figuring that that would give us plenty of time to get down town by noon.

When we arrived at the house, however, we found trouble. A bunch of horses that the boss had bought the day before had kicked down the corral fence during the night and vamoosed the ranch. Of course we had to join the rest of the boys in rounding them up, which took us a good two hours.

There was no time to clean up, for only by hard riding could we hope to reach the grounds before the circus started. So we stopped only long enough to change horses and then hot-footed it for town.

That is, all except Highwater Schuller. Some time during his mysterious and checkered career Hi had acquired a suit of clothes. Just how, nobody seemed to know. He had 'em with him when he blew into the community, six years before, and they looked just the same now as they did then.

The coat was one of them long, sky-pilot affairs, with pockets stuck in the tails, and none where they'd ought to be, and the pants were built to match. When Hi togged himself out in 'em he was sure the biggest insult to the human race that ever walked on two legs. Hi's all of six-foot-two, and the man the suit was originally built for couldn't 'a' been over five-foot-six, and the consequences was that when Hi got into the rigging, there was six inches of sun-burned red-wrists between the end' of the sleeves and his thumbs, and about the same number of inches of darned red socks between the bottom of the britches and his ankles. That's how he got his name.

And the funny part of it was that Hi thought he looked like a lady-killer when he was togged out in his abominations. He only wore them on state occasions, and in the intervals kept 'em hung up on a wire frame in his own private wardrobe, which was one corner of the bull-pen partitioned off with a horse blanket.

There hadn't been a state occasion for some time, and the suit had been quietly reposing in its quarters, undisturbed, for over two months.

Of course Hi had to stop long enough to make one change. He didn't bother about the britches, but just rushed in and yanked on the coat and was back in the saddle again in half a minute, and then we were off.

We weren't any too soon, either, for when we arrived at the grounds the crowd was already inside the tents and the band was hitting up the opening overture. We picketed our horses down in the pasture and hustled inside the animal tent.

A good-sized crowd still lingered here, looking at the critters, but we started to push right through to the big show, when our attention was arrested by a barker at the other side of the tent, who was loudly proclaiming:

"It's your last chance, ladies an' gents, before the big show begins, to take a ride on the back of Betsey, the largest elephant in captivity! Come up! Come up and bring the children! It's your one chance of a life time to ride on the big game of the African jungle! Only room for six passengers in the car! Twice around the tent and the price is only a dime, ten cents!"

And so we joined the rest of the crowd and went over to see Betsey.

"Hello!" says Hi, as we approached, "there's old man Jennings with his wife and Sally. They're going to ride the elephant, too, by gum!" he added, as Mrs. Jennings started up the ladder that leaned against the animal's side.

She was followed by Sally, while the old man wound up in the rear.

"Room for three more!" yelled the barker. "Remember, folks, it's your last chance before the big show! Only a dime, ten cents!"

"There's Buck," says Henry Clay,

pointing to a disconsolate looking individual leaning against the tent-pole.

"He'd ought to be in on this," says I.

"Why, that's so!" exclaimed Hen. "Let's set him up to a ride. Come along here, Buck."

But for obvious reasons Buck held back.

"Oh, come along," says Hen, impatiently, and grabbing him by the arm yanked him up the ladder before he realized what was coming.

"Lend a hand here, Billy," Hen added to me.

I entered at once into the spirit of the thing, and seizing the other arm we boosted him up the ladder and slammed him down in the seat beside Sally in jig time. Then me and Hen settled down in the rear seat.

It was all done so quick that the old man didn't have a chance for objections, but the way him and his wife twisted themselves around in their little front seat and glared at Buck was plumb amusing to witness. Then Mrs. Jennings made up her mind.

"Guess we wont ride," says she. "Get down, Sally."

"Full up!" yelled the barker, who'd heard the remark and wasn't going to lose that thirty cents if he could help it. "Take down that ladder there, and then we're off."

And right here old Highwater Schuller and his sky-pilot coat came into the play.

Hi had been standing by the elephant's head, watching the proceedings with an interested eye, and now when he saw we were about to be off he started to bid us good-by.

"Bone voyage!" he yelled, and dived into his coat-tail pocket for the big white silk handkerchief he always carried there, for state occasions, also.

He explained afterwards that he had merely intended to wave us a farewell, but what he brought out, instead of the kerchief, was a good-sized ball of white silk rags and shreds, mixed with wisps of hay, bits of paper and other things.

Betsey showed us that she was keeping an eye out for favors by sedately swinging her trunk up to Hi for the tidbit she was sure she had coming.

"Now, what in the deuce is this?"

says Hi in amazement, and started to pull the ball to pieces.

At the first pull, however, out popped a badly scared little brown mouse, which took one look at its surroundings, gave a wild leap into space and landed squarely on Betsey's upraised trunk.

Now, how was Hi supposed to know that an elephant looks upon a small brown mouse in precisely the same light as does an Eastern-bred school marm on a bull-snake, multiplied by one million, six hundred and forty-four in the intensity of the horror—and what difference would it 'a' made if he had known?

Betsey didn't wait for further particulars, but with one shrill toot, that would 'a' put a runaway locomotive to blush, she commenced to remove herself from that vicinity.

Now, Betsey was constructed on the plan of a race-horse—that is, she was built for speed. In the matter of altitude and longitude she was all that her owner claimed for her, but in the way of latitude she was built more on the lines of a razor-back hog, with long, lean legs, on which she frisked about as lively as a yearling colt.

She didn't bother about the door, but with one fell swoop of her trunk she knocked the monkey cage on end and dove straight through the side of the tent, taking most of the canvas with her.

Then away we went with that quadruped tooting like all the mice in the corn crib were right at her heels, while we hung onto the sides of our chariot for dear life and prayed fervently that the cinches wouldn't break. I'd a blame sight rather 'a' fell off a freight car going thirty mile an hour than off that critter's back at the clip she was traveling.

I've never seen the ocean and much less sailed it, but I'll bet a new saddler was ever rocked in the cradle of the deep in quite so lively a fashion as were we on that occasion.

Mrs. Jennings clung frantically to her husband with one hand and her hat with the other and rivaled Betsey in the tenor of her toots, while the old man

clung desperately to the arm of his seat and yelled "Whoa!" at every jump, in a tone of voice calculated to halt a deaf and dumb mule over in the next county.

Sally had her two plump arms clasped tightly around her seat-mate's neck and was earnestly assisting her ma in trying to burst the atmosphere wide open, while Buck was sitting just as still as he could, looking straight ahead and perfectly happy and not saying a word. Apparently he didn't care a whoop whether he, she or it ever touched *terra firma* again, just so the girl maintained her stranglehold.

Me and Hen were perfectly busy, thank you. We'd learned to ride young, kept it up pretty steady for some years and supposed we had reached a stage where we could sit on top the most rampageous critter that ever traveled on four legs, and eat a piece of custard pie without dropping a crumb.

Just let me wrap my legs around the barrel of the meanest outlaw cayuse that ever humped his spine, and I'll stay there just as long as the next man, but when it comes to sitting on a smooth board that's heaving and sliding and jerking and buck-jumping under you like twenty-seven California earthquakes rolled into one, and you aint got nothing but air between your knees to hold on with, it's a different proposition. Me and Hen had all our hands full, and could have used a couple of more pair, easy, keeping ourselves where we were, instead of on the ground, where we'd rather 'a' been.

And thus we traveled over the fair landscape of Idaho.

When I finally got adjusted to conditions enough to look around a little we were on the open road, headed due west, and bounce, bump, bobbing along at full elephant speed, which wasn't over a mile a minute, that I could estimate.

Naturally our exit stirred up considerable interest and excitement back at the show-grounds, and we hadn't covered much more'n a mile when here come a bunch of the boys, riding fit to kill and whooping like they was being paid for it by the yell.

They tried every wile and ruse of cow-puncherdom in their efforts to stop

that critter. They roped her front legs and her hind legs and her trunk and tail and ears and every part of her anatomy they could get a rope around, but Betsey snapped them lariats like they was cotton threads and kept right on a-going, just as if there wasn't such a thing in the world as a hundred husky and experienced cow-punchers doing their dumdest to head her off.

I reckon we wouldn't 'a' stopped short of the coast if Clover Creek hadn't hove into view. I knew that the bridge across that stream would hold up a traction engine, and felt fairly certain that it would stand up under Betsy's prancing, although I was inwardly hoping that the blame thing would break down and dump us all into the creek.

We were due for further instructions in elephantine eccentricities, however. I had it very ably demonstrated to me right there and then, for the first and last time in my life, that an elephant wont cross a bridge under any circumstances.

Betsey never slackened her speed until she arrived at the structure, and then she stopped so sudden that she plowed four furrows in the road with her feet, ten inches deep and three foot long.

Nothing short of a head-on collision between two fast trains would have equaled that stop. It was quite the suddenest thing I ever experienced. Me and Hen connected with the seat-back in front of us like it was a long lost brother, and Sally and Buck did themselves noble duplicating the stunt in the next seat forward.

The old man and his wife wern't so fortunate. There wasn't anything handy for them to collide with and so they dismounted.

They rose majestically into the air, still clasped tightly in each other's arms, turned flip-flops so fast that I gave up trying to keep count, and came down with a Niagara splash in the middle of the creek.

Luckily the water at this point was nice and soft and deep, so we knew that they hadn't been hurt anv. and as all the boys staved to help 'em out, we went right along with Betsey.

She never hesitated a second, but

turning at right-angles she went through an eight foot barb-wire fence with the same calm indifference that a cow would wade through a cob-web, and capered gayly away across country.

She made a wide detour of the field, smashed another hole through the fence and took the back-track for town with the same earnest endeavor to smash all records that had characterized her initial spurt.

Almost immediately we were joined by a bunch of the boys, and right in the middle of them, cussing and yelling and making himself generally numerous, was old Highwater Schuller.

"When is that blame old machine of yours going to run down?" he yelled at us.

"How the hotel do we know?" sassed back Hen. "We aint engineering this thing!"

"Well, you keep right straight ahead, just as you are going, and I'll hustle to town and see what can be done," says he, and with that he whipped up his nag and left us in the rear.

Betsey had at last begun to show signs of petering out. She was running slower and heavier and breathing like the exhaust of a donkey engine, and we finished the return trip to town at about half her usual speed.

Straight down through the middle of Main Street she lumbered, considerable wobbly, but still in the Marathon. We passed the postoffice and the Red Front saloon, where everybody except the women folk and those who hadn't taken up the chase, were congregated, and they all piled out into the street to cheer us on our way with appropriate remarks from their mouths and six-shooters and other implements of cordiality.

At last the court-house hove into view down the street and right there was Hi and half a dozen others, bustling around like they had important business on hand.

As we drew nearer I saw that they had about a hundred feet of cow rope stretched out along the road and that several of the men were making one end of this fast to a tree, while Hi was tying a running noose in the other end.

Hi's about as handy a man with the

riata as ever came into the West, and the way he handled that cow-ropo was worth the trouble we'd gone through to witness it. He had to use both hands to swing the noose, but he dropped it around Betsey's right fore-foot as neatly as if he were using his own pet horse-hair lasso, instead of an inch and a quarter manilla rope, stiff as a board.

It did the business, too. Betsey wasn't going to pay any more attention to it than she had the others, but when she came to the end of the line and it tautened, she came to a mighty sudden stop and spun around like a roped steer. She was too tired to bust *that* riata.

It yanked hilarious delight out of me and Hen clean out of the box. He came down in the horse trough, which eased the drop somewhat and prevented him from breaking his neck and other bones.

A very excited little nigger in a red uniform came rushing up just then, stabbed Betsey in the nose with an ice-pick and said something to her in a foreign language, at which she put the aforesaid nose affectionately around his waist and promised to be good.

Then somebody fetched a ladder and the remaining three passengers disembarked.

We hadn't any more than touched the ground when Hen, who'd picked himself out of the trough, grabbed Buck and Sally, hustled them to one side and began an earnest conversation.

The effects showed right off. Sally squealed and blushed and shook her head vigorously; Buck grinned and did likewise, at which Hen scowled ferociously and became more vociferous.

"Why, of course you do!" I heard him exclaim. "You'll never have a better chance than this, and, the Lord knows, you may *never* get another!"

Sally said something in a tone too low for me to hear.

"Don't need a preacher!" exploded Hen. "Judge o' Probate can do it just as well an' mebbe a blame sight better. Come along, now!" and grabbing an arm of each he hustled them, still vigorously protesting, into the court-house.

Twenty minutes later, when Mr. and Mrs. Jennings arrived in Charlie Ricknor's buckboard, very wet and very mad and very much concerned over the present whereabouts and welfare of one Sally Jennings, that individual had ceased to be, and Mr. and Mrs. Buck Miller were receiving the congratulations of the gang.

A Little Deal in Mothers

By FRED JACKSON

"I THINK," said Mr. Van Schaik, fixing his mild blue eyes meditatively upon Sanders, "that I will have a cocktail—Martini—*not* sweet."

Sanders bowed and if his solemn face expressed anything at all, it indicated his pleasure at the unexpected opportunity of serving his master with a "bracer" at that hour of the morning.

To his absolute knowledge, it was the first time since the beginning of things

that Mr. Van Schaik had begun breakfast with a cocktail, but nothing that Mr. Van Schaik could do was strange enough to startle Sanders.

If Mr. Van Schaik had raised his mild blue eyes and had said:

"I think, Sanders, that I will have a small slice of elephant-tusk with some butterfly-wings as garnish," Sanders would have bowed with precisely the same expression, and he would have

exerted every means in his power to gratify the desire.

Not that Mr. Van Schaik was given to whims, understand me. There was usually a very good reason behind any strange command that he might give, and the reason that prompted the order for the cocktail lay at that moment uppermost upon the pile of letters at the side of his plate. As Sanders moved to the buffet promptly and began to mix the proper ingredients with a judicious and painstaking air, Van Schaik let his mild blue eyes wander thoughtfully over the breakfast-room, and he sighed softly—once.

It was an especially pleasing breakfast-room—almost a perfect one, for everything in it was the result of Mr. Van Schaik's discriminating taste and his limitless income. There was not an article too much, nor was there one lacking. The color scheme (pale blue and pale pink, I believe it was) was pleasant and cheerful without being insistent, and so the tone of it was just right. Some people in endeavoring to supply a cozy background for the morning meal, really overdo the thing, and the outcome is irritation. I have witnessed a few tragedies due to the selection of a wrong color. However, Mr. Van Schaik did *not* err. He had excellent taste.

"It would be a pity," he thought, regretfully, "to have the place torn up, and the furnishings marred. It would be a pity." That was when he sighed—once. Immediately, however, he repented of the sigh, drew his Japanese dressing-gown more closely about him, pushing away the morning paper, and regarded the topmost letter again. He had read it through once, but the principal item of information in it had quite blinded him to minor details. He skimmed it through again.

"DEAR JIM:—Years and years ago when we were a fine pair of striplings and we made that little compact, sealed with our rings, I did not realize how much it was destined to mean to me. I was surprisingly ambitious in those days, you remember, and things looked mighty promising for the Big Future, and I didn't think that I should ever

stand in need of assistance of any sort. Do you remember how it came about? We'd been strolling through the slums (I was on a week-end visit to you) and we passed a little pawn-shop with the rings in the window. There were two of them—exactly alike—sapphires set in dull gold, and they were so queerly chased and carved and set that they struck our fancy at once. We bought them, of course, because we were not in the habit of denying ourselves anything that we wanted, and I presented mine to you, while you presented yours to me. I forget whose the idea was (probably mine, because I was always something of a dreamer), but we agreed that those rings were to have a secret significance between us two. In the first place, they were to seal our friendship (we calmly assured each other *that* was to last everlastingly) and secondly, if either of us should ever be in difficulties, he was to send his ring to the other as a sign. We swore that if either of us ever received the other's ring that way, we would not ignore the call for help. Do you remember all of that boyish nonsense, Jimmie? I can close my eyes still and see us putting them on in the dim little shop, with the dirty windows, and the low show-cases filled with odds and ends, and the one feeble lamp, fighting back the army of shadows.

"I don't think we understood what a large order we were taking upon ourselves that night, but I know that I was sincere in my affection for you, and I think that you were too, then, even if you have quite forgotten me now. I've got to believe that you were, Jimmie, because I've got to recall to you that promise of yours, and I've got to hold you to it. My ring comes back to you with this letter, and the call for help is very urgent, Jimmie Boy.

"You probably read of my marriage long ago. She was a Gayety dancer, you remember, and my people cast me off because I wouldn't give her up, but I had my grandmother's money, and things weren't very hard for us—except that we were absolutely alone. We had each other, at first, though, and that was a great deal; and later, we had the boy. His name is Oliver Everet Bran-

don, Junior, but I've always called him "Squeak" for short. He's twelve years old now. Eight years afterwards, Miss Elizabeth Colver Brandon arrived, and I was left to face the problem of raising her alone. Dolly (my wife) hadn't much of the mother-stuff in her, you see, and I suppose a kind Providence wanted to relieve her of another long struggle, such as she had in raising "Squeak." That was four years ago, and now I have been unexpectedly summoned, too, Jim.

"I've had a devil of a time bringing those kids up, as you may imagine, but I labored to the best of my ability, and I think they are pretty fine specimens. They're strong, hearty, healthy little chaps, anyway, and that is something.

"I had to leave off there, yesterday, so the text is a little vague to me. The point of all this is, however, that *you've* got to take those kids, Jim. I've no one else to leave them to, and I've got to leave them. I wish I had time to see you and talk it over with you before I start, but I can't. They'll have a little money of their own, but you'll have to look out for it, Jim, and you'll have to look out for *them*, which is a lot more to ask, I know. Danby, my lawyer, will arrange all the details. He took them away to-day. I've told them that I've got to take a long trip, and that I can't take them because of the hard traveling, but that I am sending them to stay with Uncle Jim. I've told them, too, all I could remember about you, and a lot more that I brazenly invented to make you sound exceedingly attractive and to content them. They understood that they are not to worry about me or to ask questions, so I think you will have little trouble. They are naturally a bit excited over the adventure.

"You'll bring them up to be *your* sort, I know, Jim, because we were good pals, you and I. It's odd that we drifted apart in later years, but—men haven't so much time for friendships as boys have, I guess. The years bring responsibilities—and they seem to fill our lives.

"If you can put yourself in my shoes for a moment, you will understand how I have clung to the thought of you, and how I depend upon you. You will be

good to them, Jim. With the affection I have always had for you, Yours,
"OLIVER EVERET BRANDON."

Sanders had brought the cocktail long ago and had deposited it noiselessly beside his master's plate. Van Schaik reached for it dreamily, and drank it off in little sips, his blue eyes fixed upon the window. It was open, and the sound of the traffic in the Avenue below drifted up to him. He could hear the toot of the motor horns, and the whir of wheels and the beat of horses' hoofs, but above them all rang a single sentence from the letter. "The years bring responsibilities—" His years hadn't. He was as carefree now as he had been when he was a boy and had made the compact with Brandon. His life had been uneventful—and now—he was a bachelor of some thirty-odd years—a bachelor with a small family! The idea alarmed him tremendously, but he never thought of shirking. Other men—placed in his position—might have thought of certain homes or schools, or even of certain female relations who were more capable of handling an unexpected family, but Van Schaik did not entertain such ideas, Miss Elizabeth (who was four) and Mr. "Squeak" (who was twelve) had been left to *him*, and though the thought of his new acquisitions alarmed him frightfully, he did not seek to relieve himself of the burden.

He finished his breakfast almost mechanically, wondering if Sanders and Kokimo would leave. He supposed that they would. Servants who agree to take charge of a bachelor living quietly by himself in bachelor quarters were unlikely to welcome the advent of Master "Squeak" of twelve, and Miss Elizabeth of four. However, he did not consult them in the matter. He thought it wiser to wait and let things take their course.

After breakfast, he went through the usual daily pursuits, but the taste had gone out of things. He was laboring under an enormous load of curiosity and suspense. In reply to Danby's letter, which had accompanied Brandon's, he wired, and at six o'clock when he returned from the club to dress, he

found the newcomers already in possession. He came in with his key and hearing the clatter in the dining-room, started upon a tour of investigation.

The table was set for three, and three large arm-chairs were drawn up to it. The one at the head of the table (his own) was empty, but the other two, which faced each other, one at either side of his, were occupied. From the doorway, he got a very poor view of the nearest chair. All he could see, in fact, was a small very fat white bundle, the outline of a blossom-pink cheek, and an immense quantity of soft brown curls, surmounted by a mammoth blue ribbon bow. An arm was visible also, a stout dimpled arm, with a stout dimpled hand at the end of it. The hand clutched a spoon and the spoon plied rapidly back and forth heavy-laden with supper. In the other chair sat a slender boy. It would be useless to describe him. He was blond and blue eyed and very much tanned, but of course that tells you nothing. You would have to see him to understand the enthralling charm of him. I might add, however, that beside him stood Sanders, serving punctiliously, and that will give you some idea. In the course of ten years, no one had received just that degree of care from Sanders, excepting only Mr. Van Schaik himself. Perceiving, now, that in the confusion of dining, his entrance had not been observed, Mr. Van Schaik coughed.

The effect of that cough was tremendous. Sanders blushed; the fat dimpled arm suspended operations, while around the side of the chair peeped two perfectly enormous brown eyes. They were startled eyes, and as they fell upon him, a certain silver spoon went clattering to the floor beneath the table, and certain fat pink thumbs journeyed mouth-ward. Mr. "Squeak," however, caught his napkin in his left hand, arose, and held out his right.

"How do you do," he said. "I guess you didn't expect us so soon. I'm Squeak—Oliver Everet Brandon, Junior, you know—and this is my sister. Squab, say hello to Uncle Jim." Miss Elizabeth, familiarly known as Squab, remained silent. Without a glance at

her brother, she continued to watch Mr. Van Schaik suspiciously.

"How do you do," said that gentleman to Squeak. "I'm sorry I wasn't here to receive you. Hope you weren't bored?" He ignored the Squab.

Squeak smiled swiftly, to quite convince his host how far he was from bearing illwill, and when he smiled, little crinkles crept in about his blue eyes, and two rows of even white teeth peeped out, and sundry dimples appeared. It was a miniature Oliver Everet Brandon—an Oliver Everet Brandon set back many years.

"I've been unpacking," said Squeak. "We brought our trunks with us on a cab. I thought we might as well get settled and save you trouble. You don't mind our beginning dinner, do you? The Squab goes to bed at seven, you see, and it's six now—after six, I guess. Besides, we were simply *famished*. Sanders said you wouldn't want us to wait."

"Sanders was right," said Mr. Van Schaik, handing the valet his hat and stick, "and I believe I am hungry myself. I'll not wait to dress to-night, Sanders," he added. Sanders bowed himself out; Mr. Van Schaik seated himself, removed his gloves, and unfolded his napkin. It seemed rather pleasant to have the other chairs occupied, even if one of them did hold a reluctant guest. He liked his first view of his inheritance tremendously.

"Did you come alone?" he asked after a bit, fixing his eyes politely upon the boy. The Squab, realizing that she was not under observation, cautiously removed the thumb, accepted the spoon that Mr. Van Schaik had carelessly moved towards her, and continued her interrupted repast. She was devouring something pleasantly soft and yellow, floating in an ocean of cream, and she seemed to fancy it mightily. As she fixed her attention upon her plate (her few side glances were always preceded by the down-drop of the spoon, and Van Schaik was accordingly forewarned of them) he noticed that her dark lashes curled prettily against her cheek, and her mouth was very tiny and very red and very curved, and altogether, she was quite delicious.

"We came with Mr. Danby," said Squeak. "He couldn't wait for you, so he left us." Squeak had *not* continued to eat, though his eyes traveled back and forth from the dinner to Van Schaik.

"I see," said Van Schaik. "Don't wait for me, please." Squeak picked up his fork with a polite show of reluctance, and went forth to battle with his chicken. A slight flush gathered upon his tanned cheeks, and his eyes brightened as the contest waxed fast and furious. Van Schaik considered them critically. They did not seem at all conscious of their unusual situation. Evidently, Brandon had put him before them as a person whom they could trust entirely. He was pleased.

"Don't you have a nurse?" he asked curiously. Squeak swallowed an incredible portion of breast and looked indignant. "For—eh—Squab, I mean, of course," added Van Schaik hastily. "She is rather small to get on by herself entirely—what?"

"Oh," said Squeak nodding. "We did have one, but she wasn't competent. We thought you'd have one for *your* little girls."

"My little girls?" repeated Mr. Van Schaik.

"Father expected you'd have some—and maybe boys, too. Haven't you?"

"No,—" confessed Van Schaik, gravely, "to be quite candid, I haven't."

Squeak sighed; the Squab regarded the large yellow island that she had been saving for the last, and smiled contentedly.

"Isn't there—even a mother in this house?" demanded Squeak. His mien was eager, breathless, fearful. He was as one would know the worst at once. Mr. Van Schaik raised his mild blue eyes, and in their depths was something profoundly apologetic.

"No," he said. "Did you consider one absolutely essential?"

"We hadn't one either," said Squeak. "I—I was hoping you'd have." His eyes wandered about the room, paneled in dark wood, then they rested upon the nearest yellow lamp-shade, and remained fixed there. He seemed to become quite a good deal smaller, and in his face was written a history of Dead

Dreams and Impossible Desires. It was fortunate for both Mr. Van Schaik and Squeak that the Squab was present, for the masculine creed which knows not emotion of any deep sort, would have been gravely violated in another instant. But Miss Elizabeth supplied a distraction. She laid aside her spoon, and lifting her bowl bodily in two firm pink fists, conveyed it speedily upward and considered it a cup.

"You little Squab!" cried Squeak reproachfully. "You know you mustn't lick the plate. Put it down and don't be a kitten."

She put it down reluctantly, surveyed it, and rubbed her eye with her fist. Then she made herself limp, squirmed out of the huge chair and advanced unexpectedly upon Van Schaik.

"Hello," she remarked conversationally.

"Hello," said Van Schaik promptly. "I'm fine, thank you. How are you?"

"Up!" she ordered, ignoring his question completely. She never answered questions unless compelled to do so. Her idea seemed to be to gain all the information possible, and answering questions, was, of course, wasting time. Van Schaik lifted her upon his knee obediently. Squeak helped himself rather absently to his seventh potato, and watched his sister's proceedings.

"Where's the cow?" she demanded. There was suspicion still hiding deep in her dark eyes, and though she was pleased to place herself within the enemy's grasp (so to speak) she was obviously not yet conquered.

"What cow?" asked Van Schaik. He did not notice Squeak's hurried wink.

"The cow that milk comes out of and you don't have to put any in," said the Squab.

"Oh, *that* cow," said Van Schaik. "We keep her in the country, of course, with the little fluffy chickens that lay eggs."

"Eggs?" repeated the Squab meditatively. "Where do they lay 'em?"

"In a little round nest made of straw," said Van Schaik.

"What's a nest?"

Mr. Van Schaik, imposing upon the suddenly displayed weakness of the enemy, stroked the peach-blossom

cheek. It was very cool and soft and smooth. He settled back in his chair so that his arm could surround her comfortably.

"A nest," said he, "is a soft pile of straw in which chickens lay eggs."

The Squab yawned, but only the last half of it was smothered behind a plump pink hand. (That was when she caught Squeak's surprised eye.)

"Why do they?" she resumed.

Mr. Van Schaik considered.

"Why do they—what?" he wanted to know.

"Why—do they lay—eggs?"

"Squab!" interrupted Squeak, tactfully. "You know you mustn't ask questions."

"I wont," said the Squab, submissively, "but—I'd like to know why they do!"

Fortunately, Sanders appeared with the soup at this juncture and set it down before his master.

"Better get down," advised Squeak. "Uncle Jim wants to eat. Besides, it's bed-time."

"Don't want to go to bed," announced Elizabeth, clinging to the nearest object. It happened to be the collar of Mr. Van Schaik's coat.

"You never want to go," Squeak reminded her, placidly, "but you always do in the end."

The logic of this evidently appealed to her. Who would persevere after four or five times three hundred and sixty-five failures. She abandoned that particular trench.

"I want to stay with Uncle Jim," she said, with a sweet smile up into Van Schaik's face. The corners of her very little, very red mouth drooped; her enormous brown eyes grew wistful; she snuggled closer.

"He wants to eat his dinner," said Squeak. "Don't be a donkey, now, Squab. I'll take you in and help you undress."

"Want Uncle Jim to take me," she said.

"Uncle Jim wants to eat his dinner. Didn't you have your dinner?"

"Want Uncle Jim to take me," said Elizabeth. She abandoned tactics. She stared at the silver saltbox and spoke insistently.

"The donkey," quoted Squeak, 'is the most stubborn creature in the world.'

"Want Uncle Jim to take me," said Elizabeth, monotonously. It is impossible to argue with anyone who simply reiterates the first statement. Squeak looked up helplessly into Mr. Van Schaik's amused eyes. He recognized the battle attitude of the Squab, and realized that she was determined to make a stand.

"All right," said Van Schaik. "I'll take her. Cover the soup, Sanders." Sanders obeyed with alacrity, breathing a very faint sigh of relief. Mr. Van Schaik seized the Squab in his arms.

"No," she protested, eagerly. "Not this way. On your shoulder."

Mr. Van Schaik amiably made the desired alteration.

"She wants to parade," said Squeak. "You lead the percession, Uncle Jim, and I bring up the rear. Dadders always used to do it that way."

Mr. Van Schaik fell in with the suggestion at once. He dragged out the marching delightfully, by taking very short steps and a roundabout course through all the bedrooms and the library and the reception rooms—even through the kitchen, where Kokimo looked up with a grin from his open fire. The Squab beat time upon his head, and Squeak in the rear made the absence of cymbals less obvious by clapping his hands together and repeating "Katzing! Katzing! K'tzing! K'tzing! K'tzing!" Mr. Van Schaik whistled.

So they came at last quite merrily to the guestchamber nearest Mr. Van Schaik's, and the Squab was deposited carelessly in the middle of the gigantic bed.

"You undress me," ordered the Squab, tossing back her cloud of brown curls. Mr. Van Schaik obediently assented, but the task proved a frightful undertaking. Buttons that you'd think would be fastened logically into ordinary buttonholes, proved just ornaments sewed on (he discovered that after pulling one out by the roots) and cunning little hooks and eyes, hidden with amazing cunning under ruffles and puffles and lace, held the topmost

garments together. They were the worst. The underneath ones were more practically built. After all, for an uninitiated, inexperienced person, Mr. Van Schaik did very well (with a few hints from Squeak enthroned upon the foot of the bed). The Squab, I fear hindered progress as much as possible, understanding that in such a fashion, her retirement could be considerably postponed, so it was nearer eight than seven when the nightie was finally on, and she had been carried over to extinguish the light. Then she said her prayers, with a generous P. S. of blessings, and Mr. Van Schaik and Squeak left her to the consolation of slumber and a bottle of warm milk.

The gentlemen returned to the dining-room and dinner was resumed. It is certainly only fair to Mr. Van Schaik's culinary department to add that it seemed not a whit less delicious on account of the delayed serving. Mr. Van Schaik, had the full gamut of courses to run, but Squeak obligingly kept him company, strengthened by reinforcements of dessert. But the necessary feeding interfered in no way with conversation. In half an hour, Squeak had given his new uncle a complete outline of his life, of Oliver Everet Brandon, Senior's, life, and of Miss Elizabeth's. And a curious narrative it was. The Brandons had evidently had endless ups and downs, and they had done a deal of traveling about. They had covered pretty much of the enlightened world, ending up somewhere in the middle west, but their residences had been in towns always, and as he listened, Van Schaik thought of his big place up the Sound where there were cows that gave milk and chickens that laid eggs. "That," he thought, "is the proper sort of place for kids."

Afterwards, they adjourned to the library, and Squeak lighted his uncle's pipe. Incidentally, he announced that Dadders had a pleasant habit of reading aloud to him after dinner, and a copy of the *Arabian Nights* (abridged) was discovered in a corner of the bookshelves. It appeared that this was a volume quite unknown to Mr. Squeak, so Van Schaik offered for his enjoyment the tale of a certain youth

named Aladdin, and his very wonderful lamp. Nine o'clock struck—but the tale went on—interrupted only by the occasional striking of a match as Van Schaik relit his pipe. Squeak sat upon a stool at the foot of the big chair, hugging his knees and staring up wide eyed. Half after nine struck and then ten. *That* was Squeak's usual bedtime, but Aladdin was searching for the magician who had carried off the princess, and one could not have slept with the tale chopped off abruptly at that point. The suspense was too great. So it was some twenty minutes more before things were finally righted. As Van Schaik closed the book and smiled down at the flushed, eager face of the boy, Squeak sighed.

"It would be fine—if there *only* were—a mother here," he said.

A week spun past. The story of Van Schaik's amazing inheritance had gone the rounds of the clubs, then the news-sheets had gotten it. A bachelor—especially one deemed as unconvertible as Van Schaik—with a family! It was too deliciously absurd! Society laughed and gossiped and wondered, waiting for him to rid himself of his white elephants in some clever, tactful fashion, but nothing of the sort happened. Interest waxed high, and I have heard that wagers were made upon the outcome. Some thought he would attempt to bring them up himself; some thought he would foist them upon his married sister, Mrs. Archibald Symmons; one man thought he would marry and settle down. That was Rodney Van Court who had seen the three together in Van Schaik's big motor. Van Schaik wouldn't stop to chat, but he looked rather more contented than Roddy had ever seen him. Miss Carrol Harding also saw them (she happened to be riding in the Park at that same hour) and Van Schaik stopped for her, and presented her to Squeak. The reason of it was this: Van Schaik realized that the time was come to take a wife. He had tried engaging a governess and the necessary maids, but in four days he had rejected some thirty women. Either he had not applied to the proper quarter, or it required a woman's intui-

tion to select a good set. Besides, he felt that children needed a mother. Experience and observation had taught him that motherless ones did not make the right sort of men and women, and he had already begun to plan futures for Squeak and the Squab. So from a practical, commonsense viewpoint alone it was obvious that he must marry, even if he didn't care about it himself. The risk was in obtaining the right sort of wife. He didn't want a butterfly person. He wanted a sweet chummy, tender, understanding sort of girl who would make a good mother for Squeak. The search threatened to be a difficult one, until Squeak himself solved the problem. It was on the second day in the Park. As they went swinging round a curve, Miss Carrol Harding passed them, coming from another direction, and her horse, surprised at the sudden advent of the motor, shied. Miss Harding mastered the animal quite easily, and before Van Schaik could descend and go to her assistance, she had Rajah standing motionless at the roadside. Her cheeks were tanned to a delicious rosygold glow, her eyes were clear hazel, and she had a great lot of shining, tawny hair. Her figure, in its simple tan habit was slim and lithe and graceful, too—and yet—despite all of these charms—Miss Harding was not considered beautiful. She was not considered ugly, either, of course; just plain. I believe her critics thought her mouth too large (they didn't see the delicious dimples that peeped out when she laughed), and they found her nose not *precisely* classical. At any rate, she wasn't acclaimed even by the news-sheets as a famous beauty.

She wasn't a success in Society, either. The reason was that she had a sense of humor, and she had never been able to stifle it. Also, she believed in telling the truth, and that is rather a dangerous policy in this stage of civilization. So she never went to receptions or balls or teas—unless she couldn't escape—and the only events she cared for were race meets, and football games, and baseball games, and horse-shows and polo tournaments. I suppose that was partly why Van Schaik had never met her (whenever he went to

outdoor sports, he went with an older set) and then, too, she spent a great deal of time in Virginia, where she had purchased a stock farm. When he had considered matrimony at all, he had pictured a different sort of girl entirely (the sort that was the most popular in his set) but that day, on the way home, Squeak had murmured: "What a bully mother she would make!" and the idea struck Van Schaik. Once he began to think about it, he realized that Miss Harding *would* make a splendid mother.

The next afternoon, he called upon Miss Harding. She came to meet him smiling (her face was really very sweet and fresh and animated when she smiled) and in reply to his apologies for introducing himself, she assured him that she had seen him play polo, and she had often wished that they might meet. Her candor appealed to Van Schaik; also, he liked the way she offered him tea. By the time he had selected his second muffin, he was prepared to take her into his confidence.

"I wonder," he said, looking thoughtfully across into Miss Harding's eyes, "whether you have heard about my legacy?"

"Everybody in New York has heard about it by this time," said Miss Harding. "They looked adorable yesterday in the motor."

"They *are* adorable," said Mr. Van Schaik. "If they were my own, they would please me more." He smiled and Miss Harding smiled back at him.

"In fact," said Mr. Van Schaik, gravely, now, "they please me so much that I do not care to consider giving them up. I want to keep them. I want to raise them—to see them grow up—to take care of them. It isn't entirely because Brandon was my pal—it's as much for their own sakes. I've become astonishingly fond of them."

Miss Harding nodded, watching him, and sipped her tea.

"But the responsibility frightens me," he confessed. "I should like *you* to share it with me."

"I *beg* your pardon!" cried Miss Harding, setting down her cup.

"I'm proposing marriage to you," explained Mr. Van Schaik, flushing

slightly. "You shouldn't interrupt. I had planned exactly what to say to you and how I meant to say it."

"Oh," said Miss Harding, catching her breath, and yet smiling faintly. "I am—very sorry—sorry that I interrupted, I mean, of course. Please go on." She clasped her hands together and looked up at him. She had exquisite hands—small and well-modeled, but strong looking and capable.

"From all I've heard of you," said Van Schaik quite calmly, "and from what I have been able to see myself, I want you very much to consent. To begin with, you would make precisely the sort of mother I want for my kiddies, and then—I have begun to—to like you a great deal."

Miss Harding blushed and smiled. "Did you plan to say that?" she asked.

"Yes," he answered in some surprise. "I had already begun yesterday, you know. I began when I saw you."

"Oh," said Miss Harding.

"I am prepared to admit that I am doing a rather unconventional thing in talking this way to you—in coming to you at all without being properly presented, in fact—but I am sure you must understand that I intend no offense. I think I should love you very much in no time—I am making splendid progress—and I am sure that I could make you happy. *Will* you marry me, Miss Harding?"

Mr. Van Schaik's voice was slightly uncertain as he finished, and Miss Harding arose, moved across to the window of the drawing-room and looked down into the Avenue. For a long time there was silence in the room, and both of them remained motionless. Miss Harding turned and came towards him.

"If you would like time to consider—," began Mr. Jimmie Van Schaik.

"No," she answered, steadily, "I don't ever need time to decide what course I want to pursue. As soon as a choice of things presents itself, I see at once what I wish to do. And in this case—" Her voice faltered; she grew quite flushed, and clasped her hands *hard* behind her.

"In this case?" prompted Van Schaik.

"I think—I should like to marry you," said Miss Harding. "I know you quite well, you see. I have heard a great deal about you, from your sister and from Billy Gorvel. You coached his class team once, and he is a worshiper of yours. And my sister—the Countess of Heddeburne—used to know you quite well before she married. I've always liked what I've known of you and—I think I could learn to love you very easily—too."

Van Schaik set down his teacup, and looked at her, his blue eyes suddenly lighting.

"What," said Miss Harding. "I haven't given you an answer yet. You are to present me to the children. If they—care for me—it will be yes, Mr. Van Schaik."

"My name," said Van Schaik, "is Jim."

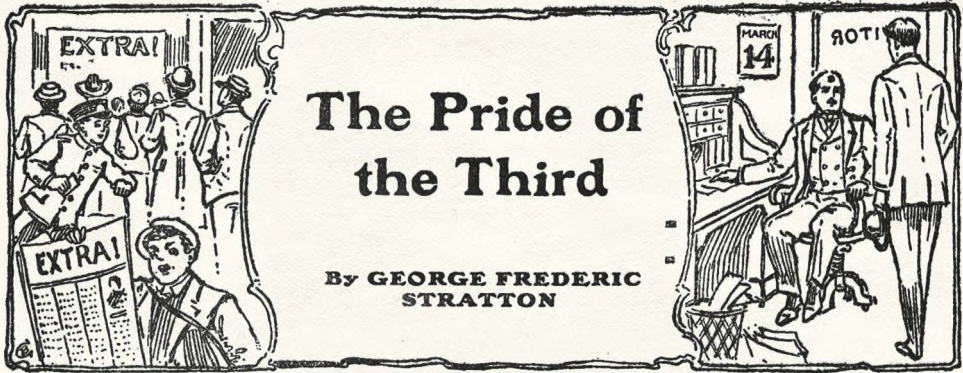
"Jim?" repeated Miss Harding with a delicious rising inflection.

"Exactly," said Mr. Van Schaik. "That is one item of information I have for you. The second is that the children are simply *wild* about you. They have been since yesterday."

"That is to be seen," said Miss Harding. "You will present me to them tomorrow—in the Park. Our meeting can look accidental." She still rested upon the arm of a big carved chair.

"I suppose you are entitled to make conditions," said Van Schaik, helplessly. "But I think I deserve some encouragement. Could you let me have a kiss on account, please?"

One month later exactly, Mr. James Westervelt Van Schaik and Miss Carol Harding, daughter of Anthony D. Harding, were married at the big Harding place on the Avenue. The Squab was flowergirl, and Squeak carried the bride's perfectly enormous court train. Afterwards, the four of them went straight out to the Van Schaik place on the Sound. (There was no honeymoon trip.) And there they are at this very minute, as surely as I write this line. For all of the repentance Van Schaik ever did, was for the years he wasted when he was a bachelor. That proves that the old adages are *always* good guides to follow, and I suppose that is the moral.



THIS will have to end, Edeson! We can go on no longer in this way. We'll take the figures of the last balance sheet and I'll either sell or buy at those figures. D'ye hear!"

And without waiting for a reply the speaker strode away, digging his heels savagely into the plank drive-way, leaving his partner, Donald Edeson, furiously dazed at this abrupt termination of their quarrel although he felt that the result did not surprise him.

A scrambling against the fence caused him to turn hastily, and he saw Gurney Brant grinning at him over the tops of the boards. It was a rugged, bronzed face, scarred deeply with lines, overhung with bushy, gray eyebrows, and surmounted by a huge mane of grizzly hair; a face which caused men of every condition to be careful in their manner of approach and yet, one which was hailed with confidence and glee by the smallest children of the town.

"Sounds like an ultimatum, doesn't it, Edeson?"

The young man scowled. He felt in no mood to discuss his affairs with an outsider, and he was dismayed and disgusted that the quarrel should have been overheard. Repressing a stinging reply he walked savagely away, while Brant looked after him with a good-humored, quizzical grin.

At six o'clock, as Edeson walked through the town on his way home, his arm was grasped by Brant, who swung him half round and said:

"Edeson, jump into my wagon—you're going up to supper with me!"

Edeson had had a miserable three hours since the quarrel. His rage had gone, but in its place was a dull heaviness, an uncertainty of action, a bitter feeling of failure. Perhaps some of this showed itself for, as he glanced sharply at Brant, he saw in his rugged face an earnestness of kindly regard and sympathy which decided him at once. The next minute he was seated in the light road wagon behind a pair of sorrels whose heels were better known than their faces.

During the two-mile whirl there was but little said—certainly nothing of business. Edeson was wondering at having allowed himself to be drawn into a discussion of his affairs (for he felt that this was what his visit meant) with a man who was not only a stranger to himself but to the town.

He looked curiously at the house as they turned into the yard. He had known the place well—a large, old-fashioned farm house, formerly almost in ruin. Now it was in perfect repair.

"There isn't a sliver of new wood where the old could be used," observed Brant. "There isn't a hinge or a lock replaced where the old ones could be repaired! It's cost me a heap more to slick it up than a new house would have cost—but it's worth it to me!"

Edeson knew that this was not a mere boast, and he wondered a little at the sentiment which must be hidden in

that husky old form to cause such devotion to his old home.

After supper they lit cigars and strolled out to the great, old-fashioned porch.

"Look here, Don!" exclaimed Brant, walking up to one of the pillars.

Edeson started at the familiarity, but it was too genuinely honest to be impertinent.

"See those initials, 'G. B.?' directed the old man. "I cut them in that post forty-six years ago. The first thing I did when I signed up for the old place was to dig out the paint and putty from those initials. They'll never be filled up again 's long as I live.

"I was twelve years old then," he continued, his eyes fixed meditatively across the meadows. "An' I got the cusseddest lickin' from the old man for cutting 'em that I'd ever had—an' they come good an' plenty, those days! He was a hard man; hard and cruel. And his wife was worse. She was my step-mother. My own mother had died two years before. I ran away that day and got kicked into the West; and I never saw them again—and never wanted to. But I wanted the old home! I've been in lots of business, my boy, mining and lumbering, and stock-dealing, and manufacturing. I've lost and I've made, but quite a bit of wealth stuck to me, and I came home to buy the old place and rest up.

"Rest!—'taint rest, it's rust.

"I got along pretty well whilst I was fixin' up here, but now it's done I'm as peevisish as a kid that's gettin' too much vacation. I've raced that team over the roads for twenty miles around till I'm plumb sick of it. I've got a new car but she don't fill the bill. 'Taint work—an' I've got to have work! I've had to do a heap of things in my life that I didn't want to do, an' whilst I can I'm going to do things I want to do. I'm going to sign up again for work. I've seen more of you than you have of me, I reckon, an' you've some points that look like pay-dirt to me. So, if you're willin', I guess I'll call that little bluff of Tansford's."

This was what Edeson expected. After a slight pause he said, slowly:

"I should think, Mr. Brant, you'd

want to get into something you are familiar with."

Brant chuckled a little. "I'm familiar with *business*, Don," he said forcibly, "and that covers everything. As long as a man is in it big enough to hire trained men for the details and then uses common sense an' sees that his accounts are kept right, he can do business in any line. I've been runnin' a bank and a lumber camp; a door and sash mill an' a tavern all at one and the same time, an' there warn't one of 'em got away from me. Now what's the trouble with you and Tansford?"

"It's pretty hard to give a definite answer to that," answered Edeson, slowly. "We're like a two-cylinder motor with the sparks timed wrong. When one runs smooth the other back-fires; and the mixture that suits one doesn't suit the other. Still, Tansford's got a purpose, I think. I've felt, for some time, that he was trying to force me out. He wants to handle this thing alone. He can get backing, you know. His father-in-law is wealthy, and he knows that I have no resources to take him up, so he's forcing me to sell."

"And you don't want to sell, eh?"

"No, sir! We started this factory in a small way and I've put my very best into it. I've seen—and see now—the chance to make this one of the biggest plants in the line, and it cuts me clear down to have to give it up."

"What's Tanford's share worth?"

"You heard what he said; that he'd buy or sell at the last invoice valuation. That's about fifty thousand."

"Nothing for the good-will and brands, eh'?"

"Nothing! But I'd fight him clear down before I'd agree to that. I'll not let him steal six years' work from me!"

"But suppose we call his bluff—buy at those figures?"

"It isn't square!" said Edeson, curtly and decidedly.

The old man looked at him with a quizzical twinkle in his shrewd gray eyes.

"Tackle him to-morrow, Don," he persisted, "and see what he'll offer for the good-will—buy or sell; then I'll buy at his figures. That'll be square enough."

But Edeson did not open the subject with his partner the next day. He decided to first ask Van Schoick's advice and went around to that gentleman's house for the purpose. Nor did he feel greatly disappointed at being told that Mr. Van Schoick was not at home, but that Miss Van Schoick was and would see him. For three years he had confided to that young lady his hopes and ambitions in business, as in much more personal matters, and had found her deliciously sympathetic and interested in both.

She fluffed some cushions onto an armchair and beckoned him to it, murmuring that she saw something very serious in his eyes.

Then he told her of his difficulty and indecision; of Brant's proposal, and his fear of making a false step; told it all in the frank, truthful, unbiased manner which was at once so boyish and so manly, and which always won him friends. And Myra, like the good little listener that she was, did not interrupt with any question or exclamation until he had finished.

"I have met Mr. Brant," she said, slowly. "I have called on his wife, several times, Don! She's the sweetest, dearest little woman I ever knew, and I think—yes, I'm sure—that he's a good man. I mean honest and true, and good-hearted, you know. He's so kind to children. Oh, it is so pitiful about their own—you haven't heard, of course."

"I have not, Myra. I really know absolutely nothing about them. I never exchanged twenty words with Brant until yesterday's interview."

"There were two little girls and they were killed by some miners, during an attack on Mr. Brant's house. And then he went off alone, and his wife thought she had lost him, too. Just think what her agony must have been, Don! Two months later he returned, and he told her never to ask where he had been or what had happened; but he cut some notches in the handle of his revolver and hung it beneath the portraits of his little daughters in their chamber—and then she knew, Don—that poor little wife and mother knew—that her babies were avenged. Oh, my dear!—it's so horrible that I cannot help the tears."

"He looks like a man who hadn't left much undone," said Edeson, grimly. "I'm a little afraid of him. I know nothing of his disposition or ability, Myra; and yet, I'm cornered and can think of nothing else to do. It looks like my chance."

"I like him!" said the girl, in her dainty, precise way, and dabbing her eyes with a little wad of lace and cambric while a betwicking smile broke through the mist. "I like him and, of course, Don, if he were not a good man I should not like him!"

Edeson laughed slightly at the logic, but at the same moment recalled some half forgotten words of his father.

"Whenever you're in doubt, my boy, whenever a question comes up which cannot be decided by the hard facts or absolute logic upon which men depend, go to some good woman. They have something, Donald, some heaven-sent instinct, perhaps, which sets them right nine times out of ten."

So Mr. Tansford found, to his evident surprise and chagrin, that his bluff was called, and the firm of Edeson & Tansford became Edeson & Brant.

"We need more power," asserted Edeson, while they were discussing their affairs a few days later. "That is where we are lame. We can't hang another machine onto that old junk. We bought it with the factory and expected to replace it with a new one, within a year or two, but Tansford kicked; so it's been burning up profits right along, without giving us the service needed."

"Give me a month, partner," demurred Brant, "I want to size up the outfit, first. There's other things want lining up, I reckon, an' when we get at it we'll make a clean-up."

At the end of the month he got Edeson into the private office and, tossing a cigar across the desk, lit one himself and said:

"Don, it's always been just as easy, an' just as quick, for me to find out if another man likes me as to find out th't I like him. I guess we're pardners, all right!"

Edeson grasped the big fist stretched out to him. "We're all that, Brant! I feel it as much as you do."

"Well, then, I reckon we're ready to talk expansion! How does it strike you to take in the Redfern Chair Company?"

"The Redfern Company!" repeated Edeson. "That strikes me all right, the way you put it, but I'm of the opinion that they're more likely to absorb us than we them. It's a big concern, Brant!"

"Well, you're talkin' now to th' biggest stockholder."

"You!—the largest stockholder in the Redfern Company?"

"I sure am. I bought some stock when I first came back—and I've bought more this past month. They've been running things in bad shape; cheap hands, wastin' material an' payin' out half their profits in rebates on poor work. There's been no dividends for two years, so I got the stock plumb cheap. Now! that outfit belongs naturally to this—or this to that. The yards are separated only by Mill Street, which runs nowhere except onto the marsh, an' I reckon we can get it re-located. An' they've got a good power-plant—big enough for two plants. We'll hitch on a generator there and wire over to this shop, and run by motor-drive. That'll save plenty expense. If you're willin' we'll reorganize as one company."

"It looks good!" exclaimed Edeson, enthusiastically.

"We'll get a switching track put in," continued Brant, "an' stop all the teaming to both plants."

His partner's eyes darkened. "Guess you don't know this town," he exclaimed, bitterly. "It's tied, hand and foot, by a gang of rotten politicians who have to be bought before you can lay ten feet of sidewalk."

Brant nodded understandingly. "I've been up against such gangs before. But this is industrial improvement, Don. We aint askin' for any franchise."

"They don't know any different, except in the size of the plums. Barstow couldn't get a permit to add twenty feet to his smokestack until he'd bought a cottage on the other side of the city, at double its value. That cottage belonged to one of the aldermen! This is a nice little old town, Brant, and I love it for some things. It's got a history, and

scenery, and some good people, but they don't vote. Thirty-four hundred polled, last year, out of a total of six thousand! How's that?"

"Plumb wastefulness!" ejaculated Brant.

"They don't like the mixing. They've let things drift clear away from them, and now, when they want anything—a building permit or a line of edgestones—they find it easier to send an order 'round to the Boss and pay his bill than to put up a fight."

"Who has the price list?"

"The price list?" repeated Edeson.

"Yes—the ante for franchises, an' permits, and the' like."

"Oh, a scoundrel named Scollard—Joe Scollard—a Third Ward saloon-keeper. He holds no office, but he is Boss of the whole rotten bunch."

"Well, we'll put in our petition for the switching-track, and the re-location of the street—an' see what Mr. Scollard has to offer."

"I'd be heartily sorry to disagree with you, Brant, but I can never be a party to any arrangement with Scollard or his gang. I'd go out of business first!"

Brant's eyes twinkled as he retorted: "We're pardners in that, too, my boy! All the same, we'll see what this Scollard has to offer. I've never seen a bluff called until the bluff was made, nor you either, Don!"

"That sounds better," laughed Edeson. "If it's a fight, you can count me in. I'd give up my auto license for a year to down that dirty scoundrel, and that's going some!"

"It's a fight, all right," retorted Brant, grimly.

There was some little delay before even a preliminary skirmish. It was always Mr. Scollard's policy to allow his prospective victims to find bars between themselves and the things they wished for; and to indicate, by futilely beating against those bars, the extent of their disappointment. The thoughtful politician of the Third Ward did not, as Gurney Brant had intimated, adhere to a fixed schedule of prices. He preferred to adjust them according to the hunger displayed by the petitioner.

Thus it was that Edeson and Brant's

request for permission to re-locate the street and for building the short track from the railroad to their yards was referred and re-referred, and tabled, and taken up and turned down. When the burial was complete a gentleman, who looked like a coroner in a large way of business, visited the office. And Edeson, knowing him by sight, instantly understood that he had come to condole with the mourners and to hold out hopes of a glorious resurrection.

"My name is Buckley," he announced, flipping a card before Brant, and, swinging a chair into the center of the room he dropped into it.

Brant picked up the card. The prefix was Thomas C. A second line stated that Mr. Buckley was an attorney-at-law.

The attorney-at-law took three cigars from his waistcoat pocket, stuck one between his teeth, and affably extended the others to the partners, who declined them.

"Don't smoke in working hours, eh?—well, as my hours are all working hours I have to steal a whiff when I can. Youse gents got a good plant here—fine location—good buildings. Pity yer didn't git that permit ter close th' street!"

There was no response. But the grim silence caused Mr. Buckley no embarrassment. He continued blithely:

"I'm talkin' fer my client, Mr. Joe Scollard, of the Third Ward. He owns a strip of th' land back of you an' he's plannin' some improvements, but he thought that, before he started in, he'd see if youse gents 'ud like to buy it. He's always int'rested in th' growth of th' city—is Scollard—an' th' growth of th' industries means th' growth of th' city—aint that so, gents?"

"Evidently the city government does not share Mr. Scollard's sentiments," exclaimed Edeson, bitterly.

"They scarcely ever do," agreed the attorney-at-law, shaking his head, but Edeson could have sworn that there was a flutter of a wink in one of the little rat-eyes. Perhaps it was chronic.

"Yer see," continued the fellow, "as Scollard is figgerin' on developin' that land he didn't feel th't Mill Street ought to be changed. And bein' a heavy

taxpayer th' aldermen, naturally, considered his interests."

"That wouldn't account for the switching-track being turned down," remarked Brant. "That wouldn't affect his land."

"It might an' it mightn't. Anyhow, he's figurin' on puttin' a switchin' track acrost there, himself—if he gets the permit—an' I guess he can."

"A switching track for himself, with not so much as a hencoop on the land!" exclaimed Edeson.

"Well, you see, gents, that's where his improvements come in—an' that's what he's offerin' fer sale."

He drew his chair up closer and assumed a more confidential tone:

"Now, it's like this, if we can agree on the price, you'll get a nice little slice of land to throw into your yards, an' th' permit for the switchin' track'll go with th' land. Also, as there'll be no objection, then, to the re-location of Mill Street, youse can re-locate it where you d—, 'scuse me—where you please, see?"

Edeson glanced at his partner, but that gentleman was lost in deep contemplation of his boots.

"Well, what is the price?" demanded the younger man.

"Ten thousand'll about cover it," replied Buckley, indifferently.

"Ten thousand!—for two acres of marsh land not worth one thousand at top valuation?"

"Did you ever know buyers and sellers to agree on valuation?" inquired the attorney, brazenly. "Y'r gettin' somethin' besides the land, remember!"

Brant drew up to his desk and, writing a few lines rapidly under a letter-head, passed it across to his partner with the request:

"Just sign that, Edeson, I want it to go in the next mail."

Edeson read the lines:

Let me handle this. I see a way to stampede the whole bunch!

He nodded, signed the paper, and Brant ostentatiously placed it in an envelope and addressed it. Then he turned to the lawyer.

"Now, Mr. Buckley, the game is, that Scollard will first secure permits for the switching track and the re-location of Mill Street, if we agree to take his

land at ten thousand dollars. Is that correct?"

"Couldn't have said it better myself!"

"And I reckon there'll have to be a written contract to that effect!"

"Of course. An' you'll have to deposit a certified check for the amount with some mutual friend, th' same to be exchanged for a deed as soon as th' said improvements are assured. See?"

Brant nodded. "We'll talk it over, Mr. Buckley; it's more than likely that the arrangement'll hit us."

"Sure it will! It'll give youse just what you want. Well, so long, gents! When your minds are made up 'phone me and you can meet Scollard in my office and sign papers."

He swaggered out, and Edeson turned eagerly to his partner.

"Well, what sort of shut-off signal are you framing up for Mr. Buckley?"

"No shut-off for him, pardner; we'll sign that contract, I reckon!—Now, hold on! Hold on! It doesn't follow that because a man draws cards he's got to play th' hand. What'll happen if we publish a copy of that contract, as soon as it's signed and in our hands, eh, Don?"

"Do what? Make such a contract as that public!"

"Why not? It's all right! Just a nice, clean little business arrangement. There isn't a point about it that smudges Mr. Scollard's character—legally. He has a right to sell his little scrap of marsh land for ten thousand, hasn't he? And he has a right to apply for a permit for a switchin' track—or a balloon-landing, if he wants one, eh, Don?"

"Surest thing, you know!" gasped Edeson, between spasms of laughter.

"Brant, you're a winner—a Blue Ribboner! You've got all us little citizens in the kindergarten class. You'll have Scollard laughed out of the burgh by his opponents, if he isn't smashed, first, by his own gang! Why, man! they'll kill him! Booking an order for their collective vote just as he would for a case of liquors. One permit for switch, and one permit for change of street, in plain, sealed package of marsh land—C. O. D. Ten Thousand Dollars! Oh, Brant! It's great!—Great!!"

"It'll wake 'em up a few," agreed Brant, "if nothing gives way. But, if Scollard's crowd conclude to stand pat and take what the public gives 'em, they'll corral our little ten thousand dollar ante."

"Don't you get woozy, Brant. Not for a moment! There isn't even a high school boy in the town but will see that the money is not for that worthless bit of marsh land, but for the permits that go with it. It's the cleanest cut evidence that could be produced that Scollard owns the city government, and if he should deliver the goods every man who voted for the permits would be tagged as a Scollard pup—a lay-down-and-roll-over, and feed-out-of-the-hand pup! Slackville would be the jeer of the country, from Coney Island to the Golden Gate. And election in five weeks!"

"I reckon we're safe," chuckled Brant. "An' what's more, pardner, I reckon I see th' way to get our permits without feedin' any chips out to Scollard an' his drove."

"Just let it rest a day or two—I haven't got the details staked out yet, but I'm campin' on th' claim, Don, I sure am!"

Scollard grunted his satisfaction with greasy nonchalance when Brant signed the innocent looking contract.

"It's th' swiftest way to get these things, Brant, an' cuts out all th' delay and trouble. I'll put in th' petitions at this week's meetin' an' they'll go to th' right committee an' be reported back fer th' vote, next week. An' there y'are! Ye can order yer ties an' rails at once."

The *Post-Express* was an afternoon paper with a mission and a struggle. The mission was to smash the Scollard crowd, but as the smashing was conducted in an eminently gentlemanly manner the Scollard party smiled indulgently and made ribald suggestions about changing the name to *Post-Mortem*. The struggle was to pay bills and maintain a cheerful contemplation of the fat, municipal advertising and printing which fell to its "esteemed but loathed" contemporary, the *Gazette*. But on the day after Scollard's petition was presented to the council the *Post-Express* was on the street at noon—

two hours before its usual time. And through the afternoon its press rattled out what was afterwards boasted of as an unprecedented edition.

The head-lines across the front page were black, bold, and appealing:

TEN THOUSAND DOLLARS FOR
MUNICIPAL PERMITS!!

JOE SCOLLARD, THE NOTORIOUS WARD
BOSS, SIGNS A CONTRACT TO DE-
LIVER VOTES!

Then followed a photographic copy of the contract—an expense at which the proprietor had shied until Brant produced a fifty-dollar bill.

Three hours after the first copy appeared on the street Scollard's yellow auto drove furiously up to the office of Edeson & Brant, and the burly dictator strode in, red and glaring.

"How in hell did that contract git into th' hands of th' *Post*?" he demanded, savagely.

"I gave it to 'em," asserted Brant, his hands in his pockets, his heels rocking on the floor and a cheerful gleam in his gray eyes.

"Youse—gave—it—to—'em!! So! it's th' double cross f'r me, eh? For ME! Yer lockin' horns wid Joe Scollard, are ye? I thort, mebbe, it just leaked out, somehow. F'r th' price uv a drink I'd smash yer face—yer white-livered welcher!"

Edeson could never quite understand just how it came about. He had often wondered at Brant's tremendous breadth of shoulders and length of reach. There was a growl of imprecation, a chair whirled back across the room, a figure leaping in the air, and then he saw his partner's fingers at Scollard's throat and caught the quick gleam of a big, brown hand as it circled once and twice, followed by the crack, sharp as from a revolver, of the open palm upon the cheek of the "Pride of the Third." Then the burly, bloated form crashed backward through the screen door and rolled on the sidewalk, tangled up with wire netting and slats.

The partners watched him from the window as he scrambled into the tonneau, swearing at his chauffeur; then, his purple face turned to the office, the features twitching spasmodically, his

fist lifted high and rigidly quivering, he disappeared around the first corner.

Edeson gazed at Brant adoringly.

"And that," he murmured, "was the 'Pride of the Third,' having a nice, playful, girly-girly time! The man who boasts that he has never been licked since he came to the city."

"He's living on his past!" said Brant. "He's just mush! He isn't quick enough to dodge a road-roller!"

"It's plumb unlucky I had to do it," he continued, "but I just had to, pardner. And now I suppose he'll force those permits through just to gather in that ten thousand."

"Don't you worry," exulted Edeson. "Scollard thrashed and flung through a screen door, is not the 'Pride of the Third' any longer. He's a 'down and outer.' His followers'll drop away from him like rabbits from a hound. The *Post* will have another big edition over this. Here comes the reporter now!"

And Edeson was right. The proprietor-editor of the *Post*, for once relieved of apprehension, about the approaching pay-day, had the spirit to rise to the situation.

He predicted that the entire country would watch, with breathless interest, the action at the next aldermanic meeting upon the petition presented by the Third Ward saloonkeeper; the same petition which had been rejected when presented by the "highly responsible, worthy, and enterprising" firm of Edeson & Brant. With magnificent enterprise he obtained a cartoon showing the "Pride of the Third" fleeing wildly along the street, pursued by a screen door; with the serious, if not quite pertinent question: "Would there be such disgraceful occurrences if the Citizens' party was in office?"

Nothing—that is, no party with a whipped leader—could withstand the fiery invective, the convincing rhetoric, the pleading eloquence of the *Post-Express*. When the Scollard petition came up but one vote was cast in its favor, that being given by a member who had been condoling through the afternoon with the late 'Pride of the Third,' and who voted under the impression that it was for the abolition of the dog tax.

"We've beaten Scollard!" commented

Brant the next morning, "but we haven't taken any tricks ourselves. We're still shy on those permits, Don, and we'll always be shy on 'em if this same board of aldermen gets re-elected. They've turned down the Boss to save their own hides, but they'll never forgive us for stampeding th' herd. Now, I'm going over to Foxboro for a few days to stake out that claim I told you about. Keep the *Post* shoutin' for the Citizens' party. Buy a hundred dollar ad. space and pay cash for it. I'll have something good an' plenty for them when I come back."

A week later Brant laid a copy of the *Foxboro News* before Edeson, pointing to an article headed:

FOXBORO TO HAVE ANOTHER GREAT INDUSTRY.

It is with much pleasure that we are in a position to state that an option has been secured by Mr. Gurney Brant, of Slackville, upon about 120,000 square feet of land at the foot of Pitford Street, adjacent to the F. & M. C. railroad tracks. In an interview with Mr. Brant this morning, at Hotel Wiskirchen, that gentleman, who is president of the Edeson & Brant Furniture Company, stated that it is their probable intention to remove their plants to this city. He gives as a reason that the facilities for expansion are very much restricted in Slackville.

His company employs, at present, a total of over four hundred hands, and is desirous of adding equipment which will require nearly twice as many. If the arrangements are completed, our city may be congratulated upon the addition of this important industry to its already long list of enterprises.

Edeson leaned back in his chair and gazed at his partner in amazement.

"I reckon that'll wake up the voters of this town a few!" chuckled Brant. "Now, don't you go to packing yer grip, right off, Don. We'll let th' *Post* handle this, and if the Citizens' ticket is elected we'll put in our petition again, and it'll go through—or I miss my guess!"

"As to that option?" asked Edeson.

"I shall take care of that. The land's good investment, anyhow. Foxboro's a rising place. Now, let's clip this and send it over to the *Post*."

Although the publication of the Scollard contract, and the fracas with Brant, had stirred up the political elements of Slackville as they had not

been stirred for years, the business element had been impressed in but a small degree. For a long time the corporations had settled into the conviction that trading with the Boss was the smoothest, if not the only way of securing what they wanted; while the retailers and the wage-earners had also settled into a dogged submission to poor service from the corporations and high taxes, because of the impossibility of any redress or adjustment. But this threatened removal of the Edeson & Brant works struck home, and struck hard. Retailers saw six thousand dollars in weekly wages going over to the rival city of Foxboro. Employees saw the relinquishment of jobs or the abandonment of homes. Landlords saw empty houses and lowered rentals. Even the *Gazette*, battered on municipal tidbits, put its helm down and shivered a little as it trimmed sail against the storm of vituperation which the *Post*, waxed aggressive and unafraid, poured upon what it termed "Scollardism."

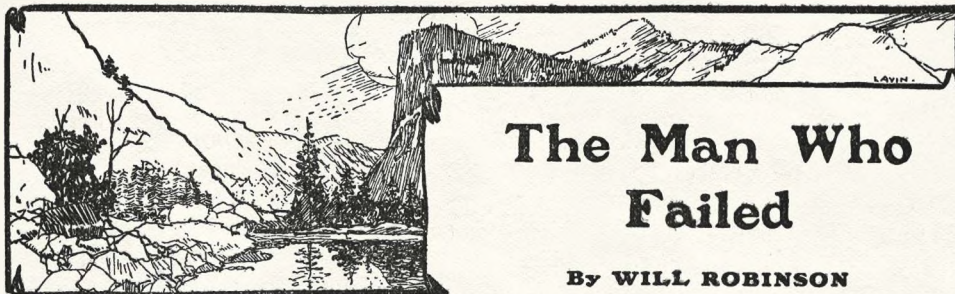
The chairman of the Citizens' committee waited upon Edeson and Brant, and urged them to reconsider their decision to remove their plant, offering most solemn pledges that, if his party came in, no obstacles should be placed in the way of the company's progress.

"We don't want pledges," said Brant, "we want a square deal. My option at Foxboro' is for sixty days. Election comes off here in ten days, and whatever's settled at election will settle our future."

So the campaign cry was, "Preserve our Industries!" and the Citizens' ticket was elected by the largest majority ever shown in Slackville.

"It's a landslide!" yelled Edeson with glee. "A little landslide for a hundred and fifty dollars, and it's swept Scollard off his perch and the gang with him. The bars are down and Slackville can now do business!"

"Don't you bank on any boom," warned Brant. "When you're through with the shoutin' an' have time to size up the new outfit you'll find 'em some pin-headed. They're more used to savin' than to makin', an' it's just as easy to kill a town by starvin' it as by robbin' it, an' it don't take as much brains."



The Man Who Failed

By WILL ROBINSON

MAN toils for a variety of reasons; usually to satisfy his stomach and cover his skin, sometimes to please a woman, more rarely he works for the very work's sake, for the personal satisfaction of doing a good job. It was the warring of the latter two motives in Whitlock's case that made this story.

All night he had been on the dam working with his men, with the roar of the water in his ears, and the smoke of the kerosene torches in his eyes. Slowly, foot by foot, they had pushed out the rock, brush and earthwork, until by the time the cook's gong sounded for breakfast, the gap through which the yellow flood boiled and foamed, had been reduced to a scant twenty feet.

For three years, at first simply running levels, afterwards as engineer in charge, Whitlock had been working on the big irrigating ditch, and now the end of it all was scarce twenty-four hours away. As for the motives; to state the more obvious one first; the day before the work had started he had helped Marian Heath aboard the overland, and had watched the girl he loved as she waved to him from the Pullman, until the train disappeared eastward into the desert. Now she was coming back.

In a sense the three years had been a time of probation; he had been measured against the best men of the Southwest and he knew he had not failed. In spite of poor equipment, inefficient laborers and the questionable support of an intriguing, vacillating superintendent, the work had been well done.

As he paused for a moment to watch the swollen river, he noticed Bowker,

the superintendent, leisurely approaching along the crest of the dam.

The elation of success overcame, for the moment, the young engineer's natural repugnance for the man, and he called enthusiastically:

"Less than twenty feet, Bowker. You'll close it to-day, sure. If you don't mind I'll stay up and help you.

Bowker seated himself on a convenient rock, waited until the last of the workmen were out of hearing, and then said bluntly:

"We aint going to close it up at all. The jig's up. I call the force off after breakfast."

"You what?" began Whitlock, in amazement.

The superintendent raised his hand.

"No pyrotechnics. I mean what I say. As engineer, you will take your orders from me. It has been raining up the river for a week. I had a 'phone message last night that there had been a cloud-burst near the Four Peaks. That water will be down to-day. If we should be working on the dam when it strikes, somebody would be very apt to drown. It's dangerous."

"Dangerous?" repeated the exasperated Whitlock. "Of course it's dangerous. What do you think we are doing; running a ribbon-counter?"

"That will about do for you," replied Bowker, curtly. "I'm in charge here. I am not going to risk these men's lives." He paused for a moment, and then added with ugly emphasis, "What you want to do is to save your precious reputation."

The engineer went white to the lips. "Don't you worry about my reputa-

tion," he said, hotly. "You were the one who advised the farmers to put in a rock and brush dam, and told them how strong it would be. My reputation? You would better look to your own."

"Aw, cut it," said Bowker. "You know as well as I do that the thing is different now."

"You mean—"

"I mean that this new outfit, the Development Company, if they can get control, will put in a concrete dam—one that can stand a cup of tea poured over it without going out."

"And you are going to let this dam go," said Whitlock, a dangerous light coming into his eyes, "in order to freeze out the small stockholders."

"That's the idea," returned Bowker, frankly.

"And you have the nerve to tell me that—you, the superintendent for the Farmers' Association, are knifing your own people—destroying twenty thousand dollars worth of property to ruin some of the very people who are paying you your wages?"

"At the present time," said the superintendent promptly, "I am working for the interests of J. Q. Bowker, and if you have any sense, Whitlock, you will see that your interests lie pretty much in the same direction. You want to marry that Heath girl?"

"You may leave her out of this," said Whitlock, with rising color.

"Think so?" said Bowker, evenly. "Well, my young friend, let me remind you that her father, John Heath, Esquire, president of the Farmers' Association, practically told me that he hoped that this dam would go out."

"Bowker," said the younger man, hotly, "I believe you are deliberately—"

"Just a minute," interrupted the superintendent, "before you say something you may be sorry for. Heath is the biggest land owner in the valley. Naturally, when it looked as if we could get nothing better, he was in favor of the rock and brush, and he put up a big lot of the money for it. Now he knows if the Development Company gets control he will get his cement dam. You can bet your future existence that he is with them."

"I don't believe it," replied the engi-

neer, bluntly. "It will take a year to build the Development dam, and while the big fellows like Mr. Heath can afford to wait, the extra assessments and the loss of this year's crop will absolutely ruin the smaller farmers."

"This isn't a debating society," interrupted Bowker insolently. "If you think you can afford to run counter to John Heath's plans, go ahead. A dumb man could tell you what he will do to you. I've had my instructions. The work stops right here. The men get their time this morning. I'm superintendent and the sooner you realize it the better."

Whitlock's eyes flashed. "You needn't tell me what you are. I know. You are a white-livered coward. You know that gap can be closed. Had your instructions, have you? I got mine when I came up here to put in that dam. I'll quit when the job is done, and not before. Discharge the men, will you? Well, I'll hire them again. I'll finish the work, too, and if you come down on the dam and try to interfere I'll throw you in the river."

Bowker eyed him contemptuously.

"You may be interested in knowing," he said finally, "that old man Heath and the girl came up last night in their automobile, and brought Colonel Flint, the president of the Development Company, with them. Before you do anything rash, you would better consult headquarters."

With his mind a tumult of conflicting emotions, Whitlock watched his adversary turn stiffly and start for the shore. The engineer started to overtake him, when suddenly all feelings of strife and bitterness were blotted from his mind by the vision of a slim, shrouded figure of a girl that waited in the gray dawn by the side of the trail.

She stretched out her hand to him in the old frank Western way.

"You have been working too hard," she said after the greetings were over. "How many hours has it been since you have had any sleep?"

"Sleep is the worst thing in the world for people," replied Whitlock, gravely. "It makes them fat."

"I think you could risk it without the slightest danger," smiled the girl. "Are you really glad to see me?"

"Glad enough never to let you go away again alone," replied the man promptly. "I am going to marry you this time."

"I didn't ask you to say that," protested the girl in alarm. "You mustn't talk that way—now. You—you might tell me if I look three years older."

The young man surveyed her in vast content. "You have lost your Arizona tan; there is a nice pink color that has just come into your cheeks, and you seem to have a very smart dressmaker—altogether you are just as nice as you ever were."

"Thank you," said the girl with a twinkle in her eyes, "that was a brave attempt, and worth a breakfast, at least. The cookhouse is full, and you are to eat in the office tent, (which we calmly appropriated last night) with Colonel Flint, father and me."

"A happy family," murmured the man softly to himself, but it came out better than he thought.

At the tent door Mr. Heath greeted him cordially, and then added:

"You will have to excuse me for a while, Whitlock. Colonel Flint and I have had our coffee and are going down with Bowker to look at the headgates. See that this young man has plenty to eat, Marian. It will make him sleep better."

"Not to-day," began the engineer, but the great man waved aside his protestations, and bowed himself out.

Bruce Whitlock laughed good humoredly.

"I wonder, Marian, if your father really thinks I could sleep with that twenty-foot hole in the dam. I am going to close that before night."

"Why, I thought you were going to let the brush dam go," said the girl in apparent surprise. "Isn't the Development Company going to put in a better one up at the reef?"

"Perhaps. Still, that has nothing to do with this job."

"But didn't father explain," insisted the girl. "He told me that at best you did not expect the dam to hold but a short time. If it goes out *now*, the people who have been objecting to a more expensive dam will *have* to consent to the Development scheme. If you make

this dam hold for a while the Development Company may get tired of waiting and go some place else. I don't know about these things as you do, of course, but wouldn't it be better for everybody to have the new dam built right away?"

"You understand the situation, all right," said Whitlock, almost bitterly. "Three years in Europe can't make a girl who was born under an irrigating ditch forget her birthright. But after all, it isn't wholly a matter of expedience, is it? Isn't there a question of honor concealed somewhere in that pile of rock and brush?"

"Yes?"

A little wrinkled line showed itself in Miss Heath's forehead.

"I told the Farmers' Association," went on the engineer, "that I would do my best to make this dam stick. It is up to me to make good. Nothing complicated about that issue."

"But a majority of the Association really doesn't want it to hold *now*. Isn't that true?"

"Perhaps. What of it?"

It had been some time since a man had talked this way to Marian Heath, and she found to her surprise that she rather enjoyed it. It was not rudeness. It was something quite worth while to be taken as an equal and a comrade by a man who admired her. It was refreshing not to have the consciousness of sex placed ever before her. Still this did not divert her from the task she had set for herself.

"But surely," she insisted, "you do not think you owe those minority people, who have always fought everything good in the valley, yourself included, more than you do father and his associates. It can't be honorable to go back on one's friends."

"My view of the situation," replied the man good humoredly, "is probably due to what Doctor Stanhope calls 'congenital strabismus.' I don't want to be a prig or seem ungrateful about this. Father, you know, was bridge foreman on the S. P. Best on the line. When he had a job he did it on honor. His father was a blacksmith and worked the same way. Probably inherited it from some foolishly loyal mediæval vassal, and perhaps we are all wrong. Still I can't see

why a fellow who builds a city can't have as much honor about *his* job as the soldier who directs a battering ram to knock it down."

"I can follow you to a certain point," replied Marian, "but it's a condition, not a theory, that confronts us.' Sooner or later this brush dam will go out; then the new dam of the Development Company will be built. It will turn two hundred thousand acres—is that the amount—of desert into fruitful homes. (You see, I read the chamber of commerce pamphlets.) The engineer who builds the new dam will build, possibly, something bigger than even a city—and incidentally make his reputation."

"Did your father ask you to say this to me?"

The months of fighting against a thousand petty obstacles, as well as lack of sleep, had put too fine an edge on Whitlock's nerves, and this cross speech was out before he realized it.

"It was I who asked him, Bruce," said the girl, "and I will tell you why. You want me to marry you," the tinge on her face deepened. "Father would never let me marry a man who was a failure. The building of the Development dam will give you success. You see, womanlike, I am selfish about it."

Again the man struck the wrong note. "Marian," he said, "I would almost sell my soul for such a bribe."

"It is not a bribe." She was angry now. "My favor does not go by purchase. If you care for me you will be glad to do this. Will you?"

"You mean you cannot marry me if I don't?"

"Oh, Bruce, why do you say those things?" replied the girl. "Why do you make it all so cheap?"

"It is not I who is making it cheap," retorted Whitlock bitterly. "It is you who are forcing the issue. You refuse to marry me because—because—"

"The decision lies with you." As the girl spoke, a spot of color burned in either cheek. "How could I trust a man who would turn his back upon his friends at such a crisis?"

"You distort it all," said Whitlock, angrily. "It is *you* who would buy *me* now. Do you really mean what you say?"

"I cannot marry a failure; a man who through his weakness—"

"Very well." Whitlock's brain swam drunkenly in the tumult of his emotion. "So this is the way it ends. I wish you joy. I wish—"

And entirely beyond the power of expressing his passion in speech, he groped his way out of the tent.

"Bruce!" called the girl faintly, "Bruce!"

He did not hear her. In front of the commissary stood Bowker talking to the men. The sight of this tangible adversary gave a focal point for the engineer's pent up emotions. A moment later he was at the superintendent's side. "Have you discharged the force?" he demanded.

"Yes," replied Bowker, briefly. "The jig's up."

"Boys," said Whitlock, turning in appeal to the crew, "we came up here to build this dam. The farmers on the ditch have put in hundreds of acres of grain because they believed in us. The job is almost done. A few hours' work will finish it. What kind of men would we be to quit now?"

"You men are fired!" interrupted Bowker, truculently. The team starts for Phoenix in fifteen minutes. If you go now, you ride; if you stay over, you walk. It's thirty miles."

"Some of the farmers," went on Whitlock evenly, "could perhaps afford to lose their crops, others have every cent they possess in the ground. If we leave the dam unfinished, their children will go hungry."

"Don't you let Whitlock fill you with hot air," said the superintendent persuasively. "It is his 'professional reputation' he's worrying about, not the poor farmers. It has been raining in the mountains for the past three days. The rise may be down any time now; if you boys are on the dam when it comes you will be killed, sure. Whitlock, you don't dare deny it."

"What Mr. Bowker says is quite true," replied the engineer, quietly. "The work is very dangerous. If we try to close the gap with the river in the condition it is, some of us will probably be hurt, but the job is there. The question is, are we going to finish it?"

Bowker took out his watch.

"I'll give you ten minutes more to get on the wagons," he said. "If you make it in five I'll add a day's pay to each of your time-checks, but if you stay—"

"If you stay," interrupted Whitlock, "you will put in the hardest day's work you ever tackled, but you will be *men*."

It is not the nature of the man who does things always to do his heroic actions in a heroic way. A big fellow in a red shirt voiced the sentiments of the crowd in three short sentences.

"'Nuff said, young feller. We're on. Get busy."

Whitlock grinned.

"Good enough. Here, Dempsey," he called crisply, "you and McIntyre are married. I don't want you on the dam. You take a half-dozen fellows, and cut those cottonwoods up at the bend. Fell them so they will float clear in the water. Arnold, you and Walker take axes and pitchforks and go down to the waste-gates. I'll send some men to help you clean out the brush. Darrough, open the headgates about a foot, and telephone the ditch-riders that we will have water in the canal some time this afternoon."

There were a score of things to think about at once, and apparently the engineer forgot none of them. Rock was dynamited from an adjacent cliff, run out on the dam in cars, and piled by the gap. A scow was loaded with rock from another quarter, and let slip down the upper side of the dam. Brush was massed in great piles and held for later use.

It was now nearly ten o'clock, and in spite of the fact that the pressure on the dam had been greatly relieved by clearing out the waste-gates, the water was slowly gaining on the works, and the current through the gap increasing. Undismayed by this, however, Whitlock only redoubled his efforts. Directing and encouraging by command and example he inspired prodigies of effort.

Steadily the work progressed. Held back by cables, the first of the cottonwoods drifted down the river. As it approached the gap three men on the scow, armed with poles, directed the placing of the tree. Slowly at first, and

then with a terrific lunge, the cottonwood swung into the center of the current above the gap. Just at that critical moment, however, one of the men in an excess of zeal, in order to bring the scow further out into the stream, tied its stern fast to the cable which held the tree. This forced the flatboat into midstream, but immediately the current pushing the boat down stream against the pull of the cables which were fastened to opposite sides of the river, ducked its bow under water. The three men jumped barely in time to save themselves from sliding rocks. Two of the men were strong swimmers and reached the edge of the dam without trouble. The third man, however, pulled by the force of the current was carried directly towards the gap.

It was no time or place for the spectacular. Whitlock waited, boat-hook in hand, until the man came opposite him, caught the hook in the strap of the man's overalls, and unceremoniously hauled him out.

No time was wasted on expressions of gratitude, as the scow now pounding against the dam demanded instant attention.

With a flying leap Whitlock landed on its submerged end, and clawed like a cat at the cracks in the deck; then on hands and knees, with the water flowing even with his chin, made his way to the ring that held one of the cables. The five minutes it took to cast it off seemed like hours. The cable once off, however, the flat-boat came immediately to the surface, and with the tree swung down into the gap. Here the tremendous force of the water threatened to snap the second cable, and lose the tree as well as the scow.

In reply to his signals, a man from the dam tossed Whitlock an ax. With a clean cut the engineer severed the hawser that tied the scow to the tree. Like a flash the boat shot through the gap and swung into an eddy below. Five minutes afterwards Whitlock was back on the dam, and unmindful of dripping garments, was again pushing forward the work.

These were incidents. The main thing was that the tree was swung into place and held. Another was floated down be-

side it, then a third. Masses of brush were thrown among the branches, and tons of rock on top of that. Then the interstices were filled with dirt, and the gap was closed.

"Boys," said Whitlock, "I believe we have worked an hour or two past dinner time. But it is just as well we didn't stop sooner. The water is coming right now. Get to shore, every one of you. Hurry!"

"It's closing the gap that makes the water show up on the gauge, sir," suggested one of the men.

"I didn't mean the gauge." Whitlock pointed up the river where the crests of three swiftly approaching waves could be seen sliding down the surface of the water. "Look there! Run!"

The men started leisurely toward the bank. They had been fighting the river for three months and had won. If they must retreat now, it should be in good order. The consequence was that the last of the men were still on the dam when the rise struck it. There was some scrambling, and some wet clothes, but even the wettest felt that at least he had not sacrificed his dignity in the presence of the enemy.

Still, if in their hour of triumph, the men inclined mildly towards the heroic, the feeling was soon extinguished. Certainly there were no laurel wreaths or palm branches waiting for them on the bank. The dinner was cold, the cook was cross; Bowker, who was reading a paper in front of the commissary, did not even raise his eyes as they passed. The office tent, which had been used by the Heaths for their private quarters, was closed, and the big touring car had gone. Clouds, which had been brooding over the mountains for the past week, now covered the sky completely, and a sodden drizzle starting in, drenched the last possible ounce of elation from the men.

Whitlock realized for the first time that he was as wet as a drowned hen, but even a change of raiment and a soggy dinner were not enough to revive his dejected spirits.

He walked down to the headgates. The water was pouring under them in a stream as generous as the banks could stand.

For three years the "Force," as well as the farmers in the valley below, had looked forward to this day. A holiday had been, originally, planned—a barbecue, perhaps, with speeches and music, in good Western fashion.

Now, at last, the glorious day had arrived, the consummation of thirty-six months of toil had been attained, and was being celebrated by the heroes who had accomplished this result, by their sitting on the ditch bank in the rain and mud, chewing tobacco and indulging in pessimism.

How he got through that afternoon, Whitlock never just remembered. If he went to his quarters in the office tent it reminded him of his miserable quarrel with Marian; if he watched the leaden-colored river sweeping over the dam, it made him realize even more keenly how completely his ambitious dreams had turned to Dead-sea fruit upon his lips.

Steadily the storm waters in the river covered the marks of the gauge. From a foot and one-half at noon it had risen steadily eleven ominous feet more. The yellow flood was now going by in a continuous sheet; dam and waste-gate making scarce a ripple on its surface. Even Bowker, awed by the magnitude of the spectacle, had forsaken the commissary and stood at Whitlock's side, watching the flood. As they gazed, a great cottonwood tree and then another and then another rose to the surface of the water below the riffle that marked the dam.

"There she goes, Bowker," said the engineer, apathetically. "You seem to have the right about it. The jig is certainly up."

"Boy," said the superintendent, not unkindly, "you deserved better luck. It wasn't your fault that you were up against a sure thing; only you were a blamed fool to go back on your own meal ticket."

Whitlock did not answer, but in his heart of hearts he wondered if, after all, Bowker's philosophy were not the better one. He watched the flood until dark and then made his way through the mud and drizzle back to his tent. The very foundations of living seemed slipping out from under him. To-mor-

row might bring courage, but the blackness of the night that was settling outside could be no blacker than the darkness that pushed against his heart.

His lips were dry and his eyes burned. His mind worked sluggishly. The dam was gone, but that disaster faded to nothing beside his greater loss.

What was it that Marian had said to him? What had he said? He tried to remember, but could not. They had quarreled. He had been a fool, and what was worse, a boor—and all about completing a piece of work that was now utterly annihilated. What folly it had all been.

As he sat humped up before the drafting-table, the tent-flap parted and a boy who helped about the corral handed him a letter.

"From Mr. Flint, sor," explained the youth. "Said he had to catch a train, and couldn't wait to see ye. Yes, sir; Mr. Heath and the young leddy went with him."

Mechanically Whitlock tore open the envelope. This is what he read:

MY DEAR WHITLOCK:

By the time this reaches you, you will doubtless have finished the dam, and the dam, probably, will have been finished by the river.

This clears the slate ready for the working out of the new problem. Work on the Development Company dam will commence as soon as we can get men, teams, and material on the ground.

The matter of superintendent has been left by the directors to Mr. Heath and me. We want a man who has ability; who can handle men; who is loyal and who works on honor.

The way you stuck to your job today was foolish and Quixotic, but on the whole I am inclined to think we want just that brand of a harebrained enthusiast to build the big dam.

If you want the job it is yours. You will have entire control and will not be hampered by lack of funds nor stinted in material. We want the best structure for the purpose that can be built.

Should you care for the place, Mr. Heath is authorized to determine the amount of your salary. Don't be too modest about compensation. We do not want a cheap man.

Very truly yours,
BERWIN FLINT.

Whitlock read the letter through twice, and laid it down with a bitter smile. The success he had worked for

had come—but too late. For what was worth all the attainment his little world could give him without Marian Heath to share it. Fate could play him no more scurvy a trick than this. He smiled grimly at his own misery.

He was tired in body and mind. In great weariness he buried his face in his arms. The drip of the rain on the canvas seemed to penetrate his soul with its coldness. If he could only sleep—sleep and knit the raveled sleeve of care.

"Bruce!"

The calling of his name came sluggishly to his brain as if in a dream.

"Bruce!"

He raised his head. Was he losing what little mind had been left him?

But when again his name was called, he knew, and in another moment Marian Heath, all dripping like Undine from the rain, was in his arms.

"If this is dreaming," he said as he looked into two gray eyes, "if this is dreaming, Marian, in the name of the blessed god of dreams, don't let me ever wake up."

"I came back," said the girl in answer to the question in the man's face, "because I could not help it."

"Because of me?"

"Because of you."

"The dam went out," said the man.

"You completed it first. Bruce, I do not know what father will think of me, but I cannot tell you how I glory in the fact that you finished what you had set out to do, on honor."

"There is nothing left to show for it now," said Whitlock, ruefully. "The river swept it away like a house of cards."

"I am sorry," said the girl. "Bruce, do not think I pride myself on womanly contrariness. I did not know what I was asking you this afternoon, and now, never was a woman more proud, my dear, than I am of you."

"Marian," said Whitlock, after an eloquent silence, "can you explain what kind of a miracle it was that brought you here? The boy said you were going away on the train."

"Colonel Flint did go. We only took him down to the ditch-rider's camp where his team was waiting."

"Do you know what he is going to do?"

"Yes. Do you? It's shameful. He is going to California to get a superintendent. I told father it was outrageous, their not giving the place to you just because you had done your duty by your old job."

"Did Colonel Flint tell you he was going away for a superintendent?" asked Whitlock.

"Worse than that. He said he had already engaged him. I am sure they both knew what I thought. They seemed to take positive pleasure in tormenting me. But after all, Bruce, if we love each other, that is what really counts. You succeeded with the old brush dam, and you will succeed again."

"Marian," said the man unsteadily, "it was because you thought I was down and out that you came back to me."

"You will never be down and out while you have me for an asset," smiled the girl.

Whitlock laughed in sheer happiness.

"You never said a truer thing. To prove it, just read that," and he handed her Colonel Flint's letter.

Marian's eyes grew as big as saucers as she read the page, and she was actually gasping when she laid it down.

"Bruce! Bruce!" she said. "You know I knew nothing of this. Why it looks as if—"

"As if," repeated Whitlock, "you were the truest woman and the dearest girl in the world."

The Missing Heiress

BY MICHAEL WHITE

"IT seems to me," she said, regarding him seriously from a taxicab window, "that you have involved yourself in a dilemma."

Clinton glanced from the imposing doors of an upper Fifth Avenue mansion as if they had closed upon a staggering situation. "Jove!" he exclaimed. "It certainly does look like it."

"Yes," she went on, "but I don't think you quite realize what you have done. You found me, a total stranger, on a seat in the Grand Central Station Concourse. You beguiled me into a taxicab and rushed me up here to claim the \$10,000 reward for the missing Miss Marchmont."

"I give you my word," protested Clinton, "I was not thinking about the reward. I was considering only the terrible strain under which Miss Marchmont's family was suffering. My reason for adopting a ruse was to avoid undesirable publicity."

"With the result, to be informed that I did not at all resemble the much sought for young lady," she remarked, expressively.

"You certainly looked extraordinarily like the description of Miss Marchmont in the evening paper," he asserted. "I remember it said she wore a plumed hat, tan suit, with shoes to match, and— and she was pronounced to be—er—to possess considerable personal beauty," he added, with an inspiration to make the most of that line of defense.

She looked at him from under the wide brim of her hat. The young man at the taxicab door was well built with broad shoulders and clean-cut features. His expression told plainly that he was, distressed at the result of his well meant, but impulsive action.

"Well," she said, after a slight pause, and with a shade less of severity in her voice, "what are you going to do now? You see, I could call a policeman—"

"For Heaven's sake, don't do that," he begged. "I'll do anything you wish—take you to any friends in the city at once."

"My friends are all out of the city at present," she replied. "I was merely passing through from Philadelphia to my home in Newbury, Connecticut. My friends will naturally be anxious when they find I have not arrived on the train it was your fault I missed, particularly if anyone should inform them I was seen going off with you in a taxicab."

"I'll wire to them right away," said Clinton.

"But what can you wire to them?" she questioned. "It seems to me it would require quite a number of telegraph forms to explain just what you have done. Even then I don't think they would understand in the least."

Clinton glanced toward the girl in the taxicab and realized she was perfectly right when she said he had entangled himself in a peculiarly harassing difficulty. He vowed inwardly he would never again attempt the restoration of a missing heiress to her family, but that did not relieve his present embarrassment. He exerted his mind over the question of what to do to make satisfactory amends.

"I suppose," she said, "I shall have to assist you by suggesting that you take me back to the Grand Central at once."

"Certainly," he agreed with alacrity. "Anything you wish."

He was much relieved by her making known a desire. So he gave a sharp order to the chauffeur and again took his seat in the taxicab.

A gray mist sweeping in from the bay had assisted in bringing down darkness rather suddenly, and the electric street lights streamed opaquely in upon Clinton and his companion while hastening down the avenue. In the moist atmosphere the roar of traffic was subdued, and objects on either side rose and passed by indistinctly. Presently a galaxy of lamps suspended against a vague mass of masonry marked some giant hostelry, probably the Plaza. Now and then a stalwart figure came out of the mist in the center of the roadway, and with voice or gesture controlled progress for the millionaire's carriage

and the delivery wagon indiscriminately.

As Clinton's companion withdrew into a state of reserve, conversation was limited to his expressing a fervent hope that they might not have long to wait for another train.

On alighting fortune seemed to favor him in this respect. The Boston Limited was starting in two and a half minutes. Clinton hastily purchased a ticket and explained as he hurried Miss Hawley along the platform—she had disclosed her name at the moment she was proved not to be Miss Marchmont—that he felt the least he could do would be to see her safely in the hands of her relations and offer them an apology. To this plan there was no time for her to protest before the train had pulled out of the station.

Presently the conductor came down the aisle punching and collecting tickets.

"This train doesn't stop at Newbury," he remarked to Clinton.

Clinton returned the conductor's gaze with a look of quick amazement.

"But I've got off this train at Newbury," he asserted.

"On Saturdays only," informed the conductor. "On other days the first stop is at Stamford. See the foot-note on the time-table. You'll have to wait for a train back at Stamford."

Clinton looked as if he would like to pick a quarrel with the conductor, but that it was too clear where the fault in taking a wrong train lay.

"Well," said Miss Hawley, with a significant elevation of the eyebrows, "pray, what do you intend to do next? I had really no particular wish to go to Stamford."

"I am awfully sorry," protested Clinton.

"Yes, but unfortunately that won't stop the train at Newbury."

"Hang the old train!" he ejaculated.

Clinton sat back with vexation of spirit. He seemed to have set some unlucky ball of Fate rolling, and for the life of him could not catch up with it.

In a moment he recovered himself and turned toward his companion with settled determination.

"I'll go and overhaul that conductor," he said. "Perhaps I can induce him to

let us off at Newbury. Don't know whether electric motors get hot boxes or not, but anyway he ought to be able to find some excuse to stop for a quarter of a minute."

As Clinton rose and followed the conductor, Miss Hawley gave that simultaneous upward tilt of the head and touch to her veil at the chin which always produces an effective pose. Into her eyes swept the suspicion of a smile.

Early in their unconventional acquaintance she had rightly judged Clinton as perfectly honorable. The missing of her train was not really a serious matter, but she thought he ought to be made to suffer a certain degree of mental sack cloth and ashes for his hasty action. Again, in spite of her annoyance in being carried on past Newbury to Stamford, she perceived an element of humor in the situation, and apart from his anxiety to satisfy her, he was really quite nice. That was why she smiled—when his back was turned.

Presently Clinton approached with unjust criticism of the conductor.

"He absolutely refused to stop the train at Newbury for us," reported Clinton. "I told him I was related to the vice-president of the road, and promised him rapid promotion, besides other things, but he took his stand upon the rules. I never came across such an obstinate conductor. All I could get out of him was that we must wait three hours at Stamford for another train back to Newbury."

"Three hours at Stamford!" she exclaimed.

"Yes, but I'll tell you what we can do," he brightened, hopefully. "I've found out we can just catch the 7:10 express back to New York, and by waiting there an hour for the Stamford local, save at least forty minutes in reaching Newbury."

"And do you really think," questioned Miss Hawley, "that I would be wise to trust myself to your guidance when you have already made two such mistakes. How can I be sure that your 7:10 express will stop anywhere, or your Stamford local not remain in New York?"

"No," he replied, with a crestfallen air. "No, you are perfectly right not to

trust my working out even of a timetable."

"In any case, I think it would be better to wait at Stamford," she relented somewhat, "though, of course, if you wish to return by the express to New York—"

"If I travel up and down this road for the rest of my days, I'll land you safely at Newbury," he declared.

"We are coming to Newbury soon," she remarked, glancing significantly toward the window.

In a few minutes they flashed past a row of station lights, but Clinton thought it best to maintain silence. He had secured some periodical literature for his companion, and she presently dipped between the covers of a magazine. Clinton felt relieved to observe that an occasional smile seemed to indicate literature had a reassuring, perhaps cheering, effect.

In the meantime the conductor passed back and forth, casting sharp glances on Clinton.

"Sorry, I could not oblige you," he halted to explain, "but it would be as much as my position is worth to stop the train without a direct order from headquarters."

"Oh, that's all right," replied Clinton, who had become more easy in mind. "Of course, it's your duty to stick to the rules."

The conductor waited, resting one hand on the back of Clinton's seat.

"Do you live at Newbury?" he asked, in a friendly manner.

"No," replied Clinton, looking up a little surprised at the question. "No, I don't live at Newbury."

The conductor nodded.

"Going there on business, I guess?" he interrupted.

"N-no, not exactly."

"Quite a real estate boom on in Newbury," suggested the conductor.

"Going ahead like anything, I understand," agreed Clinton.

The conductor passed on, and Miss Hawley came from the pages of the magazine with a light laugh.

"I am sure my brother will be glad to hear that real estate is going ahead like anything, Mr.—er—"

"Clinton."

"Mr. Clinton," she proceeded, "because he is in that business, and it has been quite dull there up to—in fact up to the present moment. Do you intend to invest in Newbury?" she asked, naïvely.

Clinton looked at her, and as he did so, it occurred to him he would not object to risking all he possessed in Newbury, though perhaps not exactly in the manner she indicated. Then, as she withdrew again into literature, he fell to wondering why the conductor had questioned him about his business in Newbury. The idea that the conductor, like himself, might have detected a resemblance between his companion and the missing Miss Marchmont, made him feel a trifle uncomfortable again. He was glad, therefore, when the train slowed down at Stamford.

He had escorted Miss Hawley to the waiting-room, and was about to make inquiries regarding the possibility of reaching Newbury by auto, when a stranger stepped from the crowd and laid a hand on his arm.

"I want a word with you," said the stranger.

"You have the advantage of me, sir," returned Clinton, regarding the other with suspicion.

The stranger drew aside his coat, disclosing a silver shield of authority.

"You must excuse me," went on the detective, "but you answer pretty strongly to the description of the person last seen in the company of the missing Miss Marchmont, and telegraphed on here."

"What—I?" gasped Clinton, falling back a pace with astonishment.

"Yes," said the detective running off a mental note. "Panama hat, blue serge suit, patent leather shoes, well set up about the shoulders, and rather a bulldog look."

For a moment Clinton felt there was a good deal of the bull-dog in his nature, but restrained himself in consideration of Miss Hawley's presence.

"But this is utterly absurd," he protested. "Absolutely ridiculous."

"Oh, I guess you can explain all right," nodded the detective. "Going to Newbury on real estate business, I understand?"

"No, I am not," replied Clinton, firmly.

The reason for the train conductor's interest in him was now apparent. The train conductor had made the same mistake regarding Clinton that Clinton had visited upon Miss Hawley. It was a humorous coincidence in one light, but just then Clinton saw it darkly. It was as well perhaps that the train with the conductor had departed.

"Well, you are going to Newbury, anyway," said the detective.

"I won't deny that," replied Clinton, "but I'm not compelled to disclose my object there."

He realized that to have attempted to do so would involve Miss Hawley with a further unpleasant experience.

"Then someone here can identify you?" suggested the detective.

"I don't know a soul in Stamford."

"Hum!" mused the detective. "Can't that young lady you were seen talking to in the train identify you?"

"No, she cannot," replied Clinton. "She doesn't know who I am, and I give you fair warning not to trouble her about me."

The detective looked Clinton over as if confirmed in his suspicion. Then he glanced toward the seat where Clinton had left Miss Hawley and gave expression to an emphatic exclamation.

"Great Scott! Plumed hat, tan suit with shoes to match, and—"

He broke off, drawing Clinton quickly toward Miss Hawley, and politely raised his hat.

"Miss Marchmont, I presume?"

"What again!" cried Miss Hawley, looking up quickly. "How perfectly ridiculous! Of course, I am not Miss Marchmont. Here are letters to prove it," she opened her hand bag. "And besides my uncle is Judge Hawley of this city."

The detective cast a look at the letters, seemed convinced, and apologized for intruding on her privacy.

"You see, it was because this person was seen talking to you on the train," he explained, "that I jumped to a conclusion. He answers the description of a man last seen with Miss Marchmont, and as he refuses to explain his actions I shall have to arrest him on suspicion."

He says that you cannot identify him."

For a moment Miss Hawley appeared stunned with the development of the situation. But quickly recovering her mental poise, she decided that she could not allow her companion to be arrested when a word from her might clear him. That would be carrying his punishment too far.

"This is all too absurd for words," she asserted. "Of course, Mr.—er—Clinton, that gentleman, knows nothing about Miss Marchmont. I can answer for that."

"You know him personally then?" questioned the detective.

"Er, yes—that is—no, not exactly; but he is a friend of my brother," she added with a nod of inspiration. "My brother would identify him if he were here, of course."

The detective looked dubiously at the pair and was not convinced. Their statements were conflicting, and their actions distinctly suspicious, even apart from the Marchmont case.

"I think I had better take you to the station anyway," he said, addressing Clinton. "Maybe you can explain there how you come to resemble the description of the person wanted in connection with Miss Marchmont. The young lady is, of course, at liberty, to—"

"No—no," she hastily interposed. "Why not take us to my uncle's house—Judge Hawley. Everything can be explained just as well there."

She halted a protest from Clinton by a significant glance, and continued to urge her suggestion upon the detective.

"All right," he said, at last, by way of a concession to Miss Hawley. "If the Judge will stand for this gentleman, then I've nothing more to say."

On the way to a car Miss Hawley managed to convey an aside to Clinton.

"I knew I should have to rescue you from this tangle sooner or later. You understand you are an old friend—college chum—or something of my half-brother, Jack. That will explain your being with me. You can then prove you know nothing at all about Miss Marchmont."

"But suppose," whispered Clinton, "suppose your half-brother Jack—"

"We've got to trust to luck about

Jack," she replied, hurriedly. "Anyway, if I told Jack to say you were his friend, he'd vow he had known you from infancy. Jack just adores me."

In the car Clinton could not help reflecting what an accommodating brother Jack must be, though glancing at Miss Hawley's profile a second thought convinced him it was not so surprising.

Judge Hawley was naturally a trifle surprised at the visit from his niece in such company and stared from one to the other through his glasses. When the detective had stated his case, Miss Hawley took up the defense.

"You see, uncle, how perfectly absurd all this is. Of course, Mr. Clinton does not know anything about Miss Marchmont, and his resemblance to the description of the person telegraphed here connected with her disappearance. Mr. Clinton is probably no more like the man sought for in reality than I—er—mean than anything. Mr. Clinton is an old friend of brother Jack, and I'm sure he would feel terribly about it if Mr. Clinton were arrested on such a ridiculous charge with no one to assist him. That is why I brought him here, uncle."

The Judge surveyed the group ranged before him and his keen eyes twinkled.

"Nephew Jack's friend, aye!" he mused. "Um! Why, it certainly would be too bad not to do all we can for him. Pretty soon settled though. Left Jack around at the club. Up here on business. Said he was going to dine there. Will send for him right away."

It was now Miss Hawley's turn to display embarrassment.

"Oh," she exclaimed, "I had no idea Jack was in Stamford."

Clinton at once saw that it was his duty to relieve Miss Hawley. She had done more for him than he had any right to expect, and for her sake he felt he could not allow the matter to proceed further.

"If you will permit me, Judge," he spoke up, "I wish to take all the responsibility upon—"

"Quite unnecessary," he said, "when a word from my nephew will settle it. Just take a seat."

"Uncle," cried Miss Hawley, moving quickly forward, "can I use your phone

a minute? I should like to speak to—”
 “Sorry, my dear,” replied the Judge;
 “but the darned thing is out of order.”

Then he left the room to send for Miss Hawley's brother.

Clinton looked significantly at Miss Hawley, and Miss Hawley returned it with an expression as much as to say: Now what is going to happen?

Before they could discuss the new emergency, the Judge returned and insisted on talking about the weather. In a little a quick step outside fell upon their ears, and a bounding tread on the porch step followed by a ring on the door-bell. Miss Hawley drew in her breath and sat with her hands grasping the arms of her chair. She was inclined to think she would never again attempt the rescue of a young man who had endeavored to restore a missing heiress to her parents. If she could only have obtained a foreword with Jack, but her uncle made that impossible.

Clinton stood with brows knit, thinking hard, and determined to exonerate Miss Hawley, happen what might to himself.

Then a young man swung into the room, and the next moment Miss Hawley was staring with eyes of wonder.

She saw Clinton rush forward, seize her brother by the hand, and thump him heartily on the back.

“Why, old chap,” he cried, “it certainly is a treat to see you again. It's as good as falling heir to a million dollars. Ha! Ha!” he laughed, “I declare you don't look a day older.”

Miss Hawley's brother stared at Clinton as if his memory was not clear upon the greeting.

“What!” said Clinton, still retaining the other's hand in his grasp, “you don't mean to say you've forgotten that trip to the Mediterranean on the *Princess Cecelia*, and the row we had with the Arab boatmen at Joppa?”

Clinton withheld the fact that in recognizing Miss Hawley's half-brother as

a fellow passenger on that occasion he had entirely forgotten his name. A light of response came into Miss Hawley's brother's eyes.

“By Jove!” he exclaimed, “You were the fellow that punched the Arab boatman when he drew a knife. Of course, I remember. I'm right glad to see you again.”

“There, Uncle,” said Miss Hawley, recovering from her surprise to take advantage of the situation. “Didn't I say Mr. Clinton was one of Jack's friends?”

“Um,” reflected the Judge. “You did, my dear.” Then with a shrewd glance: “Once in a while luck does seem to help certain kind of people when things are intended that way. A few minutes ago I'd have bet my boots—but what's the use anyway! I guess this gentleman has been identified all right,” added the Judge by way of dismissing the detective.

In the meantime Clinton had become so deeply interested in the real estate prospect at Newbury that he spontaneously accepted an invitation from Miss Hawley's brother to go down there and look it over.

It was not long before he invested all he possessed—in Miss Hawley.

Regarding Miss Marchmont, it subsequently appeared she had merely gone to visit a girl friend and omitted to inform her family. On the way she had stopped to inquire her direction from a broad shouldered young man in a Panama hat, blue serge suit, and patent leather shoes. In courteously walking a block with her, he was observed by a shrewd policeman, and then went out of Miss Marchmont's life. But the shrewd policeman did his duty and reported the description. It was telegraphed to Stamford among other places, and thus brought about the happiness of two people mixed up in the case, of whose existence this is the first intimation to Miss Marchmont.



Stageland

By CHARLES DARNTON
CARICATURE ILLUSTRATIONS BY
MARIUS De ZAYAS

With this number begins the review of the New York Theatrical Season of 1909-10. In the offerings of drama the business-play is insistent while the musical comedy season, although quite young, has scored one big success

WE CAN'T get away from business. Our playwrights keep charging the American man with excessive devotion to business, and then they proceed to encourage him in his sins by filling his hours of ease with discussions of the subject. Miss Olive Porter, a new lady-dramatist, has lured us to the theatre with her play, "The Ringmaster," in the expectation of seeing a circus, only to be fleeced in Wall Street instead, while at the same time George Broadhurst is giving us the high sign of "The Dollar Mark," soon to be produced. There's no telling how many more the market may offer.

In "The Ringmaster" Miss Porter shows that while she may know something about Wall Street, she has only a bowing acquaintance with the stage. The business deal on which the plot centers is complicated, involved, and no doubt, follows the rules of the game perfectly; but as plays must appeal to mere, every-day human beings and not only to Wall Street financiers it fails to interest.

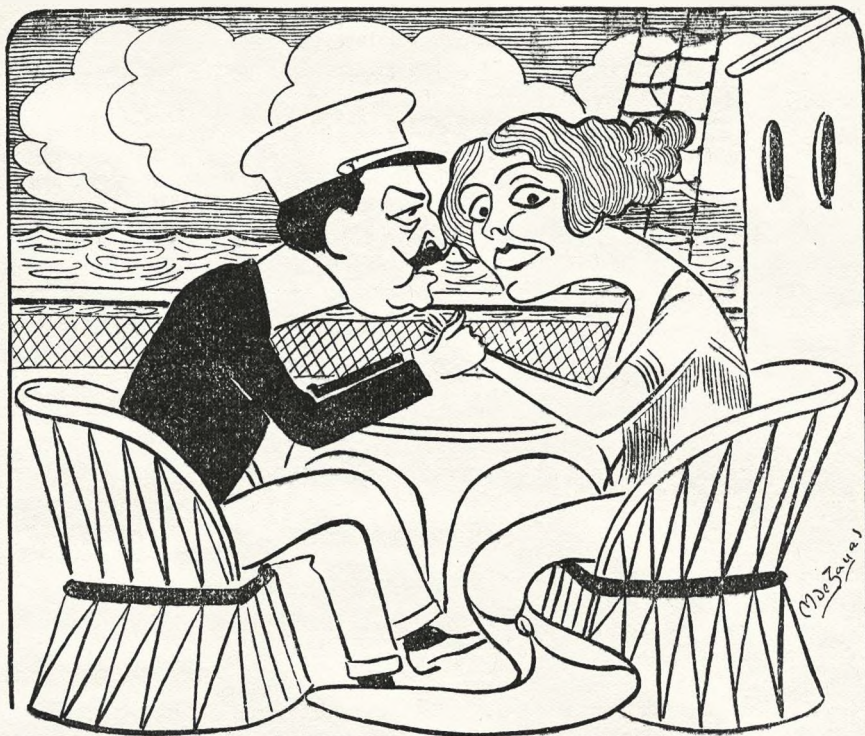
"The Ringmaster"

THE story turns on the struggle between a young and high-minded novice in business, *John Le Baron*, and an old operator of Wall Street, *Richard Hillary*, known as "The Ringmaster." *Le Baron's* father had been one of the big business men of his day and a fighter to the end, but the son, hating

the ruthlessness of the game, had devoted his time to travel, collecting, and other high-browed pursuits, for which he is reproached by *Hillary's* daughter, *Eleanor*, who wants to see him "do something"—until he "does" her papa.

When *Hillary* and his associates offer him a chance to join them in a deal that will ruin an old and well managed Western railroad, *Le Baron*, remembering that a college friend of his is a director of the road, and that the widow of a dead friend has all her fortune invested in it, refuses, but promises to say nothing of the offer since *Hillary* pretends to drop the whole scheme.

On a yachting trip on which two frolicsome youngsters intercept wireless messages and look them up in the code "for fun," he learns through a message from *Hillary*, who is in England, to his broker, that "The Ringmaster" is working out his plan of destroying the railroad alone. This rouses *Le Baron's* fighting blood, and he puts back to New York to take a hand in the game. He is making his opposition felt when *Hillary* begins to put pressure on him. Only through the unexpected information, gained from a young reporter, whose paper seems to allow him more than his share of free time, that *Hillary* and his associates have been involved in a crooked deal, does *Le Baron* succeed in saving the day. He summons *Hillary's* associate, *McElroy*, and gets him to promise to sell all his shares in the railroad that *Le Baron* needs.



"THE RINGMASTER." ARTHUR BYRON AS *John Le Baron, Jr.*; LAURETTE TAYLOR AS *Eleanor Hillary*

Hardly has *McElroy* left when *Hillary*, straight from the steamer, rushes in and forbids *Le Baron* to take over these shares. He dashes to the telephone to call up *McElroy*. This *Le Baron* naturally tries to prevent, since his success depends on the deal's going through before three o'clock, when the stock exchange closes. But he is forced to subside (according to Miss Porter) when he is told that he is only a subtenant, and therefore cannot control the wire!

So *Hillary* does telephone, but as *McElroy* obligingly dies of heart-disease, right at the other end of the telephone, *Le Baron's* deal goes through after all, and the young lion defeats the old fox. *Eleanor* learns to her dismay of her father's dubious financial methods and tells *Le Baron* not to go—while papa, humbled and crushed—begs his pardon.

The acting of the men was almost uniformly good, that of the women almost uniformly bad. Mr. George Howell as "The Ringmaster," Mr. Frederic Burton as *McElroy*, and Mr. Edward

Emery as a third financier stood out particularly. Both these two latter, incidentally, along with the heroine, were survivors of the cast of that other business play of the spring, "The Great John Ganton."

Mr. Arthur Byron as *Le Baron* was intelligent and energetic, if rather smug.

Miss Laurette Taylor as *Eleanor* wore stranger gowns even than those of "The Great John Ganton" and displayed stranger ideas of acting. Miss Oza Waldrop was more impossible than the usual stage ingénue, but Miss Marion Ballou as the seasick aunt made one small scene amusing.

Dentistry and Love

IF YOU have teeth to shed, prepare to shed them when you see Mr. Sidney Drew in "Billy," a three-act comedy by Mr. Drew's wife, who calls herself "George Cameron" when she writes plays. Mrs. Drew first wrote this dental

play for the vaudeville houses where, in the form of a one-act sketch, under the cheerful name of "Billy's Tombstones," it set audiences a-roar. Her success induced her to try whether she could fill three acts with four teeth, missing ones at that. I confess I am still puzzled as to the proper answer to this problem.

Given a football hero who has gloriously lost his four uppers on the bloody field and ingloriously lost his false "set" on the deck of a steamship while making love to his girl, could you make a play of that? Mrs. Drew does it, proving thus again that women can cut their material ever so much more economically, even if it be only in cutting dramatic teeth.

Billy Hargreave, though a football hero, is sensitive about his lost teeth. After retiring from the world for six weeks to recover from their loss and acquire a false set, he emerges for the first time on the steamer *Florida*, bound for Havana. His little journey is to set up his nerves again, and his younger sister, *Alice*, accompanies him as guardian angel. Like other angels, however, *Alice* fails to "make good." When *Billy's* need is sorest, that is, when he meets his long but secretly loved inamorita, *Beatrice Sloane*, on the same steamer.

Beatrice is sailing south with her mamma, who must escape the neuralgic winter of New York. As *Mrs. Sloane* disapproves of *Billy* and thoroughly approves of *Sam Eustace*, who is traveling with them, it looks sad enough for *Billy* at best, but

sister *Alice* makes it worse. Not being endowed with the inestimable gift of tact, she starts to blurt out the truth about *Billy's* "sickness" that kept him indoors so long, only to stop herself in time to give *Beatrice* and *Mrs. Sloane* the impression that instead of four harmless, necessary false teeth, *Billy* really conceals a dark, abysmal past in which four of another kind figure.

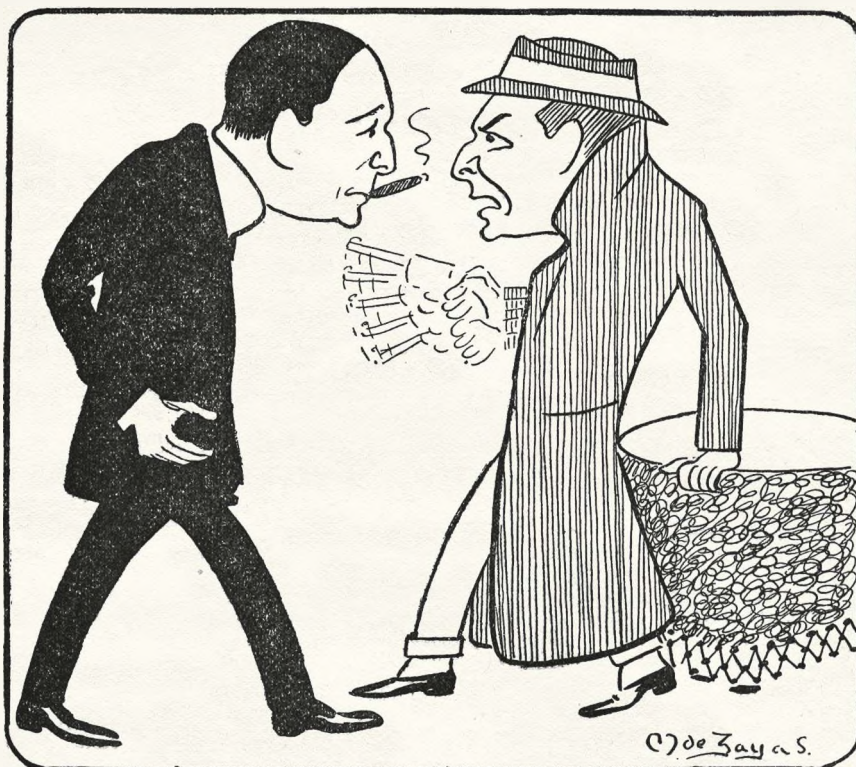
Meanwhile, *Billy*, following his sister's advice, has made up his mind to tell *Beatrice* all, but in the midst of a most impassioned speech made on the upper deck, while his lady love is gazing over the blue deep, the door back of him is suddenly thrown open by a clumsy steward, and *Billy* is pitched headlong with more force than his teeth can bear. These false friends desert him at this critical moment, and you see him dashing into his stateroom with his hands clapped over his mouth, while *Beatrice* wonders whether he has suddenly taken leave of his senses.

A cockney boatswain and a Scotch sailor in cleaning the deck find *Billy's* teeth before he or *Alice* can return to recover them. Knowing that such objects usually fetch a valuable reward, if discreetly restored, they resolve to say nothing about their find, in the certainty of having some wretched passenger make known his loss.

But *Billy* has no idea of disclosing his loss to any one. Hypersensitive as he is on the subject, he remains in his stateroom, except to creep out now and then to search for his lost treasures. Once he encounters *Mrs. Sloane*, who re-



MABEL CAMERON AS *Jean* IN "THE ONLY LAW"



"THE ONLY LAW:" BEN JOHNSON AS *Spider*; FORREST WINANT AS *MacAvoy*

bukes him soundly for "insulting" her daughter by trying to tell her of his disgraceful past, and again, the bumptious *Sam Eustace*, who proceeds to blackguard him for his conduct toward the young lady. *Billy*, still toothless, remains speechless perforce, but when *Mrs. Sloane* and *Sam* have gone and *Alice* joins him, he bursts into a spluttering rage. His missing teeth prevent his pronouncing the letter "s," and his lisping attempts to say solemnly, "Alithe, I mutht thee Beatrithe and ekthplain," are screamingly funny. That Mr. Drew plays this farce rôle straight through with monumental gravity adds to its humor.

In the wee, sma' hours of the gray morning you next see *Billy* prowling about on his hands and knees, armed with a lantern and searching every inch of the deck for his set. The boatswain and sailor, whose duties bring them up just in time to see him on his dark errand, suspect him of being a conscience-crazed murderer looking for the blood

he has shed. But fortune smiles on him at last. He knocks two or three times at the door of his sister's stateroom, as he thinks, and on getting no answer, raises the wooden blind to wake her. Horror of horrors! He has made a mistake in the stateroom—it is *Mrs. Sloane* who lies there asleep. But joy of joys! In a glass by her side is a beautiful set of upper teeth. Without a moment's hesitation *Billy* swipes them, gently lowers the blind, leaves the glass outside on deck, and rushes to his stateroom to equip himself anew.

A few minutes later *Beatrice* is horrified to hear inarticulate moans and cries from her mother's stateroom, and on rushing to her learns from the speechless matron's gestures that she has been robbed of her teeth. *Beatrice* at once seeks *Sam*, to beg him to go to the captain or the purser and report this embarrassing loss for her. *Sam*, who is in the qualms of approaching seasickness promises with a green and sickly smile to do all he can.

But *Billy* has discovered that the teeth he has taken don't fit him, and when the conscientious *Alice* tells him he must restore them to *Mrs. Sloane*, he promises to obey. But how can he declare himself to *Beatrice* when he can't even pronounce her name? *Alice* ingeniously suggests his using only words that have no "s's" in them and promises to prompt him through her stateroom window if he will make his proposal on deck in front of it. So when *Beatrice* next comes along, still waiting to hear about her mother's lost teeth, *Billy* stops her and begins to propose more in agony than with enthusiasm. His frantic attempts to think of words without an "s," his abrupt pauses that are filled only when *Alice* has suggested the proper word, his endearing phrases to *Beatrice*, such as "dear lady," "kind friend," "beloved one," make this proposal the funniest incident in the play.

Billy's agony ends in truly farcical fashion when the teeth found by the two sailors are

auctioned off by the amused passengers and *Sam*, thinking them *Mrs. Sloane's*, bids against *Billy*, who makes *Alice* his spokesman, *Sam* can't keep up the pace, and the teeth fall to *Billy*, bankrupt *pro tem.*, but happy. He seizes his own, inserts them where they belong, presents her set to *Mrs. Sloane*, as if he had bought them for her, and the curtain falls on him as he addresses "*Beatrice!*" with unctuous satisfaction.

Aside from the fact that the farce deals with a very intimate personal

theme that makes some of the jokes perilously indelicate, and that the language is a bit vulgar at times, "*Billy*" is amusing, if trifling. It is too long drawn out, and the excellent acting of Mr. Drew, with his consistent seriousness, alone saves some of the situations. The two sailors by Spottiswood Aitken and Prince Miller are amusing, and Mr. Franklin Jones is clever in his seasick scene. Miss Jane Marbury as *Alice* is

successful in making this crude, tactless youngster seem natural, and Mrs. Stuart Robson is fat and funny enough as *Mrs. Sloane*.

"The Florist Shop"

IN "THE Florist Shop," adapted by Mr. Oliver Herford from the German, we have another farce of the new season that might better have made its bow as a musical comedy. Since Mr. Savage engaged Mr. Herford to adapt "*The Devil*" of Franz Molnar last year, this more or less celebrated wit seems to have turned his attention to light-weight

products of the German theatre, for in addition to this present offering Mr. Savage announces "*The Love Cure*," also adapted by Mr. Herford from the German.

"*Luck with the Ladies*" in the original is by Alexander Engel and Julius Horst, authors of "*The Blue Mouse*," so successfully whitewashed by Mr. Clyde Fitch last season. While Mr. Herford has rendered this Americanized "*Glueck bei Frauen*" more innocuous, it is less funny than Fitch's earlier play.



[JANE MARBURY AS *Alice*; SIDNEY DREW AS *Billy Hargreave* IN "*BILLY*"]



"THE FLORIST SHOP:" NINA MORRIS AS *Claudine*;
LIONEL WALSH AS *Clarence Perkins*

The plot turns mainly on the mistaken characters of two young benedicts. *Clarence Perkins* and *Richard Baxter* are newly-wed husbands who have to belie their true characters to live up to the schoolgirl ideals of their wives, *Angelica* and *Irene*. *Perkins*, a poet, a student, a shy recluse, is forced to pretend to a dark and wicked past to satisfy his *Angelica's* romantic ideas, while *Richard*, a genuine rounder with a roseate past and a bundle of compromising letters, must conceal his gayety behind a solemn frown and his debonair jauntiness in ill-fitting clothes. Another ill-matched pair appears in the persons of *Josiah Perkins* and his wife, *Miranda*, the uncle and aunt of *Clarence* and *Angelica*, who swoop down upon the newly weds from "up state" for a visit.

The air of New York has an immediately exhilarating effect on *Uncle Josiah*, who consults his nephew as to the best excuse to use to escape the watchful eye of *Miranda* when he "does" the town. *Clarence* is at a loss, but the experienced *Richard* suggests that when in need of freedom, a sudden, raging toothache necessitating an immediate visit to the dentist will always

serve. *Josiah* tries the scheme and escapes under *Richard's* guidance, but when *Clarence* uses the same subterfuge a little later, he is treated to a hot plaster and a hotter footbath by his aunt and wife. This footbath is realistically administered on the stage, and Mr. Lionel Walsh's feet are largely in evidence.

In the "Innovation Florist Shop" of *Madame Claudine* in the second act, you are introduced to a new feature of metropolitan life. *Madame Claudine*, deploring the vast sums squandered daily on perishable floral tributes to the fair sex, has conceived the practical idea of substituting hosiery, lingerie, and other feminine frills for flowers, if the receiver so desires. Revolving glass cases disclose American Beauties or orchids in front from which masculine donors may select, while silk stockings and lace creations are displayed on the other side for the inspection of ladies who prefer them to flowers.

Hither swarm in true farce fashion all the characters of the play—*Richard*, to introduce *Uncle Josiah* to one of New York's gay shops, where this country sport at once picks up an acquaintance with a manicure girl whom he



"THE FLORIST SHOP:" MARION LORNE AS *Angelica Perkins*; LOUISE DREW AS *Irene Barter*

treats to "American Beauties" of *Madame Claudine's* special sort; *Angelica* and *Irene*, to select some silk "Beauties" of the same brand; *Aunt Miranda* for a "straight front"; the *Rev. Cadwalader Cope, Baxter's* uncle, to choose some flowers for three ladies of his congregation; and, finally, *Perkins*, in search of a "past." Husbands and wives try to dodge one another. There's a great deal of hurrying and scurrying to and fro, without much result in the way of fun, it must be confessed.

Just as the first act fails to pave the way for the second, so there is no natural, logical connection between the second and the last act. *Irene* and *Angelica* are waiting in *Richard's* bachelor apartments—that he has not yet given up—to steal a march on *Clarence*, whose

rooms they suppose them to be. Meanwhile, the *Rev. Cadwalader Cope* has sublet the rooms from *Richard's* valet and is snoring in the next room.

The valet, taking the two girls for polite burglars, locks them in, but *Angelica* climbs through the transom—a feat gracefully accomplished by Miss Marion Lorne, who plays this part—and the two are about to escape when *Richard* and *Clarence* enter. Then every one explains everything. The virtuous *Clarence* is allowed to sin no more, while *Richard* is held fast by *Irene*, neatly acted by John Drew's daughter Louise.

"The Florist Shop" was evidently built with a view to light and color, but there is a little too much striving with no solid foundation. The plot wanders

incontinently from one episode to another, and so many of the situations are forced that a few good songs and gay music are needed to swing them along. There are one or two novel incidents, but in general the plot is as ancient as the stage "rube" and his nagging wife. There are a number of bright lines, too, but may I be permitted to parody the poet and say to Mr. Herford:

"Bon mots do not a whole farce make,
Nor clever lines a play.
Wits by profession still may take
This lesson on their way."

"The Only Law"

ANOTHER step in the degradation of the stage has been reached by "The Only Law," a so-called play of New York life that reeks of the Tenderloin — not its upper side where the merry game may be worth the midnight candle, but that part of it that runs close to the gutter with the green lights of the police station for its legitimate end. One of its authors, George Bronson-Howard — the other is Wilson Mizner — was arrested while the vicious exhibition was on view at the Hackett Theatre, charged by a show-girl with having stolen her diamond ring and ten dollars, and also with having threatened to spoil her beauty with a paper-knife which was found on him when he was taken in charge at the Casino Theatre, where the fair complainant, to whom he was no stranger, was displaying her show-girl beauty in the front row of the chorus in "Havana."

These introductory facts may help you to understand the "atmosphere" of the play produced by Walter N. Lawrence, for it so happens that the girl, who is chiefly concerned in "The Only Law," holds a similar position at the Casino. *Jean* is as far as her name goes on the program, and she has "one room and bath" in a hotel that isn't particular about the society it keeps. *Hortense*, whose hair and words are yellow, is also "of the Casino" and the same hotel. Even her hunger is not without its professional touch, as is noted in her inquiry, "Got an egg with some open time?"

By comparison with her, *Jean*—hair down and a simple faith in light house-keeping—seems a rear-room virgin. This is evidently the view taken by "Mister" *Bannister*, an unsuspecting Wall Street broker, who is paying to have her voice cultivated and putting an unstained checkbook at her disposal. This, of course, is too good to be true, for as a matter of fact, *Jean* is the willing slave of a despicable youth who lives off her bounty. This rat, *MacAvoy* by name, is the worst of the characters that in-



GEORGE "HONEY BOY" EVANS IN THE
COHAN AND HARRIS MINSTRELS

fest the play and inspires in one a strong desire to kick him into the street. His mean cunning is revealed when he sees on the table a bill for \$7.50 for piano-rent. He suggests rubbing out the decimal point and making it \$750, confident that the innocent broker will think this the price of the piano and give *Jean* the money. *Jean*, who has some sense of honesty left, replies that she doesn't like doing

"small" things, and "*Spider*," an eminent wire-tapper, who happens in at this moment, heartily agrees with her.

"Why don't you get a tip from the stock-market that will do you some real good?" he asks. "Bannister's old man swings Wall Street round his head just for exercise."

This suggestion is not lost on *Jean*, who, after *MacAvoy* has "fixed" the bill, gets a check for \$1,000 from the young broker with which to buy a new piano, and then wheedle out of him the secret of his proposed trip to Mexico, that is in itself a "tip" worth following in Wall Street. She is overwhelmed with surprise when *Bannister* tells her

pagne and lobster her starved soul cries out for the idyllic life. For one brief moment the Tenderloin is garnished with lilies of the valley, but only for a moment.

On hearing that "*Mister*" *Bannister* wants to marry her, *MacAvoy* stops packing his trunk, and his surprise turns to amazement when *Jean* tells him she isn't going to grasp her golden opportunity. He declares that it would be madness to give up the game just as it is getting big. It would make no difference in their relations, he argues. They could see each other as much as ever.

"Are you willing to see me dig in a two-by-four front yard when I could be a gentleman right here in New York," he shouts. "We won't leave here—not an inch. Remember, I've got that money. You'll marry this fellow!"

When *Jean* realizes that the cur is in earnest, she flatly refuses to do his bidding and cries her way out of the room. *MacAvoy* promptly decides to get away with the \$18,000 and telephones to Cook's to reserve passage in the name of Martin on a boat that is to sail for England on the following day. While he is at the telephone, *Hortense* stands listening at the door. Her one ambition is to go to London to try her luck with the silly

lords. Here's her chance! When *MacAvoy* turns from the telephone, she smilingly confronts him and pleasantly informs him that he will have company on the voyage. At first he laughs at her, but when she tells him she has heard everything he said over the telephone, he unwillingly accepts her terms—the cost of her passage to be the price of her silence.

But he has reckoned without the law that drives "*Spider*" into the room to get away from intrusive "cops." "*Spider*" has made his way there *via* the fire-escape, on which he had waited so long in the cold that he is moved to remark, "A joint like this ought to have steam-heated fire-escapes."



MURIEL FERRY AS *Cadet Marosi* AND FLORENCE REID AS *Baroness Creszka* IN "THE GAY HUSSARS"

that he wants to marry her and take her to Mexico with him in two days, and to save his feelings for the moment she tells him she will consider his offer.

But the moment he is gone she telephones to another firm of brokers to "sell short" for her to the extent of a \$1,000 margin in the stock that is scheduled to drop in the Bannister deal. A lovely heroine to sympathize with, is she not? She is not.

By the following day *Jean* is \$18,000 richer, thanks to *Bannister's* generosity and misplaced confidence, and she is ready and waiting for the venal *MacAvoy* to take her to California with him. She is pining to live in a cottage and see the roses grow. After cham-



Laura Guerite as Mlle. Maria De Deans in
"A Broken Idol"

This is one of the several lines that make the dialogue ring true to the Tenderloin. The play is not without a certain kind of humor as well as an unsavory truthfulness that reflects life as it may be viewed from the corner of Forty-second Street and Broadway. That this life should be reflected in the theatre, however, is quite another matter—an altogether vicious matter of bad taste. I doubt whether the questionable meaning of the play, so far at least as the contemptible *MacAvoy* is concerned, will be understood outside New York.

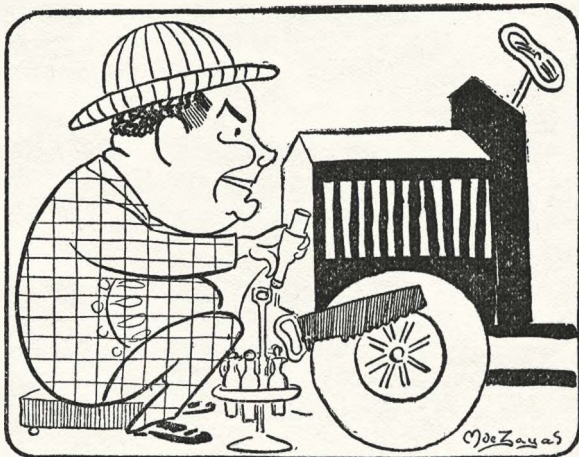
As crooks go, "*Spider*" is not a bad sort. He despises *MacAvoy*, and when the opportunity comes his way he proceeds to spoil that sneak's little game. "*Spider*" is alone in the room when the telephone-bell rings. It is the man at Cook's, explaining about the steamship tickets. "*Spider*" gets the whole story and sees through it clearly with the quickness of his kind. Then he puts the situation before *Jean* in a hypothetical case, and she tells him that he ought to betray the scoundrel in fairness to his supposed friend, the intended victim. "Being on the square with a pal is the only law we know," is *Jean's* way of laying it down.

The situation is made doubly embarrassing to "*Spider*,"

because he is lying low, owing to the fact that only the day before he had fleeced an affluent stranger at the Waldorf of \$17,500. But on second thought this fortunate incident gives him an idea. He calls up police headquarters and tells a detective that the man who swindled the stranger at the Waldorf will try to make his "get-away" on the *Majestic* at three o'clock the next day under the name of "Martin," and that he will have the money on him.

That settles *MacAvoy's* little pleasure trip. In the last act a "cop" has him by the collar. Squealing like the trapped rat he is, he gets *Jean* to say that she gave him the money. Then "*Spider*" takes the money away from him and throws him into the hall.

Bannister is waiting downstairs, and his uncle, who is with him, according to the clerk's announcement, happens to be the stranger who was taken in by the wire-tapper. Therefore, "*Spider*" thinks it well to use a little discretion and have only *Bannister* sent up. *Jean*, like a good show-girl, won't touch the money that "*Spider*" has taken from *MacAvoy*, so "*Spider*" gives it to the young broker, saying it belongs to his uncle. He explains with ready ingenuity that the girl who was with the wire-tapper on the boat was a friend of *Jean*,



Otis Earlan as Doc Whatt in "A Broken Idol"

and that she thought *Jean* would stand for the lie that it was her money to save the fellow from jail.

"She feels badly about this, sir," adds "*Spider*." "Ashamed of knowing that kind of people, you know, especially at this time when her trunks are at the Grand Central depot and she's been waiting all day for you."

All of this makes it easy for *Jean* to fall into the broker's arms and say she wants to be taken away from there. By this time you are willing to bet your program that there isn't a straight hair in her head.

If the play has a moral, it is "Pity the rich broker."

Mr. Ben Johnson, who won friends as "*Jimsy*" in "*Paid in Full*," makes "*Spider*" a crook worthy of an honored place in the Rogues' Gallery, and Mr. Forrest Winant as *MacAvoy* is successful in rousing disgust by his truthful portrayal of a type to be recognized in the Shadows of Broadway. Miss Mabel Frenyear as *Jean* is very much like a show-girl, especially when she tries to act.

Musical Comedy and Minstrelsy

HERE'S to the health of "The Gay Hussars!" The music of this military operetta is so enlivening that one feels like thanking Manager Henry W. Savage for bringing it over from Vienna. "Kitty, Please Give Me a Kiss," and "Oh! You Bold, Bad Men," are two of the songs that are worth going blocks to hear, and the swing of them all carries you along with your feet tapping time.

Miss Muriel Terry, an English woman with German experience, plays a volunteer cadet with great good humor, and manages her songs skilfully. Miss Florence Reid is dainty in white, but it is not until she tunefully reproaches the "bold, bad men" that she completely wins your heart! Miss Anna Bussert takes her prima donna responsibilities

seriously. "Bobby" North is amusing as a barber trying to be a soldier, but he ought to be court-martialed for the unnecessary vulgarity with which he spoils his song, "My Friend Lebel."

The story doesn't matter—they never do in musical plays unless they're funny—and this one isn't. But there's a clever turn to the first act when an old sergeant puts his company to sleep with a yarn in which the drowsy soldiers are told to repeat the word "bones" every time he drops it in order that he may be assured that eternal vigilance is the price of a good audience. The responses grow fewer and fewer until the curtain finally descends upon snores. The scene leaves you with a sense of its originality.

"A Broken Idol," on the other hand, is simply a machine-made contraption that recalls relics of other musical comedy days. The "book" by Hal Stephens is witless, the lyrics by Harry Williams are crude, and the music by Egbert Van Alstyne is sing-songy. The reminiscent affair depends largely upon the gayly moving pictures devised by Stage Manager Gus Sohlke, and these become tiresome.

Otis Harlan has hard work trying to be funny as *Doctor Whatt*. Miss Alice Yorke is busy letting out her voice and keeping in her waist, and Laura Guerite strives desperately with shrugs, winks, and a large expanse of undraped back to be as wicked as French concert hall ladies are supposed to be when they fall into American "musical farcicality" ways.

I've a notion that the good old minstrel days are coming back. At any rate, the Cohan & Harris Minstrels, with "Honey Boy" Evans at their head, were greeted with every sign of popularity at the New York Theatre, where they entertained huge audiences for two weeks before starting on tour. Some of Evans' jokes are a trifle raw, but from first part to last it's a corking—a burnt-corking—good show.

Waterman's Ideal Fountain Pen



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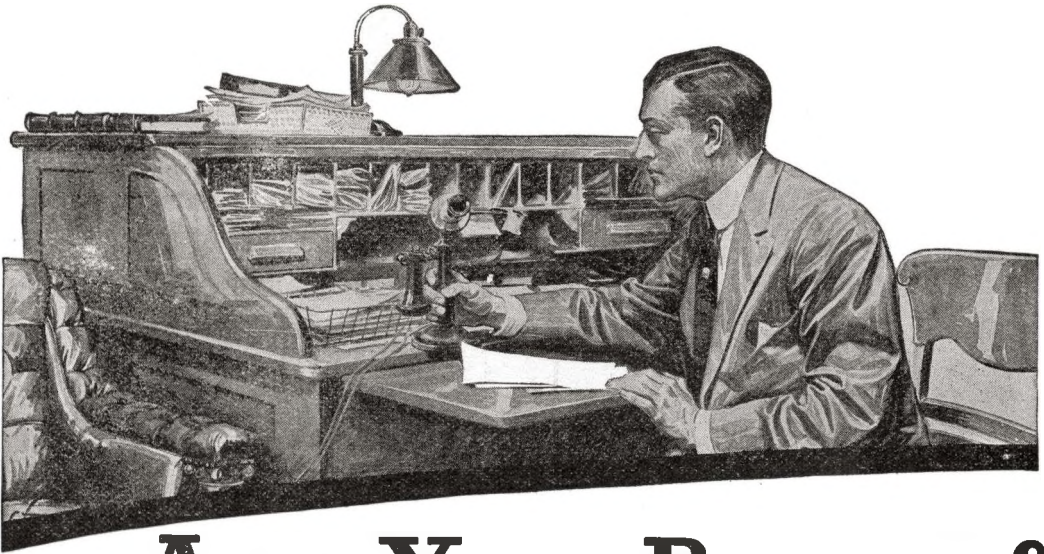
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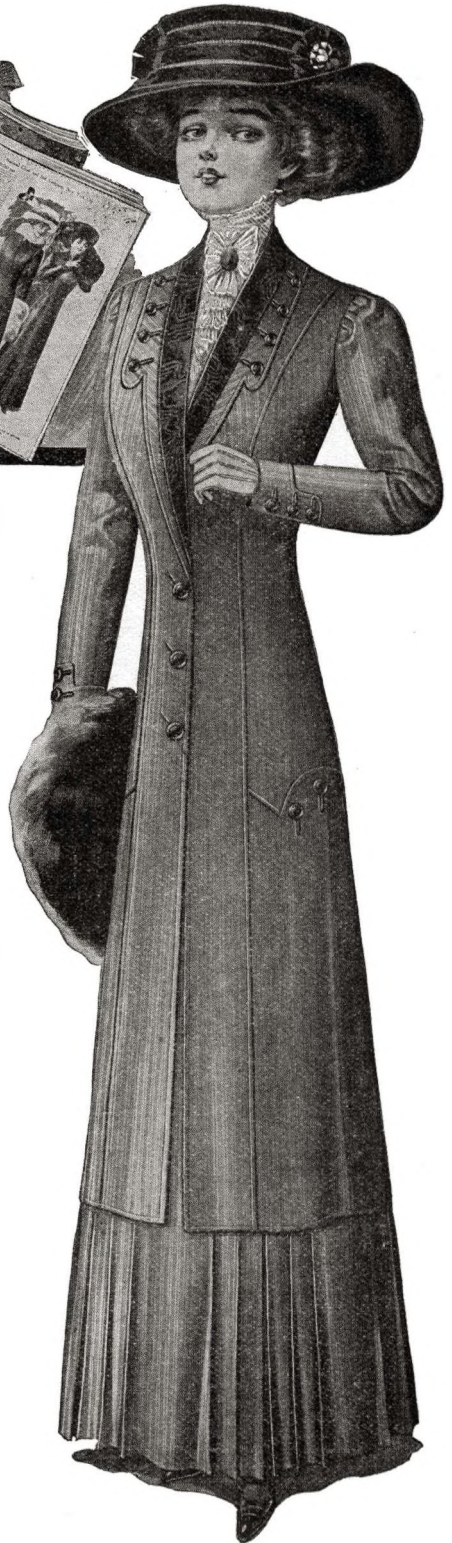
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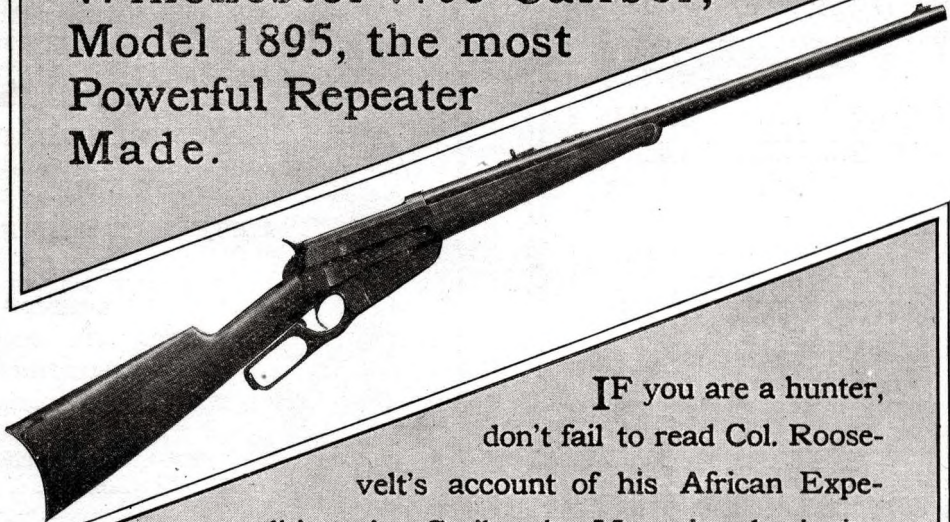
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HOW I TOOK MY WRINKLES OUT

After Facial Massage, Creams and Beauty Doctors Had Failed

BY HARRIET META

Trouble, worry and ill-health brought me deep lines and wrinkles. I realized that they not only greatly marred my appearance and made me look much older, but that they would greatly interfere with my success, because a woman's success, either socially or financially, depends very largely on her appearance. The homely woman, with deep lines and furrows in her face, must fight an unequal battle with her younger and better looking sister.

I therefore bought various brands of cold cream and skin foods and massaged my face with most constant regularity, hoping to regain my former appearance. But the wrinkles simply would not go. On the contrary, they seemed to get deeper. Next I went to a beauty specialist, who told me she could easily rid me of my wrinkles. I paid my money and took the treatment. Sometimes I thought they got less, but after spending all the money I could afford for such treatment I found I still had my wrinkles. So I gave up in despair and concluded I must carry them to my grave. One day a friend of mine who was versed in chemistry made a suggestion, and this gave me a new idea. I immediately went to work making experiments and studying everything I could get hold of on the subject. After several long months of almost numberless trials and discouragements I finally discovered a process which produced most astounding results on my wrinkles in a single night. I was delighted beyond expression. I tried my treatment again, and, lo and behold! my wrinkles were practically gone. A third treatment—three nights in all—and I had no wrinkles and my face was as smooth as ever. I next offered my treatment to some of my immediate friends, who used it with surprising results, and I have now decided to offer it to the public. Miss Gladys Desmond of Pittsburg, Pa., writes that it made her wrinkles disappear in one night.

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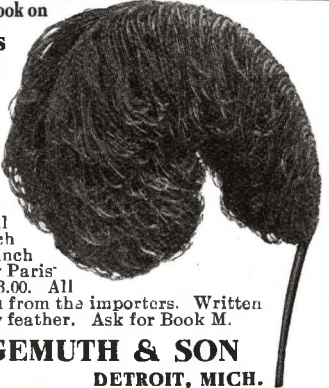
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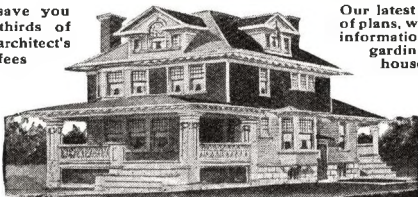
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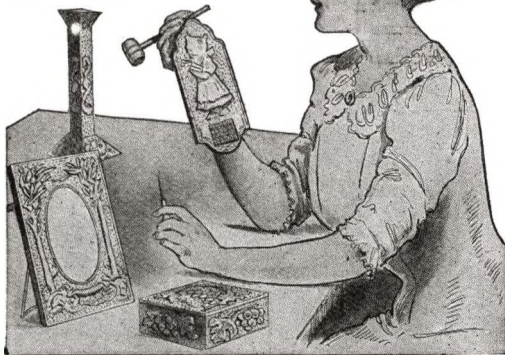
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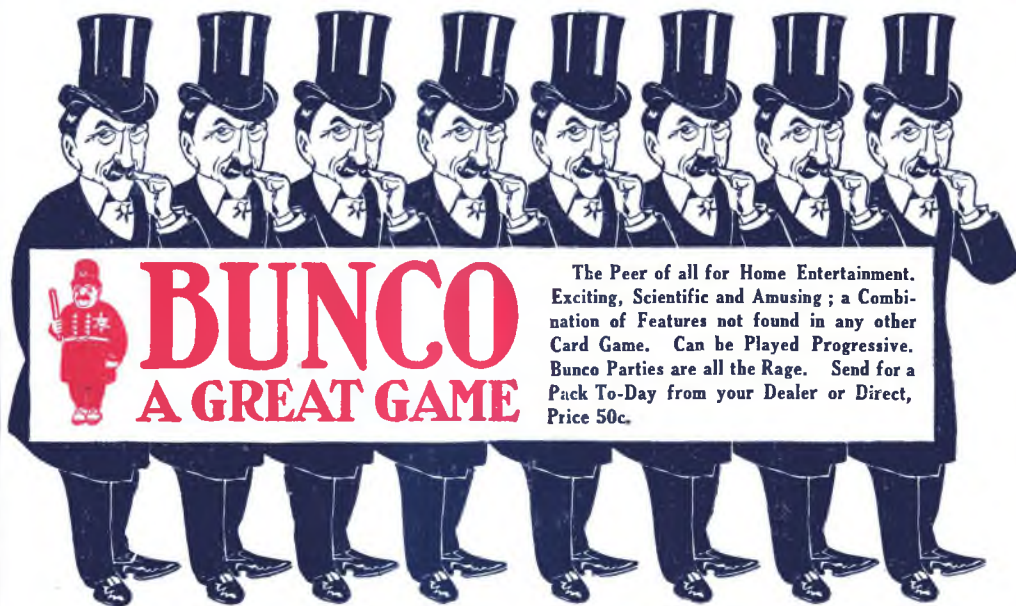
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