

NOV., 1907

224 PAGES READING MATTER

15 CENTS

REG. U. S. PAT. OFF.

The Popular Magazine



'Ever-Ready' 12 Bladed Safety Razor



TRADE
MARK
FACE ON
EACH BOX

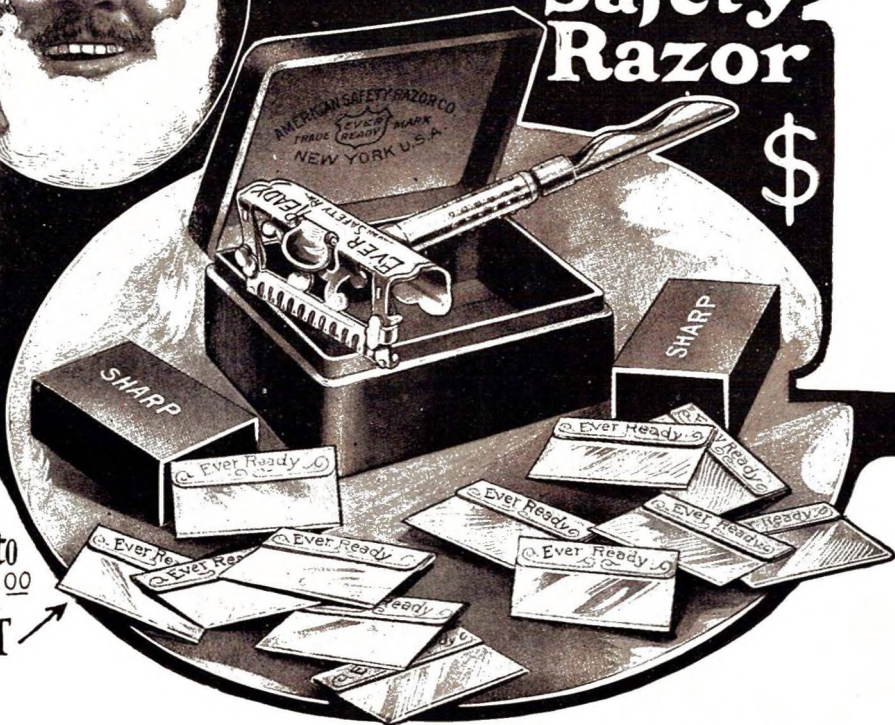


Photo
of \$1⁰⁰
SET

We guarantee with a guarantee that returns you your money after trial—that the new "Ever-Ready" 12 Bladed Dollar Safety Razor will shave you best of all safety razors. This means \$5.00 ones and it goes with lesser priced sorts without saying.

No other razor blade in existence is so capable of its shaving mission as the Ever-Ready blade and there are twelve (12) Ever-Ready blades in each set complete for \$1.00. A Million Ever-Ready Safety Razors are giving that sought-for, easy, safety shave to a million users. This proves conclusively the pre-eminence of the dollar Ever-Ready over his high priced makes or poor imitations. Each Ever-Ready set is complete at \$1.00, containing handsome safety frame, 12 intensely sharp Ever-Ready blades, handle and blade stropper all in compact case.

You Buy Extra Blades 10 for 50c direct of us or your dealer.

You don't throw dull blades away—Ever-Ready blades are too good for that. You simply strop back the keen edge or exchange 10 dull blades for 10 new ones upon payment of 35 cents. The Ever-Ready is least priced of all—the least priced to maintain and the finest ever.

"Ever-Ready" blades to fit "Yankee," "Star," and "Gem" frames or to add to your "Ever-Ready" set—10 for 50 cents.

Sold by Hardware, Cutlery, Department Stores, Jewelers and Druggists throughout America and the World. Mail Orders prepaid upon receipt of \$1.00.

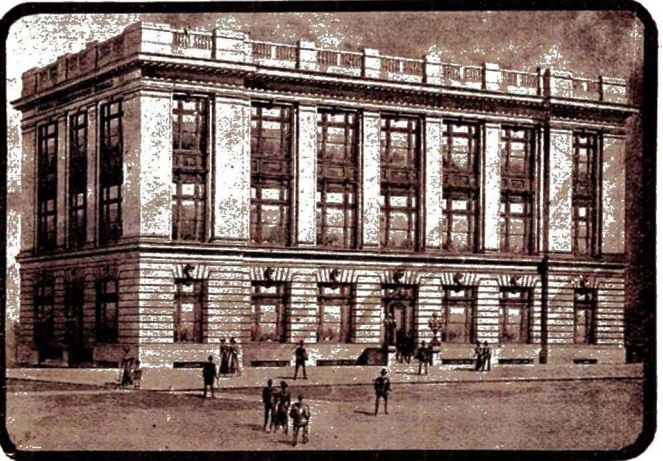
AMERICAN SAFETY RAZOR CO., Inc., Makers,

320 Broadway, NEW YORK

EXTRA - BLADES 10 for 50¢ 'Ever-Ready'

For Doubling Salaries

and last chance to get the best advertising instruction at a saving of 33½% to 50%.



The beautiful new Powell-Building, 1908, the greatest salary doubling edifice in the world, will be owned and wholly occupied by the Powell Correspondence Schools—my famous Advertising System and allied courses, Illustrating, Show Card Writing, Window Trimmings, etc. Famous experts will conduct the new schools on new ideas, while I am about to surprise the business world with additions to the advertising course, which I shall continue to personally conduct.



This is the most important message I have ever penned to ambitious men and women who want to earn more, and to merchants and manufacturers who want to double their businesses.

Six years ago at the urgent suggestion of notable advertising men who saw the crying need of really expert training, I established the Powell System of Advertising Instruction by correspondence.

Beginning with two modest rooms, the demand for my services increased so steadily that four, then six rooms were required, followed in 1905 by removal to large leased floorage in the present building.

Giving my entire personal time to fitting deservng young men and women to earn large salaries and business men to infuse originality, sense and ginger into their advertising, the fame of the Powell System soon spread from coast to coast, and it stands to-day as it has from the very first, the *one* standard course of instruction in the estimation of all advertising authorities and the leading publishers of the land.

POPULAR readers have seen such a steady stream of new testimony from my graduates, in contrast to the undated, unaddressed, doubtful and time-worn "nest egg" recommendations of my followers and imitators, that it will be easy to understand why the fine new Powell building is necessary—

Necessary because six years of conscientious, successful personal endeavor have broken all rec-

ords in doubling, quadrupling and again doubling salaries and incomes in almost every line of industry.

But with all the past success of my System of Instruction—the best ever conceived—I am about to still further amplify and greatly enlarge it, for I intend that it shall remain at the head and typify the best in every advancement. And it will likewise continue to be the easiest to master.

This is of vast importance to those who wish to become expert advertisers, and especially because of the necessary raise in tuition rates, due to advances in printing, book-making, etc., and I take this means to notify all my prospective students and explain that by enrolling now, they will save nearly half! This is no hurry-up scheme, but a timely notification, and extra enrollments secured in this way will permit me to cut off enough advertising this Fall to meet the increased expense in giving the enlarged course of study.

If at all interested, let me mail my free books—Prospectus, "Net Result" and full explanatory matter. Address me

George H. Powell, 621 Metropolitan Annex, New York



Became Genl. Manager.

BOSTON, Mass.,
August 16, 1907.

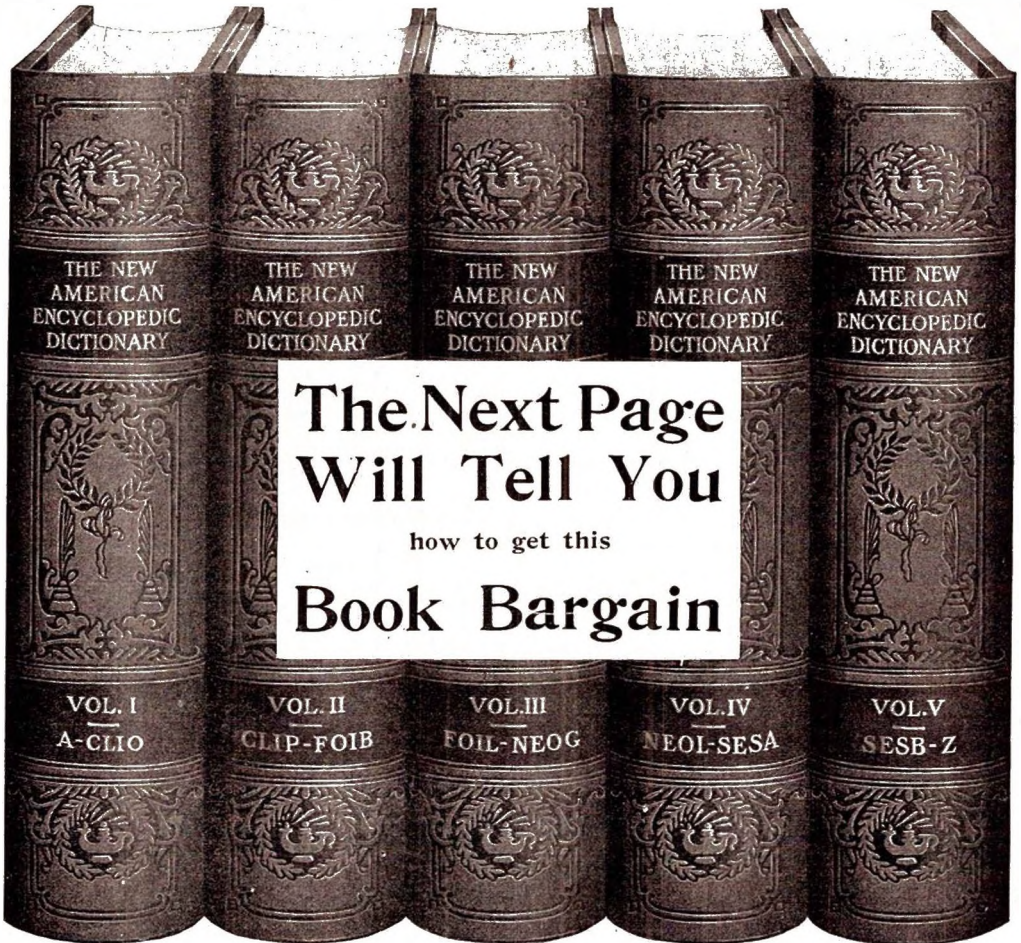
As a result of the advertising literature that I was able to turn out after completing your course of instruction, I was offered the position of general manager of the Inventors' Exchange about two months ago, and am pleased to say that I have not only been able to satisfactorily fill the position but have actually increased our business at a time of the year when everything is usually at a standstill, and I knew almost nothing about advertising before enrolling.

ROYAL L. BARROWS.

Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."

SLIGHTLY DAMAGED SETS

A Great Reference Work at the Price of the Sheets



5 Big Volumes, each one foot tall

5,000 Pages—250,000 Words—50,000 Encyclopedic Articles

On going over our stock, we find on hand a few sets of the New American Encyclopedic Dictionary, that are slightly damaged. Rather than have these books rebound, we have decided to cut the price away down and dispose of them to those who first apply.

These books would hardly be considered damaged by the general reader. Every one of the 5,000 pages in the set is perfect. But the covers are a little rubbed, and therefore, we do not want to sell them at their full price.

And with each set we will give *Free* the Modern Atlas of the World—itsself worth \$5.00.

Cut Off The Coupon and Mail It Today 

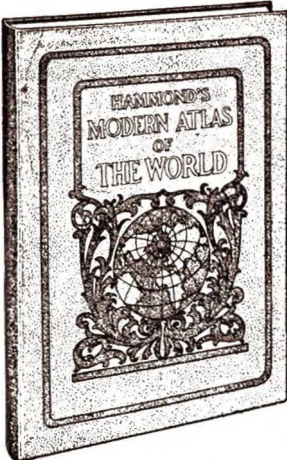
Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."

The Newest and Best Reference Work

is the only one you want. You need it in your office and your home. The **New American Encyclopedic Dictionary** will fill your needs. It is up-to-date—it was printed in July, 1907. It is absolutely reliable—three-quarters of a million dollars were spent in its preparation. Its editorial staff contain the greatest names in every field of knowledge.

It is not merely an encyclopedia or merely a dictionary. It combines the functions of both and does the work of either perfectly. It covers every subject, defines every word you could possibly want to know about, contains all the information you want. And it is brief, to the point. It contains no long drawn out, dry articles, but

The **New American Encyclopedic Dictionary** contains 250,000 words, —more than any other dictionary. Its 50,000 complete articles cover every conceivable subject.



THIS \$5.00 ATLAS IS FREE

The Modern Atlas of the World sells regularly for \$5.00. It contains more than 100 maps in colors. There is a map of each state, territory and country. It gives the population of all cities of importance. This invaluable Atlas is bound in red cloth and is .10 x 13 inches in size. We will send it to you, absolutely free, if your order for the **Encyclopedic Dictionary** is received at once.

JUSTICE GOFF, of the Supreme Court of the State of New York, says: "To the student and man of busy life, the advantage of finding, embraced in one work, the best features of an encyclopedia and dictionary is incalculable."

REV. CHARLES H. PARKHURST, New York, says: "The Encyclopedic Dictionary is a library condensed into a few volumes; as delicate in detail as it is comprehensive in contents."

The Complete Set FREE on Approval

You can have no idea of the value of this superb reference library unless you see the books themselves. That is why we want to send you a complete set for examination, *express charges prepaid*, for your leisurely examination.

We Guarantee Your Satisfaction

by agreeing to take the books back if they are not better than you expected.

Fill out and mail coupon to-day. It will bring you a complete set, express charges prepaid. You take no risk. Simply keep the books a week and look them over. If you want us to take them back, we will do so *at our expense*. If you keep them, you pay the cut price in small monthly payments.

Bear in mind that the prices in the coupon are far below the regular prices. They are good only on a few sets. You can have one if you are prompt. Set right down and mail the coupon. That is the only sure way to save half the price of the books and get the Atlas *Free*.

J. A. Hill & Company

44-60 EAST 23rd STREET, NEW YORK, N. Y.

..... Mail the Coupon To-day.....

J. A. HILL & COMPANY, New York:

You may send me for inspection one set of the AMERICAN ENCYCLOPEDIA, bound in the style indicated by having the "X" beside it.

Full Sheep Binding. Regular price \$62.00 for the set. I will pay for the same, if I decide to keep the books, as follows: \$1.00 after I examine them, and \$2.00 a month for twelve months. (**\$25.00.**)

Half Leather Binding. Regular price \$36.00 for the set. I will pay for the same, if I decide to keep the books, as follows: 50 cents after I examine them, and \$1.50 a month until your special price of **\$19.50** is paid.

Library Cloth Binding. Regular price \$20.00 for the set. I will pay for the same, if I decide to keep the books, as follows: 50 cents after I examine them, and \$1.00 a month for fifteen months. (**\$15.50.**)

It is understood that if this is one of the first 250 orders received, you will send me with the set, free, an Atlas of the World. You prepay delivery charges. If I decide not to keep the books, I am to return them to you, charges collect, together with the Atlas.

Name.....

City.....

State.....

Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."

AINSLEE'S

FOR NOVEMBER

"THE
MAGAZINE
THAT
ENTERTAINS"

The opening chapters of the new serial which appear in the current number of *Ainslee's Magazine* have probably convinced all who have read them that its author,

HARRY LEON WILSON

has written a really great American story. "**Ewing's Lady**" is thoroughly and essentially American. The second instalment, which will be found in the November number, leads up to a climax even more dramatic than that with which the first ended.

The novelette will be a story by **Morley Roberts**, called "*The Key*," and is a tale full of tense situations. Mr. Roberts is best known by his book, "*The Idlers*," which many people consider a greater story than "*The House of Mirth*."

H. F. Prevost-Battersby will be represented by one of the best short stories he has ever written, called "*The Voice of Duty*."

Mary H. Vorse will have one of the best of her humorous child-interest tales, called "*The Refinement of Ab*."

Rose K. Weekes will have a thrilling tale of profound human interest in "*The Raft*."

Other short stories, as good as anything their authors have ever done, will be by **Robert E. MacAlarney**, **Joseph C. Lincoln** and **Sarah Guernsey Bradley**.

An essay of special contemporary interest is one entitled "*Paderewski, Swiss Farmer*," giving an intimate account of the great pianist in moments of relaxation.

Mrs. John Van Vorst will also contribute one on "*International Marriages*."

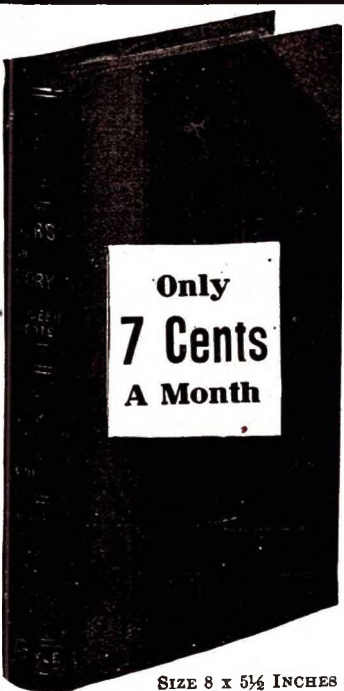
Price, per copy, 15c.

Subscription, \$1.80 per Year

AINSLEE MAGAZINE COMPANY, NEW YORK

FREE BOOKS—READ CAREFULLY

We are going to give away, absolutely free of cost, 38 sets of books worth \$16.00 a set. As one who reads, you will be interested in this offer. Read carefully, for this is a rare opportunity, and one that will not soon occur again. In taking stock we find on hand a few sets of the



Only
7 Cents
A Month

SIZE 8 x 5 1/4 INCHES

20 Magnificent De Luxe
Volumes, only 7 cents
a month.

Titles of the Makers of History:

**ALEXANDER THE GREAT
WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR
ALFRED THE GREAT
MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS
CLEOPATRA
HERNANDO CORTEZ
JOSEPHINE
QUEEN ELIZABETH
HENRY IV
MARIE ANTOINETTE
JULIUS CAESAR
PETER THE GREAT
HANNIBAL. PYRRHUS
NERO. ROMULUS
GENGHIS KHAN
DARIUS THE GREAT
XERXES
CYRUS THE GREAT**

Makers of History

20 beautiful De Luxe volumes, of which the bindings are slightly rubbed—not enough to impair their real value, but sufficient to prevent their shipment as perfect stock at the regular price of \$60.00 per set. There being only 38 of these sets, we shall not rebind, but have decided to let them go for third-price, upon easy monthly payments, and to give away with each of these 38 sets, **FREE**, one set of Shakespeare's Complete Works, in 8 magnificent volumes, worth \$16 per set.

The "Makers of History" are the most entertaining and instructive friends you could possibly have in your home. Each volume is a complete narrative of a man or woman who in their time made things happen. There is not a dull page in the entire 20 volumes. No set of books published can compare in interest or instruction with the "Makers of History." They are as absorbing as anything you can imagine. They are the kind of books that keep people up late reading. Once you start to read any of these volumes you dislike to stop until the book is finished. Hundreds of thousands know and own these books. Their sale is ever increasing, because they are real books to be read and enjoyed—not to be put away and never looked at.

Read coupon carefully; price is cut in thirds. You take no risk. After examination, if books are not found to be satisfactory, return them at our expense. Remember, these sets are as good as new for all practical purposes. We guarantee the interiors are not injured.

Description of The Free Shakespeare

It contains all the Tragedies, all the Comedies, all the Poems and Sonnets, and embraces a History of the Early Drama, an Exhaustive Biography, Shakespeare's Will, Introduction to each Play, Index to Characters, Glossary of Obsolete Words, Names of Actors and Actresses of Shakespeare's Day, Notes on each Play, etc., etc., from the works of Collier, Knight, Dyce, Douce, Hunter, Richardson, Verplanck, and Hudson.

Edited by George Long Duyckinck

Many full-page illustrations, including portraits of leading Shakespearian actors and actresses, and scenes from the plays, taken from the famous Boydell Gallery, 8 volumes. Handsomely and durably bound in fine cloth, gilt tops, with gold lettering and stamping.

ORDER TO-DAY—TO-MORROW MAY BE TOO LATE. ONLY 38 SETS WILL BE GIVEN AWAY.

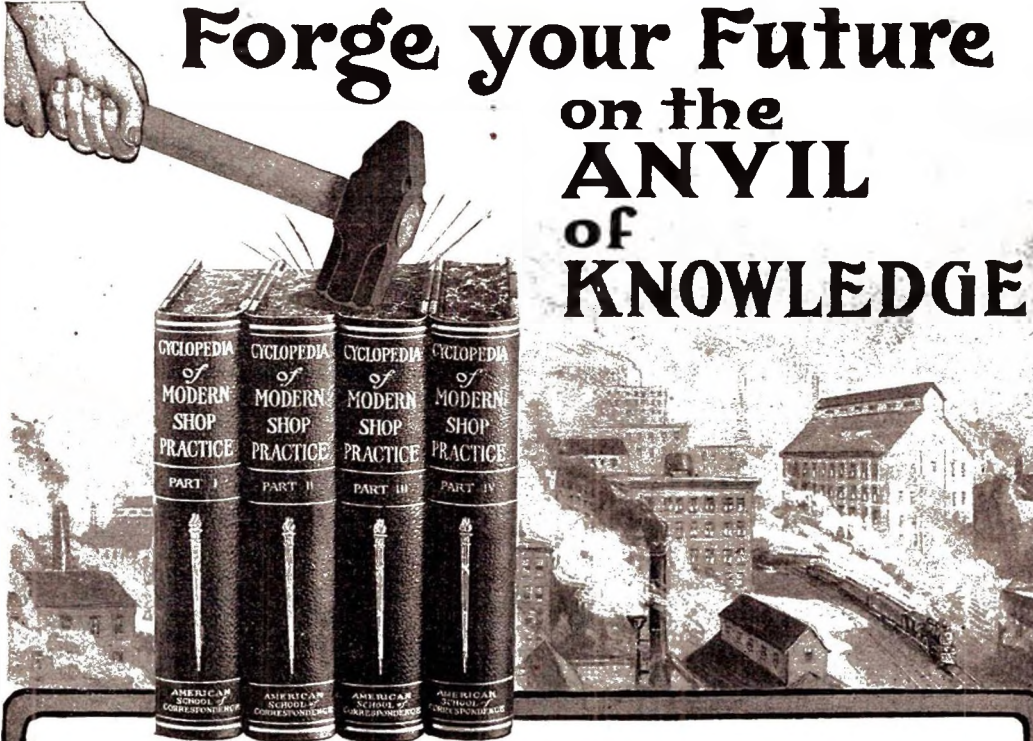
Pop 11-'07
Sign your name and mail this coupon now.
A. L. Fowle Company
88 1/2 Fourth Avenue,
New York, N. Y.

You may send me, all charges prepaid, one set of the **Makers of History, 20 De Luxe Volumes**, and the set of **Shakespeare**, in 8 volumes, for my inspection. If after examination I decide to keep the books I will pay you as follows: 50 cents after examination and \$1.50 a month for 15 months. It is understood that the books will be sent to me all delivery charges prepaid, and that if I decide not to keep the books I am to return both sets to you all charges collect.

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City and State.....

A. L. FOWLE, New York, N. Y.

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Forge your Future on the ANVIL of KNOWLEDGE

Every man is the architect of his own fortune. It is just as easy for you to mould your destiny as it is for the blacksmith to shape the red hot iron under the resounding blows of his hammer.

It all depends upon your training, your education, the special knowledge that you acquire to fit yourself for a particular niche in the world's work.

If you are a young man without a regular trade or an older man dissatisfied with poorly paid uncongenial work, the

CYCLOPEDIA OF MODERN SHOP PRACTICE

offers you an unusual opportunity for advancement. It is the greatest mechanical work ever published; compiled from representative instruction papers of the American School of Correspondence, it embodies the teachings of the foremost experts in shop work throughout the country. Everything is explained in a plain and easy manner. Especially designed for home study use. To the man who is already working in the shop it will be an invaluable help because it will enable him to advance in his work.

Theory must be combined with practice to insure the greatest results. The Superintendent and foreman hold their positions because they possess knowledge that cannot be obtained in ordinary shop routine. No matter what your position is you can get this same knowledge in this great Cyclopeda and you can get it without losing a moment from your regular work.

To prove to you the superiority of the methods of instruction of the American School of Correspondence, for the next 30 days this set will sell for

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SPECIAL PRICE \$12.00

REGULAR PRICE \$24.00

FREE FOR EXAMINATION

Sent express prepaid. If satisfactory, send \$2.00 within one week and \$2.00 a month for five months thereafter. We will send for the books if you believe they cannot help you to better things.

AMERICAN SCHOOL OF CORRESPONDENCE

CHICAGO

ILLINOIS

Please send set Cyclopeda Modern Shop Practice for week's free examination. I will send \$2 within a week and \$2 a month until \$12 is paid; otherwise I'll notify you to send for the books.

Name.....

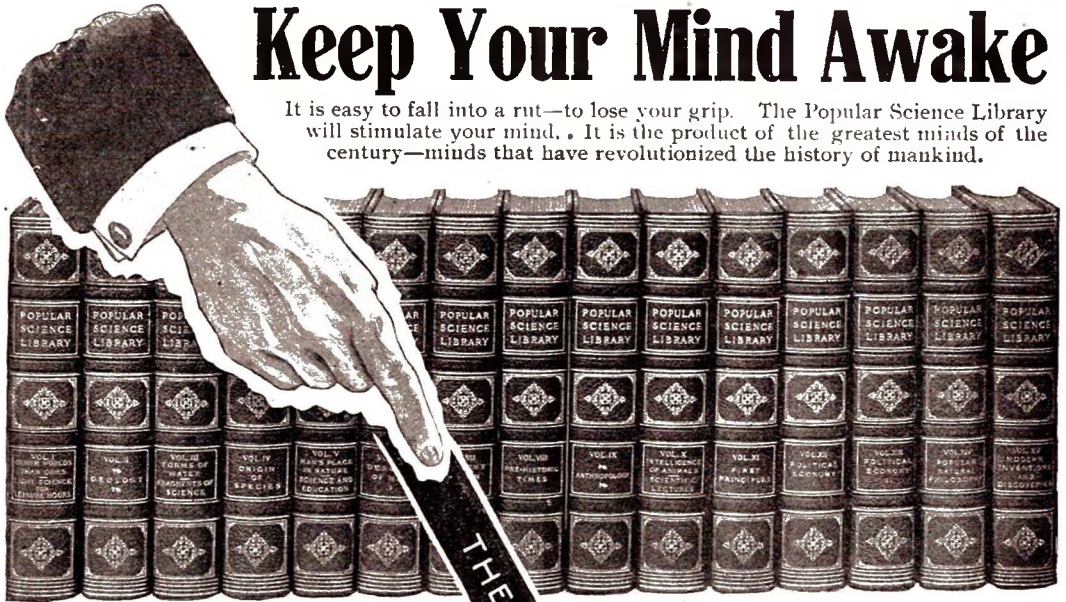
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CUT OUT THIS COUPON

Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."

Keep Your Mind Awake

It is easy to fall into a rut—to lose your grip. The Popular Science Library will stimulate your mind. It is the product of the greatest minds of the century—minds that have revolutionized the history of mankind.



It is the **Popular Science Library** because it appeals to every man and woman, every growing boy and girl. Like all great things, it is simple. You need not know anything of Science to understand and enjoy every page of the fifteen volumes. They will give you as complete a knowledge of Science as any college course. They contain all the important work of Darwin, Huxley, Tyndall, Spencer, and every other one of the great men whose genius revolutionized Science. From a weary tabulation of facts, they transformed it to a story full of life and light—a tale of marvels more wonderful than the Arabian Nights. Led by Dr. Ira Remsen, President of Johns Hopkins University, a long line of famous living scientists contribute full, clear accounts of the newest inventions and discoveries.

The Library covers every branch of Science from the Darwinian Theory of Evolution to the miracles of modern progress—Wireless Telegraphy, Aerial Navigation, Radium, etc. It embraces Geology, Astronomy, Anthropology, Philosophy, Political Economy, Natural Philosophy, Metaphysics and Inventions. The titles of the volumes follow:

Intelligence of Animals, Scientific Lectures, } by Sir John Lubbock.
Man's Place in Nature, Science and Education, } by Thomas H. Huxley.
Popular Natural Philosophy, by Adolphe Ganot.
Modern Inventions and Discoveries by various authors, including Professor S. P. Langley; Dr. Ira Remsen, President of Johns Hopkins University; Ray Stannard Baker, Alfred Russel Wallace, and Professor R. H. Thurston of Cornell University.

Geology, by Sir Archibald Geikie.
Descent of Man, by Charles Darwin.
Anthropology, by Edward B. Tyler.
First Principles, by Herbert Spencer.
Origin of Species, by Charles Darwin.
Political Economy, by John Stuart Mill.
Prehistoric Times, by Sir John Lubbock.
Forms of Water, Fragments of Science, } by John Tyndall.
Other Worlds Than Ours, by Richard A. Proctor.

A Great Price Reduction

We have managed to secure a limited edition of the **Popular Science Library** at less than the actual cost of paper and printing. Even adding a small profit, we can pass this superb set on to you at a remarkably low price. Thousands of sets of the half-morocco binding have been sold at \$48.00. As long as this special edition lasts, you can have a set for 50 cents after examination and \$2.00 a month for 12 months.

We want to send you a complete set for examination at our expense. You take no risk. We send the books to you, express charges prepaid. If, after you've had them for a week, you want us to take them back, we will do so at our expense. Fill out and mail the coupon at once. This is an unusual offer, but you must take advantage of it immediately, because the half price edition won't last long. Don't lose the opportunity by delaying. Mail the coupon to-day.

AMERICAN NEWSPAPER ASSOCIATION
 44-60 East 23rd Street, New York, N. Y.

Popular Science Library

Fifteen handsome volumes; printed from clear large type, on specially made, high-grade paper; profusely illustrated with full page plates; bound in rich red half-morocco with marbled sides, gold tops, leather corners and backs stamped in gold. There are a few sets bound in neat red vellum cloth.

Either set will be sent free on approval, to be taken back at our expense if it is not satisfactory.

Pop. 11-07

American Newspaper Association

Send me, express charges prepaid, for examination, one set of the Popular Science Library, in fifteen volumes, bound in half-morocco. If the books are not satisfactory, I will return them at your expense. Otherwise, I will keep them and will send you 50 cents after examination and \$2.00 a month for 12 months.

Name.....
 Address.....
 City.....
 State.....

Note. If you prefer a set in vellum cloth binding change payments to \$1.50 after examination and \$2 a month for 9 months.

Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."



CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING SECTION

We have opened this classified advertising section, and invite all reputable advertisers to come in—no display—all must be set in uniform type—no objectionable advertisements accepted—minimum space, four lines; maximum space in this section, thirty lines. Our aim will be to eliminate all questionable advertisements, and we bespeak our readers' assistance to help keep this section clean and profitable to all. Rates, \$2.25 a line, which includes AINSLEE'S and SMITH'S Magazines, making a total of 4,000,000 readers—the cheapest and best Classified Advertising medium on the market. Next issue of THE POPULAR closes October 18th.

Agents and Help Wanted

BE YOUR OWN BOSS! Many make \$2,000 a year. You have the same chance. Start a mail-order business at home. We tell you how. Money coming in daily. Very good profits. Everything furnished. Write at once for our "Starter" and free particulars. Address M. L. Krueger Co., 155 Washington St., Chicago, Ill.

AGENTS wanted to sell our Styrographic and Fountain pens. Write for Catalogue and Agents' discount. J. X. Ulrich & Co., Manufacturers, 27 Thames Building, New York, N.Y.

HUSTLERS Everywhere \$25 to \$30 made weekly distributing circulars, samples; no canvassing. Steady. Merchants Out-door Ad Co., Chicago.

WANTED MEN EVERYWHERE. Good pay to distribute Circulars, adv. matter, tack signs, etc. No canvassing. 93 National Adv. Bureau, Chicago.

WANTED—A lady agent in every city to work from home to every city; good salary easily earned and satisfaction guaranteed. Charles Chemical Co., Grand Rapids, Mich.

SALESMAN: With ability to earn \$5.00 a day or better. Men or women. Position permanent. Commence now. No experience required. Outfit free. No triners need apply. First National Nurseries, Rochester, N. Y.

LADY Secretaries Wanted—Organize Grocery and Soap clubs. Easy work. Big Earnings, no investment. Postal brings catalogue and special offer 2. R. & G. Supply Co., Binghamton, N. Y.

THOUSANDS IN USE throughout the world. \$15 "Gem" Adding Machine, very compact, elegant side line. Special Offer to high grade Agents. Automatic Adding Machine Co., Dept. 2, 332 Broadway, N. Y.

AGENTS—\$63 every month; press the handle and Automatic Egg Beater and Cream Whipper does the rest; sample free; exclusive territory. P. Thomas Mfg. Co., 150 C St., Dayton, Ohio.

INSURANCE STOCK—Scientific Salesmen will be offered an exceptional money making proposition. Address J. B. Harper, Room 12, Stomont Building, Topeka, Kansas.

Agents and Help Wanted—Continued.

CAN YOU SELL a stock that is now a dividend payer! Semi-annual dividend due January first next. Bank references. For terms and particulars, C. W. Gallager, 2021 No. 150 Nassau Street, New York.

A NEW ART and a fascinating, rapid money-maker. You can decorate china, porcelain, pillowtops, anything, in colors or not, from photographs. No talent or experience required. More popular than hand-painted china. Cost small, profits large. Send stamp for information. A. H. Valance Co., Elkhart, Indiana.

AGENTS wanted to represent old established Mail Order House. Over one thousand rapid selling specialties. From \$5 to \$10 per day easily made; costly outfit free. George A. Parker, Dept. 9, 720 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, Pa.

AGENTS WANTED. Portraits 35c, Frames 15c, sheet pictures 1c, stereoscopes 25c, views 1c. 30 days credit. Samples & Catalog Free. Consolidated Portrait Co., 290-168 W. Adams St., Chicago.

AGENTS WANTED in every county to sell the Transparent Handle Pocket Knife. Big commission paid. From \$75 to \$300 a month can be made. Write for terms. Novelty Cutlery Co., No. 14 Bar St., Canton, Ohio.

WANTED—Agents for town and country. Attractive proposition; experience unnecessary; earnings paid weekly; steady work; no delivering or collecting. Perry Nursery Company, Rochester, N. Y.

SALESMEN—Salaried position or \$30 40 or 50c. Latest exclusive novelties. Bug Blight Proof Potato, Seedless Apple, Black Beauty Rose, etc. \$6 or more daily sure. Fairview Nurseries, Rochester, N. Y.

SALESMEN to sell trade only Non-Nico Pipe Device, just out. Our Rochester agent cleared \$164 first week. Sells on sight to tobacconists, grocers, druggists, etc. Samples 25c. Non-Nico Co., Rochester, N. Y.

BUYER: Importing concern wants expert in raw furs to take charge of purchasing department. Must know up-to-date systems, records, etc. \$3,500. Hapgoods, 305-307 B'way, N. Y.

Business Opportunities

"SUCCESS IN THE STOCK MARKET." Our little book gives interesting details. It's yours for the asking. Write for it. John A. Boardman & Co., Stock Brokers, 53 Broadway, N. Y.

START a mail order business; we furnish everything necessary; only few dollars required; new plan, success certain; costs nothing to investigate. Milburn Hicks, 706 Pontiac Bldg., Chicago

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START MAIL-ORDER BUSINESS. Sell goods by mail; cash orders, big profits. Conducted by any one, anywhere. Our plan positively successful. Absolute satisfaction guaranteed. Write for Free Book, Central Supply Co., Kansas City, Mo.

"ADVERTISERS MAGAZINE"—THE WESTERN MONTHLY should be read by every advertiser and Mail-order dealer. Best "Ad School" in existence. Trial Subscription 10c. Sample Copy Free. Address 810 Grand Ave., Kansas City, Mo.

WE START YOU in a permanent business with us and furnish everything. Full course of instructions free. We are manufacturers and have a new plan in the mail order line. Large profits. Small capital. You pay us in three months and make big profit. References given. Pease Mfg. Co., 252 Pease Bldg., Buffalo, N. Y.

WRITE SHOW CARDS! For 25c. I send book of eight Sample Alphabets, borders, complete instructions, etc., enabling you to readily write show cards. J. E. Pless, 415 E. 87th St., N. Y.

START COLLECTION BUSINESS. Handsome profits, no capital needed, big field. Earnings start immediately. Learn secrets of collecting money; establish permanent income at home. Write for free printers. Am. Collection Service, 19 State St., Detroit, Mich.

IF YOU WANT TO BUY, SELL OR EXCHANGE property, any kind, anywhere, or if you want a partner, additional capital or location, state what you want and send 10c. for the Investor's Guide, 349 Bank Commerce Bldg., Minneapolis, Minn.

Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."

Business Opportunities—Continued.

\$3,000 to \$10,000 yearly easily made in real estate business; no capital required; we will teach you the business by mail, appoint you special representative of leading real estate company, list with you readily salable properties, co-operate with and assist you to permanent success; valuable book free. Address The Cross Company, 870 Reaper Block, Chicago.

CIVIL SERVICE EMPLOYEES are paid well for easy work; examinations of all kinds soon; booklet All describing positions and telling easiest and quickest way to secure them is free. Write now, Washington Civil Service School, Washington, D. C.

\$1,000 AT DEATH; weekly benefit \$5, and our system of registration and identification with black seal wallet, all for \$2 per year. Agents wanted. German Registry Co., 243 N. 7th St., St. Louis, Mo.

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11171

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Name..... Address.....

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S. Carleton's "Lastluck Lake," one of the best novelettes of the year, will appear in the December number.

VOLUME X

NUMBER 1

The Popular Magazine

NOVEMBER

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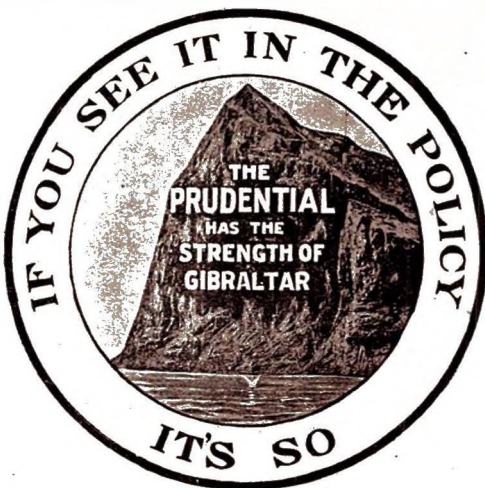
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THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

VOL. X.

NOVEMBER, 1907.

No. 1.

Wyoming

By William MacLeod Raine

Another great story from the pen of the prominent author, William MacLeod Raine, whose "Robbers' Roost" created such a sensation when it appeared in the March number of "The Popular." "Wyoming" is a thrilling tale of the adventures of a young Eastern girl in that wild State and the deadly feud existing between the sheepmen and cattle raisers. An unusual spirit of life and action pervades the whole story and is sure to make it as great a favorite with "Popular" readers as was "Robbers' Roost."

(A Complete Novel)

CHAPTER I.

A DESERT MEETING.



AN automobile shot out from a gash in the hills and slipped swiftly down to the butte. Here it came to a halt on the white, dusty road, while its occupant gazed with eager, unsated eyes on the great panorama that stretched before her. The earth rolled in waves like a mighty sea to the distant horizon line. From a wonderful blue sky poured down upon the land a bath of sunbeats. The air was like wine, pure and strong, and above the desert swam the rare, untampered light of Wyoming. Surely here was a peace primeval, a silence unbroken since the birth of creation.

It was all new to her, and wonderfully exhilarating. The infinite roll of plain, the distant shining mountains, the multitudinous voices of the desert drowned in a sunlit sea of space—they

were all details of the situation that ministered to a large serenity.

And while she breathed deeply the satisfaction of it, an exploding rifle echo shattered the stillness. With excited sputtering came the prompt answer of a fusillade. She was new to the West; but some instinct stronger than reason told the girl that here was no playful puncher shooting up the scenery to ventilate his exuberance. Her imagination conceived something more deadly; a sinister picture of men pumping lead in a grim, close-lipped silence; a lusty plainsman, with murder in his heart, crumpling into a lifeless heap, while the thin smoke-spiral curled from his hot rifle.

So the girl imagined the scene as she ran swiftly forward through the pines to the edge of the butte bluff whence she might look down upon the coulée that nestled against it. Nor had she greatly erred, for her first sweeping glance showed her the thing she had dreaded.

In a semicircle, well back from the

foot of the butte, half a dozen men crouched in the cover of the sage-brush and a scattered group of cottonwoods. They were perhaps fifty yards apart, and the attention of all of them was focused on a spot directly beneath her. Even as she looked, in that first swift moment of apprehension, a spurt of smoke came from one of the rifles and was flung back from the forked pine at the bottom of the mesa. She saw him then, kneeling behind his insufficient shelter, a trapped man making his last stand.

From where she stood the girl made him out very clearly, and under the field-glasses that she turned on him the details leaped to life. Tall, strong, slender, with the lean, clean build of a greyhound, he seemed as wary and alert as a panther. The broad, soft hat, the scarlet handkerchief loosely knotted about his throat, the gray shirt, spurs, and overalls, proclaimed him a stockman, just as his dead horse at the entrance to the coulee told of an accidental meeting in the desert and a hurried run for cover.

That he had no chance was quite plain, but no plainer than the cool vigilance with which he proposed to make them pay. Even in the matter of cover he was worse off than they were, but he knew how to make the most of what he had; knew how to avail himself of every inch of sage-brush that helped to render him indistinct to their eyes.

One of the attackers, eager for a clearer shot, exposed himself a trifle too far in taking aim. Without any loss of time in sighting, swift as a lightning-flash, the rifle behind the forked pine spoke. That the bullet reached its mark she saw with a gasp of dismay. For the man suddenly huddled down and rolled over on his side.

His comrades appeared to take warning by this example. The men at both ends of the crescent fell back, and for a minute the girl's heart leaped with the hope that they were about to abandon the siege. Apparently the man in the scarlet kerchief had no such expectation. He abandoned his position be-

hind the pine and ran back, crouching low in the brush, to another little clump of trees closer to the bluff. The reason for this was at first not apparent to her, but she understood presently when the men who had fallen back behind the rolling hillocks appeared again well in to the edge of the bluff. Only by his timely retreat had the man saved himself from being outflanked.

It was very plain that the attackers meant to take their time to finish him in perfect safety. He was surrounded on every side by a cordon of rifles, except where the bare face of the butte hung down behind him. To attempt to scale it would have been to expose himself as a mark for every gun to certain death.

It was now that she heard the man who seemed to be directing the attack call out to another on his right. She was too far to make out the words, but their effect was clear to her. He pointed to the brow of the butte above, and a puncher in white woolen chaps dropped back out of range and swung to the saddle upon one of the ponies bunched in the rear. He cantered round in a wide circle and made for the butte. His purpose was obviously to catch their victim in the unprotected rear, and fire down upon him from above.

The young woman shouted a warning, but her voice failed to carry. For a moment she stood with her hands pressed together in despair, then turned and swiftly scudded to her machine. She sprang in, swept forward, reached the rim of the mesa, and plunged down. Never before had she attempted so precarious a descent in such wild haste. The car fairly leaped into space, and after it struck swayed dizzily as it shot down. The girl hung on, her face white and set, the pulse in her temple beating wildly. She could do nothing, as the machine rocked down, but hope against many chances that instant destruction might be averted.

Utterly beyond her control, the motor-car thundered down, reached the foot of the butte, and swept over a little hill in its wild flight. She rushed by a mounted horseman in the thousandth

part of a second. She was still speeding at a tremendous velocity, but a second hill reduced this somewhat. She had not yet recovered control of the machine, but, though her eyes instinctively followed the white road that flashed past, she again had photographed on her brain the scene of the turbid tragedy in which she was intervening.

At the foot of the butte the road circled and dipped into the coulée. She braced herself for the shock, but, though the wheels skidded till her heart was in her throat, the automobile, hanging on the balance of disaster, swept round in safety.

Her horn screamed an instant warning to the trapped man. She could not see him, and for an instant her heart sank with the fear that they had killed him. But she saw then that they were still firing, and she continued her honking invitation as the car leaped forward into the zone of spitting bullets.

By this time she was recovering control of the motor, and she dared not let her attention wander, but out of the corner of her eye she appreciated the situation. Temporarily, out of sheer amaze at this apparition from the blue, the guns ceased their snipping. She became aware that a light curly head, crouched low in the sage-brush, was moving rapidly to meet her at right angles, and in doing so was approaching directly the line of fire. She could see him dodging to and fro as he moved forward, for the rifles were again barking.

She was within two hundred yards of him, still going rapidly, but not with the same headlong rush as before, when the curly head disappeared in the sage-brush. It was up again presently, but she could see that the man came limping, and so uncertainly that twice he pitched forward to the ground. Incautiously one of his assailants ran forward with a shout the second time his head went down. Crack! The unerring rifle rang out, and the impetuous one dropped in his tracks.

As she approached, the young woman slowed without stopping, and as the car

swept past Curly Head flung himself in headlong. He picked himself up from among her feet, crept past her to the seat beyond, and almost instantly whipped his rifle to his shoulder in prompt defiance of the fire that was now converged on them.

Yet in a few moments the fire died away, for a voice midway in the crescent had shouted an amazed discovery:

"By God, it's a woman!"

The car skimmed forward over the uneven ground toward the end of the semicircle, and passed within fifty yards of the second man from the end, the one she had picked out as the leader of the party. He was a black, swarthy fellow in plain leather chaps and blue shirt. As they passed he took a long, steady aim.

"Duck!" shouted the man beside her, and dragged her down on the seat so that his body covered hers.

A puff of wind fanned the girl's cheek.

"Near thing," her companion said coolly. He looked back at the swarthy man and laughed softly. "Some day you'll mebbe wish you had sent your pills straighter, Mr. Judd Morgan."

Yet a few wheel-turns and they had dipped forward out of range among the great land waves that seemed to stretch before them forever. The unexpected had happened, and she had achieved a rescue in the face of the impossible.

"Hurt badly?" the girl inquired briefly, her dark-blue eyes meeting his as frankly as those of a boy.

"No need for an undertaker. I reckon I'll survive, ma'am."

"Where are you hit?"

"I just got a telegram from my ankle saying there was a cargo of lead arrived there unexpected," he drawled easily.

"Hurts a good deal, doesn't it?"

"No more than is needful to keep my memory jogged up. It's a sort of a forget-me-not souvenir. For a good boy; compliments of Mr. Jim Henson," he explained.

Her dark glance swept him searchingly. She disapproved the assurance

of his manner even while the youth in her applauded his reckless sufficiency. His gay courage held her unconsenting admiration even while she resented it. He was a trifle too much at his ease for one who had just been snatched from peril dire. Yet even in his insouciance there was something engaging; something almost of distinction.

"What was the trouble?"

Mirth bubbled in his gray eyes. "I gathered, ma'am, that they wanted to collect my scalp."

"Oh, I know that. But why?"

He seemed to reproach himself. "Now how could I be so neglectful? I clean forgot to ask."

"That's ridiculous," was her sharp verdict.

"Yes, ma'am, plumb ridiculous. My only excuse is that they began scattering lead so sudden I didn't have time to ask many 'Whyfors.' I reckon we'll just have to call it a Wyoming difference of opinion," he concluded pleasantly.

"Which means, I suppose, that you are not going to tell me."

"I got so much else to tell y'u that's a heap more important," he laughed. "Y'u see, I'm enjoyin' my first automobile ride. It was ce'tainly thoughtful of y'u to ask me to go riding with y'u, Miss Messiter."

"So you know my name. May I ask how?" was her astonished question.

He gave the low laugh that always seemed to suggest a private source of amusement of his own. "I suspicioned that might be your name when I saw y'u come a-sailin' down from heaven to gather me up like Enoch."

"Why?"

"Well, ma'am, I happened to drift in to Gimlet Butte two or three days ago, and while I was up at the depot looking for some freight a train sashaid in and side-tracked a flat car. There was an automobile on that car addressed to Miss Helen Messiter. Now, automobiles are awful seldom in this country. I don't seem to remember having seen one before."

"I see. You're quite a Sherlock

Holmes. Do you know anything more about me?"

"I know y'u have just fallen heir to the Lazy D. They say y'u are a schoolmarm, but I don't believe it."

"Well, I am." Then: "Why don't you believe it?" she added.

He surveyed her with his smile audacious, let his amused eyes wander down from the mobile face with the wild-rose bloom to the slim young figure so long and supple, then serenely met her frown.

"Y'u don't look it."

"No? Are you the owner of a composite photograph of the teachers of the country?"

He enjoyed again his private mirth. "I should like right well to have the pictures of some of them."

She glanced at him sharply, but he was gazing so innocently at the purple Tetons in the distance that she could not give him the snub she thought he needed.

"You are right. My name is Helen Messiter," she said, by way of stimulating a counter fund of information. For, though she was a young woman not much given to curiosity, she was aware of an interest in this spare, broad-shouldered youth who was such an incarnation of bronzed vigor.

"Glad to meet y'u, Miss Messiter," he responded, and offered his firm brown hand in Western fashion.

But she observed resentfully that he did not mention his own name. It was impossible to suppose that he knew no better, and she was driven to conclude that he was silent of set purpose. Very well! If he did not want to introduce himself, she was not going to urge it upon him. In a businesslike manner she gave her attention to eating up the dusty miles.

"Yes, ma'am. I reckon I never was more glad to death to meet a lady than I was to meet up with y'u," he continued cheerfully. "Y'u sure looked good to me as y'u come a-foggin' down the road. I fair had been yearnin' for company, but was some discouraged for fear the invitation had miscarried." He broke off his sardonic rallery and let

his level gaze possess her for a long moment. "Miss Messiter, I'm ce'tainly under an obligation to y'u I can't repay. Y'u saved my life," he finished gravely.

"Nonsense."

"Fact."

"It isn't a personal matter at all," she assured him, with a touch of impatient hauteur.

"It's a heap personal to me."

In spite of her healthy young resentment, she laughed at the way in which he drawled this out, and with a swift sweep her boyish eyes took in again his compelling devil-may-care charm. She was new to the West, but intuition as well as experience taught her that he was unusual enough to be one of ten thousand. No young Greek god's head could have risen more superbly above the brick-tanned column of the neck than this close-cropped, curly one. Gray eyes, deep and unwavering and masterful, looked out of a face as brown as Wyoming. He was got up with no thought of effect, but the tigerish liteness, the picturesque competency of him, spake louder than costuming.

"Aren't you really hurt worse than you pretend? I'm sure your ankle ought to be attended to as soon as possible."

"Don't tell me you're a lady doctor, ma'am," he burlesqued his alarm.

"Can you tell me where the nearest ranch-house is?" she asked, ignoring his diversion.

"The Lazy D is the nearest, I reckon."

"Which direction?"

"North by west, ma'am."

"Then I'll take the most direct road to it."

"In that case I'll thank y'u for my ride and get out here."

"But—why?"

He waved a jaunty hand toward the recent battle-field. "The Lazy D lies right back of that hill. I expect, mebbe, those wolves might howl again if we went back."

"Where, then, shall I take you?"

"I hate to trouble y'u to go out of your way."

"I dare say, but I'm going, just the same," she told him dryly.

"If you're right determined——" He interrupted himself to point to the south. "Do y'u see that camel-backed peak over there?"

"The one with the sunshine on its lower edge?"

"That's it, Miss Messiter. They call those two humps the Antelope Peaks. If y'u can drop me somewhere near there, I think I'll manage all right."

"I'm not going to leave you till we reach a house," she informed him promptly. "You're not fit to walk fifty yards."

"That's right kind of y'u, but I could not think of asking so much. My friends will find me if y'u leave me where I can work a heliograph."

"Or your enemies," she cut in.

"I hope not. I'd not likely have the luck to get another invitation right then to go riding with a friendly young lady."

She gave him direct, cool, black-blue eyes that met and searched his. "I'm not at all sure she *is* friendly. I shall want to find out the cause of the trouble you have just had before I make up my mind as to that."

"I judge people by their actions. Y'u didn't wait to find out before bringing the ambulance into action," he laughed.

"I see you do not mean to tell me."

"You're quite a lawyer, ma'am," he evaded.

"I find you a very slippery witness, then."

"Ask anything y'u like and I'll tell you."

"Very well. Who were those men, and why were they trying to kill you?"

"They turned their wolf loose on me because I shot up one of them yesterday."

"Dear me! Is it your business to go around shooting people? That's three I happen to know that you have shot. How many more?"

"No more, ma'am."

"Well, three is quite enough. You seem to me a good deal of a desperado."

"Yes, ma'am."

"And who are they?"

There was a gleam of irrepressible humor in the bold eyes. "Your cow-punchers, ma'am."

"My cow-punchers?"

"They certainly belong to the Lazy D outfit."

"And you say that you shot one of my men yesterday?" He could see her getting ready for a declaration of war.

"Down by Willow Creek—— Yes, ma'am," he answered comfortably.

"And why, may I ask?" she flamed.

"That's a long story, Miss Messiter. It wouldn't be square for me to get my story in before your boys. You ask them." He permitted himself a genial smile, somewhat ironic. "I shouldn't wonder but what they'll give me a gilt-edged testimonial as an unhang'd horse-thief."

"Isn't there such a thing as law in Wyoming?" the girl demanded.

"Lots of it. You can buy just as good law right here as in Kalamazoo."

"I wish I knew where to find it."

"Like to put me in the calaboose?"

"In the penitentiary. Yes, sir!" A moment later the question that was in her thoughts leaped hotly from her lips. "Who are you, sir, that dare to commit murder and boast of it?"

She had flicked him on the raw at last. Something that was near to pain rested for a second in his eyes. "Murder is a hard name, partner. And I didn't say he was daid, or any of the three," came his gentle answer.

"You meant to kill them, anyhow."

"Did I?" There was the ghost of a sad smile about his eyes.

"The way you act a person might think you one of Ned Bannister's men," she told him scornfully.

"I expect you're right."

She repented her a little at a charge so unjust. "If you are not ashamed of your name, why are you so loath to part with it?"

"You didn't ask me my name," he said, a dark flush sweeping his face.

"I ask it now."

Like the light from a snuffed candle the boyish recklessness had gone out of

his face. His jaws were set like a vise, and he looked hard as hammered steel.

"My name is Bannister," he said coldly.

"Ned Bannister, the outlaw," she let slip, and was aware of a strange sinking of the heart.

It seemed to her that something sinister came to the surface in his handsome face. "I reckon we might as well let it go at that," he returned, with bitter briefness.

CHAPTER II.

THE KING OF THE HOLE-IN-THE-WALL COUNTRY.

Two months before this time Helen Messiter had been serenely teaching a second grade at Kalamazoo, Michigan, notwithstanding the earnest efforts of several youths of that city to induce her to retire to domesticity. "What's the use of being a schoolmarm?" had been the burden of their plaint. "Any spinster can teach kids *C-a-t*, Cat, but only one in several thousand can be the prettiest bride in Kalamazoo." None of them, however, had been able to drive the point sufficiently home, and it is probable that she would have continued to devote herself to Young America if an uncle she had never seen had not died without a will and left her a ranch in Wyoming yecept the Lazy D.

When her lawyer proposed to put the ranch on the market, Miss Helen had a word to say.

"I think not. I'll go out and see it first, anyhow," she said.

"But really, my dear young lady, it isn't at all necessary. Fact is, I've already had an offer of a hundred thousand dollars for it. Now I should judge that a fair price——"

"Very likely," his client interrupted quietly. "But, you see, I don't care to sell."

"Then what in the world are you going to do with it?"

"Run it."

"But, my dear Miss Messiter, it isn't an automobile, or any other kind of toy. You must remember that it takes a busi-

ness head and a great deal of experience to make such an investment pay. I really think——”

“My school ends on the fourteenth of June. I’ll get a substitute for the last month. I shall start for Wyoming on the eighteenth of May.”

The man of law gasped, explained the difficulties again carefully as to a child, found that he was wasting his breath, and wisely gave it up.

Miss Messiter had started on the eighteenth of May as she had announced. When she reached Gimlet Butte, the nearest railroad point to the Lazy D, she found a group of curious, weather-beaten individuals gathered round a machine foreign to their experience. It was on a flat car, and the general opinion ran the gamut from a sewing-machine to a thresher. Into this guessing-contest came its owner with so brisk and businesslike an energy, that inside of two hours she was testing it up and down the wide street of Gimlet Butte, to the wonder and delight of an audience to which each one of the eleven saloons of the city had contributed its admiring quota.

Meanwhile the young woman attended strictly to business. She had disappeared for half an hour with a suit-case into the Elk House; and when she returned in a short-skirted khaki suit, leggings, and wide-brimmed gray Stetson hat, all Gimlet Butte took an absorbing interest in the details of this delightful adventure that had happened to the town. Presently “Soapy” Sothern, drifting in on his buckskin from the Hole-in-the-Wall country, where for private reasons of his own he had been for the past month a sojourner, reported that he had seen the prettiest sight in the State climbing under a gasoline bronc with a monkey-wrench in her hand. Where? Right over the hill on the edge of town. The immediate stampede for the cow-ponies was averted by a warning chug-chug that sounded down the road, followed by the appearance of a flashing whir that made the ponies dance on their hind legs.

“The gasoline bronc lady sure makes a hit with me,” announced “Texas”

gravely. “I allow I’ll rustle a job with the Lazy D outfit.”

“She ce’tainly rides herd on that machine like a champeen,” admitted Soapy. “I reckon I’ll drift over to the Lazy D with you to look after yore remains, Tex, when the lightning hits you.”

Miss Messiter swung the automobile round in a swift circle, came to abrupt halt in front of the hotel, and alighted without farther delay. As she passed in through the half-score of admirers she had won, her blue-black eyes swept smilingly over assembled Cattleland. She had already met most of them at the launching of the machine from the flat car, and had directed their perspiring energies as they labored to follow her orders. Now she nodded a recognition of them with a little ripple of gay laughter.

“I’m delighted to be able to contribute to the entertainment of Gimlet Butte,” she said as she swept in. For this young woman was possessed of Western adaptation. It gave her no conscientious qualms to exchange conversation fraternal with these genial savages.

The Elk House did not rejoice in a private dining-room, and competition strenuous ensued as to who should have the pleasure of sitting beside the guest of honor. To avoid ill feeling, the matter was determined by a game of freeze-out, in which Texas and a mature gentleman named, from his complexion, “Beet” Collins, were the lucky victors. Texas immediately repaired to the general store, where he purchased a new scarlet bandanna for the occasion; also a cake of soap with which to rout the alkali dust that had filtered into every pore of his hands and face from a long ride across the desert.

Came supper and Texas simultaneously, the cow-puncher’s face scrubbed to an apple shine. At the last moment Collins defaulted, his nerve completely gone. Since, however, he was a thrifty soul, he sold his place to Soapy for ten dollars, and proceeded to invest the proceeds in an immediate drunk.

During the first ten minutes of dinner Miss Messiter did not appear, and the

two guardians who flanked her chair solicitously were the object of much badinage.

"She got one glimpse of that red haid of Tex, and the pore lady's took to the sage," explained Yorky.

"And him scrubbed so shiny fust time since Christmas befo' the big blizzard," sighed Doc Rogers.

"Shucks! She ain't scared of no sawed-off, hammered-down runt like Tex. No, siree! Miss Messiter's on the absent-list, 'cause she's afraid she cayn't resist the blandishments of Soapy. Did yo' ever hear about Soapy and that Caspar hash-slinger?"

"Forget it, Slim," advised Soapy promptly. He had been engaged in lofty and oblivious conversation with Texas, but he did not intend to allow reminiscences to get under way just now.

At this opportune juncture arrived the mistress of the "gasoline bronc," trimly clad in a simple white lawn with blue trimmings. She looked like a gleam of sunshine in her fresh, sweet youth; and not even in her own school-room had she ever found herself the focus of a cleaner, more unstinted admiration. For the outdoors West takes off its hat reverently to women worthy of respect, especially when they are young and friendly.

Helen Messiter had come to Wyoming because the call of adventure, the desire for experience outside of rutted convention, were stirring her warm-blooded youth. She had seen enough of life lived in a parlor, and when there came knocking at her door a chance to know the big, untamed outdoors at first hand, she had at once embraced it like a lover. She was eager for her new life, and she set out skilfully to make these men tell her what she wanted to know. To them, of course, it was an old story, and whatever of romance it held was unconscious. But since she wanted to talk of the West, they were more than ready to please her.

So she listened, and drew them out with adroit questions when it was necessary. She made them talk of life on the open range, of rustlers and those

who lived outside the law in the Hole-in-the-Wall country, of the deadly war waging between the cattle and sheep industries.

"Are there any sheep near the Lazy D Ranch?" she asked, intensely interested in Soapy's tale of how cattle and sheep could no more be got to mix than oil and water.

For an instant nobody answered her question, then Soapy replied with what seemed elaborate carelessness:

"Ned Bannister runs a bunch of about twelve thousand not more'n fifteen miles from your place."

"And you say they are spoiling the range?"

"They're ce'tainly spoiling it for cows."

"But can't something be done? If my cows were there first, I don't see what right he has to bring his sheep there," the girl frowned.

The assembled company attended strictly to supper. The girl, surprised at the stillness, looked round. "Well?"

"Now you're shouting, ma'am. That's what we say," enthused Texas, spurring to the rescue.

"It doesn't much matter what you say. What do you do?" asked Helen impatiently. "Do you lie down and let Mr. Bannister and his kind drive their sheep over you?"

"Do we, Soapy?" grinned Texas. Yet it seemed to her his smile was not quite carefree.

"I'm not a cowman myself," explained Soapy to the girl. "Nor do I run sheep. I——"

"Tell Miss Messiter what yore business is, Soapy," advised Yorky from the end of the table, with a mouthful of biscuit swelling his cheeks.

Soapy crushed the irrepressible Yorky with a look, but that young man hit back smilingly.

"Soapy he sells soap, ma'am. He's a sorter city salesman, I reckon."

"I should never have guessed it. Mr. Sothern does not *look* like a salesman," said the girl, with a glance at his shrewd, hard, expressionless face.

"Yes, ma'am, he's a first-class seller of soap, is Mr. Sothern," chuckled the

cow-puncher, kicking his friends gaily under the table.

"You can see I never sold *him* any, Miss Messiter," came back Soapy sorrowfully.

All this was Greek to the young lady from Kalamazoo. How was she to know that Mr. Sothern had vended his soap in small cubes, on street corners, and that he wrapped bank-notes of various denominations in the bars, which same were retailed to eager customers for the small sum of fifty cents, after a guarantee that the soap was good? His customers rarely patronized him twice; and frequently they used bad language because the soap-wrapping was not as valuable as they had expected. This was manifestly unfair, for Mr. Sothern, who made no claims to philanthropy, often warned them that the soap should be bought on its merits, and not with an eye single to the premium that might or might not accompany the package.

"I started to tell you, ma'am, when that infant interrupted, that the cowmen don't aim to quit business yet a while. They've drawn a dead-line, Miss Messiter."

"A dead-line?"

"Yes, ma'am, beyond which no sheepherder is to run his bunch."

"And if he does?" the girl asked, open-eyed.

"He don't do it twict, ma'am. Why don't you pass the fritters to Miss Messiter, Slim?"

"And about this Bannister—— Who is he?"

Her innocent question seemed to ring a bell for silence; seemed to carry with it some hidden portent that stopped idle conversation as a striking clock that marks the hour for an execution. The smile that had been gay grew grim, and men forgot the subject of their light, casual talk. It was Sothern that answered her, and she observed that his voice was grave, his face studiously without expression.

"Mr. Bannister, ma'am, is a sheepman."

"So I understood, but——" Her eyes traveled swiftly round the table,

and appraised the sudden sense of responsibility that had fallen on these reckless, careless frontiersmen. "I am wondering what else he is. Really, he seems to be the bogey man of Gimlet Butte."

There was another instant silence, and again it was Soapy that lifted it. "I expaict you'll like Wyoming, Miss Messiter; leastways, I hope you will. There's a right smart of country here." His gaze went out of the open door to the vast sea of space that swam in the fine sunset light. "Yes, most folks that ain't plumb spoilt with city ways like it."

"Sure she'll like it. Y'u want to get a good, easy-ridin' hawss, Miss Messiter," advised Slim.

"And a rifle," added Texas promptly.

It occurred to her that they were all working together to drift the conversation back to a safe topic. She followed the lead given her, but she made up her mind to know what it was about her neighbor, Mr. Bannister, the sheepherder, that needed to be handled with such wariness and circumspection of speech.

Her chance came half an hour later, when she stood talking to the landlady on the hotel porch in the mellow twilight that seemed to rest on the land like a moonlit aura. For the moment they were alone.

"What is it about this man Bannister that makes men afraid to speak of him?" she demanded, with swift impulse.

Her landlady's startled eyes went alertly round to see that they were alone. "Hush, child! You mustn't speak of him like that," warned the older woman.

"Why mustn't I? That's what I want to know."

"It isn't healthy."

"What do you mean?"

Again that anxious look flashed round in the dusk. "The Bannister outfit is the worst in the land. Ned Bannister is king of the Hole-in-the-Wall country," she whispered.

"And you mean to tell me that everybody is afraid of him; that men like

Mr. Sothern dare not say their soul is their own?" the newcomer asked contemptuously.

"Not so loud, child. He has spies everywhere. That's the trouble. You don't know who is in with him. He has this whole region terrified."

"Is he so bad?"

"He is a devil. Last year he and his hell riders swept down on Topaz and killed two bartenders just to see them kick, Ned Bannister said."

"But the law—the government? Haven't you a sheriff and officers?"

"Bannister has. He elects the sheriff in this county."

"Aren't there more honest people here than villains?"

"Ten times as many, but the trouble is that the honest folks can't trust each other. You see, if one of them made a mistake and confided in the wrong man—well, some fine day he would go riding herd, and would not turn up at night. Next week, or next month, maybe, one of his partners might find a pile of bones in an arroyo."

"Have you ever seen this Bannister?"

"You *must* speak lower when you talk of him, Miss Messiter," the woman insisted. "Yes, I saw him once; at least I think I did. Mighty few folks know for sure that they have seen him. He is a mystery, and he travels under many names and disguises."

"When was it you think you saw him?"

"Two years ago at Ayr. The bank was looted that night and robbed of thirty thousand dollars. They roused the cashier from his bed and made him give the combination. He didn't want to, and Ned Bannister"—her voice sank to a tremulous whisper—"put red-hot running-irons between his fingers till he weakened. It was a moonlight night—much such a night as this—and after it was done I peeped through the blind of my room and saw them ride away. He rode in front of them and sang like an angel—did it out of daredeviltry to mock the people of the town that hadn't nerve enough to shoot him. You see he knew that nobody would dare hurt him 'count of the revenge of his men."

"What was he like?" the mistress of the Lazy D asked, strangely awed at this recital of transcendent villainy.

"'Course he was masked, and I didn't see his face. But I'd know him anywhere. He's a long, slim fellow, built like a mountain lion. You couldn't look at him and ever forget him. He's one of these graceful, easy men that go so fur with fool women; one of the kind that half-shuts his dark, devil eyes and masters them without seeming to try."

"So he is a woman-killer, too, is he? Any more outstanding inconsistencies in this versatile Jesse James?"

"He's plumb crazy about music, they say. Has a piano, and plays Grigg and Chopping, and all that classical kind of music. He went clear down to Denver last year to hear Mrs. Shoeman sing."

Helen smiled, guessing at Schumann-Heink as the singer in question, and Grieg and Chopin as the composers named. Her interest was incredibly aroused. She had expected the West and its products to exhilarate her, but she had not looked to find so finished a Mephisto among its vaunted "bad men." He was probably overrated; considered a wonder because his accomplishments outstepped those of the range. But Helen Messiter had quite determined on one thing. She was going to meet this redoubtable villain and make up her mind for herself. Already, before she had been in Wyoming six hours, this emancipated young woman had decided on that.

CHAPTER III.

AN INVITATION GIVEN AND ACCEPTED.

And already she had met him. Not only met him, but saved him from the just vengeance about to fall upon him. She had not yet seen her own ranch, had not met a single one of her employees, for it had been a part of her plan to drop in unexpected and examine the situation before her foreman had a chance to put his best foot forward. So she had started alone from Gimlet Butte that morning in her machine, and had come almost in sight of the Lazy

D ranch-houses when the battle in the coulée invited her to take a hand.

She had acted on generous impulse, and the unforeseen result had been to save this desperado from justice. But the worst of it was that she could not find it in her heart to regret it. Granted that he was a villain, double-dyed and beyond hope, yet he was the home of such courage, such virility, that her unconsenting admiration went out in spite of herself. He was, at any rate, a *man*, square-jawed, resolute, implacable. In the sinuous trail of his life might lie arson, robbery, murder, but he still held to that dynamic spark of self-respect that is akin to the divine. Nor was it possible to believe that those unblinking gray eyes, with the capability of a latent sadness of despair in them, expressed a soul entirely without nobility. He had a certain gallant ease, a certain attractive candor, that did not consist with villainy unadulterated.

It was characteristic even of her impulsiveness that Helen Messiter curbed the swift condemnation that leaped to her lips when she knew that the man sitting beside her was the notorious Hole-in-the-Wall bandit. She was not in the least afraid. A sure instinct told her he was not the kind of a man of whom a woman need have fear so long as her own anchor held fast. In good time she meant to let him have her unvarnished opinion of him; but she did not mean it to be an unconsidered one. Wherefore she drove the machine forward toward the camel-backed peak he had indicated, her eyes straight before her, a frown corrugating her forehead.

For him, having made his dramatic announcement, he seemed content for the present with silence. He leaned back in the car and appreciated her with a coolness that just missed impudence. Certainly her appearance proclaimed her very much worth while. To dwell on the long lines of her supple young body, the exquisite throat and chin curve, was a pleasure with a thrill to it. As a physical creation, a mere innocent young animal, he thought her perfect; attuned to a fine harmony of grace and color. But it was the animating vital-

ity of her, the lightness of motion, the fire and sparkle of expression that gave her the captivating charm she possessed.

They were two miles nearer the camel-backed peak before he broke the silence. "Beats a bronco for getting over the ground. Think I'll have to get one," he mused aloud, a hint of self-mockery in his voice.

"With the money you took from the Ayr bank?" she flashed.

"I might drive off some of your cows and sell them," he countered promptly. "About how much will they hold me up for a machine like this?"

"This is only a runabout. You can get one for twelve or fourteen hundred dollars of anybody's money."

"Of yours?" he laughed.

"I haven't that much with me. If you'll come over and hold up the ranch, perhaps we might raise it among us," she jeered.

His mirth was genuine. "But right now I couldn't get more than how much off y'u?"

"Sixty-three dollars is all I have with me, and I couldn't give you more—*not even if you put red-hot irons between my fingers.*" She gave it to him straight, her blue eyes fixed steadily on him.

Yet she was not prepared for the effect of her words. The last thing she had expected was to see the blood wash out of his bronzed face, to see his sensitive nostrils twitch with pain. He made her feel as if she had insulted him, as if she had been needlessly cruel. And because of it she hardened her heart. Why should she spare him the mention of it? He had not hesitated at the shameless deed itself. Why should she shrink before that wounded look that leaped to his fine eyes in that flash of time before he hardened them to steel?

"You did it—didn't you?" she demanded.

"That's what they say." His gaze met hers defiantly.

"And it is true, isn't it?"

"Oh, anything is true of a man that herds sheep," he returned bitterly.

"If that is true it would not be pos-

sible for you to understand how much I despise you."

"Thank you," he retorted ironically.

"I don't understand at all. I don't see how you can be the man they say you are. Before I met you it was easy to understand. But somehow—I don't know—you don't *look* like a villain." She found herself strangely voicing the deep hope of her heart. It was surely impossible to look at him and believe him guilty of the things of which he was accused. And yet he offered no denial, suggested no defense.

Her troubled eyes went over his thin, sun-baked face with its touch of bitterness, and she did not find it possible to dismiss the subject without giving him a chance to set himself right. "You can't be as bad as they say. You are not, are you?" she asked naively.

"What do y'u think?" he asked coolly.

She flushed angrily at what she accepted as his insolence. "A man of any decency would have jumped at the chance to explain."

"But if there is nothing to explain?"

"You are then guilty."

Their eyes met, and neither of them quailed.

"If I pleaded not guilty, would y'u believe me?"

She hesitated. "I don't know. How could I when it is known by everybody? And yet——"

He smiled. "Why should I trouble y'u, then, with explanations? I reckon we'll let it go at guilty."

"Is that all you can say for yourself?"

"I expect if we changed the subject I could say a good deal for y'u," he drawled. "I never saw anything pluckier than the way y'u flew down from that mesa and conducted the cutting-out expedition. Y'u sure drilled through your punchers like a streak of lightning."

"I didn't know who you were," she explained proudly.

"Would it have made any difference if y'u had?"

Again the angry flush touched her cheeks. "Not a bit. I would have saved

you in order to have you properly hanged later," she cut back promptly.

He shook his head gaily. "I'm certainly going to disappoint y'u some. Your enterprising punchers may collect me yet, but not alive, I reckon."

"I'll give them strict orders to bring you in alive."

"Did you ever want the moon when y'u was a little kid?" he asked.

"We'll see, Mr. Outlaw Bannister."

He laughed softly, in the quiet, indolent fashion that would have been pleasant if it had not been at her. "It's right kind of you to take so much interest in me. I'd most be willing to oblige by letting your boys rope me to renew this acquaintance, ma'am." Then, "I get out here, Miss Messiter," he added.

She stopped on the instant. Plainly she could not get rid of him too soon. "Haven't you forgot one thing?" she asked ironically.

"Yes, ma'am. To thank you proper for what y'u did for me." He limped gingerly down from the car and stood with his hand on one of the tires. "I have been trying to think how to say it right; but I guess I'll have to give it up. All is, that if ever I get a chance to even the score——"

She waved his thanks aside impatiently. "I didn't mean that. You have forgotten to take my purse."

His gravity was broken on the instant, and his laughter was certainly delightfully fresh. "I clean forgot, but I expect I'll drop over to the ranch for it some day."

"We'll try to make you welcome, Mr. Bannister."

"Don't put yourself out at all. I'll take pot-luck when I come."

"How many of you may we expect?" she asked defiantly.

"Oh, I allow to come alone."

"You'll very likely forget."

"No, ma'am, I don't know so many ladies that I'm liable to such an oversight."

"I have heard a different story. But if you do remember to come, and will let us know when you expect to honor the

Lazy D, I'll have messengers sent to meet you."

He perfectly understood her to mean leaden ones; and the humorous gleam in his eye sparkled in appreciation of her spirit. "I don't want all that fuss made over me. I reckon I'll drop in unexpected," he said.

She nodded curtly. "Good-by. Hope your ankle won't trouble you very much."

"Thank y'u, ma'am. I reckon it won't. Good-by, Miss Messiter."

Out of the tail of her eye she saw him bowing like an Italian opera singer, as impudently insouciant, as gracefully graceless, as any stage villain in her memory. Once again she saw him, when her machine swept round a curve and she could look back without seeming to do so, limping across through the sage-brush toward a little hillock near the road. And as she looked, the bare, curly head was inclined toward her in another low, mocking bow. He was certainly the gallantest vagabond unhanged.

CHAPTER IV.

AT THE LAZY D RANCH.

Helen Messiter was a young woman very much alive, which implies that she was given to emotions; and as her machine skimmed over the ground to the Lazy D she had them to spare. For from the first this young man had taken her eye, and it had come upon her with a distinct shock that he was the notorious scoundrel who was terrorizing the countryside. She told herself almost passionately that she would never have believed it if he had not said so himself. She knew quite well that the coldness that had clutched her heart when he gave his name had had nothing to do with fear. There had been chagrin, disappointment, but nothing in the least like the terror she might have expected. The simple truth was that he had seemed so much a man that it had hurt her to find him also a wild beast.

Deep in her heart she resented the conviction forced upon her. Reckless

he undoubtedly was, at odds with the law surely, but it was hard to admit that attractive personality to be the mask of fiendish cruelty and sinister malice. And yet—the facts spoke for themselves. He had not even attempted a denial. Still there was a mystery about him, else how was it possible for two so distinct personalities to dwell together in the same body.

She hated him with all her lusty young will; not only for what he was, but also for what she had been disappointed in not finding him after her first instinctive liking. Yet it was with an odd little thrill that she ran down again into the coulée where her prosaic life had found its first real adventure. He might be all they said, but nothing could wipe out the facts that she had offered her life to save his, and that he had lent her his body as a living shield for one exhilarating moment of danger.

As she reached the hill summit beyond the coulée, Helen Messiter was aware that a rider in ungainly chaps of white wool was rapidly approaching. He dipped down into the next depression without seeing her; and when they came face to face at the top of the rise the result was instantaneous. His pony did an animated two-step not on the program. It took one glance at the diabolical machine, and went up on its hind legs, preliminary to giving an elaborate exhibition of pitching. The rider indulged in vivid profanity, and plied his quirt vigorously. But the bronco, with the fear of this unknown evil on its soul, varied its bucking so effectively, that the puncher astride its hurricane-deck was forced to "take the dust," in the language of his kind.

His red head sailed through the air and landed in the white sand at the girl's feet. For a moment he sat in the road and gazed with chagrin after the vanishing heels of his mount. Then his wrathful eyes came round to the owner of the machine that had caused the eruption. His mouth had opened to give adequate expression to his feelings, when he discovered anew the forgotten fact that he was dealing with a woman. His jaw hung open for an in-

stant in amaze; and when he remembered the unedited vocabulary he had turned loose on the world, a flood of purple swept his tanned face.

She wanted to laugh, but wisely refrained. "I'm very sorry," was what she said.

He stared in silence as he slowly picked himself from the ground. His red hair rose like the quills of a porcupine above a face that had the appearance of being unfinished. Neither nose nor mouth nor chin seemed to be quite definite enough.

She choked down her gaiety and offered renewed apologies.

"I was going for a doc," he explained, by way of opening his share of the conversation.

"Then perhaps you had better jump in with me and ride back to the Lazy D. I suppose that's where you came from?"

He scratched his vivid head helplessly. "Yes, ma'am."

"Then jump in."

"I was going to Bear Creek, ma'am," he added dubiously.

"How far is it?"

"'Bout twenty-five miles, and then some."

"You don't expect to walk, do you?"

"No, I allowed——"

"I'll take you back to the ranch, where you can get another horse."

"I reckon, ma'am, I druther walk."

"Nonsense! Why?"

"It ain't safe, is it?"

"Quite. There is nothing to be afraid of."

Reluctantly he got in beside her, as happy as a calf in a branding-pen.

"Are you the lady that sashaid off with Ned Bannister?" he asked presently, after he had had time to smother successively some of his fear, wonder, and delight at their smooth, swift progress.

"Yes. Why?"

"The boys allow you hadn't oughter have done it." Then, to place the responsibility properly on shoulders broader than his own, he added: "That's what Judd says."

"And who is Judd?"

"Judd, he's the foreman of the Lazy D."

Below them appeared the corrals and houses of a ranch nestling in a little valley flanked by hills.

"This yere's the Lazy D," announced the youth, with pride, and in the spirit of friendliness suggested a caution. "Judd, he's some peppery. You wanter smooth him down some, seeing as he's riled up to-day."

A flicker of steel came into the blue eyes. "Indeed! Well, here we are."

"If it ain't Reddy, and the lady with the flying-machine," murmured a freckled youth named McWilliams, emerging from the bunk-house with a pan of water which had been used to bathe the wound of one of the punctured combatants.

"What's that?" snapped a voice from within; and immediately its owner appeared in the doorway and bored with narrowed black eyes the young woman in the machine.

"Who are you?" he demanded bruskiy.

"Your target," she answered quietly. "Would you like to take another shot at me?"

The freckled lad broke out into a gurgle of laughter, at which the black, swarthy man beside him wheeled round in a rage. "What you cacklin' at, Mac?" he demanded, in a low voice.

"Oh, the things I notice," returned that youth jauntily, meeting the other's anger without the flicker of an eyelid.

"It ain't healthy to be so noticin'," insinuated the other.

"Y'u don't say," came the prompt, sarcastic retort. "If you're such a darned good judge of health, y'u better be attending to some of your patients." He jerked a casual thumb over his shoulder toward the bunks on which lay the wounded men.

"I shouldn't wonder but what there might be another patient for me to attend to," snarled the foreman.

"That so? Well, turn your wolf loose when y'u get to feelin' real devilish," jeered the undismayed one, strolling forward to assist Miss Messiter to alight.

The mistress of the Lazy D had been aware of the byplay, but she had caught neither the words nor their import. She took the offered brown hand smilingly, for here again she looked into the frank eyes of the West, unafraid and steady. She judged him not more than twenty-two, but the school where he had learned of life had held open and strenuous session every day since he could remember.

"Glad to meet y'u, ma'am," he assured her, in the current phrase of the semi-arid lands.

"I'm sure I am glad to meet *you*," she answered heartily. "Can you tell me where is the foreman of the Lazy D?"

He introduced with a smile the swarthy man in the doorway. "This is him, ma'am—Mr. Judd Morgan."

Now it happened that Mr. Judd Morgan was simmering with suppressed spleen.

"All I've got to say is that you had no business mixing in that shootin' affair back there. Perhaps you don't know that the man you saved is Ned Bannister the outlaw," was his surly greeting.

"Oh, yes, I know that."

"Then what d'ye mean—— Who are you, anyway?" His insolent eyes coasted malevolently over her.

"Helen Messiter is my name."

It was ludicrous to see the change that came over the man. He had been prepared to bully her; and with a word she had pricked the bubbles of his arrogance. He swallowed his anger and got a mechanical smile in working order.

"Glad to meet you, Miss Messiter," he said, his sinister gaze attempting to meet hers frankly. "I been looking for you every day."

"But y'u managed to surprise him, after all, ma'am," chuckled Mac.

"Where's yo' hawss, Reddy?" inquired a third young man, who had appeared silently in the doorway of the bunk-house.

Reddy pinked violently. "I had an accident, Denver," he explained. "This lady yere, she——"

"Scooped y'u right off yore hawss. Y'u *don't* say," sympathized Mac so breathlessly that even Reddy joined in the chorus of laughter that went up at his expense.

The young woman thought to make it easy for him, and suggested an explanation.

"His horse isn't used to automobiles, and so when it met this one——"

"I got off," interposed Reddy hastily, displaying a complexion like a boiled beet.

"He got off," Mac explained gravely to the increasing audience.

Denver nodded with an imperturbable face. "He got off."

Mac introduced Miss Messiter to such of her employecs as were on hand. "Shake hands with Miss Messiter. Missou," was the formula, the name alone varying to suit the embarrassed gentlemen in leathers. Each of them in turn presented a huge hand, in which her little one disappeared for the time, and was sawed up and down in the air like a pump-handle. Yet if she was amused she did not show it; and her pleasure at meeting the simple, elemental products of the plains outweighed a great deal her sense of the ludicrous.

"How are your patients getting along?" she presently asked of her foreman.

"I reckon all right. I sent Reddy for a doc, but——"

"He got off," murmured Mac pensively.

"I'll go rope another hawss," put in the man who had got off.

"Get a jump on you, then. Miss Messiter, would you like to look over the place?"

"Not now. I want to see the men that were hurt. Perhaps I can help them. Once I took a few weeks in nursing."

"Bully for you, ma'am," whooped Mac. "I've a notion those boys are sufferin' for a woman to put the diamond-hitch on them bandages."

"Bring that suit-case in," she commanded Denver, in the gentlest voice he had ever heard, after she had made a

hasty inspection of the first wounded man.

From the suit-case she took a little leather medicine-case, the kind that can be bought already prepared for use. It held among other things a roll of medicated cotton, some antiseptic tablets, and a little steel instrument for probing.

"Some warm water, please; and have some water boiling on the range," were her next commands.

Mac flew to execute them.

It was a pleasure to see her work, so deftly the skilful hands accomplished what her brain told them. In admiring awe the punchers stood awkwardly around while she washed and dressed the hurts. Two of the bullets had gone through the fleshy part of the arm and left clean wounds. In the case of the third man she had to probe for the lead, but fortunately found it with little difficulty. Meanwhile she soothed the victim with gentle womanly sympathy.

"I know it hurts a good deal. Just a minute and I'll be through."

His hands clutched tightly the edges of his bunk. "That's all right, doc. You attend to roping that pill and I'll endure the grief."

A long sigh of relief went up from the assembled cowboys when she drew the bullet out. The sinewy hands fastened on the wooden bunk relaxed suddenly.

"'Frisco's daid," gasped the cook, who bore the title of Hop Lee for no reason except that he was an Irishman in a place usually held by a Chinese.

"He has only fainted," she said quietly, and continued with the antiseptic dressing.

When it was all over, the big, tanned men gathered at the entrance to the calf corral and expanded in admiration of their new boss.

"She's a pure for fair. She grades up any old way yuh take her to the best corn-fed article on the market," pronounced Denver, with enthusiasm.

"I got to ride the boundary," sighed Missou. "I kinder hate to go right now."

"Here, too," acquiesced another. "I

got a round-up on Wind Creek to cut out them two-year-olds. If 'twas my say-so, I'd order Mac on that job."

"Right kind of y'u. Seems to me"—Mac's sarcastic eye trailed round to include all those who had been singing her praises—"the new queen of this hacienda won't have no trouble at all picking a prince consort when she gets round to it. Here's Hop Lee, not what y'u might call anxious, but ce'tainly willing. Then Denver's some in the turtle-dove business, according to that hash-slinger in Cheyenne. Missou might be induced to accept if it was offered him proper; and I allow Jim ain't turned the color of Redtop's hair jest for instance. I don't want to leave out 'Frisco and the other boys carrying Bannister's pills——"

"Nor McWilliams. I'd admire to include him," murmured Denver.

That sunburned, nonchalant youth laughed musically. "Sure thing. I'd hate to be left out. The only difference is——"

"Well?"

His roving eye circled blandly round. "I stand about one show in a million. Y'u rough-necks are dead ones already."

With which cold comfort he sauntered away to join Miss Messiter and the foreman, who now appeared together at the door of the ranch-house, prepared to make a tour of the buildings and the immediate corrals.

"How did y'u leave 'Frisco, ma'am?" asked Mac, by way of including himself easily.

"He's resting quietly. Unless blood-poisoning sets in they ought all to do well."

"It's right lucky for them y'u happened along. This is the hawss corral, ma'am," explained the young man just as Morgan opened his thin lips to tell her.

Judd contrived to get rid of him promptly. "Slap on a saddle, Mac, and run up the remuda so Miss Messiter can see the hawsses for herself," he ordered.

"Mebbe she'd rather ride down and look at the bunch," suggested the capable McWilliams.

As it chanced, she did prefer to ride down the pasture and look over the place from on horseback. She was in love with her ranch already. Its spacious distances, the thousands of cattle and the horses, these picturesque retainers who served her even to the shedding of an enemy's blood; they all struck an answering echo in her gallant young heart that nothing in Kalamazoo had been able to stir. She bubbled over with enthusiasm, the while Morgan covertly sneered and McWilliams warmed to the untamed youth in her.

"What about this man Bannister?" she flung out suddenly, after they had cantered back to the house when the remuda had been inspected.

Her abrupt question brought again the short, tense silence she had become used to expect.

"He runs sheep about twenty miles southeast of here," explained McWilliams, in a carefully casual tone.

"So everybody tells me, but it seems to me he spills a good deal of lead on my men," she answered impatiently. "What's the trouble?"

"Last week he crossed the dead-line with a bunch of five thousand sheep."

"Who draws this dead-line?"

"The cattlemen got together and drew it. Your uncle was one of those that marked it off, ma'am."

"And Bannister crossed it?"

"Yes, ma'am. Yesterday 'Frisco come on him and one of his herders with a big bunch of them less than fifteen miles from here. He didn't know it was Bannister, and took a pot-shot at him. 'Course Bannister came back at him, and he got 'Frisco in the laig."

"Didn't know it was Bannister? What difference would that make?" she said impatiently.

Mac laughed. "What difference would it make, Judd?"

Morgan scowled, and the young man answered his own question. "We don't any of us go out of our way more'n a mile to cross Bannister's trail," he drawled.

"Do you wear this for an ornament? Are you upholstered with hardware to catch the eyes of some girl?" she asked,

touching with the end of her whip the revolver in the holster strapped to his chaps.

His serene, gay smile flashed at her. "Are y'u ordering me to go out and get Ned Bannister's scalp?"

"No, I am not," she explained promptly. "What I am trying to discover is why you all seem to be afraid of one man. He is only a man, isn't he?"

A veil of ice seemed to fall over the boyish face and leave it chiseled marble. His unspeaking eyes rested on the swarthy foreman as he answered:

"I don't know what he is, ma'am. He may be one man, or he may be a hundred. What's more, I ain't particularly suffering to find out. Fact is, I haven't lost any Bannisters."

The girl became aware that her foreman was looking at her with a wary vigilance sinister in its intensity.

"In short, you're like the rest of the people in this section. You're afraid."

"Now y'u're shoutin', Miss Messiter. I sure am when it comes to shootin' off my mouth about Bannister."

"And you, Mr. Morgan?"

It struck her that the young puncher waited with a curious interest for the answer of the foreman.

"Did it look like I was afraid this mawnin', ma'am?" he asked, with narrowed eyes.

"No, you all seemed brave enough then—when you had him eight to one."

"I wasn't there," hastily put in McWilliams. "I don't go gunning for my man without giving him a show."

"I do," retorted Morgan cruelly. "I'd go if we was fifty to one. We'd 'a' got him, too, if it hadn't been for Miss Messiter. 'Twas a chance we ain't likely to get again for a year."

"It wasn't your fault you didn't kill him, Mr. Morgan," she said, looking hard at him. "You may be interested to know that your last shot missed him only about six inches, and me about four."

"I didn't know who you were," he sullenly defended.

"I see. You only shoot at women when you don't know who they are."

She turned her back on him pointedly and addressed herself to McWilliams. "You can tell the men working on this ranch that I won't have any more such attacks on this man Bannister. I don't care what or who he is. I don't propose to have him murdered by my employees. Let the law take him and hang him. Do you hear?"

"I certainly do, and the boys will get the word straight," he replied.

"I take it since yuh are giving your orders through Mac, yuh don't need me any longer for your foreman," bullied Morgan.

"You take it right, sir," came her crisp reply. "McWilliams will be my foreman from to-day."

The man's face, malignant and wolfish, suddenly lost its mask. That she would so promptly call his bluff was the last thing he had expected. "That's all right. I reckon yuh think yuh know your own business, but I'll put it to yuh straight. Long as yuh live you'll be sorry for this."

And with that he wheeled away.

She turned to her new foreman and found him less radiant than she could have desired. "I'm right sorry y'u did that. I'm afraid y'u'll make trouble for yourself."

"Why?"

"I don't know myself just why." He hesitated before adding: "They say him and Bannister is thicker than they'd ought to be. It's a cinch that he's in cahoots somehow with that Hole-in-the-Wall outfit."

"But—why, that's ridiculous. Only this morning he was trying to kill Bannister himself."

"That's what I don't just savvy. There's a whole lot about that business I don't get next to. I guess Bannister is at the head of them. Everybody seems agreed about that. But the whole thing is a tangle of contradiction to me. I've milled it over a heap in my mind, too."

"What are some of the contradictions?"

"Well, here's one right off the bat, as we used to say back in the States. Bannister is a great musician, they

claim; fine singer, and all that. Now I happen to know he can't sing any more than a bellowing yearling."

"How do you know?" she asked, her eyes shining with interest.

"Because I heard him try it. 'Twas one day last summer when I was out cutting trail of a bunch of strays down by Dead Cow Creek. The day was hot, and I lay down behind a cottonwood and dropped off to sleep. When I wakened it didn't take me longer'n an hour to discover what had woke me. Somebody on the other side of the creek was trying to sing. It was certainly the limit. Pretty soon he come out of the brush, and I seen it was Bannister."

"You're sure it was Bannister?"

"If seeing is believing, I'm sure."

"And was his singing really so bad?"

"I'd hate ever to hear worse."

"Was he singing when you saw him?"

"No, he'd just quit. He caught sight of my pony grazing, and hunted cover real prompt."

"Then it might have been another man singing in the thicket."

"It might, but it wasn't. Y'u see, I'd followed him through the bush by his song, and he showed up the moment I expected him."

"Still, there might have been another man there singing."

"One chance in a million," he conceded.

A sudden hope flamed up like tow in her heart. Perhaps, after all, Ned Bannister was not the leader of the outlaws. Perhaps somebody else was masquerading in his name, using Bannister's unpopularity as a shield to cover his iniquities. Still, this was an unlikely hypothesis, she had to admit. For why should he allow his good name to be dragged in the dust without any effort to save it? On a sudden impulse the girl confided her doubt to McWilliams.

"You don't suppose there can be any mistake, do you? Somehow I can't think him as bad as they say. He looks awfully reckless, but one feels one could trust his face."

"Same here," agreed the new foreman. "First off when I saw him my

think was, 'I'd like to have that man backing my play when I'm sitting in the game with Old Man Hard Luck reaching out for my blue chips.'"

"You don't think faces lie, do you?"

"I've seen those that did, but generally speaking, tongues are a heap more likely to get tangled with the truth. But I reckon there ain't any doubt about Bannister. He's known all over this Western country."

The young woman sighed. "I'm afraid you're right."

CHAPTER V.

A PARTY CALL.

The mistress of the Lazy D, just through with her morning visit to the hospital in the bunk-house, stopped to read the gaudy poster tacked to the wall. It was embellished with the drawing of a placid rider astride the embodiment of fury incarnate, under which was the legend: "Stick To Your Saddle."

BIG FOURTH OF JULY CELEBRATION AT GIMLET BUTTE.

ROPING AND BRONCO BUSTING CONTESTS FOR THE CHAMPIONSHIP OF THE WORLD AND BIG PRIZES,

Including \$1,000 for the Best Rider and the Same for Best Roper. Cow Pony Races, Ladies' Races and Ladies' Riding Contest, Fireworks, AND FREE BARBECUE!!!!

EVERYBODY COME AND TURN YOUR WOLF LOOSE.

A sudden thud of pounding hoofs, a snatch of ragtime, and her foreman swept up in a cloud of white dust. His pony came from a gallop to an instant halt, and simultaneously Mac landed beside her, one hand holding the wide-brimmed hat he had snatched off in his descent, the other hitched by a casual thumb to the belt of his chaps.

She laughed. "You really did it very well."

Mac blushed. He was still young enough to take pride in his picturesque regalia; to prefer the dramatic way of doing a commonplace thing. But, though he liked this girl's trick of laughing at him with a perfectly grave face out of those dark, long-lashed eyes, he would have liked it better if sometimes they had given back the applause he thought his little tricks merited.

"Sho! That's foolishness," he deprecated.

"I suppose they got you to sit for this picture;" and she indicated the poster with a wave of her hand.

"That ain't a real picture," he explained, and when she smiled added, "as of course y'u know. No hawss ever pitched that way—and the saddle ain't right. Fact is, it's all wrong."

"How did it come here? It wasn't here last night."

"I reckon Denver brought it from Slauson's. He was ridin' that country yesterday, and as the boys was out of smokin' he came home that way."

"I suppose you'll all go?"

"I reckon."

"And you'll ride?"

"I aim to sit in."

"At the roping, too?"

"No, m'm. I ain't so much with the rope. It takes a Mexican to snake a rope."

"Then I'll be able to borrow only a thousand dollars from you to help buy that bunch of young cows we were speaking about," she mocked.

"Only a thousand," he grinned. "And it ain't a cinch I'll win. There are three or four straight-up riders on this range. A fellow come from the Hole-in-the-Wall and won out last year."

"And where were you?"

"Oh, I took second prize," he explained, with obvious indifference.

"Well, you had better get first this year. We'll have to show them the Lazy D hasn't gone to sleep."

"Sure thing," he agreed.

"Has that buyer from Cheyenne turned up yet?" she asked, reverting to business.

"Not yet. Do y'u want I should make the cut soon as he comes?"

"Don't you think his price is a little low—fifteen dollars from brand up?"

"It's a scrub bunch. We want to get rid of them, anyway. But you're the doctor," he concluded slangily.

She thought a moment. "We'll let him have them, but don't make the cut till I come back. I'm going to ride over to the Twin Buttes."

His admiring eyes followed her as she went toward the pony that was waiting saddled for her with the rein thrown to the ground. She carried her slim, lithe figure with a grace, a lightness, that few women could have rivaled. When she had swung to the saddle, she half-turned in her seat to call an order to the foreman.

"I think, Mac, you had better run up those horses from Eagle Creek. Have Denver and Missou look after them."

"Sure, ma'am," he said aloud; and to himself: "She's certainly a thoroughbred. Does everything well she tackles. I never saw anything like it. I'm a Chink if she doesn't run this ranch like she had been at it fohty years. Same thing with her gasoline bronc. That pinto, too. He's got a bad eye for fair, but she makes him eat out of her hand. I reckon the pinto is like the rest of us—clean mashed." He put his arms on the corral fence and grew introspective. "Blamed if I know what it is about her. 'Course she's a winner on looks, but that ain't it alone. I guess it's on account of her being such a game little gentleman. When she turns that smile loose on a fellow—well, there's sure sunshine in the air. And game—why, Ned Bannister ain't gamer himself."

Mr. McWilliams had climbed lazily to the top board of the fence. He was an energetic youth, but he liked to do his thinking at his ease. Now, as his gaze still followed its lodestar, he slipped from his seat and ran forward, pulling the revolver from its scabbard as he ran. Into his eyes had crept a tense alertness, the shining watchfulness of the tiger ready for its spring.

The cause of the change in the foreman of the Lazy D was a simple one, and on its face innocent enough. It was merely that a stranger had swung in

casually at the gate of the short stable lane, and was due to meet Miss Messiter in about ten seconds. So far good enough. A dozen travelers dropped in every day, but this particular one happened to be Ned Bannister.

From the stable-door a shot rang out. Bannister ducked and shouted genially: "Try again."

But Helen Messiter whirled her pony as on a half-dollar, and charged down on the stable.

"Who fired that shot?" she demanded, her eyes blazing.

The horse-wrangler showed embarrassment. He had found time only to lean the rifle against the wall.

"I reckon I did, ma'am. Y'u see——"

"Did you get my orders about this feud?" she interrupted crisply.

"Yes, ma'am, but——"

"Then you may call for your time. When I give my men orders I expect them to obey."

"I wouldn't 'a' shot if I'd knowed y'u was so near him. Y'u was behind that summer kitchen," he explained lamely.

"You only expect to obey orders when I'm in sight. Is that it?" she asked hotly, and without waiting for an answer delivered her ultimatum. "Well, I won't have it. I run this ranch as long as I am its owner. Do you understand?"

"Yes, ma'am. I hadn't ought to, but when I seen Bannister it come over me I owed him a pill for the one he sent me last week down in the coulée. So I up and grabbed the rifle and let him have it."

"Then you may up and grab your trunk for Medicine Hill. Shorty will drive you to-morrow."

When she returned to her unexpected guest, Helen found him in conversation with McWilliams. The latter's gun had found again its holster, but his brown, graceful hand hovered close to its butt.

"Seems like a long time since the Lazy D has been honored by a visit from Mr. Bannister," he was saying, with gentle irony.

"That's right. So I have come to make up for lost time," came Bannister's quiet retort.

Miss Messiter did not know much

about Wyoming human nature in the raw, but she had learned enough to be sure that the soft courtesy of these two youths covered a stark courage that might leap to life any moment. Wherefore she interposed.

"We'll be pleased to show you over the place, Mr. Bannister. As it happens, we are close to the hospital. Shall we begin there?"

Her cool, silken defiance earned a smile from the visitor. "All your cases doing well, ma'am?"

"It's very kind of you to ask. I suppose you take an interest because they are *your* cases, too, in a way of speaking?"

"Mine? Indeed!"

"Yes. If it were not for you I'm afraid our hospital would be empty."

"It must be right pleasant to be nursed by Miss Messiter. I reckon the boys are grateful to me for scattering my lead so promiscuous."

"I heard one say he would like to lap your haid tenderly," murmured McWilliams.

"With a two-by-four, I suppose," laughed Bannister.

"Shouldn't wonder. But, looking y'u over casual, it occurs to me he might get sick of his job befo' he turned y'u loose," McWilliams admitted, with a glance of admiration at the clean power showing in the other's supple lines.

Nor could either the foreman or his mistress deny the tribute of their respect to this scamp who sat so jauntily his seat regardless of what the next moment might bring forth. Three wounded men were about the place, all presumably quite willing to get a clean shot at him in the open. One of them had taken his chance already, and missed. Their visitor had no warrant for knowing that a second might not any instant try his luck with better success. Yet he looked every inch the man on horseback, no whit disturbed, not the least conscious of any danger. Tall, spare, broad-shouldered, this berry-brown young man, crowned with close-cropped curls, sat at the gates of the enemy very much at his insolent ease.

"I came over to pay my party call," he explained.

"It really wasn't necessary. A run in the machine is not a formal function."

"Maybe not in Kalamazoo."

"I thought perhaps you had come to get my purse and the sixty-three dollars," she derided.

"No, ma'am; nor yet to get that bunch of cows I was going to rustle from you to buy an auto. I came to ask you to go riding with me."

The audacity of it took her breath. Of all the outrageous things she had ever heard, this was the cream. An acknowledged outlaw, engaged in feud with her retainers over that deadly question of the run of the range, he had sauntered over to the ranch where lived a dozen of his enemies, three of them still scarred with his bullets, merely to ask her to go riding with him. The magnificence of his bravado almost obliterated its impudence. Of course she would not think of going. The idea! But her eyes glowed with appreciation of his courage, not the less because the consciousness of it was so conspicuously absent from his manner.

"I think not, Mr. Bannister"—and her face almost imperceptibly stiffened. "I don't go riding with strangers, nor with men who shoot my boys. And I'll give you a piece of advice, sir. That is, to burn the wind back to your home. Otherwise I won't answer for your life. My punchers don't love you, and I don't know how long I can keep them from you."

McWilliams nodded. "That's right. Y'u better roll your trail, seh; and if y'u take my advice, you'll throw gravel lively. I saw two of the boys cutting acrost that pasture five minutes ago. They looked as if they might be haided to cut y'u off, and I allow it may be their night to howl."

"Indeed!" Their visitor looked politely interested. "This solicitude for me is very touching. I observe that both of you are carefully blocking me from the bunk-house in order to prevent another practise-shot. I reckon I'll go while I'm still unpunctured." He

bowed, and gathered the reins for departure.

"One moment! Mr. McWilliams and I are going with you," the girl announced.

"Changed your mind? Think you'll take a little *puscar*, after all?"

"I don't want to be responsible for your killing. We'll see you safe off the place," she answered curtly.

The foreman fell in on one side of Bannister, his mistress on the other. They rode in close formation, to lessen the chance of an ambush. Bannister alone chatted at his debonair ease, ignoring the responsibility they felt for his safety.

"I got my ride, after all," he presently chuckled. "To be sure, I wasn't expecting Mr. McWilliams to chaperon us. But that's an added pleasure."

"Would it be an added pleasure to get bumped off to kingdom come?" drawled the foreman, giving a reluctant admiration to his aplomb.

"Thinking of those willing boys of yours again, are you?" laughed Bannister. "They're certainly a heap prevalent with their hardware, but their hunting don't seem to bring home any meat."

"By the way, how *is* your ankle, Mr. Bannister? I forgot to ask." This shot from the young woman.

He enjoyed it with internal mirth. "They did happen on the target that time," he admitted. "Oh, it's getting along fine, but I aim to do most of my walking on horseback for a while."

They swept past the first dangerous grove of cottonwoods in safety, and rounded the boundary fence corner.

"They're in that bunch of pines over there," said the foreman, after a single sweep of his eyes in that direction.

"Yes, I see they are. You oughtn't to let your boys wear red bandannas when they go gunning, Miss Messiter. It's an awful careless habit."

Helen herself could see no sign of life in the group of pines, but she knew their keen, trained eyes had found what hers could not. Riding with one or another of her cowboys, she had often noticed how infallibly they could read

the country for miles around. A scattered patch on a distant hillside, though it might be a half-hour's ride from them, told them a great deal more than seemed possible. To her the dark spots sifted on that slope meant scrub underbrush, if there was any meaning at all in them. But her riders could tell not only whether they were alive, but could differentiate between sheep and cattle. Indeed, McWilliams could nearly always tell whether they were *her* cattle or not. He was unable to explain to her how he did it. By a sort of instinct, she supposed.

The pines were negotiated in safety, and on the part of the men with a carelessness she could not understand. For after they had passed there was a spot between her shoulder-blades that seemed to tingle in expectation of a possible bullet boring its way through. But she would have died rather than let them know how she felt.

Perhaps Bannister understood, however, for he remarked casually: "I wouldn't be ambling past so leisurely if I was riding alone. It makes a heap of difference who your company is, too. Those punchers wouldn't take a chance at me now for a million dollars."

"No, they're some haidstrong, but they ain't plumb locoed," agreed Mac.

Fifteen minutes later Helen drew up at the line corner. "We'll part company here, Mr. Bannister. I don't think there is any more danger from my men."

"Before we part there is something I want to say. I hold that a man has as much right to run sheep on these hills as cows. It's government land, and neither one of us owns it. It's bound to be a case of the survival of the fittest. If sheep are hardier and more adapted to the country, then cows have got to *vamos*. That's nature, as it looks to me. The buffalo and the antelope have gone, and I guess cows have got to take their turn."

Her scornful eyes burned him. "You came to tell me that, did you? Well, I don't believe a word of it. I'll not yield my rights without a fight. You may depend on that."

"Here, too," nodded her foreman. "I'm with my boss clear down the line. And as soon as she lets me turn loose my six-gun, you'll hear it pop, seh."

"I have not a doubt of it, Mr. McWilliams," returned the sheepman blithely. "In the meantime I was going to say that though most of my interests are in sheep instead of cattle——"

"I thought most of your interests were in other people's property," interrupted the young woman.

"It goes into sheep ultimately," he smiled. "Now, what I am trying to get at is this: I'm in debt to you a heap, Miss Messiter, and since I'm not all yellow cur, I intend to play fair with you. I have ordered my sheep back across the dead-line. You can have this range to yourself for your cattle. The fight's off so far as we personally are concerned."

A hint of deeper color touched her cheeks. Her manner had been cavalier at best; for the most part frankly hostile; and all the time the man was on an errand of good-will. Certainly he had scored at her expense, and she was ashamed of herself.

"Y'u mean that you're going to respect the dead-line?" asked Mac in surprise.

"I didn't say quite that," explained the sheepman. "What I said was that I meant to keep on my side of it so far as the Lazy D cattle are concerned. I'll let your range alone."

"But y'u mean to cross it down below where the Bar Double-E cows run?"

Bannister's gay smile touched the sardonic face. "Do you invite the public to examine your hand when you sit into a game of poker, Mr. McWilliams?"

"You're dead right. It's none of my business what y'u do so long as y'u keep off our range," admitted the foreman. "And next time the conversation happens on Mr. Bannister, I'll put in my little say-so that he ain't all black."

"That's very good of you, sir," was the other's ironical retort.

The girl's gauntleted hand offered itself impulsively. "We can't be friends

under existing circumstances, Mr. Bannister. But that does not alter the fact that I owe you an apology. You came as a peace envoy, and one of my men shot at you. Of course, he did not understand the reason why you came, but that does not matter. I did not know your reason myself, and I know I have been perfectly horrid."

"Are you shaking hands with Ned Bannister the sheepman, or Ned Bannister the outlaw?" asked the owner of that name, with a queer little smile that seemed to mock himself.

"With Ned Bannister the gentleman. If there is another side to him I don't know it personally."

He flushed underneath the tan, but very plainly with pleasure. "Your opinions are right contrary to Hoyle, ma'am. Aren't you aware that a sheepman is the lowest thing that walks? Ask Mr. McWilliams."

"I have known stockmen of that opinion, but——"

The foreman's sentence was never finished. From a clump of bushes a hundred yards away came the crack of a rifle. A bullet sang past, cutting a line that left on one side of it Bannister, on the other Miss Messiter and her foreman. Instantly the two men slid from their horses on the farther side, dragged down the young woman behind the cover of the broncos, and arranged the three ponies so as to give her the greatest protection available. Somehow the weapons that garnished them had leaped to their hands before their feet touched the ground.

"That coyote isn't one of our men. I'll back that opinion high," said McWilliams promptly.

"Who is he?" the girl whispered.

"That's what we're going to find out pretty soon," returned Bannister grimly. "Chances are it's me he is trying to collect. Now, I'm going to make a break for that cottonwood. When I go, you better run up a white handkerchief on your riding-whip and move back from the firing-line. Turn Buck loose when you leave. He'll stay around and come when I whistle."

He made a run for it, zigzagging

through the sage-brush so swiftly as to offer the least certain mark possible for a sharpshooter. Yet twice the rifle spoke before he reached the cottonwood.

Meanwhile Mac had fastened the handkerchief of his mistress on the end of her whip and was edging out of range. His tense, narrowed gaze never left the bush-clump from which the shots were being pumped, and he was careful during their retreat to remain on the danger side of the road, in order to cover Helen.

"I guess Bannister's right. He don't want us, whoever he is."

And even as he murmured it, the wind of a bullet lifted his hat from his head. He picked it up and examined it. The course of the bullet was marked by a hole in the wide brim, and two more in the side and crown.

"He certainly ventilated it proper. I reckon, ma'am, we'll make a run for it. Lie low on the pinto's neck, with your haid on the off side. That's right. Let him out."

A mile and a half farther up the road Mac reined in, and made the Indian peace-sign. Two dejected figures came over the hill and resolved themselves into punchers of the Lazy D. Each of them trailed a rifle by his side.

"You're a fine pair of ring-tailed snorters, ain't y'u?" jeered the foreman. "Got to get gay and go projectin' round on the shoot after y'u got your orchs to stay hitched. Anything to say for yo'selves?"

If they had it was said very silently.

"Now, Miss Messiter is going to pass it up this time, but from now on y'u don't go off on any private massacrees while y'u punch at the Lazy D. Git that? This hyer is the last call for supper in the dining-cah. If y'u miss it, y'u'll feed at some other chuck-house." Suddenly the drawl of his sarcasm vanished. His voice carried the ring of peremptory command. "Jim, y'u go back to the ranch with Miss Messiter, and keep your eyes open. Missou, I need y'u. We're going back. I reckon y'u better hang on to the stirrup, for we got to travel some. *Adios, seño-rita!*"

He was off at a slow lope on the road he had just come, the other man running beside the horse. Presently he stopped, as if the arrangement were not satisfactory; and the second man swung behind him on the pony. Later, when she turned in her saddle, she saw that they had left the road and were cutting across the plain, as if to take the sharpshooter in the rear.

Her troubled thoughts stayed with her even after she had reached the ranch. She was nervously excited, keyed up to a high pitch; for she knew that out on the desert, within a mile or two of her, men were stalking each other with life or death in the balance as the price of vigilance, skill, and an unflawed steel nerve. While she herself had been in danger, she had been mistress of her fear. But now she could do nothing but wait, after ordering out such reinforcements as she could recruit without delay; and the inaction told upon her swift, impulsive temperament. Once, twice, the wind brought to her a faint sound.

She had been pacing the porch, but she stopped, white as a sheet. Behind those faint explosions might lie a sinister tragedy. Her mind projected itself into a score of imaginary possibilities. She listened, breathless in her tensity, but no further echo of that battle-field reached her. The sun still shone warmly on brown Wyoming. She looked down into a rolling plain that blurred in the distance from knobs and flat spaces into a single stretch that included a thousand rises and depressions. That roll of country teemed with life, but the steady, inexorable sun beat down on what seemed a shining, primeval waste of space. Yet somewhere in that space the tragedy was being determined; unless it had been already enacted.

She wanted to scream. The very stillness mocked her. So, too, did the clicking windmill, with its monotonous regularity. Her pony still stood saddled in the yard. She knew that her place was at home, and she fought down a dozen times the tremendous impulse to mount and fly to the field of combat.

She looked at her watch. How slowly the minutes dragged! It could not be only five minutes since she had looked last time. Again she fell to pacing the long west porch, and interrupted herself a dozen times to stop and listen.

"I can bear it no longer," she told herself at last, and in another moment was in the saddle plying her pinto with the quirt.

But before she reached the first cottonwoods she saw them coming. Her glasses swept the distant group, and with a shiver she made out the dreadful truth. They were coming slowly, carrying something between them. The girl did not need to be told that the object they were bringing home was their dead or wounded.

A figure on horseback detached itself from the huddle of men and galloped toward her. He was coming to break the news. But who was the victim? Bannister or McWilliams she felt sure, by reason of the sinking heart in her; and then it came home that she would be hard hit if it were either.

The approaching rider began to take distinct form through her glasses. As he pounded forward she recognized him. It was the man nicknamed Denver. The wind was blowing strongly from her to him, and while he was still a hundred yards away she hurled her question at him.

His answer was lost in the wind sweep, but one word of it she caught. That word was "Mac."

CHAPTER VI.

THE MAN FROM THE HOLE-IN-THE WALL.

Though the sharpshooter's rifle cracked twice during his run for the cottonwood, the sheepman reached the tree in safety. He could dodge through the brush as elusively as any man in Wyoming. It was a trick he had learned on the whitewashed gridiron of a football-field. For in his buried past this man had been the noted half-back of

a famous college, and one of his specialties had been running the ball back after a catch through a broken field of opponents. The lesson that experience had then thumped into him had since saved his life on more than one occasion.

Having reached the tree, Bannister took immediate advantage of the lie of the ground to snake forward unobserved for another hundred feet. There was a dip from the foot of the tree, down which he rolled into the sage below. He wormed his way through the thick scrub brush to the edge of a dry creek, into the bed of which he slid. Then swiftly, his body bent beneath the level of the bank, he ran forward in the sand. He moved noiselessly, eyes and ears alert to aid him, and climbed the bank at a point where a live-oak grew.

Warily he peeped out from behind its trunk and swept the plain for his foe. Nothing was to be seen of him. Slowly and patiently his eyes again went over the semicircle before him, for where death may lurk behind every foot of vegetation, every bump or hillock, the plainsman leaves as little as may be to chance. No faintest movement could escape the sheepman's eyes, no least stir fail to apprise his ears. Yet for many minutes he waited in vain, and the delay told him that he had to do with a trained hunter rather than a mere reckless cow-puncher. For somewhere in the rough country before him his enemy lay motionless, every faculty alive to the least hint of his presence.

It was the whirring flight of a startled dove that told Bannister the whereabouts of his foe. Two hundred yards from him the bird rose, and the direction it took showed that the man must have been trailing forward from the opposite quarter. The sheepman slipped back into the dry creek bed, retraced his steps for about a stone-throw, and again crawled up the bank.

For a long time he lay face down in the grass, his gaze riveted to the spot where he knew his opponent to be hidden. A faint rustle not born of the wind stirred the sage. Still Bannister waited. A less experienced man would

have blazed away and exposed his own position. But not this young man with the steel-wire nerves. Silent as the coming of dusk, no breaking twig or displaced brush betrayed his self-contained presence.

Something in the clump he watched wriggled forward and showed indistinctly through an opening in the underbrush. He whipped his rifle into position and fired twice. The huddled brown mass lurched forward and disappeared.

"Wonder if I got him. Seems to me I couldn't have missed clean," thought Bannister.

Science as before, vast and unbroken.

A scramble of running feet tearing a path through the brush, a crouching body showing darkly for an eyeflash, and then the pounding of a horse's retreating feet.

Bannister leaped up, ran lightly across the intervening space, and with his repeater took a pot-shot at the galloping horseman.

"Missed!" he muttered, and at once gave a sharp whistle that brought his pony to him on the trot. He vaulted to the saddle and gave chase. It was rough going, but nothing in reason can stop a cow-pony. As sure-footed as a mountain goat, as good a climber almost as a cat, Buck followed the flying horseman over perilous rock rims and across deep-cut creek beds. Panther-like he climbed up the steep creek sides without hesitation, for the round-up had taught him never to falter at stiff going so long as his rider put him at it.

It was while he was clambering out of the sheer sides of a wash that Bannister made a discovery. The man he pursued was wounded. Something in the manner of the fellow's riding had suggested this to him, but a drop of blood splashed on a stone that happened to meet his eye made the surmise a certainty.

He was gaining now—not fast, almost imperceptibly, but none the less surely. He could see the man looking over his shoulder, once, twice, and then again, with that hurried, fearful glance that measures the approach of retribu-

tion. Barring accidents, the man was his.

But the unforeseen happened. Buck stepped in the hole of a prairie-dog and went down. Over his head flew the rider like a stone from a catapult.

How long Ned Bannister lay unconscious he never knew. But when he came to himself it was none too soon. He sat up dizzily and passed his hand over his head. Something had happened. What was it? Oh, yes, he had been thrown from his horse. A wave of recollection passed over him, and his mind was clear once more. Presently he got to his feet and moved rather uncertainly toward Buck, for the horse was grazing quietly a few yards from him.

But half-way to the pony he stopped. Voices, approaching by way of the bed of Dry Creek, drifted to him.

"He must 'a' turned and gone back. Mebbe he guessed we was there."

And a voice that Bannister knew, one that had a strangely penetrant, cruel ring of power through the drawl, made answer: "Judd said before he fainted he was sure the man was Ned Bannister. I'd certainly like to meet up with my beloved cousin right now and even up a few old scores. By God, I'd make him sick before I finished with him!"

"I'll bet y'u would, cap," returned the other admiringly. "Think we'd better deploy here and beat up the scenery a few as we go?"

There are times when the mind works like lightning, flashes its messages on the wings of an electric current. For Bannister this was one of them. The whole situation lighted for him plainly as if it had been explained for an hour. His cousin had been out with a band of his cutthroats on some errand, and while returning to the fastnesses of the Hole-in-the-Wall country had stopped to noon at a cow-spring three or four miles from the Lazy D. Judd Morgan, whom he knew to be a lieutenant of the notorious bandit, had ridden toward the ranch in the hope of getting an opportunity to vent his anger against its mistress or some of her men. While pursuing the renegade, Bannis-

ter had stumbled into a hornet's nest, and was in imminent danger of being stung to death. Even now the last speaker was scrambling up the bank toward him.

The sheepman had to choose between leaving his rifle and immediate flight. The latter was such a forlorn hope that he gave up Buck for the moment, and ran back to the place where his repeating Winchester had fallen. Without stopping, he scooped the rifle up as he passed. In his day he had been a famous sprinter, and he scudded now for dear life. It was no longer a question of secrecy. The sound of men breaking their hurried way through the heavy brush of the creek-bank came crisply to him. A voice behind shouted a warning, and from not a hundred yards in front of him came an answering shout. Hemmed in from the fore and the rear, he swung off at a right angle. An open stretch lay before him, but he had to take his desperate chance without cover. Anything was better than to be trapped like a wild beast driven by the beaters to the guns.

Across the bare, brown mesa he plunged; and before he had taken a dozen steps the first rifle had located its prey and was sniping at him. He had perhaps a hundred yards to cover ere the mesa fell away into a hollow, where he might find temporary protection in the scrub live-oaks. And now a second marksman joined himself to the first. But he was going fast, and already had covered half the distance, and it is no easy thing to bring down a live, dodging target.

Again the first gun spoke, and scored another miss, whereat a mocking, devilish laugh rang out in the sunshine.

"Y'u boys splash a heap of useless lead around the horizon. I reckon cousin Ned's my meat. Y'u see, I get him in the flapper without spoiling him complete." And at the word he flung the rifle to his shoulder and fired with no apparent aim.

The running man doubled up like a cottontail, but found his feet again in an instant, though one arm hung limp by

his side. He was within a dozen feet of the hill-drop and momentary safety.

"Shall I take him, cap?" cried one of the men.

"No. He's mine." The rifle smoked once more, and again the runner went down. But this time he plunged headlong down the slope and out of sight.

The outlaw chief turned on his heel. "I reckon he'll not run any more today. Bring him into camp and we'll take him along with us," he said carelessly, and walked away to his horse in the creek bed.

Two of the outlaws started forward, but they stopped half-way, as if rooted to the ground. For a galloping horseman suddenly drew up at the very point for which they were starting. He leaped to the ground and warned them back with his rifle. While he covered them, a second man rode up and lifted Bannister to his saddle.

"Ready, Mac," he gave the word, and both horses disappeared with their riders over the brow of the hill. When the surprised desperadoes recovered themselves and reached that point, the rescuers had disappeared in the heavy brush.

The alarm was at once given, and their captain, cursing them in a raucous bellow for their blunder, ordered immediate pursuit. It was some little time before the trail of the fugitives was picked up, but once discovered they were overhauled rapidly.

"We're not going to get out without swapping lead," McWilliams admitted anxiously. "I wisht y'u wasn't hampered with that load, but I reckon I'll have to try to stand them off alone."

"We bucked into a slice of luck when I happened on his brone mavericking around alone. Hadn't been for that we could never have made it," said Missou, who never crossed a bridge until he came to it.

"We haven't made it yet, old hoss, not by a long mile, and two more on top o' that. They're beginning to pump lead already. Huh! Got to drap your pills closer'n that 'fore y'u worry me."

"I believe he's daid, anyway," said

Missou presently, peering down into the white face of the unconscious man.

"Got to hang onto the remains, anyhow, for Miss Helen. Those coyotes are too much of the wolf breed to leave him with them."

"Looks like they're gittin' the aim some better," equably remarked the other a minute later, when a spurt of sand flew up in front of him.

"They're certainly crowding us. I expaict I better send them a 'How-de-do?' so as to discourage them a few." He took as careful aim as he could on the galloping horse, but his bullet went wide.

"They're gaining like sixty. It's my offhand opinion we better stop at that bunch of trees and argue some with them. No use buck-jumpin' along to burn the wind while they drill streaks of light through us."

"All right. Take the trees. Y'u'll be able to get into the game some then."

They debouched from the road to the little grove and slipped from their horses.

"Deader'n hell," murmured Missou, as he lifted the limp body from his horse. "But I guess we'll pack what's left back to the little lady at the Lazy D."

The outlaw chief halted his men just out of range and came forward alone, holding his right hand up in the usual signal of peace. In appearance he was not unlike Ned Bannister. There was the same long, slim, tiger build, with the flowing muscles rippling easily beneath the loose shirt; the same effect of power and dominance, the same clean, springy stride. The pose of the head, too, even the sweep of salient jaw, bore a marked resemblance. But similarity ceased at the expression. For instead of frankness there lurked here that hint of the devil of strong passion uncontrolled. He was the victim of his own moods, and in the space of an hour one might, perhaps, read in that face cold cunning, cruel malignity, leering ribaldry, as well as the hard-bitten virtues of unflinching courage and implacable purpose.

"I reckon you're near enough," suggested Mac, when the man had approached to within a hundred feet of the tree-clump.

"Y'u're drawing the dead-line," the other acknowledged indolently. "It won't take a minute to tell y'u what I want and mean to have. I'm giving y'u two minutes to hand me over the body of Ned Bannister. If y'u don't see it that way, I'll come and collect."

"Y'u can't come too quick, seh. We're here a-shootin', and don't y'u forget it," was McWilliams' prompt answer.

The sinister face of the man from the Hole-in-the-Wall darkened. "Y'u've signed your own death-warrants," he let out through set teeth, and at the word swung on his heel.

"The ball's about to open. Pardners for a waltz. Have a dust-cutter, Mac, before she grows warm."

The puncher handed over his flask, and the other held it before his eye and appraised the contents in approved fashion. "Don't mind if I do. Here's how!"

"How!" echoed Missou, in turn, and tipped up the bottle till the liquor gurgled down his baked throat.

"He's fanning out his men so as to get us both at the front and back door. Lucky there ain't but four of them."

"I guess we better lie back to back," proposed Missou. "If our luck's good, I reckon they're going to have a gay time rushing this fort."

A few desultory shots had already been dropped among the cottonwoods, and returned by the defendants when Missou let out a yell of triumph.

"Glory Hallelujah! Here come the boys splittin' down the road hell-for-leather. That lopsided, ring-tailed snorter of a hawss-thief is gathering his wolves for a hike back to the tall timber. Feed me a cigaret, Mac. I plumb want to celebrate."

It was as the cow-puncher had said. Down the road a cloud of dust was sweeping toward them, in the center of which they made out three hard-riding cowboys from the ranch. Farther back, in the distance, was another dust

whirl. The outlaw chief's hard, vigilant gaze swept over the reenforcements, and decided instantly that the game had gone against him for the present. He whistled shrilly twice, and began a slow retreat toward the hills. The miscreants flung a few defiant shots at the advancing cowmen, and disappeared, swallowed up in the earth-swells.

The homeward march was a slow one, for Bannister had begun to show signs of consciousness, and it was necessary to carry him with extreme care. While they were still a mile from the ranch-house, the pinto and its rider could be seen loping toward them.

"Ride forward, Denver, and tell Miss Helen we're coming. Better have her get everything fixed to doctor him soon as we get there. Give him the best show in the world, and he'll still be sailing awful close to the divide. I'll bet a hundred plunks he'll cash in, anyway."

"Done!"

The voice came faintly from the improvised litter. Mac turned with a start, for he had not known that Bannister was awake to his surroundings. The man appeared the picture of helplessness, all the lusty power and vigor stricken out of him; but his indomitable spirit still triumphed over the physical collapse, for as the foreman looked his left eyelids drooped humorously in a wink. It seemed to say: "Still in the ring, old man."

CHAPTER VII.

NORA DARLING ARRIVES.

Miss Messiter clung to civilization enough, at least, to prefer that her chambermaid should be a woman rather than a Chinese. It did not suit her preconceived idea of the proper thing that Lee Ming should sweep floors, dust bric-à-brac, and make the beds. To see him slosh-sloshing around in his felt slippers made her homesick for Kalamazoo. There were other reasons why the proprieties would be better served by having another woman about the place; reasons that had to do with the chap-eron system that even in the uncombed

West makes its claims upon unmarried young women of respectability.

Wherefore on the morning after her arrival, Helen had sent two letters back to "the States." One of these had been to Mrs. Winslow, a widow of fifty-five, inviting her to come out on a business basis as housekeeper of the Lazy D. The buxom widow had loved Helen since she had been a toddling baby, and her reply was immediate and enthusiastic. Eight days later she had reported in person. The second letter bore the affectionate address of Nora Darling, Detroit, Michigan. This also in time bore fruit at the ranch in a bewitching little personality most distracting to any susceptible cowboy heart.

Nora Darling was petite, and when she turned her soft, dark, velvety eyes on an unattached man he was lost. It was agreed at the Lazy D mess-table that no single woman—either grammatically or matrimonially—had the right to monopolize so many attractions in so small a compass. Dark and flashing she was, with full red lips, like cherries. Her hair was of a coppery glint, and had a most fascinating trick of escaping in little curls. Always she had the pleasantest little smile for a man, in the depth of which sparkled two rows of tiny pearls. Her shy, slant glances penetrated tough hides to tender hearts, and set them a-tingle with a queer delight. Add to this that Nora was Irish and a born flirt, and enough evidence is in to show that the new housemaid at the Lazy D was necessarily bound to stimulate rivalry among the retainers of the ranch.

She did. It was astonishing how many errands the men found to take them to "the house," as they called the building where the mistress of the ranch dwelt. After Bannister was brought there to be nursed back to health, he served for a time as an excellent excuse. Judging from the number of the inquiries which the men found it necessary to make as to his progress, Helen would have guessed him exceedingly popular with her riders. Having a sense of humor, she mentioned this to McWilliams one day.

He laughed, and tried to turn it into a compliment to his mistress. But she would have none of it.

"I know better, sir. They don't come here to see me. Nora is the attraction, and I have sense enough to know it. My nose is quite out of joint," she laughed.

Mac looked with gay earnestness at the feature she had mentioned. "There's a heap of difference in noses," he murmured, apparently apropos of nothing.

"That's another way of telling me that Nora's pug is the sweetest thing you ever saw," she charged.

"I ain't half such a bad actor as some of the boys," he deprecated.

"Meaning in what way?"

"The Nora Darling way."

He pronounced her name so much as if it were a caress that his mistress laughed, and he joined in it.

"It's your fickleness that is breaking my heart. The first week I came none of you could do enough for me. Now it's all Nora, darling." She mimicked gaily his intonation.

"Well, ma'am, it's this way," explained the foreman with a grin. "Y'u're right pleasant and friendly, but the boys have got a savvy way down deep that y'u'd shuck that friendliness awful sudden if any of them dropped around with 'Object, Matrimony' in their manner. Consequence is, they're loaded down to the ground with admiration of their boss, but they ain't presumptuous enough to expaict any more. I had notions, mebbe, I'd cut more ice, me being not afflicted with bashfulness. My notions faded, ma'am, in about a week."

"When Nora came?" she laughed.

"No, ma'am, they had gone glimmering long before she arrived. I was just convalescent enough to need being cheered up when she drapped in."

"And are you cheered up yet?" his mistress asked.

He took off his dusty hat and scratched his head. "I ain't right certain, yet, ma'am. Soon as I know I'm consoled, I'll be round with a. invite to the wedding."

"That is, if you are."

"If I am—yes. Y'u can't most always tell when they have eyes like hers."

"You're quite an authority on the sex considering your years."

"Yes, ma'am." He looked aggrieved, thinking himself a man grown. "How did y'u say Mr. Bannister was?"

"Wait, and I'll send Nora out to tell you," she flashed, and disappeared in the house.

Conversation at the bunk-house and the chuck-tent sometimes circled around the young women at the house, but its personality rarely grew pronounced. References to Helen Messiter and the housemaid were usually by way of repartee at each other. For a change had come over the spirit of the Lazy D men, and, though a cheerful profanity still flowed freely when they were alone together, vulgarity was banished.

The morning after his conversation with Miss Messiter, McWilliams was washing in the foreman's room when the triangle beat the call for breakfast, and he heard the cook's raucous "Come and get it." There was the usual stampede for the tent, and a minute later Mac flung back the flap and entered. He took the seat at the head of the table, along the benches on both sides of which the punchers were plying busy knives and forks.

"A stack of chips," ordered the foreman; and the cook's "Coming up" was scarcely more prompt than the plate of hot cakes he set before the young man.

"Hlen fruit, sunny side up," shouted Reddy, who was further advanced in his meal.

"Tame that fog-horn, son," advised Lee Hop; but presently he slid three fried eggs from a frying-pan into the plate of the hungry one.

"I want y'u boys to finish flankin' that bunch of hill calves to-day," said the foreman, emptying half a jug of sirup over his cakes.

"Redtop, he ain't got no appetite these days," grinned Denver, as the gentleman mentioned cleaned up a second loaded plate of ham, eggs, and fried

potatoes. "I see him studying a Wind River Bible* yesterday. Curious how in the spring a young man's fancy gits to wandering on house furnishing. Red, he was taking the catalogue alphabetically. Carpets was absorbin' his attention, chairs on deck, and chandeliers in the hole, as we used to say when we was baseball kids."

"Ain't a word of truth in it," indignantly denied the assailed, his unfinished nose and chin giving him a pathetic, whipped puppy look. "Sho! I was just looking up saddles. Can't a fellow buy a new saddle without asking leave of Denver?"

"Cyarpets used to begin with a C in my spelling-book, but saddles got off right foot fust with a S," suggested Mac amiably.

"He was ce'tainly trying to tree his saddle among the C's. He was looking awful loving at a Turkish rug. Reckon he thought it was a saddle-blanket," derided Denver cheerfully.

"Huh! Y'u're awful smart, Denver," retaliated Reddy, his complexion matching his hair. "Y'u talk a heap with your mouth. Nobody believes a word of what y'u say."

Denver relaxed into a range song by way of repartee:

"I want mighty bad to be married,
To have a garden and a home;
I ce'tainly aim to git married,
And have a gyurl for my own."

"Aw! Y'u fresh guys make me tired. Y'u don't devil me a bit, not a bit. Whyfor should I care what y'u say? I guess this outfit ain't got no surcingle on me." Nevertheless, he made a hurried end of his breakfast and flung out of the tent.

"Y'u boys hadn't ought to wound Reddy's tender feelings, and him so bent on matrimony," said Denver innocently. "Get a move on them fried spuds and sashay them down this way, if there's any left when y'u fill your plate, Missou."

Nor was Reddy the only young man

who had dreams those days on the Lazy D. Cupid must have had his hands full, for his darts punctured more than one honest plain-man's heart. The reputation of the young women at the Lazy D seemed to travel on the wings of the wind, and from far and near Cattleland sent devotees to this shrine of youth and beauty. So casually the victims drifted in, always with a good business excuse warranted to endure raillery and sarcasm, that it was impossible to say they had come of set purpose to sun themselves in feminine smiles.

As for Nora, it is not too much to say that she was having the time of her life. Detroit, Michigan, could offer no such field for her expansive charms as the Wind River country, Wyoming. Here she might have her pick of a hundred, and every one of them picturesque begirt with flannel shirt, knotted scarf at neck, an arsenal that bristled, and a sun-tan that could be achieved only in the outdoors of the Rockies. Certainly these knights of the saddle radiated a romance that even her floor-walker "gentleman friend" could not compete with.

It was, too, very flattering to be in such demand that several of them usually wanted to appropriate her at once, as happened on the evening of the day when Reddy's breakfast came to untimely end. After supper that young man waited to shave, by reason of which he was hopelessly outdistanced, as usual. 'Frisco's lame leg, not yet fully recovered from Bannister's bullet, handicapped him unfairly, so that it was the foreman and Denver who dropped into the kitchen by different doors, neck and neck for the finish.

Nora was washing dishes, and she promptly set them both to wiping.

"I want to get some table-linen over to Lee Ming to-night," she said presently.

"Denver, he'll be glad to take it for y'u, ma'am. He's real obliging," offered Mac generously.

"I've been in the house all day, so I need a walk. I thought, perhaps, one of you gentlemen might——"

"Sure, I'll go along and carry it,"

*A Wind River Bible in the Northwest ranch country is a catalogue of one of the big Chicago department-stores that does a large shipping business in the West.

Denver interrupted. "Just as Mac says, I'll be real pleased to go."

Mac had missed it that time. He had too soon jumped to the conclusion that Nora did not intend to go herself. Lee Ming had established a laundry some half-mile from the ranch, and the way thereto lay in most romantic shadow and moonlight. Being a persistent admirer, the foreman tried again.

"I don't know as y'u ought to go out in the night air with that cold, Denver. I'd hate a heap to have y'u catch pneumonia," he said anxiously.

"Y'u're that thoughtful, Mac. I ex-paict, mebbe, a little walk might help my throat. Miss Nora and I will go real slow, so as not to wear out my strength."

"I was thinkin' I have some awful good medicine for a cold in the drawer of my wash-stand. Help yourself liberal, and it will do y'u good surely. *It's in a bottle.*"

"I'll bet it's good medicine, Mac. I'll drop round after we get home."

"I sorter hate to have y'u take risks," Mac tried again. "There ain't a bit of use in y'u exposing yourself so careless."

Miss Nora giggled.

"No, sir! The way I look at it, a fellow's got to take some risk. Now y'u cayn't tell some things. I figure I ain't half so likely to catch pneumonia as y'u would be to get heart trouble if y'u went walking with Miss Nora," returned Denver.

A perfect gravity sat on both their faces during the progress of their reparatee.

"If your throat's so bad, Mr. Halliday, I'll put a kerosense-rag round it for you when we get back," Nora said, with a sweet little glance of sympathy that the foreman did not enjoy.

Denver, otherwise "Mr. Halliday," beamed. "Y'u're real kind, ma'am. I'll bet that will help it on the outside much as Mac's medicine will inside."

"What'll y'u do for my heart, ma'am, if it gits bad the way Denver figures it will?"

"Y'u might try a mustard plaster," she giggled, with laughter.

For once the debonair foreman's ready tongue had brought him to defeat, and he was about to retire from the field when Nora herself offered first aid to the wounded.

"We would like to have you come along, Mr. McWilliams. I want you to come."

The soft, deep, velvety eyes invited him with such a subtle suggestion of a private understanding that Mac was instantly encouraged to accept. He knew, of course, that she was playing them off against each other, but he was possessed of an opinion common to young men in his case, that he really did have a better footing with her than had any other one of the boys. It may be added that this was an opinion that Denver, 'Frisco, and Reddy also shared as regards themselves. Which is merely another way of putting the regrettable fact that this otherwise charming young woman was given to coquetting with the hearts of her admirers.

"Any time y'u get oneasy about that cough, y'u may go on home, Denver," the foreman assured him after they had started. "Don't stay jest for politeness. We'll never miss y'u."

"Thank y'u, Mac. But I reckon I got to stay to keep Miss Darling from getting bored."

When they reached the little trail that ran up to Lee Ming's place, it was Denver that suggested Mac run in with the bundle so as to save Nora the climb.

"I'd like to, old man, but, since y'u thought of it first, I won't steal from you the credit of doing Miss Nora a little service. We'll wait right here for y'u till y'u come back."

"We'll all go up together," decided Nora, and honors were still easy.

In the pleasant moonlight the three sauntered back, two of them engaging in lively badinage, while the third applauded them with appreciative little giggles and murmurs of "Oh, Mr. McWilliams," and "You know you're just flattering me, Mr. Halliday."

If they had not been so gaily absorbed in their foolishness, the two men might not have walked so innocently into the trap waiting for them at the end of their

jaunt. As it was, the first intimation they had of anything unusual in the situation was a stern command to surrender.

"Throw up your hands. Quick, y'u blank fools!"

A masked man covered them, a six-shooter in each hand, and at the sound of his voice the arms of the cow-punchers went instantly into the air.

Nora gave an involuntarily little scream of dismay.

"Y'u don't need to be afraid, lady. Ain't anybody going to hurt y'u, I reckon," the masked man growled.

"Sure they won't," Mac reassured her. And he added ironically: "This play is just a little neighborly frolic. Liable to happen any day in Wyoming."

A second masked man stepped up. He, too, was garnished with an arsenal.

"What's all this talking about?" he demanded sharply.

"We just been having a little conversation, seh," returned McWilliams, his vigilant eyes searching through the disguise of the other. "Just been telling the lady that your call is in a friendly spirit. No objections, I suppose?"

The swarthy newcomer, who seemed to be in command, swore sourly. "You put a knot in your tongue, Mr. Foreman."

"Ce'tainly, if y'u prefer," returned the indomitable McWilliams.

"Shut up, or I'll pump lead into you."

"I'm padlocked, seh."

Nora Darling interrupted the dialogue by quietly fainting. McWilliams caught her as she fell.

"See what y'u done, y'u locoed idiots," he snapped.

already two of the men were back at work, and the third almost fit for service. As for the sheepman himself, for two days he had hung between life and death, then his splendid constitution had told, and he had rallied with so swift a recovery that it amazed her. It had now been six days since he was shot, and already he was laboriously limping about the room with the aid of a walking-stick. Under the tan he still wore an interesting pallor, but there could be no question that he was mending fast.

But before he had weathered that issue of life and death that pressed so closely on him, while he lay in the delirium of fever, talking incessantly, she had surprised the secrets of his soul. His talk had been incoherent, snatches of scenes from his daily life, echoes from the past, and babblings of names she did not know. He said much of his sheep, gave directions for the lambing, and at another time for dipping; then irrelevantly he would break away to the football-field, and urge his men to hold them and get the ball. And again his talk was to another lad apparently under his care, or perhaps to himself, when some other lad had had charge of him. She could not be sure which.

"Ned, Ned, remember your mother," he would implore. "She asked me to look after you, boy. Don't go wrong." This he repeated many times, and when he changed the subject it was to talk of her. She noticed that when he had imagined himself in the East, his talk had been correct and his speech finished, but now he lapsed into the drawl of Cattleland. "I ain't such a sweep as y'u think, girl. And I love y'u, too; I reckon I did from the time I landed in your auto. Y'u're game, dear, and a thoroughbred. To see y'u come sailin' down after me—y'u so sweet and steady, not turning a hair when the bullets sang—I sure do love y'u, Helen." At the mention of her name he fell on it, called her softly by it a hundred times.

And though she assured herself she did not love him—how could she love a man over whom such sinister doubts hovered?—yet his unconscious confession had been music to her heart. She

CHAPTER VIII.

A MUSICAL EVENING AMONG FRIENDS.

One of the things that had been a continual surprise to Helen was the short time required by these deep-chested and clean-blooded Westerners to recover from apparently serious wounds. It was only two weeks since Bannister had filled her hospital, and

had thought of it often since, after he had begun to mend and his gray eyes followed her peacefully about the room, when he had fallen asleep after her first short talks with him, and in the night when she should have been asleep, but preferred to torture herself with a sweet delight that was impossible.

This evening he had been liker himself than any day of his sickness. She had seen the daring, whimsical irony at work in him as of old; and this, too, had pleased her.

"I think if you'll be good you may have an egg and toast for supper," she had told him.

"I'll be right good if y'u'll eat it with me," he had answered.

So they ate supper together, in a pleasant intimacy that was delightful to both. He lay on the lounge, propped up with sofa cushions, and between them a short-legged sewing-table held the food. He watched her deft fingers butter the toast for him and prepare his egg, and it came to him that it was good to be alive and a convalescent, given so sweet a comrade for a nurse.

"I expect when I was sick I talked a heap of nonsense," he suggested, in the voice of a question; but he was unprepared for the sudden blush that swept her cheeks at his words.

"Sick folks do talk foolishness, they say," he added, his gaze trained on her suspiciously.

"Do they?"

"Nora says I rambled a few when I was out of my haid. But when I asked her what I said she laughed, and told me to ask y'u. Well, I'm asking now."

She was suddenly very busy over the teapot. "You talked about your ranch and your old home, and you wandered over your early days a good deal. It was very silly of Nora. She might just as well have told you. Will you have some more tea?"

"No, thank y'u. I've finished. Yes, that certainly seems harmless. I didn't know but I'd been telling secrets." Still his gray eyes rested on her quietly.

"No, Mr. Bannister, you did not tell any secrets of your gang, if that is what you mean."

"That isn't just what I meant, but it will have to do, I reckon. Are y'u going to read to me this evening?"

"If you like. What shall I read?"

"Some more of Barrie's book, if y'u don't mind. When a fellow is weak as a kitten, he kinder takes to things that make him feel like a kid again."

So Helen cleared away the supper things, moved the table, and sat down in an easy chair beside him to read "The Little White Bird." He lay at his ease, the strong, supple lines of him stretched gracefully on the lounge, and watched the play of her face in the lamplight as she read with vivid appreciation the Scotch novelist's excursion into Fairyland. She was very good to see, so vitally alive, so full of a sweet charm entirely personal. Occasionally they stopped to discuss some of the child fancies so intimately portrayed, and it was while they were doing this that the door opened to let in a masked man.

He stood negligently in the doorway, his masked face smiling down at them with a malice inhuman in its triumph. Perhaps it was the black vizor that was responsible for this Mephisto effect, for behind it only the leering eyes could be seen. These, narrowed to slits, swept the room, and came back to its occupants. He was a tall man and well-knit, dressed incongruously in up-to-date riding-boots and breeches, in combination with the usual gray shirt, knotted kerchief, and wide-brimmed felt hat of the horseman of the plains. The dust of the desert lay thick on him, without in the least obscuring a certain ribald elegance, a distinction of wickedness that rested upon him as his due. To this result his debonair manner contributed, though it carried with it no impression of weakness.

Indescribably sinister he looked, but joy leaped to the girl's heart; for she knew that this man in the doorway, menacing them with undrawn weapons, was the "king" of the Hole-in-the-Wall country, and therefore whoever the Ned Bannister she knew might be he was not what she had feared.

The eyes of the two men clashed, Bannister's stern and unyielding, the

outlaw's lit with the devil of triumph. But out of the faces of both men looked the inevitable conflict; the declaration of war that never ends till death.

"Introduce me to the lady, Cousin Ned," the newcomer said, with a sneer that was vulgarity refined to the *n*th power.

But Bannister, not deigning to move an inch from his position, looked in silence his steady contempt.

"Then it's up to me to introduce myself." The man's brown hand brushed the mask from his eyes, and he bowed with mocking deference. "Miss Messiter, allow me to introduce to y'u Ned Bannister, sometimes known as the king of the Hole-in-the-Wall country."

"But I don't understand—I thought—" Her eyes traveled in their perplexity to the Bannister she knew.

"A false alarm, ma'am. I'm the genuine guaranteed king," the outlaw suavely assured her.

"Still—his name—"

The desperado shrugged his broad shoulders. "That's my misfortune, Miss Messiter. He's my cousin, and we happen to have the same name. He has not been here long, and the general opinion mixes him with me, and thinks there is only one of us. That's easy enough, since both of us are on the move a good bit, and don't frequent the same society." He gave her his sleek smile. "That is, as a rule we don't move in the same circles. To-night's an exception."

It was not hard to see how the great likeness between them contributed to this mistake. Side by side, no man could possibly have mistaken one for the other. The color of their eyes, the shade of hair, even the cut of their features, was different. But beneath all distinctions in detail ran a family resemblance not to be denied. He looked like the Ned Bannister she knew might have been if all his life a free rein had been given to evil passions. To this effect of similarity, the height, the build, the elastic tread of each, all made further contributions.

"What are y'u doing here?" They

were the first words the wounded man had spoken, and in them was a curt ring of challenge.

"Come to look after my dear cousin, and see he's being treated proper," came the prompt, silken answer.

The other watched him with a cool, quiet glance that never wavered. The outlaw was heavily armed, but his weapons were sheathed, and, though there was a wary glitter behind the vindictive exultation in his eyes, his capable hands betrayed no knowledge of the existence of his revolvers. It was, he knew, to be a moral victory, if one at all.

"Hope I'm not disturbing any happy family circle," he remarked, and, taking two steps forward, he lifted the book from the girl's unresisting hands. "H'm! Barrie. I don't go much on him. He's too sissy for me. But I could have guessed the other Ned Bannister would be reading something like that," he concluded, a flicker of sneering contempt crossing his face.

"Perhaps y'u'll learn some time to attend to your own business," said the man on the couch quietly.

Hatred gleamed in the narrowed slits from which the soul of the other cousin looked down at him. "Go slow, Ned Bannister."

The girl hastily interrupted. She had not feared for herself, but she knew fear for the indomitable man she had nursed back to life. "Won't you sit down, Mr. Bannister? Since you don't approve our literature, perhaps we can find some other diversion more to your taste." She smiled faintly.

The man turned in smiling divination of her purpose, and sat down to play with her as a cat does with a mouse.

"Thank y'u, Miss Messiter, I believe I will. I called to thank y'u for your kindness to my cousin. The word goes that y'u pulled my dear cousin back when death was reaching mighty strong for him. Of course I feel grateful to y'u. How is he getting along now?"

"He's doing very well, I think."

"That's certainly good hearing," was his ironical response. "Howcome he to get hurt, did y'u say?"

"A hound bit me," explained the sheepman.

"Y'u don't say! I reckon y'u oughtn't to have got in its way. Did y'u kill it?"

"Not yet."

"That was surely a mistake, for it's liable to bite again."

The girl felt a sudden sickness at his honeyed cruelty, but immediately pulled herself together. For whatever fiendish intention might be in his mind she meant to frustrate it.

"I hear you are of a musical turn, Mr. Bannister. Won't you play for us?"

She had by chance found his weak spot. Instantly his eyes lit up. He stepped across to the piano and began to look over the music, though not so intently that he forgot to keep under his eye the man on the lounge.

"H'm! Mozart, Grieg, Chopin, Raff, Beethoven. Y'u certainly have the music here; I wonder if y'u have the musician." He looked her over with a bold, unscrupulous gaze. "It's an old trick to have classical music on the rack and ragtime in your soul. Can y'u p'ay these?"

"You will have to be the judge of that," she said.

He selected two of Grieg's songs and invited her to the piano. He knew instantly that the Norwegian's delicate fancy and lyrical feeling had found in her no inadequate medium of expression. The peculiar emotional quality of the song "I Love Thee" seemed to fill the room as she played. When she swung round on the stool at its conclusion it was to meet a shining-eyed, musical enthusiast instead of the villain she had left five minutes earlier.

"Y'u *can* play," was all he said, but the manner of it spoke volumes.

For nearly an hour he kept her at the piano, and when at last he let her stop playing he seemed a man transformed.

"You have given me a great pleasure, a very great pleasure, Miss Messiter," he thanked her warmly, his Western idiom sloughed with his villainy for the moment. "It has been a good many months since I have heard any decent

music. With your permission I shall come again."

Her hesitation was imperceptible. "Surely, if you wish." She felt it would be worse than idle to deny the permission she might not be able to refuse.

With perfect grace he bowed, and as he wheeled away met with a little shock of remembrance the gaze of his cousin. For a long moment their eyes bored into each other. Neither yielded the beat of an eyelid, but it was the outlaw that spoke.

"I had forgotten y'u. That's strange, too, because it was for y'u I came. I'm going to take y'u home with me."

"Alive or dead?" asked the other serenely.

"Alive, dear Ned."

"Same old traits cropping out again. There was always something feline about y'u. I remember when y'u were a boy y'u liked to torment wild animals y'u had trapped."

"I play with larger game now—and find it more interesting."

"Just so. Miss Messiter, I shall have to borrow a pony from y'u, unless——" He broke off and turned indifferently to the bandit.

"Yes, I brought a hawss along with me for y'u," replied the other to the unvoiced question. "I thought maybe y'u might want to ride with us."

"But he can't ride. He couldn't possibly. It would kill him," the girl broke out.

"I reckon not." The man from the Hole-in-the-Wall glanced at his victim as he drew on his gauntlets. "He's a heap tougher than y'u think."

"But it will. If he should ride now, why—— It would be the same as murder," she gasped. "You wouldn't make him ride now?"

"Didn't y'u hear him order his hawss, ma'am? He's keen on this ride. Of course he don't have to go unless he wants to." The man turned his villainous smile on his cousin, and the latter interpreted it to mean that if he preferred, the point of attack might be shifted to the girl. He might go or he might stay. But if he stayed the mis-

tress of the Lazy D would have to pay for his decision.

"No, I'll ride," he said at once.

Helen Messiter had missed the meaning of that Marconied message that flashed between them. She set her jaw with decision. "Well, you'll not. It's perfectly ridiculous. I won't hear of such a thing."

"Y'u seem right welcome. Hadn't y'u better stay, Ned?" murmured the outlaw, with smiling eyes that mocked.

"Of course he had. He couldn't ride a mile—not half a mile. The idea is utterly preposterous."

The sheepman got to his feet unsteadily. "I'll do famously."

"I won't have it. Why are you so foolish about going? He said you didn't need to go. You can't ride any more than a baby could chop down that live-oak in the yard."

"I'm a heap stronger than y'u think."

"Yes, you are!" she derided. "It's nothing but obstinacy. Make him stay," she appealed to the outlaw.

"Am I my cousin's keeper?" he drawled. "I can advise him to stay, but I can't make him."

"Well, I can. I'm his nurse, and I say he sha'n't stir a foot out of this house—not a foot."

The wounded man smiled quietly, admiring the splendid poise and energy of her. "I'm right sorry to leave y'u so unceremoniously."

"You're not going." She wheeled on the outlaw. "I don't understand this at all. But if you want him you can find him here when you come again. Put him on parole and leave him here. I'll not be a party to murder by letting him go."

"All right. We'll leave it that way," announced the man. "I'd hate to hurt your tender feelings after such a pleasant evening. Let him give his parole to come to me whenever I send for him, no matter where he may be, to quit whatever he is doing right that instant, and come on the jump. If he wants to leave it that way, we'll call it a bargain."

Again the rapier-thrust of their eyes

crossed. The sheepman was satisfied with what he saw in the face of his foe.

"All right. It's a deal," he agreed, and sank weakly back to the couch.

There are men whose looks are a profanation to any good woman. Ned Bannister, of the Hole-in-the-Wall, was one of them. He looked at his cousin, and his ribald eyes coasted back to bold scrutiny of this young woman's charming, buoyant youth. There was something in his face that sent a flush of shame coursing through her rich blood. No man had ever looked at her like that before.

"Take awful good care of him," he sneered, with so plain an implication of evil that her clean blood boiled. "But I know y'u will, and don't let him go before he's real strong."

"No," she murmured, hating herself for the flush that bathed her.

He bowed like a Chesterfield, and went out with elastic heels, spurs clicking.

Helen turned fiercely on her guest. "Why did you make me insist on your staying? As if I want you here, as if——" She stopped, choking with anger; presently flamed out, "I hate you," and ran from the room to hide herself alone with her tears and her shame.

CHAPTER IX.

FOR THE WORLD'S CHAMPIONSHIP.

The scene on which Helen Messiter's eyes rested that mellow Fourth of July was vivid enough to have interested a far more jaded mind than hers. Nowhere outside of Cattleland could it have been duplicated. Wyoming is sparsely populated, but the riders of the plains think nothing of traveling a hundred miles in the saddle to be present at a "bronco-busting" contest. Large delegations, too, had come in by railroad from Caspar, Billings, Cheyenne, and even Denver, so that the amphitheater that looked down on the arena was filled to its capacity.

All night the little town had rioted with its guests. Everything was wide open at Gimlet Butte. Saloons were

doing a land-office business and gambling-houses coining money. Great piles of gold had passed to and fro during the night at the roulette-wheel and the faro-table. But with the coming of day interest had centered on the rough-riding contest for the world's championship. Saloons and dance-halls were deserted, and the universal trend of travel had been toward the big grand stands, from which the sport could be best viewed.

It was afternoon now. The preliminaries had been ridden, and half a dozen of the best riders had been chosen by the judges to ride again for the finals. Helen was wonderfully interested, because in the six who were to ride again were included the two Bannister cousins, her foreman, McWilliams, the young man "Texas," whom she had met the day of her arrival at Gimlet Butte, and Tom Sanford, who had last year won the championship.

She looked down on the arena, and her heart throbbed with the pure joy of life. Already she loved her West and its picturesque, chap-clad population. Their jingling spurs and their colored kerchiefs knotted round sun-burned necks, their frank, whole-hearted abandon to the interest of the moment, led her to regard these youths as schoolboys. Yet they were a hard-bitten lot, as one could see, burned to a brick-red by the untempered sun of the Rockies: with muscles knit like steel, and hearts toughened to endure any blizzard they might meet. Only the humorous wrinkles about the corners of their eyes gave them away for the cheerful sons of mirth that they were.

"Bob Austin on Two-Step," announced the megaphone man, and a little stir eddied through the group gathered at the lane between the arena and the corral.

A meek-looking buckskin was driven into the arena. The embodiment of listlessness, it apparently had not ambition enough to flick a fly from its flank with its tail. Suddenly the bronco's ears pricked, its sharp eyes dilated. A man was riding forward, the loop of a lariat circling about his head. The rope fell

true, but the wily pony side-stepped, and the loop slithered to the ground. Again the rope shot forward, dropped over the pony's head, and tightened. The roper's mustang braced its fore-feet, and brought the buckskin up short. Another rope swept over its head. It stood trembling, unable to move without strangling itself.

A picturesque youth in flannel shirt and chaps came forward, dragging blanket, saddle, and bridle. At sight of him the horse gave a spasmodic fling, then trembled again violently. A blind was coaxed over its eyes and the bridle slipped on. Quickly and warily, with deft fingers, the young man saddled and cinched. He waved a hand jauntily to the ropers. The lariats were thrown off as the puncher swung to the saddle. For an instant the buckskin stood bewildered, motionless as a statue. There was a sudden leap forward high in air, and Bob Austin, alias "Texas," swung his sombrero with a joyous whoop.

"Fan him! Fan him!" screamed the spectators, and the rider's quirt went up and down like a piston-rod.

Round and round went Two-Step in a vicious circle, "swapping ends" with dizzying rapidity. Suddenly he went forward as from a catapult, and came to sudden halt in about five seconds. But Texas' knees still clung, viselike, to the sides of the pony. A series of quick bucks followed, the buckskin coming down with back humped, all four legs stiff as iron posts. The jar on the rider would have been like a pile-driver falling on his head had he not let himself grow limp. The buckskin plunged forward again in frenzied leaps, ending in an unexpected jump to one side. Alas for Texas! One moment he was jubilantly plying quirt and spurs, the next he found himself pitching sideways. To save himself he caught at the saddle-horn.

"He's hunting leather," shouted a hundred voices.

One of the judges rode out and waved a hand. Texas slipped to the ground disqualified, and made his dejected way back to his deriding comrades. Some of them had endured simi-

lar misfortunes earlier in the day. Therefore they found much pleasure in condoling with him.

"If he'd only recollected to saw off the horn of his saddle, then he couldn't 'a' found it when he went to hunt leather," mournfully commented one puncher in a shirt of robin's egg blue.

"'Twould have been most as good as to take the dust, wouldn't it?" retorted Texas gently, and the laugh was on the gentleman in blue, because he had been thrown earlier in the day.

"A fellow's hands sure get in his way sometimes. I reckon if you'd tied your hands, Tex, you'd been riding that rocking-hawss yet," suggested Denver amiably.

"Sometimes it's his foot he puts in it. There was onct a gent disqualified for riding on his spurs," said Texas reminiscently.

At which hit Denver retired, for not three hours before he had been detected digging his spurs into the cinch to help him stick to the saddle.

"Jim McWilliams will ride Dead Easy," came the announcement through the megaphone, and a burst of cheering passed along the grand stand, for the sunny smile of the foreman of the Lazy D made him a general favorite. Helen leaned forward and whispered something gaily to Nora, who sat in the seat in front of her. The Irish girl laughed and blushed, but when her mistress looked up it was her turn to feel the mounting color creep into her cheeks. For Ned Bannister, arrayed in all his riding finery, was making his way along the aisle to her.

She had not seen him since he had ridden away from the Lazy D ten days before, quite sufficiently recovered from his wounds to take up the routine of life again. They had parted not the best of friends, for she had not yet forgiven him for his determination to leave with his cousin the night that she had been forced to insist on his remaining. He had put her in a false position, and he had never explained to her why. Nor could she guess the reason—that he was not a man to harvest credit for himself by explaining his own chivalry.

Since her heart told her how glad she was he had come to her box to see her, she greeted him with the coolest little nod in the world.

"Good morning, Miss Messiter. May I sit beside y'u?" he asked.

"Oh, certainly!" She swept her skirts aside carelessly and made room for him. "I thought you were going to ride soon."

"No, I ride last except for Sanford, the champion. My cousin rides just before me. He's entered under the name of Jack Holloway."

She was thinking that he had no business to be riding, that his wounds were still too fresh, but she did not intend again to show interest enough in his affairs to interfere even by suggestion. Her heart had been in her mouth every moment of the time this morning while he had been tossed hither and thither on the back of his mount. In his delirium he had said he loved her. If he did, why should he torture her so? It was well enough for sound men to risk their lives, but—

A cheer swelled in the grand stand and died breathlessly away. McWilliams was setting a pace it would take a rare expert to equal. He was a trick-rider, and all the spectacular feats that appealed to the onlooker were his. While his horse was wildly pitching, he drank a bottle of pop and tossed the bottle away. With the reins in his teeth he slipped off his coat and vest, and concluded a splendid exhibition of skill by riding with his feet out of the stirrups. He had been smoking a cigar when he mounted. Except while he had been drinking the pop it had been in his mouth from beginning to end, and, after he had vaulted from the pony's back, he deliberately puffed a long smoke-spiral into the air, to show that his cigar was still alight. No previous rider had earned so spontaneous a burst of applause.

"He's certainly a pure when it comes to riding," acknowledged Bannister. "I look to see him get either first or second."

"Whom do you think is his most dangerous rival?" Helen asked.

"My cousin is a straight-up rider, too. He's more graceful than Mac, I think, but not quite so good on tricks. It will be nip and tuck."

"How about your cousin's cousin?" she asked, with bold irony.

"He hopes he won't have to take the dust," was his laughing answer.

The next rider suffered defeat irrevocably before he had been thirty seconds in the saddle. His mount was one of the most cunning of the outlaw ponies of the Northwest, and it brought him to grief by jamming his leg hard against the fence. He tried in vain to spur the bronco into the middle of the arena, but after it drove at a post for the third time and ground his limb against it, he gave up to the pain and slipped off.

"That isn't fair, is it?" Helen asked of the young man sitting beside her.

He shrugged his lean, broad shoulders. "He should have known how to keep the horse in the open. Mac would never have been caught that way."

"Jack Holloway on Rocking Horse," the announcer shouted.

It took four men and two lariats to subdue this horse to a condition sufficiently tame to permit of a saddle being slipped on. Even then this could not be accomplished without throwing the bronco first. The result was that all the spirit was taken out of the animal by the preliminary ordeal, so that when the man from the Hole-in-the-Wall country mounted, his steed was too jaded to attempt resistance.

"Thumb him! Thumb him!" the audience cried, referring to the cowboy trick of running the thumbs along a certain place in the shoulder to stir the anger of the buckner.

But the rider slipped off with disgust. "Give me another horse," he demanded, and after a minute's consultation among the judges a second pony was driven out from the corral. This one proved to be a Tartar. It went off in a frenzy of pitching the moment its rider dropped into the saddle.

"Nothing so good for the inside of a man as the outside of a hawss, the doctors tell lungers when they send them out here," chuckled Bannister, as he

watched his cousin's perfect ease in the cyclone of which he was the center.

"I expect it depends on the kind of a 'hawss,'" she mocked. "He's riding well, isn't he?"

"I don't know any that ride better."

The horse put up a superb fight, trying everything it knew to unseat this demon clamped to its back. It possessed in combination all the worst vices, was a weaver, a sunfisher, and a fence-rouer, and never had it tried so desperately to maintain its record of never having been ridden. But the outlaw in the saddle was too much for the outlaw underneath. He was master, just as he was first among the ruffians whom he led, because there was in him a red-hot devil of wickedness that would brook no rival.

The furious bronco surrendered without an instant's warning, and its rider slipped at once to the ground. As he sauntered through the dust toward the grand stand, Helen could not fail to see how his vanity sunned itself in the applause that met his performance. His equipment was perfect to the least detail. The reflection from a lady's looking-glass was no brighter than the silver spurs he jingled on his sprightly heels. Strikingly handsome in a dark, sinister way, one would say at first sight, and later would chafe at the justice of a verdict not to be denied.

Ned Bannister rose from his seat beside Helen. "Wish me luck," he said, with his gay smile.

"I wish you all the luck you deserve," she answered.

"Oh, wish me more than that if y'u want me to win."

"I didn't say I wanted you to win. You take the most unaccountable things for granted."

"I've a good mind to win, then, just to spite y'u," he laughed.

"As if you could," she mocked; but her voice took a softer intonation as she called after him in a low murmur: "Be careful, please."

His white teeth flashed a smile of reassurance at her. "I've never been killed yet."

"Ned Bannister on Steamboat," sang out the megaphone man.

"I'm certainly in luck. Steamboat's the worst hawss on the range," he told himself, as he strode down the grand stand to enter the arena.

The announcement of his name created for the second time that day a stir of unusual interest. Everybody in that large audience had heard of Ned Bannister; knew of his record as a "bad man" and his prowess as the king of the Hole-in-the-Wall country. That he should have the boldness to enter the contest in his own name seemed to show how defiant he was of the public sentiment against him, and how secure he counted himself in flaunting this contempt. As for the sheepman, the notoriety that his cousin's odorous reputation had thrust upon him was extremely distasteful as well as dangerous, but he had done nothing to disgrace his name, and he meant to use it openly. He could almost catch the low whispers that passed from mouth to mouth about him.

"Ain't it a shame that a fellow like that, leader of all the criminals that hide in the Hole-in-the-Wall, can show himself openly before ten thousand honest folks?" That he knew to be the purport of their whispering, and along with it went a recital of the crimes he had committed. How he was a noted "waddy," or cattle-rustler; how he and his gang had held up three trains in eighteen months; how he had killed Tom Mooney, Bob Carney, and several others—these were the sorts of things that were being said about him, and from the bottom of his soul he resented his impotency to clear his name.

There was something in Bannister's riding that caught Helen's fancy at once. It was the unconscious grace of the man, the ease with which he seemed to make himself a very part of the horse. He attempted no tricks, rode without any flourishes. But the perfect poise of his lithe body as it gave with the motions of the horse, proclaimed him a born rider; so finished, indeed, that his very ease seemed to discount the performance. Steamboat had a

malevolent red eye that glared hatred at the oppressor man, and to-day it lived up to its reputation of being the most vicious and untamed animal on the frontier. But, though it did its best to unseat the rider and trample him underfoot, there was no moment when the issue seemed in doubt save once. The horse flung itself backward in a somersault, risking its own neck in order to break its master's. But he was equal to the occasion; and when Steamboat staggered again to its feet Bannister was still in the saddle. It was a daring and magnificent piece of horsemanship, and, though he was supposed to be a desperado and a ruffian, his achievement met with a breathless gasp, followed by thunderous applause.

The battle between horse and man was on again, for the animal was as strong almost in courage as the rider. But Steamboat's confidence had been shaken as well as its strength. Its efforts grew less cyclonic. Foam covered its mouth and flecked its sides. The pitches were easy to foresee and meet. Presently they ceased altogether.

Bannister slid from the saddle and swayed unsteadily across the arena. The emergency past, he had scarce an ounce of force left in him. Jim McWilliams ran out and slipped an arm around his shoulders, regardless of what his friends might think of him for it.

"You're all in, old man. Y'u hadn't ought to have ridden, even though y'u did skin us all to a finish."

"Nonsense, Mac. First place goes to y'u or—or Jack Holloway."

"Not unless the judges are blind."

But Bannister's prediction proved true. The champion, Sanford, had been traveling with a Wild West show, and was far too soft to compete with these lusty cowboys, who had kept hard from their daily life on the plains. Before he had ridden three minutes it was apparent that he stood no chance of retaining his title, so that the decision narrowed itself to an issue between the two Bannisters and McWilliams. First place was awarded to the latter, the second prize to Jack Holloway, and the third to Ned Bannister.

But nearly everybody in the grand stand knew that Bannister had been discriminated against because of his unpopularity. The judges were not local men, and had nothing to fear from the outlaw. Therefore they penalized him on account of his reputation. It would never do for the associated press despatches to send word all over the East that a murderous desperado was permitted, unmolested, to walk away with the championship belt.

"It ain't a square deal," declared McWilliams promptly.

He was sitting beside Nora, and he turned round to express his opinion to the two sitting behind him in the box.

"We'll not go behind the returns. Y'u won fairly. I congratulate y'u, Mr. Champion-of-the-world," replied the sheepman, shaking hands cordially.

"I told you to bring that belt to the Lazy D," smiled his mistress, as she shook hands.

But in her heart she was crying out that it was an outrage.

CHAPTER X.

JUDD MORGAN PASSES.

Gimlet Butte devoted the night of the fourth to a high old time. The roping and the other sports were to be on the morrow, and meanwhile the night hours were filled with exuberance. The cowboy's spree comes only once in several months, but when it does come he enters into the occasion with such whole-hearted enthusiasm as to make up swiftly for lost time. A traveling midway had cast its tents in a vacant square in competition with the regular attractions of the town, and everywhere the hard-riding punchers were "night herding" in full regalia.

There was a big masked ball in the street, and another in the Masonic Hall, while here and there flared the lights of the faker with something to sell. Among these last was "Soapy" Sothern, doing a thriving business in selling suckers and bars wrapped with greenbacks. Crowds tramped the streets blowing horns and throwing con-

fetti, and everywhere was a large sprinkling of men in high-heeled boots, swinging along with the awkward, stiff-legged gait of the cowboy. Sometimes a girl was hanging on his arm, and again he was "whooping it up with the boys"; but in either case the range-rider's savings were burning a hole through his pockets with extreme rapidity.

Jim McWilliams and the sheepman Bannister had that day sealed a friendship that was to be as enduring as life. The owner of the sheep-ranch was already under heavy obligation to the foreman of the Lazy D, but debt alone is not enough on which to found soul brotherhood. There must be qualities of kinship in the primeval elements of character. Both men had suspected that this kinship existed, but to-day they had proved it in the way that one had lost and the other had won the coveted championship. They had made no vows and no professions. The subject had not even been touched in words; a meeting of the eyes, followed by the handshake with which Bannister had congratulated the winner. That had been all. But it was enough.

With the casual democracy of the frontier they had together escorted Helen Messiter and Nora Darling through a riotous three hours of carnival, taking care to get them back to their hotel before the night really began "to howl."

But after they had left the young women, neither of them cared to sleep yet. They were still in costume, Mac dressed as a monk, and his friend as a Stuart cavalier, and the spirit of frolic was yet strong in them.

"I expaict, mebbe, we better hunt in couples if we're going to help paint the town," smiled Mac, and his friend had immediately agreed.

It must have been well after midnight that they found themselves "bucking the tiger" in a combination saloon and gambling-house, whose patrons were decidedly cosmopolitan in character. Here white and red and yellow men played side by side, the Orient and the Occident and the aboriginal alike intent on the falling cards and the little roll-

ing ball. A good many of them were still in their masks and dominos, though these, for the most part, removed their veils before playing.

Neither McWilliams nor his friend were betting high, and the luck had been so even that at the end of two hours' play neither of them had at any time either won or lost more than fifteen dollars. In point of fact, they were playing not so much to win as just to keep in touch with the gay, youthful humor of the night.

They were getting tired of the game when two men jingled in for a drink. They were talking loudly together, and it was impossible to miss the subject of their conversation.

McWilliams gave a little jerk of his head toward one of them. "Judd Morgan," his lips framed without making a sound.

Bannister nodded.

"Been tanking up all day," Mac added. "Otherwise his tongue would not be shooting off so reckless."

A silence had fallen over the assembly save for the braggarts at the bar. Men looked at each other, and then furtively at Bannister. For Morgan, ignorant of who it was sitting quietly with his back to him at the faro-table, was venting his hate of Bannister and McWilliams.

"Both in the same boat. Did y'u see how Mac ran to help him to-day? Both waddies. Both rustlers. Both train-robbers. Sho! I got through putting a padlock on me mouth. Man to man, I'm as good as either of them—damn sight better. I wisht they was here, one or both; I wisht they would step up here and fight it out. Bannister's a false-alarm, and that foreman of the Lazy D——" His tongue stumbled over a blur of villification that ended with a foul mention of Miss Messiter.

Instantly two chairs crashed to the floor. Two pair of gray eyes met quietly.

"My quarrel, Bann," said Jim, in a low, even voice.

The other nodded. "I'll see y'u have a clear field."

The man who was with Morgan sud-

denly whispered in his ear, and the latter slewed his head in startled fear. Almost instantly a bullet clipped past McWilliams' shoulder. Once—twice the foreman's revolver made answer. Morgan staggered, slipped down to the floor, a bullet crashing through the chandelier as he fell. For a moment his body jerked. Then he rolled over and lay still.

The foreman's weapon covered him unwaveringly, but no more steadily than Bannister's gaze the man who had come in with him who lay lifeless on the floor. The man looked at the lifeless thing, shuddered, and backed out of the saloon.

"I call y'u all to witness that my friend killed him in self-defense," said Bannister evenly. "Y'u all saw him fire first. Mac did not even have his gun out."

"That's right," agreed one, and another added: "He got what was coming to him."

"He sure did," was the barkeeper's indorsement. "He came in hunting trouble, but I reckon he didn't want to be accommodated so prompt."

"Y'u'll find us at the Gimlet Butte House if we're wanted for this," said Bannister. "We'll be there till mo'n'ing."

But once out of the gambling-house McWilliams drew his friend to one side. "Do y'u know who that was I killed?"

"Judd Morgan, foreman before y'u at the Lazy D."

"Yes, but what else?"

"What do y'u mean?"

"I mean that next to your cousin Judd was leader of that Hole-in-the-Wall bunch."

"How do y'u know?"

"I suspected it a long time, but I knew for sure the day that your cousin held up the ranch. The man that was in charge of the crowd outside—was Morgan. I could swear to it. I knew him soon as I clapped eyes to him, but I was awful careful to forget to tell him I recognized him."

"That means we are in more serious trouble than I had supposed."

"Y'u bet it does. We're in a hell of a hole, figure it out any way y'u like. Instead of having shot up a casual idiot, I've killed Ned Bannister's right-hand man. That will be the excuse—shooting Morgan. But the real trouble is that I won the championship belt from your cousin. He already hated y'u like poison, and he don't love me any too hard. He will have us arrested by his sheriff here. Catch the point. *Y'u're Ned Bannister, the outlaw, and I'm his right-bower.* That's the play he's going to make, and he's going to make it right soon."

"I don't care if he does. We'll fight him on his own ground. We'll prove that he's the miscreant and not us."

"Prove nothing. Do y'u reckon he'll give us a chance to prove a thing? Not on your life. He'll have us jailed first thing; then he'll stir up a sentiment against us, and before morning there will be a lynching-bee, and y'u and I will wear the neckties. How do y'u like the looks of it?"

"But y'u have a lot of friends. They won't stand for anything like that."

"Not if they had time to stop it. Trouble is, a fellow's friends think awful slow. They'll arrive in time to cut us down and be the mourners. No, sir! It's a hike for Jimmie Mac on the back of the first bronc he can slap a saddle on."

Bannister frowned. "I don't like to run before the scurvy scoundrels."

"Do y'u suppose I'm enjoying it? Not to any extent, I allow. But that sweet relative of yours holds every ace in the deck, and he'll play them, too. He owns the law in this man's town, and he owns the lawless. But the best card he holds is that he can get a thousand of the best people here to join him in hanging the 'king' of the Hole-in-the-Wall. Explanations nothing! Y'u rode under the name of Bannister, didn't y'u? He's Jack Holloway."

"It does make a strong combination," admitted the sheepman.

"Strong! It's invincible. I can see him playing it, laughing up his sleeve all the time at the honest fools he is working. No, sir! I draw out of a

game like that. Y'u don't get a run for your money."

"Of course he knows already what has happened," mused Bannister.

"Sure he knows. That fellow with Morgan made a bee-line for him. Just about now he's routing the sheriff out of his bed. We got no time to lose. Thing is, to burn the wind out of this town while we have the chance."

"I see. It won't help up any to be spilling lead into a sheriff's posse. That would certainly put us in the wrong."

"Now y'u're shouting. If we're honest men, why don't we surrender peaceable? That's the play the 'king' is going to make in this town. Now if we should spoil a posse and bump off one or two of them, we couldn't pile up evidence enough to get a jury to acquit. No, sir! We can't surrender and we can't fight. Consequence is, we got to roll our tails immediate."

"We have an appointment with Miss Messiter and Nora for to-morrow morning. We'll have to leave word we can't keep it."

"Sure. Denver and Missou are playing the wheel down at the Silver Dollar. I reckon we better make those boys jump and run errands for us while we lie low. I'll drop in casual and give them the word. Meet y'u here in ten minutes. Whatever y'u do, keep that mask on your face."

"Better meet farther from the scene of trouble. Suppose we say the north gate of the grand stand?"

"Good enough. So-long."

The first faint streaks of day were beginning to show on the horizon when Bannister reached the grand stand. He knew that inside of another half-hour the little frontier town would be blinking in the early morning sunlight that falls so brilliantly through the limpid atmosphere. If they were going to leave without fighting their way out there was no time to lose.

Ten minutes slowly ticked away.

He glanced at his watch. "Five minutes after four. I wish I had gone with Mac. He may have been recognized."

But even as the thought flitted

through his mind, the semi-darkness opened to let a figure out of it.

"All quiet along the Potomoc, seh?" asked the foreman's blithe voice. "Good. I found the boys and got them started." He flung down a Mexican vaquero's gaily trimmed costume. "Get into these, seh. Denver shucked them for me. That coyote must have noticed what we wore before he slid out. Y'u can bet the orders are to watch for us as we were dressed then."

"What are y'u going to do?"

"Me? I'm scheduled to be Aaron Burr, seh. Missou swaps with me when he gets back here. They're going to rustle us some white men's clothes, too, but we can't wear them till we get out of town on account of showing our handsome faces."

"What about horses?"

"Denver is rustling some for us. Y'u better be scribbling your billy-doo to the girl y'u leave behind y'u, seh."

"Haven't y'u got one to scribble?" Bannister retorted. "Seems to me y'u better get busy, too."

So it happened that when Missou arrived a few minutes later he found this pair of gentlemen, who were about to flee for their lives, busily inditing what McWilliams had termed facetiously *billets-doux*. Each of them was trying to make his letter a little warmer than friendship allowed without committing himself to any chance of a rebuff. Mac got as far as Nora Darling, absent-mindedly inserted a comma between the words, and there stuck hopelessly. He looked enviously across at Bannister, whose pencil was traveling rapidly down his note-book.

"My, what a swift trail your pencil leaves on that paper. That's going some. Mine's bogged down before it got started. I wisht y'u would start me off."

"Well, if you ain't up and started a business college already. I had ought to have brought a typewriter along with me," murmured Missou ironically.

"How are things stacking? Our friends the enemy getting busy yet?" asked Bannister, folding and addressing his note.

"That's what. Orders gone out to guard every road so as not to let you pass. What's the matter with me rustling up the boys and us holding down a corner of this town ourselves?"

The sheepman shook his head. "We're not going to start a little private war of our own. We couldn't do that without spilling a lot of blood. No, we'll make a run for it."

"That y'u, Denver?" the foreman called softly, as the sound of approaching horses reached him.

"Bet your life. Got your own broncs, too. Sheriff Burns called up Daniels not to let any horses go out from his corral to anybody without his O. K. I happened to be cinching at the time the phone message came, so I concluded that order wasn't for me, and lit out kinder unceremonious."

Hastily the fugitives donned the new costumes and dominos, turned their notes over to Denver, and swung to their saddles.

"Good luck!" the punchers called after them, and Denver added an ironical promise that the foreman had no doubt he would keep. "I'll look out for Nora—Darling." There was a drawling pause between the first and second names. "I'll ce'tainly see that she don't have any time to worry about y'u, Mac."

"Y'u go to Halifax," returned Mac genially over his shoulder as he loped away.

"I doubt if we can get out by the roads. Soon as we reach the end of the street we better cut across that hayfield," suggested Ned.

"That's whatever. Then we'll slip past the sentries without being seen. I'd hate to spoil any of them if we can help it. We're liable to get ourselves disliked if our guns spatter too much."

They rode through the main street, still noisy with the shouts of late revelers returning to their quarters. Masked men were yet in evidence occasionally, so that their habits caused neither remark nor suspicion. A good many of the punchers, unable to stay longer, were slipping out of town after having made a night of it. In the gen-

eral exodus the two friends hoped to escape unobserved.

They dropped into a side street, galloped down it for two hundred yards, and dismounted at a barb-wire fence which ran parallel with the road. The foreman's wire-clippers severed the strands one by one, and they led their horses through the gap. They crossed an alfalfa-field, jumped an irrigation ditch, used the clippers again, and found themselves in a large pasture. It was getting lighter every moment, and while they were still in the pasture a voice hailed them from the road in an unmistakable command to halt.

They bent low over the backs of their ponies and gave them the spur. The shot they had expected rang out, passing harmlessly over them. Another followed, and still another.

"That's right. Shoot up the scenery. Y'u don't hurt us none," the foreman said, apostrophizing the man behind the gun.

The next clipped fence brought them to the open country. For half an hour they rode swiftly without halt. Then McWilliams drew up.

"Where are we making for?"

"How about the Wind River country?"

"Won't do. First off, they'll strike right for our home country after us. What's the matter with running up Sweetwater Creek and lying out in the bad lands around the Roubideaux?"

"Good. I have a sheep-camp up that way. I can arrange to have grub sent up there for us by a man I can trust."

"All right. The Roubideaux goes."

While they were nooning at a cow-spring, Bannister, lying on his back, with his face to the turquoise sky, became aware that a vagrant impulse had crystallized to a fixed determination. He broached it at once to his companion.

"One thing is a cinch, Mac. Neither y'u nor I will be safe in this country now until we have broken up the gang of desperadoes that is terrorizing this country. If we don't get them they will get us. There isn't any doubt about that. I'm not willing to lie down before these miscreants. What do y'u say?"

"I'm with y'u, old man. But put a name to it. What are y'u proposing?"

"I'm proposing that y'u and I make it our business not to have any other business until we clean out this nest of wolves. Let's go right after them, and see if we can't wipe out the Hole-in-the-Wall outfit."

"How? They own the law, don't they?"

"They don't own the United States Government. When they held up a mail-train they did a fool thing, for they bucked up against Uncle Sam. What I propose is that we get hold of one of the gang and make him weaken. Then, after we have got hold of some evidence that will convict, we'll go out and run down my namesake, Ned Bannister. If people once get the idea that his hold isn't so strong, there's a hundred people that will testify against him. We'll have him in a government prison inside of six months."

"Or else he'll have us in a hole in the ground," added the foreman dryly.

"One or the other," admitted Bannister. "Are y'u in on this thing?"

"I surely am. Y'u're the best man I've met up with in a month of Sundays, seh. Y'u ain't got but one fault; and that is y'u don't smoke cigarets. Feed yourself about a dozen a day, and y'u won't have a blamed trouble left. Match, seh?" The foreman of the Lazy D, already following his own advice, rolled deftly his smoke, moistened it, and proceeded to blow away his troubles.

Bannister looked at his debonair insouciance and laughed. "Water off a duck's back," he quoted. "I know some folks that would be sweating fear right now. It's certainly an aggravating situation, that of being an honest man hunted as a villain by a villain. But I exapict my cousin's enjoying it."

"He ain't enjoying it so much as he would if his plans had worked out a little smoother. He's holding the sack right now, and cussing right smaht over it, I reckon."

"He *did* lock the stable-door a little too late," chuckled the sheepman. But even as he spoke a shadow fell over

his face. "My God! I had forgotten. Y'u don't suppose he would take it out of Miss Messiter."

"Not unless he's tired of living," returned her foreman darkly. "One thing this country won't stand for is that. He's got to keep his hands off women or he loses out. He dassent lay a hand on them if they don't want him to. That's the law of the plains, isn't it?"

"That's the unwritten law for the bad man, but I notice it doesn't seem to satisfy y'u, my friend. Y'u and I know that my cousin, Ned Bannister, doesn't acknowledge any law, written or unwritten. He's a devil, and he has no fear."

"He surely would never dare touch those young ladies. But—I don't know. Bann, I guess we better roll along toward the Wind River country, after all."

"I think so." Ned looked at his friend with smiling drollery. "I thought y'u smoked your troubles away, Jim. This one seems to worry y'u."

McWilliams grinned sheepishly. "There's one trouble won't be smoked away. It kinder dwells." Then, apparently apropos of nothing, he added irrelevantly: "Wonder what Denver's doing right now?"

"Probably keeping that appointment y'u ran away from," bantered his friend.

"I'll bet he is. Funny how some men have all the luck," murmured the despondent foreman.

CHAPTER XI.

HUNTING BIG GAME.

In point of fact, Denver's occupation at that moment was precisely what they had guessed it to be. He was sitting beside Nora Darling in the grand stand, explaining to her the fine points of "roping." Mr. Bob Austin, commonly known as "Texas," was meanwhile trying to make himself agreeable to Helen Messiter. Truth to tell, both young women listened with divided interest to their admirers. Both of them

had heard the story of the night, and each of them had tucked away in her corsage a scribbled note she wanted to get back to her room and read again. That the pursuit was still on everybody knew, and those on the inside were aware that the "king," masquerading under the name of Jack Holloway, was the active power behind the sheriff stimulating the chase.

It was after the roping had begun, and Austin had been called away to take his turn, that the outlaw chief sauntered along the aisle of the grand stand to the box in which was seated the mistress of the Lazy D.

"Beautiful mo'ning, isn't it? Delightfully crisp and clear," he said by way of introduction, stopping at her box.

She understood the subtle jeer in his manner, and her fine courage rose to meet it. There was a daring light in her eye, a buoyant challenge in her voice as she answered:

"It is a splendid morning. I'm not surprised you are enjoying it."

"Did I say I was enjoying it?" He laughed as he lifted the bar, came into her box, and took a seat.

"Of course not. How careless of me! I had forgotten you were in mourning for a deceased friend."

His dark eyes flashed. "I'll not mourn for him long. He was a mighty trifling fellow, anyhow. Soon as I catch and hang his murderers, I'll quit wearing black."

"You may wear out several suits before then," she hit back.

"Don't y'u believe it; when I want a thing I don't quit till it's done."

She met his gaze, and the impact of eyes seemed to shock her physically. The wickedness in him threatened, gloated, dominated. She shivered in the warm sunlight, and would not have had him know it for worlds.

"Dear me! How confident you talk. Aren't you sometimes disappointed?"

"Temporarily. But when I want a thing I take it in the end."

She knew he was serving notice on her that he meant to win her; and again the little spinal shiver raced over her.

She could not look at his sardonic, evil face without fear, and she could not look away without being aware of his eyes possessing her. What was the use of courage against such a creature as this?

"Yes, I understand you take a good deal that isn't yours," she retorted carelessly, her eyes on the arena.

"I make it mine when I take it," he answered coolly, admiring the gameness which she wore as a suit of chain armor against his thrusts.

"Isn't it a little dangerous sometimes?" her even voice countered. "When you take what belongs to others you run a risk, don't you?"

"That's part of the rules. Except for that I shouldn't like it so well. I hunt big game, and the bigger the game the more risk. That's why y'u guessed right when y'u said I was enjoying the mo'ning."

"Meaning—your cousin?"

"Well, no! I wasn't thinking of him, though he's some sizable. But I'm hunting bigger game than he is, and I expect to bag it."

She let her scornful eyes drift slowly over him. "I might pretend to misunderstand you. But I won't. You may have your answer now. I am not afraid of you, for since you are a bully you must be a coward. I saw a rattlesnake last week in the hills. It reminded me of some one I have seen. I'll leave you to guess who."

Her answer drew blood. The black tide raced under the swarthy tan of his face. He leaned forward till his beady eyes were close to her defiant ones. "Y'u have forgotten one thing, Miss Messiter. A rattlesnake can sting. I ask nothing of you. Can't I break your heart without your loving me? You're only a woman—and not the first I have broken, by God!"

His slim, lithe body was leaning forward so that it cut off others, and left them to all intents alone. At a touch of her fingers the hand-bag in her lap flew open, and a little ivory-hilted revolver lay in her hand.

"You may break me, but you'll never bend me an inch."

He looked at the little gun and laughed ironically. "Sho! If y'u should hit me with that and I should find it out, I might get mad at y'u."

"Did I say it was for you?" she said coldly; and again the shock of joined eyes ended in drawn battle.

"Have y'u the nerve?" He looked her over, so dainty and so resolute, so silken strong; and he knew he had his answer. His smoldering eyes burned with desire to snatch her to him and ride away into the hills. For he was a man who lived in his sensations. He had won many women to their hurt, but it was the joy of conflict that made the pursuit worth while to him.

She dropped the revolver back into the bag and shut the clasp with a click. "And now I think, Mr. Bannister, that I'll not detain you any longer. We understand each other sufficiently."

He rose with a laugh that mocked. "I exapict to spend quite a bit of time understanding y'u one of these days. In the meantime this is to our better acquaintance."

Deliberately, without the least haste, he stooped and kissed her before she could rally from the staggering surprise of the intention she read in his eyes too late to elude. Then, with the coolest bravado in the world, he turned on his heel and strolled away.

Angry sapphires gleamed at him from under the long, brown lashes. She was furious, aghast, daunted. By the merest chance she was sitting in a corner of the box, so screened from observation that none could see. But the insolence of him, the reckless defiance of all standards of society, shook her even while it enraged her. He had put forth his claim like a braggart, but he had made good with an audacity superb in its effrontery. How she hated him! How she feared him! The thoughts were woven inseparably in her mind. Mephisto himself could not have impressed himself more imperatively than this strutting, heartless master artist in vice.

She saw him again presently down in the arena, for it was his turn to show his skill at roping. Texas had done

well; very well, indeed. He had made the throw and tie in twenty-nine seconds, which was two seconds faster than the record of the previous year. But she knew instinctively, as her fascinated eyes watched the outlaw preparing for the feat, that he was going to win. He would use his success as a weapon against her; as a means of showing her that he always succeeded in whatever he undertook. So she interpreted the look he flung her as he waited at the chute for the wild hill-steer to be driven into the arena.

It takes a good man physically to make a successful roper. He must be possessed of nerve, skill, and endurance far out of the ordinary. He must be quick-eyed, strong-handed, nimble of foot, expert of hand, and built like a wildcat. So Denver explained to the two young women in the box, and the one behind him admitted reluctantly that the long, lean, supple Centaur waiting impassively at the gateway fitted to the specifications.

Out flashed the rough-coated hill-steer, wild and fleet as a hare, thin and leggy, with muscles of whipcord. Down went the flag, and the stop-watches began to tick off the seconds. Like an arrow the outlaw's pony shot forward, a lariat circling round and round the rider's head. At every leap the cow-pony lessened the gap as it pounded forward on the heels of the flying steer.

The loop swept forward and dropped over the horns of the animal. The pony, with the perfect craft of long practise, swerved to one side with a rush. The dragging rope swung up against the running steer's legs, grew suddenly taut. Down went the steer's head, and next moment its feet were swept from under it as it went heavily to the ground. Man and horse were perfect in their team work. As the supple rider slid from the back of the pony, it ran to the end of the rope and braced itself to keep the animal from rising. Bannister leaped on the steer, tie-rope in hand. Swiftly his deft hands passed to and fro, making the necessary loops and knots. Then his hands went into the air. The steer was hog-tied.

For a few seconds the judges consulted together. "Twenty-six seconds," announced their spokesman, and at the words a great cheer went up. Bannister had made his tie in record time.

Impudently the scoundrel sauntered up to the grand stand, bowed elaborately to Miss Messiter, and perched himself on the fence, where he might be the observed of all observers. It was curious, she thought, how his vanity walked hand in hand with so much power and force. He was really extraordinarily strong, but no *débutante's* self-sufficiency could have excelled his. He was so frankly an egotist that it ceased to be a weakness.

Back in her room at the hotel an hour later, Helen paced up and down under a nervous strain foreign to her temperament. She was afraid; for the first time in her life definitely afraid. This man pitted against her had deliberately divorced his life from morality. In him lay no appeal to any conscience-court of last resort. But the terror of this was not for herself principally, but for her flying lover. With his indubitable power, backed by the unpopularity of the sheepman in this cattle country, the king of the Hole-in-the-Wall could destroy his cousin if he set himself to do so. Of this she was convinced, and her conviction carried a certainty that he had the will as well as the means. If he had lacked anything in motive, she herself had supplied one. For she knew that this villain had read her heart.

And as her hand went fluttering to her heart she found small comfort in the paper lying next it that only a few hours before had brought her joy. For at any moment a messenger might come in to tell her that the writer of it had been captured, and was to be dealt with summarily in frontier fashion. At best, her lover and her friend were but fugitives from justice. Against them were arrayed not only the ruffian followers of their enemy, but also the lawfully constituted authorities of the county. Even if they should escape to-day, the net would tighten on them, and they would eventually be captured.

For the second time since coming to Wyoming Helen found refuge in tears.

CHAPTER XII.

PLAYING FOR TIME.

"They've got 'em. Caught them on Dry Creek, just below Green Forks."

Helen Messiter, just finishing her breakfast at the hotel preparatory to leaving in her machine for the ranch, laid down her knife and fork and looked with dilated eyes at Denver, who had broken in with the news.

"Are you sure?" The color had washed from her face and left her very white, but she fronted the situation quietly without hysterics or fuss of any kind.

"Yes, ma'am. They're bringing them in now to jail. Watch out and you'll see them pass here in a few minutes. Seems that Bannister's wound opened up on him, and he couldn't go any farther. 'Course, Mac wouldn't leave him. Sheriff Burns and his posse dropped in on them, and had them covered before Mac could chirp."

"You are sure this man—this desperado, Bannister—will do nothing till night?"

"Not the way I figure it. He'll have the jail watched all day. But he's got to work the town up to a lynching. I expect the bars will be free for all to-day. By night the worst part of this town will be ready for anything. The rest of the citizens are going to sit down and do nothing just because it is Bannister."

"But it isn't Bannister—not the Bannister they think it is."

He shook his head. "No use, ma'am. I've talked till my throat aches, but it don't do a mite of good. Nobody believes a word of what I say. Y'u see, we ain't got any proof."

"Proof! We have enough, God knows. Didn't this villain—this outlaw that calls himself Jack Holloway—attack and try to murder him?"

"That's what we believe, but the re-

port out is that one of us punchers shot him up for crossing the dead-line."

"Didn't this fellow hold up the ranch and try to take Ned Bannister away with him?"

"Yes, ma'am. But that doesn't look good to most people. They say he had his friends come to take him away so y'u wouldn't hold him and let us boys get him. This cousin business is a fairy-tale the way they size it up. How come this cousin to let him go if he held up the ranch to put the sick man out of business. No, miss. This country has made up its mind that your friend is the original Ned Bannister. My opinion is that nothing on earth can save him."

"I don't want your opinion. I'm going to save him, I tell you; and you are going to help. Are his friends nothing but a bunch of quitters?" she cried, with sparkling eyes.

"I didn't know I was such a great friend of his," answered the cowboy sulkily.

"You're a friend of Jim McWilliams, aren't you? Are you going to sneak away and let these curs hang him?"

Denver flushed. "Y'u're dead right, Miss Helen. I guess I'll see it out with you. What's the orders?"

"I want you to help me organize a defense. Get all Mac's friends stirred up to make a fight for him. Bring as many of them in to see me during the day as you can. If you see any of the rest of the Lazy D boys send them in to me for instructions. Report yourself every hour to me. And make sure that at least three of your friends that you can trust are hanging round the jail all day so as to be ready in case any attempt is made to storm it before dark."

"I'll see to it." Denver hung on his heel a moment before leaving. "It's only square to tell y'u, Miss Helen, that this means war here to-night. These streets are going to run with blood if we try to save them."

"I'm taking that responsibility," she told him curtly; but a moment later she added gently: "I have a plan, my friend, that may stop this outrage yet.

But you must do your best for me." She smiled sadly at him. "You're my foreman to-day, you know."

"I'm going to do my level best, y'u may tie to that," he told her earnestly.

"I know you will." And their fingers touched for an instant.

Through a window the girl could see a crowd pouring down the street toward the hotel. She flew up the stairs and out upon the second-story piazza that looked down upon the road.

From her point of vantage she easily picked them out—the two unarmed men riding with their hands tied behind their backs, encircled by a dozen riders armed to the teeth. Bannister's hat had apparently fallen off farther down the street, for the man beside him was dusting it. The wounded prisoner looked about him without fear, but it was plain he was near the limit of endurance. He was pale as a sheet, and his fair curls clung moistly to his damp forehead.

McWilliams caught sight of her first, and she could see him turn and say a word to his comrade. Bannister looked up, caught sight of her, and smiled. That smile, so pale and wan, went to her heart like a knife. But the message of her eyes was hope. They told the prisoners silently to be of good cheer, that at least they were not deserted to their fate.

"What is it about—the crowd?" Nora asked of her mistress as the latter was returning to the head of the stairs.

In as few words as she could Helen told her, repressing sharply the tears the girl began to shed. "This is not the time to weep—not yet. We must save them. You can do your part. Mr. Bannister is wounded. Get a doctor over the telephone and see that he attends him at once. Don't leave the phone until you have got one to promise to go immediately."

"Yes, miss. Is there anything else?"

"Ask the doctor to call you up from the prison and tell you how Mr. Bannister is. Make it plain to him that he is to give up his other practise, if necessary, and is to keep us informed through the day about his patient's condition. I will be responsible for his bill."

Helen herself hurried to the telegraph-office at the depot. She wrote out a long despatch and handed it to the operator. "Send this at once, please."

He was one of those supercilious young idiots that make the most of such small power as ever drifts down to them. Taking the message, he tossed it on the table. "I'll send it when I get time."

"You'll send it now."

"What—what's that?"

Her steady eyes caught and held his shifting ones. "I say you are going to send it now—this very minute."

"I guess not. The line's busy," he bluffed.

"If you don't begin sending that message this minute I'll make it my business to see that you lose your position," she told him calmly.

He snatched up the paper from the place where he had tossed it. "Oh, well, if it's so darned important," he conceded ungraciously.

She stood quietly above him while he sent the telegram, even though he contrived to make every moment of her stay an unvoiced insult. Her wire was to the wife of the officer in command at Fort Garfield. They had been close friends at school, and the latter had been urging Helen to pay a visit to the army post. The message she sent was as follows:

Battle imminent between outlaws and cattlemen here. Bloodshed certain to-night. My foreman last night killed in self-defense a desperado. Bannister's gang, in league with town authorities, mean to lynch him and one of my other friends after dark this evening. Sheriff will do nothing. Can your husband send soldiers immediately? Wire answer.

The operator looked up sullenly after his fingers had finished the last tap. "Well?"

"Just one thing more," Helen told him. "You understand the rules of the company about secrecy. Nobody but you knows I am sending this message. If by any chance it should leak out, I shall know through whom. If you want to hold your position, you will keep quiet."

"I know my business," he growled. Nevertheless, she had spoken in season, for he had had it in his mind to give a tip where he knew it would be understood to hasten the jail delivery and accompanying lynching.

When she returned to the hotel, Helen found Missou waiting for her. She immediately sent him back to the office, and told him to wait there until the answer was received. "I'll send one of the boys up to relieve you so that you may come with the telegram as soon as it arrives. I want the operator watched all day. Oh, here's Jim Henson! Denver has explained the situation to you, I presume. I want you to go up to the telegraph-office and stay there all day. Go to lunch with the operator when he goes. Don't let him talk privately to anybody, not even for a few seconds. I don't want you to seem to have him under guard before outsiders, but let him know it very plainly. He is not to mention a wire I sent or the answer to it—not to anybody, Jim. Is that plain?"

"Y'u bet! He's a clam, all right, till the order is countermanded." And the young man departed with a cheerful grin that assured Helen she had nothing to fear from official leaks.

Nora, from answering a telephone call, came to report to the general in charge. "The doctor says that he has looked after Mr. Bannister, and there is no immediate danger. If he keeps quiet for a few days he ought to do well. Mr. McWilliams sent a message by him to say that we aren't to worry about him. He said he would—would—rope a heap of cows—on the Lazy D yet."

Nora, bursting into tears, flung herself into Helen's arms. "They are going to kill him. I know they are, and—and 'twas only yesterday, ma'am, I told him not to—to get gay, the poor boy."

Her mistress smiled in spite of herself, though she was bitterly aware that even Nora's grief was only superficially ludicrous.

"We're going to save him, Nora, if we can. There's hope while there's life. You see, Mac himself is full of cour-

age. He hasn't given up. We must keep up our courage, too."

"Yes, ma'am, but this is the first gentleman friend I ever had hanged, and——" She broke off, sobbing, leaving the rest as a guess.

Helen filled it out aloud. "And you were going to say that you care more for him than any of the others. Well, you must stop coquetting and tell him so when we have saved him."

"Yes, ma'am," agreed Nora, very repentant for the moment of the fact that it was her nature to play with the hearts of those of the male persuasion. Irrelevantly she added: "He was *that* kind, ma'am, and tender-hearted."

Helen, whose own heart was breaking, continued to soothe her. "Don't say *was*, child. You are to be brave, and not think of him that way."

"Yes, ma'am. He told me he was going to buy cows with the thousand dollars he won yesterday. I knew he meant——"

"Yes, of course. It's a cowboy's way of saying that he means to start house-keeping. Have you the telegram, Missou?" For that young man was standing in the doorway.

He handed her the yellow slip. She ripped open the envelope and read:

Troops en route. Railroad connections uncertain. Postpone crisis long as possible. May reach Gimlet Butte by ten-thirty.

Her first thought was of unspeakable relief. Uncle Sam was going to take a hand. The boys in blue would come marching down the street, and everything would be all right. But hard on the heels of her instinctive gladness trod the sober second thought. Ten-thirty at best, and perhaps later! Would they wait that long, or would they do their cowardly work as soon as night fell? She must contrive to delay them till the train drew in. She must play for those two lives with all her woman's wit; must match the outlaw's sinister cunning and fool him into delay. She knew he would come if she sent for him. But how long could she keep him? As long as he was amused at her agony, as long as his pleasure in tor-

menting her was greater than his impatience to be at his ruffianly work. Oh, if she ever needed all her power it would be to-night.

Throughout the day she continued to receive hourly reports from Denver, who always brought with him four or five honest cow-punchers from up-country to listen to the strange tale she unfolded to them. It was, of course, in part, the spell of her sweet personality, of that shy appeal she made to the manhood in them; but of those who came, nearly all believed, for the time, at least, and aligned themselves on her side in the struggle that was impending. Some of these were swayed from their allegiance in the course of the day, but a few she knew would remain true.

Meanwhile, all through the day, the enemy was busily at work. As Denver had predicted, free liquor was served to all who would drink. The town and its guests were started on a grand debauch that was to end in violence that might shock their sober intelligence. Everywhere poisoned whispers were being flung broadcast against the two men waiting in the jail for what the night would bring forth.

Dusk fell on a town crazed by bad whisky and evil report. The deeds of Bannister were hashed and rehashed at every bar, and nobody related them with more ironic gusto than the man who called himself Jack Holloway. There were people in town who knew his real name and character, but of these the majority were either in alliance with him or dared not voice their knowledge. Only Miss Messiter and her punchers told the truth, and their words were blown away like chaff.

From the first moment of darkness Helen had the outlaw leader dogged by two of her men. Since neither of these were her own riders this was done without suspicion. At intervals of every quarter of an hour they reported to her in turn. Bannister was beginning to drink heavily, and she did not want to cut short his dissipation by a single minute. Yet she had to make sure of getting his attention before he went too far.

It was close to nine when she sent him a note, not daring to delay a minute longer. For the reports of her men were all to the same effect, that the crisis would not now be long postponed. Bannister, or Holloway, as he chose to call himself, was at the bar with his lieutenants in evil when the note reached him. He read it with a satisfaction he could not conceal. So! He had brought her already to her knees. Before he was through with her she should grovel in the dust before him.

"I'll be back in a few minutes. Do nothing till I return," he ordered, and went jingling away to the Elk House.

The young woman's anxiety was pitiable, but she repressed it sternly when she went to meet the man she feared of herself; and never had it been more in evidence than in this hour of her greatest torture. Blithely she came forward to meet him, eye challenging eye gaily. No hint of her anguish escaped into her manner. He read there only coquetry, the eternal sex conflict, the winsome defiance of a woman hitherto the virgin mistress of all assaults upon her heart's citadel. It was the last thing he had expected to see, but it was infinitely more piquant, more intoxicating, than desperation. She seemed to give the lie to his impression of her love for his cousin; and that, too, delighted his pride.

"You will sit down?"

Carelessly, almost indolently, she put the question, her raised eyebrows indicating a chair with perfunctory hospitality. He had not meant to sit, had expected only to gloat a few minutes over her despair; but this situation called for more deliberation. He had yet to establish the mastery his vanity demanded. Therefore he took a chair.

"This is certainly an unexpected honor. Did y'u send for me to explain some more about that sufficient understanding between us?" he sneered.

It was a great relief to her to see that, though he had been drinking, as she had heard, he was entirely master of himself. Her efforts might still be directed to Philip sober.

"I sent for you to congratulate you."

she answered, with a smile. "You are a bigger man than I thought. You have done what you said you would do, and I presume you can very shortly go out of mourning."

He radiated vanity, seemed to visibly expand. "Do y'u go in when I go out?" he asked brutally.

She laughed lightly. "Hardly. But it does seem as if I'm unlucky in my foremen. They all seem to have engagements across the divide."

"I'll get y'u another."

"Thank you. I was going to ask as much of you. Can you suggest one now?"

"I'm a right good cattle man myself."

"And—can you stay with me a reasonable time?"

He laughed. "I have no engagements across the Styx, ma'am."

She settled herself comfortably back in an easy chair, as alluring a picture of buoyant, radiant youth as he had seen in many a day. "But the terms. I am afraid I can't offer you as much as you make at your present occupation."

"I could keep that up as a side-line."

"So you could. But if you use my time for your own profit, you ought to pay me a royalty on your intake."

His eyes lit with laughter. "I reckon that can be arranged. Any percentage you think fair. It will all be in the family, anyway."

"I think that is one of the things about which we don't agree," she made answer softly, flashing him the proper look of inviting disdain from under her silken lashes.

He leaned forward, elbow on the chair-arm and chin in hand. "We'll agree about it one of these days."

"Think so?" she returned airily.

"I don't think. I know."

Just an eyebeat her gaze met his, with that hint of shy questioning, of puzzled wonder that showed a growing interest. "I wonder," she murmured, and recovered herself with a hurried little laugh.

How she hated her task, and him! She was a singularly honest woman, but she must play the siren; must allure this scoundrel to forgetfulness, and yet

elude the very familiarity her manner invited. She knew her part, the heartless, enticing coquette, compounded half of passion and half of selfishness. It was a hateful thing to do, this sacrifice of her personal reticence, of the individual abstraction in which she wrapped herself as a cloak, in order to hint at a possibility of some intimacy of feeling between them. She shrank from it with a repugnance hardly to be overcome, but she held herself with an iron will and consummate art to the rôle she had undertaken. Two lives hung on her success. She must not forget that. She would not let herself forget that—and one of them that of the man she loved.

So bravely she played her part, repelling always with a hint of invitation, denying with the promise in her fascinated eyes of ultimate surrender to his ardor. In the zest of the pursuit the minutes slipped away unnoticed. Never had a woman seemed to him more subtly elusive, and never had he felt more sure of himself. Her charm grew on him, stirred his pulses to a faster beat. For it was his favorite sport, and this warm, supple young creature, who was to be the victim of his bow and arrow, showed herself worthy of his mettle.

The clock down-stairs struck the half-hour, and Bannister, reminded of what lay before him outside, made a move to go. Her alert eyes had been expecting it, and she forestalled him by a change of tactics. Moved apparently by impulse, she seated herself on the piano-stool, swept the keys for an instant with her fingers, and plunged into the brilliant "Carmen" overture. Susceptible as this man was to the influence of music, he could not fail to be arrested by so perfect an interpretation of his mood. He stood rooted, was carried back again in imagination to a great artiste's rendering of that story of fierce passion and aching desire so brilliantly enacted under the white sunbeat of a country of cloudless skies. Imperceptibly she drifted into other parts of the opera. Was it the wild, gipsy seductiveness of *Carmen* that he felt, or, rather, this American girl's allurements? From

"Love will like a birdling fly" she slipped into the exquisitely graceful snatches of song with which *Carmen* answers the officer's questions. Their rare buoyancy marched with his mood, and from them she carried him into the song "Over the hill," that is so perfect and romantic an expression of the *wanderlust*.

How long she could have held him she will never know, for at that inopportune time came blundering one of his men into the room with a call for his presence to take charge of the situation outside.

"What do y'u want, Bostwick?" he demanded, with curt peremptoriness.

The man whispered in his ear.

"Can't wait any longer, can't they?" snapped his chief. "Y'u tell them they'll wait till I give the word. Understand?"

He almost flung the man out of the room, but Helen noticed that she had lost him. His interest was perfunctory, and, though he remained a little time longer, it was to establish his authority with the men rather than to listen to her. Twice he looked at his watch within five minutes.

He rose to go. "There is a little piece of business I have to put through. So I'll have to ask y'u to excuse me. I have had a delightful hour, and I hate to go." He smiled, and quoted with mock sentimentality:

"The hours I spent with thee, dear heart,
Are as a string of pearls to me;
I count them over, every one apart,
My rosary! My rosary!"

"Dear me! One certainly lives and learns. How could I have guessed that, with your reputation, you could afford to indulge in a rosary?" she mocked.

"Good night." He offered his hand.

"Don't go yet," she coaxed.

He shook his head. "Duty, y'u know."

"Stay only a little longer. Just ten minutes more."

His vanity purred, so softly she stroked it. "Can't. Wish I could. Y'u hear how noisy things are getting. I've got to take charge. So-long."

Then the outraged woman in her, curbed all evening with an iron bit, escaped from control. "My God! Are you going to kill your own cousin?"

All her terror, all her detestation and hatred of him, looked haggardly out of her unmasked face. His narrowed eyes searched her heart, and his countenance grew every second more sinister.

"Y'u have been fooling me all evening, then?"

"Yes, and hating you every minute of the time."

"Y'u dared?" His face was black with rage.

"You would like to kill me. Why don't you?"

"Because I know a better revenge. I'm going out to take it now. After your lover is dead, I'll come back and make love to y'u again," he sneered.

"Never!" She stood before him like a queen in her lissom, brave, defiant youth. "And as for your cousin, you may kill him, but you can't destroy his contempt for you. He will die despising you for a coward and a scoundrel."

It was true, and he knew it. In his heart he cursed her, while he vainly sought some weapon that would strike home through her impervious armor.

"Y'u love him. I'll remember that when I see him kick," he taunted.

"I make you a present of the information. I love him, and I despise you. Nothing can change those facts," she retorted whitely.

"Mebbe, but some day y'u'll crawl on your knees to beg my pardon for having told me so."

"There is your overweening vanity again," she commented.

"I'm going to break y'u, my beauty, so that y'u'll come running when I snap my fingers."

"We'll see."

"And in the meantime I'll go hang your lover." He bowed ironically, swung on his jingling heel, and strode out of the room.

She stood there listening to his dying footfalls, then covered her face with her hands, as if to press back the dreadful vision her mind conjured.

CHAPTER XIII.

WEST POINT TO THE RESCUE.

It was understood that the sheriff should make a perfunctory defense against the mob in order to "square" him with the voters at the election soon to be held. But the word had been quietly passed that the bullets of the prison guards would be fired over the heads of the attackers. This assurance lent an added braggadocio to the Dutch courage of the lynchers. Many of them who would otherwise have hung back distinguished themselves by the enthusiasm which they displayed.

Bannister himself generated the affair, detailing squads to batter down the outer door, to guard every side of the prison, and to overpower the sheriff's guard. That official, according to program, appeared at a window and made a little speech, declaring his intention of performing his duty at whatever cost. He was hooted down with jeers and laughter, and immediately the attack commenced.

The yells of the attackers mingled with the sound of the ax-blows and the report of revolvers from inside the building. Among those nearest to the door being battered down were Denver and the five men he had with him. His plan offered merely a forlorn hope. It was that in the first scramble to get in after the way was opened he and his friends might push up the stairs in the van, and hold the corridor for as long as they could against the furious mob.

It took less than a quarter of an hour to batter down the door, and among the first of those who sprang across the threshold were Denver, Missou, Frisco, and their allies. While others stopped to overpower the struggling deputies according to the arranged farce, they hurried up-stairs and discovered the cell in which their friends were fastened.

Denver passed a revolver through the grating to McWilliams, and another to Bannister. "Haven't got the keys, so I can't let y'u out, old hoss," he told the foreman. "But mebbe y'u won't feel so lonesome with these little toys to play with."

Meanwhile Frisco, a young giant of seventy-six inches, held the head of the stairs, with four stalwart plainsmen back of him. The rush of many feet came up pell-mell, and he flung the leaders back on those behind.

"Hold on there. This isn't a free-lunch counter. Don't you see we're crowded up here already?"

"What's eating you? Whyfor can't we come?" growled one of the foremost, nursing an injured nose.

"I've just explained to you, son, that it's crowded. Folks are prevalent enough up here right now. Send up that bunch of keys and we'll bring your meat to you fast enough."

"What's that? What's that?" The outlaw chief pushed his way through the dense mob at the door and reached the stairway.

"He won't let us up," growled one of them.

"Who won't?" demanded Bannister sharply, and at once came leaping up the stairs.

"Nothing doing," drawled Frisco, and tossed him over the railing on to the heads of his followers below.

They carried Bannister into the open air, for his head had struck the newel-post in his descent. This gave the defense a few minutes' respite.

"They're going to come a-shooting next time," remarked Denver. "Just as soon as he comes back from bye-low land you'll see things hum."

"Y'u bet," agreed Missou. "We'll last about three minutes when the stampede begins."

The scream of an engine pierced the night.

Denver's face lit. "Make it five minutes, Missou, and Mac is safe. At least, I'm hoping so awful hard. Miss Helen wired for the soldiers at Fort Garfield this m'ning. Chances are they're on that train. I couldn't tell you earlier because she made me promise not to. She was afraid it might leak out and get things started sooner."

Weak but furious, the miscreant from the Hole-in-the-Wall returned to the attack. "Break in the back door and sneak up behind on those fellows.

"We'll have the men we want inside of fifteen minutes," he promised the mob. "We'll rush them from both sides, and show those guys on the landing whether they can stop us."

Suddenly some one raised the cry, "The soldiers!" Bannister looked up the street and swore a vicious oath. Swinging down the road at double time came a company of regulars in khaki.

"Bilked by that girl," he muttered, and disappeared promptly into the nearest dark alley.

The mob scattered by universal impulse; disintegrated so promptly that within five minutes the soldiers held the ground alone, save for the officials of the prison and Denver's little band.

A boyish lieutenant just out of the Point was in command. "In time?" he asked anxiously, for this was his first independent expedition.

"Y'u bet," chuckled Denver. "We're right glad to see you, and I'll bet those boys in the cage ain't regretting your arrival any. Fifteen minutes later and you would have been in time to hold the funeral services, I reckon."

"Where is Miss Messiter?" asked the young officer.

"She's at the Elk House, colonel. I expect some of us better drift over there and tell her it's all right. She's the gamest little woman that ever crossed the Wyoming line. Hadn't been for her these boys would have been across the divide hours ago. She's a plumb thoroughbred. Wouldn't give up an inch. All day she has generated this thing; played a mighty weak hand for a heap more than it was worth. Sand? Seh, she's grit clear through, if anybody asks you." And Denver told the story of the day, making much of her unflinching courage and nothing of her men's readiness to back whatever steps she decided upon.

It was ten minutes past eleven when a smooth young, apple-cheeked lad in khaki presented himself before Helen Messiter with a bow never invented outside of West Point.

"I am Lieutenant Beecher. Colonel Raleigh presents his compliments by

me, Miss Messiter, and is very glad to be able to put at your service such forces as are needed to quiet the town."

"You were in time?" she breathed.

"With about five minutes to spare. I am having the prisoners brought here for the night if you do not object. In the morning I shall investigate the affair, and take such steps as are necessary. In the meantime you may rest assured that there will be no further disturbance."

"Thank you. I am sure that with you in command everything will now be all right, and I am quite of your opinion that the prisoners had better stay here for the night. One of them is wounded, and ought to be given the best attention. But, of course, you will see to that, lieutenant."

The young man blushed. This was the right kind of appreciation. He wished Colonel Raleigh and the officers' mess could hear how implicitly this sweet girl relied on him.

"Certainly. And now, Miss Messiter, if there is nothing you wish, I shall retire for the night. You may sleep with perfect confidence."

"I am sure I may, lieutenant." She gave him a broadside of trusting eyes full of admiration. "But perhaps you would like me to see my foreman first, just to relieve my mind. And, as you were about to say, his friend might be brought in, too, since they are together."

The young man promptly assented, though he had not been aware that he was about to say anything of the kind.

They came in together, Bannister supported by McWilliams' arm. The eyes of both mistress and maid brimmed over with tears when they saw them. Helen dragged forward a chair for the sheepman, and he sank into it. From its depths he looked up with his rare, sweet smile.

"I've heard about it," he told her, in a low voice. "I've heard how y'u fought for my life all day. There's nothing I can say. I owed y'u everything already twice, and now I owe it all over again. Give me a lifetime and I couldn't get even."

Helen's swift glance swept over Nora and the foreman. They were in a dark alcove, oblivious of anybody else. Also they were in each other's arms frankly. For some reason wine flowed into the cream of Helen's cheeks.

"Do you have to 'get even'? Among friends is that necessary?" she asked shyly.

"I hope not. If it is, I'm sure bankrupt. Even my thanks seem to stay at home. If y'u hadn't done so much for me, perhaps I could tell y'u how much y'u had done. But I have no words to say it."

"Then don't," she advised.

As it chanced they were close to the window, their shadows reflected on the blind. A man, slipping past in the street on horseback, stopped at sight of that lighted window, with the moving shadows, in an uncontrollable white fury. He slid from the saddle, threw the reins over the horse's head to the ground, and slipped his revolver from its holster and back to make sure that he could draw it easily. Then he passed springily across the road to the hotel and up the stairs. He tread lightly, stealthily, and by his very wariness defeated his purpose of eluding observation. For a pair of keen eyes from the hotel office glimpsed the figure stealing past so noiselessly, and promptly followed up the stairway.

"Hope I don't intrude at this happy family gathering."

Helen, who had been pouring a glass of cordial for the spent and wounded shepman, put the glass down on the table and turned at sound of the silken, sinister voice. After one glance at the vindictive face, from the cold eyes of which hate seemed to smolder, she took an instinctive step toward her lover. The cold wave that drenched her heart accompanied an assurance that the man in the doorway meant trouble.

His sleek smile arrested her. He was standing with his feet apart, his hands clasped lightly behind his back, as natty and as well groomed as was his wont.

"Ah, make the most of what ye yet may spend,

Before ye, too, into the Dust descend;

Dust into Dust, and under Dust to lie,
Sans Wine, sans Song, sans Singer, and—
sans End!"

he misquoted, with a sneer: and immediately interrupted his irony to give way to one of his sudden blind rages.

With incredible swiftness his right hand moved forward and up, catching a revolver from scabbard as it rose. But by a fraction of a second his purpose had been anticipated. A closed fist shot forward to the salient jaw in time to fling the bullets into the ceiling. An arm encircled the outlaw's neck, and flung him backward down the stairs. The railing broke his fall, and on it his body slid downward, the weapon falling from his hand. He pulled himself together at the foot of the stairs, crouched for an upward rush, but changed his mind instantly. The young officer who had flung him down had him covered with his own six-shooter. He could hear footsteps running toward him, and he knew that in a few seconds he would be in the hands of the soldiers. Plunging out of the doorway, the desperado vaulted to the saddle and drove his spurs home. For a minute hoofs pounded on the hard, white road. Then the night swallowed him and the echo of his disappearance.

"That was Bannister of the Hole-in-the-Wall," the girl's white lips pronounced to Lieutenant Beecher.

"And I let him get away from me," the disappointed lad groaned. "Why, I had him right in my hands. I could have throttled him as easy. But how was I to know he would have nerve enough to come rushing into a hotel full of soldiers hunting him?"

"Y'u have a very persistent cousin, Mr. Bannister," said McWilliams, coming forward from the alcove with shining eyes. "And I must say he's game. Did y'u ever hear the like? Come butting in here as cool as if he hadn't a thing to do but sing out orders like he was in his own home. He was that easy."

"It seems to me that a little of the praise is due Lieutenant Beecher. If he hadn't dealt so competently with the situation murder would have been done.

Did you learn your boxing at the Academy, lieutenant?" Helen asked, trying to treat the situation lightly in spite of her hammering heart.

"I was the champion middleweight of our class," Beecher could not help saying boyishly, with another of his blushes.

"I can easily believe it," returned Helen.

"I wish y'u would teach me how to double up a man so prompt and immediate," said the admiring foreman.

"I expect I'm under particular obligations to that straight right to the chin, lieutenant," chimed in the sheepman. "The fact is that I don't seem to be able to get out anything except thanks these days. I expect I ought to send my cousin a letter thanking *him* for giving me a chance to owe so much kindness to so many people."

"Your cousin?" repeated the uncomprehending officer.

"This desperado, Bannister, is my cousin," answered the sheepman gravely.

"But if he was your cousin, why should he want to kill you?"

"That's a long story, lieutenant. Will y'u hear it now?"

"If you feel strong enough to tell it."

"Oh, I'm strong enough." He glanced at Helen. "Perhaps we had better not tire Miss Mesiter with it. If y'u'll come to my room——"

"I should like, above all things, to hear it," interrupted that young woman promptly.

As Bannister had said, it was a long story. But the main points can be told in a few words. Their grandfather, General Edward Bannister, had worn the Confederate gray for four years, and had lost an arm in the service of the flag with the stars and bars. After the war he returned to his home in Virginia to find it in ruins, his slaves freed, and his fields mortgaged. He had pulled himself together for another start, and had practised law in the little town where his family had lived for generations. Of his two sons, one was

a ne'er-do-well. He was one of those brilliant fellows of whom much is expected that never develops. He had a taste for low company, married beneath him, and, after a career that was a continual mortification and humiliation to his father, was killed in a drunken brawl under disgraceful circumstances, leaving behind a son named for the general. The second son of General Bannister also died young, but not before he had proved his devotion to his father by an exemplary life. He, too, was married and left an only son, also named for the old soldier. The boys were about of an age, and were well matched in physical and mental equipment. But the general, who had taken them both to live with him, soon discovered that their characters were as dissimilar as the poles. One grandson was frank, generous, open as the light; the other was of a nature almost degenerate. Tales began to come to the old general's ears that at first he refused to credit. But eventually it was made plain to him that the youth was a rake of the most objectionable type.

There were many stormy scenes between the general and his grandson, but the boy continued to go from bad to worse. After a peculiarly flagrant case, involving the character of a respectable young girl, young Ned Bannister was forbidden his ancestral home. It had been by means of his cousin that this last iniquity of his had been unearthed, and the boy had taken it to his grandfather in hot indignation as the last hope of protecting the reputation of the injured girl. From that hour the evil hatred of his cousin, always dormant in the heart, flamed into active heat. The disowned youth swore to be revenged. A short time later the general died, leaving what little property he had entirely to the one grandson. This stirred again the bitter rage of the other. He set fire to the house that had been willed his cousin, and took a train that night for Wyoming. By a strange irony of fate they met again in the West years later, and the enmity between them was renewed, growing every month more bitter on the part

of the one who called himself the king of the Hole-in-the-Wall country.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE SIGNAL-LIGHTS.

In a little hill-rift about a mile back of the Lazy D Ranch was a deserted miner's cabin. The hut sat on the edge of a bluff that commanded a view of the buildings below, while at the same time the pines that surrounded it screened the shack from any casual observation. A thin curl of smoke was rising from the mud chimney, and inside the cabin two men lounged before the open fire.

"It's his move, and he is going to make it soon. Every night I look for him to drop down on the ranch. His hate's kind of volcanic. Mr. Ned Bannister's is, and it's bound to bubble over mighty sudden one of these days," said the younger of the two, rising and stretching himself.

"It did bubble over some when he drove two thousand of my sheep over the bluff and killed the whole outfit," suggested the namesake of the man mentioned.

"Yes, I reckon that's some irritating," agreed McWilliams. "But if I know him, he isn't going to be content with sheep so long as he can take it out of a real live man."

"Or woman," suggested the sheepman.

"Or woman," agreed the other. "Especially when he thinks he can cut y'u deeper by striking at her. If he doesn't raid the Lazy D one of these nights, I'm a blamed poor prophet."

Bannister nodded agreement. "He's near the end of his rope. He could see that if he were blind. When we captured Bostwick and they got a confession out of him, that started the landslide against him. It began to be noised abroad that the government was going to wipe him out. Folks began to lose their terror of him, and after that his whole outfit began to want to turn State's evidence. He isn't sure of one of them now; can't tell when he will be shot in the back by one of his own

scoundrels for that two thousand dollars reward."

The foreman strolled negligently to the door. His eyes drifted indolently down into the valley, and immediately sparkled with excitement.

"The signal's out, Bann," he exclaimed. "It's in your window."

The sheepman leaped to his feet and strode to the door. Down in the valley a light was gleaming in a window. Even while he looked another light appeared in a second window.

"She wants us both," cried the foreman, running to the little corral back of the house.

He presently reappeared with two horses, both saddled, and they took the downward trail at once.

"If Miss Helen can keep him in play till we arrive," murmured Mac anxiously.

"She can if he gives her a chance, and I think he will. There's a kind of cat instinct in him to play with his prey."

"Yes, but he missed his kill last time by letting her fool him. That's what I'm afraid of, that he won't wait."

They had reached lower ground now, and could put their ponies at a pounding gallop that ate up the trail fast. As they approached the houses, both men drew rein and looked carefully to their weapons. Then they slid from the saddles and slipped noiselessly forward.

What the foreman had said was exactly true. Helen Messiter did want them both, and she wanted them very much indeed.

After supper she had been dreamily playing over to herself one of Chopin's waltzes, when she became aware, by some instinct, that she was not alone in the room. There had been no least sound, no slightest stir to betray an alien presence. Yet that some one was in the room she knew, and by some subtle sixth sense could even put a name to the intruder.

Without turning she called over her shoulder: "Shall I finish the waltz?" No faintest tremor in the clear, sweet voice betrayed the racing heart.

"Y'u're a cool hand, my friend," came his ready answer. "But I think

we'll dispense with the music. I had enough last time to serve me for twice."

She laughed as she swung on the stool, with that musical scorn which both allured and maddened. "I did rather do you that time," she allowed.

"This is the return match. You won then. I win now," he told her, with a look that chilled.

"Indeed! But isn't that rather discounting the future?"

"Only the immediate future. Y'u're mine, my beauty, and I mean to take y'u with me."

Just a disdainful sweep of her eyes she gave him as she rose from the piano-stool and rearranged the lamps. "You mean so much that never comes to pass, Mr. Bannister. The road to the nether regions is paved with good intentions, we are given to understand. Not that yours can by any stretch of imagination be called 'good intentions.'"

"Contrariwise, then, perhaps the road to heaven may be paved with evil intentions. Since y'u travel the road with me, wherever it may lead, it were but gallant to hope so."

He took three sharp steps toward her and stood looking down in her face, her sweet slenderness so close to him that the perfume mounted to his brain. Surely no maiden had ever been more desirable than this one, who held him in such contemptuous estimation that only her steady eyes moved at his approach. These held to his and defied him, while she stood leaning motionless against the table with such strong and supple grace. She knew what he meant to do, hated him for it, and would not give him the satisfaction of flying an inch from him.

"Your eyes are pools of splendor. That's right. Make them flash fire. I love to see such spirit, since it offers a more enticing pleasure in breaking," he told her, with an admiration half-ironic but wholly genuine. "Pools of splendor, my beauty! Therefore I salute them."

At the touch of his lips upon her eyelids a shiver ran through her, but still she made no movement, was cold

to him as marble. "You coward!" she said softly, with an infinite contempt.

"Your lips," he continued to catalogue, "are ripe as fresh flesh of southern fruit. No cupid ever possessed so adorable a mouth. A worshiper of Eros I, as now I prove."

This time it was the mouth he kissed, the while her unconquered spirit looked out of the brave eyes, and fain would have murdered him. In turn he kissed her cold cheeks, the tip of one of her little ears, the small, clenched fist with which she longed to strike him.

"Are you quite through?"

"For the present, and now, having put the seal of my ownership on her more obvious charms, I'll take my bride home."

"I would die first."

"Nay, you'll die later, Madam Bannister, but not for many years, I hope," he told her, with a theatrical bow.

"Do you think me so weak a thing as your words imply?"

"Rather so strong that the glory of overcoming y'u fills me with joy. Believe me, madam, though your master I am not less your slave," he mocked.

"You are neither my master nor my slave, but a thing I detest," she said, in a low voice that carried extraordinary intensity.

"And obey," he added suavely. "Come, madam, to horse, for our honeymoon."

"I tell you I shall not go."

"Then, in faith, we'll reenact a modern edition of 'The Taming of the Shrew.' Y'u'll find me, sweet, as apt at the part as old *Petruchio*." He paced complacently up the room and back, and quoted glibly:

"And thus I'll curb her mad and headstrong humor.

He that knows better how to tame a shrew,
Now let him speak; 'tis charity to show."

"Would you take me against my will?"

"Y'u have said it. What's your will to me? What I want I take. And I sure want my beautiful shrew." His half-shuttered eyes gloated on her as he rattled off a couple more lines from the play he had mentioned.

"Kate, like the hazel-twig,
Is straight and slender, and as brown in hue
As hazel-nuts, and sweeter than the kernels."

She let a swift glance travel anxiously to the door. "You are in a very poetical mood to-day."

"As befits a bridegroom, my own." He stepped lightly to the window and tapped twice on the pane. "A signal to bring the horses round. If y'u have any preparations to make, any trousseau to prepare, y'u better set that girl of yours to work."

"I have no preparations to make."

"Coming to me simply as y'u are? Good. We'll lead the simple life."

Nora, as it chanced, knocked and entered at this moment. The sight of her vivid good looks struck him for the first time. At sight of him she stopped, gazing with parted lips, a double row of pearls shining through.

He turned swiftly to the mistress. "Y'u ought not to be alone there among so many men. It wouldn't be proper. We'll take the girl along with us."

"Where?" Nora's parted lips emitted.

"To Arden, my dear." He interrupted himself to look at his watch. "I wonder why that fellow doesn't come with the horses. They should pass this window."

Bannister, standing jauntily with his feet astride as he looked out of the window, heard some one enter the room. "Did y'u bring round the horses?" he snapped, without looking round.

"No, we allowed they wouldn't be needed."

At sound of the slow drawl the outlaw wheeled like a flash, his hand traveling to the hilt of the revolver that garnished his hip. But he was too late. Already two revolvers covered him, and he knew that both his cousin and McWilliams were dead shots. He flashed one venomous look at the mistress of the ranch.

"Y'u fooled me again. That lamp business was a signal, and I was too thick-headed to see it. My compliments to y'u, Miss Messiter."

"Y'u are under arrest," announced his cousin.

"Y'u don't say." His voice was full

of sarcastic admiration. "And y'u done it with your little gun! My, what a wonder y'u are!"

"Take your hand from the butt of that gun. Y'u better relieve him of it, Mac. He's got such a restless disposition he might commit suicide by reaching for it."

"What do y'u think you're going to do with me now y'u have got me, cousin Ned?"

"We're going to turn y'u over to the United States Government."

"Guess again. I have a thing or two to say to that."

"You're going to Gimlet Butte with us, alive or dead."

The outlaw intentionally misunderstood. "If I've got to take y'u, then we'll say y'u go dead rather than alive."

"He was going to take Nora and me with him," Helen explained to her friends.

Instantly the man swung round on her. "But now I've changed my mind, ma'am. I'm going to take my cousin with me instead of y'u ladies."

Helen caught his meaning first, and flashed it whitely to her lover. It dawned on him more slowly.

"I see y'u remember, Miss Messiter," he continued, with a cruel, silken laugh. "He gave me his parole to go with me whenever I said the word. I'm saying it now." He sat down astride a chair, put his chin on the back cross-bar, and grinned malevolently from one to another.

"What's come over this happy family? It don't look so joyous all of a sudden. Y'u don't need to worry, ma'am. I'll send him back to y'u all right—alive or dead. With his shield or on it, y'u know. Ha! ha!"

"You will not go with him?" It was wrung from Helen as a low cry, and struck her lover's heart.

"I must," he answered. "I gave him my word, y'u remember."

"But why keep it? Y'u know what he is, how absolutely devoid of honor."

"That is not quite the question, is it?" he smiled.

"Would he keep his word to you?"

"Not if a lie would do as well. But that isn't the point, either."

"It's quixotic—foolish—worse than that, ridiculous," she implored.

"Perhaps, but the fact remains that I am pledged."

"I could not love thee, dear, so much
Loved I not honor more,"

murmured the villain in the chair, apparently to the ceiling. "Dear Ned, he always was the soul of honor. I'll have those lines carved on his tombstone."

"You see. He is already bragging that he means to kill you," said the girl.

"I shall go armed," the sheepman answered.

"Yes, but he will take you into the mountain fastnesses, where the men that serve him will do his bidding. What is one man among so many?"

"Two men, ma'am," corrected the foreman.

"What's that?" The outlaw broke off the snatch of opera he was singing to slew his head round at McWilliams.

"I said two. Any objections, seh?"

"Yes. That wasn't in the contract."

"We're giving y'u surplusage, that's all. Y'u wanted one of us, and y'u get two. We don't charge anything for the extra weight," grinned Mac.

"Oh, Mac, will you go with him?" cried Helen, with shining eyes.

"Those are my present intentions, Miss Helen," laughed her foreman.

Whereat Nora emerged from the background and flung herself on him. "Y'u can't go, Jim. I won't have you go," she cried.

The young man blushed a beautiful pink, and tried to disengage himself from the arms about his neck. "It's all right, honey. Don't y'u think two big, grown-up men are good to handle that scalawag? Sho! Don't y'u worry."

"Miss Nora can come, too, if she likes," suggested he of the Hole-in-the-Wall. "Looks like we would have quite a party. Won't y'u join us, too, Miss Messiter, according to the original plan?" he said, extending an ironical invitation.

"I think we had better cut it down to me alone. We'll not burden your hospitality, sir," said the sheepman.

"No, sir, I'm in on this. Whyfor can't I go?" demanded Jim.

Bannister, the outlaw, eyed him unpleasantly. "Y'u certainly can so far as I am concerned. I owe y'u one, too, Mr. McWilliams. Only if y'u come of your own free will, as y'u are surely welcome to do, don't holler if y'u're not so welcome to leave whenever y'u take a notion."

"I'll try and look out for that. It's settled, then, that we ride together. When do y'u want to start?"

"We can't go any sooner than right now. I hate to take these young men from y'u, ladies, but, as I said, I'll send them back in good shape. *Adios, señorita*. Don't forget to whom y'u belong." He swaggered to the door and turned, leaning against the jamb with one hand against it. "I expect y'u can say those lovey-dovey good-bys without my help. I'm going into the yard. If y'u want to y'u can plug me in the back through the window," he suggested, with a sneer.

"As y'u would us under similar circumstances," retorted his cousin.

"Be with y'u in five minutes," said the foreman.

"Don't hurry. It's a long good-by y'u're saying," returned his enemy placidly.

Nora and the young man who belonged to her followed him from the room, leaving Bannister and his hostess alone.

"Shall I ever see you again?" Helen murmured.

"I think so," the sheepman answered. "The truth is that this opportunity falls pat. Jim and I have been wanting to meet those men who are under my cousin's influence and have a talk with them. There is no question but that the gang is disintegrating, and I believe that if we offered to mediate between its members and the government, something might be done to stop the outrages that have been terrorizing this country. My cousin can't be reached, but I believe the rest of them, or, at

least, a part, can be induced either to surrender or to flee the country. Anyhow, we want to try it."

"But the danger?" she breathed.

"Is less than y'u think. Their leader has not anywhere nearly the absolute power he had a few months ago. They would hardly dare do violence to a peace envoy."

"Your cousin would. I don't believe he has any scruples."

"We shall keep an eye on him. Both of us will not sleep at the same time. Y'u may depend on me to bring your foreman safely back to y'u," he smiled.

"Oh, my foreman!"

"And your foreman's friend," he added. "I have the best of reasons for wanting to return alive. I think y'u know them. They have to do with y'u. Miss Helen."

It had come at last, but, womanlike, she evaded the issue her heart had sought. "Yes, I know. You think it would not be fair to throw away your life in this foolish manner after I have saved it for you—how many times was it you said?" The brown eyes lifted with deceptive frankness to the blue ones.

"No, that isn't my reason. I have a better one than that. I love y'u, girl, more than anything in this world."

"And so you try to prove it to me by running into a trap set for you to take your life. That's a selfish kind of love, isn't it? Or it would be if I loved you."

"Do y'u love me, Helen?"

"Why should I tell you, since you don't love me enough to give up this quixotic madness?"

"Don't y'u see, dear, I *can't* give it up?"

"I see you won't. You care more for your pride than for me."

"No, it isn't that. I've *got* to go. It isn't that I want to leave y'u. God knows. But I've given my word, and I must keep it. Do y'u want me to be a quitter, and y'u so game yourself? Do y'u want it to go all over this cattle country that I gave my word and took it back because I lost my nerve?"

"The boy that takes a dare isn't a hero, is he? There's a higher courage

that refuses to be drawn into such foolishness, that doesn't give way to the jeers of the empty-headed."

"I don't think that is a parallel case. I'm sorry we can't see this alike, but I've got to go ahead the way that seems to me right."

"You're going to leave me, then, to go with that man?"

"Yes, if that's the way y'u have to put it." He looked at her sorrowfully, and added gently: "I thought you would see it. I thought sure you would."

But she could not bear that he should leave her so, and she cried out after him. "Oh, I see it. I know you must go; but I can't bear it." Her head buried itself in his coat. "It isn't right—it isn't a—a square deal that you should go away now, the very minute you belong to me."

A happy smile shone in his eyes. "I belong to you, do I? That's good hearing, girl o' mine." His arm went round her, and he stroked the black head softly. "I'll not be gone long, dear. Don't y'u worry about me. I'll be back with you soon; just as soon as I have finished this piece of work I have to do."

"But if you should get—if anything should happen to you?"

"Nothing is going to happen to me. There is a special providence looks after lovers, you know."

"Be careful, Ned, of yourself. For my sake, dear."

"I'll dry my socks every time I get my feet wet for fear of taking cold," he laughed.

"But you will, won't you?"

"I'll be very careful, Helen," he promised more gravely.

Even then she could hardly let him go, clinging to him with a reluctance to separate that was a new experience to her independent, vigorous youth. In the end he unloosened her arms, kissed her once, and hurried out of the room. In the hallway he met McWilliams, also hurrying out from a tearful farewell on the part of Nora.

Bannister, the outlaw, already mounted, was waiting for them. "Y'u *did* get through at last," he drawled in-

solently. "Well, if y'u'll kindly give orders to your seven-foot dwarf to point that Winchester another way, I'll collect my men and we'll be moving."

For, though the outlaw had left his men in command of the ranch when he went into the house, he found the situation reversed on his return. With the arrival of reinforcements, in the persons of McWilliams and his friend, it had been the turn of the raiders to turn over their weapons.

"All right, 'Frisco," nodded the foreman.

The outlaw chief whistled for his men, and with their guests they rode into the silent, desert night.

CHAPTER XV.

EXIT THE "KING."

They bedded that night under the great vault-roof where twinkle a million stars. There were three of the outlaw's men with him, and both McWilliams and his friend noticed that they slept a little apart from their chief. There were other indications among the rustlers of a camp divided against itself. Bannister's orders to them he contrived to make an insult, and their obedience was as surly as possible compatible with safety. For all of the men knew that he would not hesitate to shoot them down in one of his violent rages should they anger him sufficiently.

Throughout the night there was no time that at least two men were not awake in the camp. The foreman and the sheepman took turns keeping vigil; and on the other side of the fire sat one of the rustlers in silent watchfulness. To the man opposite him each of the sentinels were outposts of the enemy, but they fraternized after the manner of army sentries, exchanging tobacco and occasional casual conversation.

The foreman took the first turn, and opposite him sat a one-eyed old scoundrel who had rustled calves from big outfits ever since Wyoming was a territory and long before. Chalkeye Dave he was called, and sometimes merely

Chalkeye. What his real name was no man knew. Nor was his past a subject for conversation in his presence. It was known that he had been in the Nevada penitentiary, and that he had killed a man in Arizona, but these details of an active life were rarely resurrected. For Chalkeye was deadly on the shoot, and was ready for it at the drop of the hat, though he had his good points, too. One of these was a remarkable fondness for another member of the party, a mere lad, called by his companions Hughie. Generally surly and morose, to such a degree that even his chief was careful to humor him, as a rule, when with Hughie all the softer elements of his character came to the surface. In his rough way he was even humorous and genial.

Jim McWilliams found him neither, however. He declined to engage in conversation, accepted a proffer of tobacco with a silent, hostile grunt, and relapsed into a long silence that lasted till his shift was ended.

"Hate to have y'u leave, old man. You're so darned good company I'll certainly pine for you," the foreman suggested, with sarcasm, when the old man rolled up in his blankets preparatory to falling asleep immediately.

Chalkeye's successor was a blatant youth much impressed with his own importance. He was both foul-mouthed and foul-minded, so that Jim was constrained to interrupt his evil boastings by pretending to fall asleep.

It was nearly two o'clock when the foreman aroused his friend to take his turn. Shortly after this, the lad Hughie relieved the bragging would-be bad man.

Hughie was a flaxen-haired, rather good-looking boy of nineteen. In his small, wistful face was not a line of wickedness, though it was plain that he was weak. He seemed so unfit for the life he was leading that the sheepman's interest was aroused. For on the frontier it takes a strong, competent miscreant to be a bad man and survive. Ineffectives and weaklings are quickly weeded out to their graves or the penitentiaries.

The boy was manifestly under great fear of his chief, but the curly-haired young Hermes who kept watch with him had a very winning smile and a charming manner when he cared to exert it. Almost in spite of himself the youngster was led to talk. It seemed that he had but lately joined the Hole-in-the-Wall outfit of desperadoes, and between the lines Bannister easily read that his cousin's masterful compulsion had coerced the young fellow. All he wanted was an opportunity to withdraw in safety, but he knew he could never do this so long as the "king" was alive and at liberty.

Under the star-roof in the chill, breaking day Ned Bannister talked to him long and gently. It was easy to bring the boy to tears, but it was a harder thing to stiffen a will that was of putty and to hearten a soul in mortal fear. But he set himself with all the power in him to combat the influence of his cousin over this boy; and before the camp stirred to life again he knew that he had measurably succeeded.

They ate breakfast in the gray dawn under the stars, and after they had finished their coffee and bacon horses were saddled and the trail taken up again. It led in and out among the foot-hills, sloping upward gradually toward the first long blue line of the Teton that stretched before them in the distance. Their nooning was at a running stream called Smith's Creek, and by nightfall the party was well up in the higher foot-hills.

In the course of the day and the second night both the sheepman and his friend made attempts to establish a more cordial relationship with Chalk-eye, but so far as any apparent results went their efforts were vain. He refused grimly to meet their overtures half-way, even though it was plain from his manner that a break between him and his chief could not long be avoided.

All day by crooked trails they pushed forward, and as the party advanced into the mountains the gloom of the mournful pines and frowning peaks invaded its spirits. Suspicion and distrust went with it, camped at night by the rushing

mountain stream, lay down to sleep in the shadows at every man's shoulder. For each man looked with an ominous eye on his neighbor, watchful of every sudden move, of every careless word that might convey a sudden meaning.

Along a narrow rock-rim trail far above a steep cañon, whose walls shot precipitously down, they were riding in single file, when the Hole-in-the-Wall chief pushed his horse forward between the road-wall and his cousin's bronco. The sheepman immediately fell back.

"I reckon this trail isn't wide enough for two—unless y'u take the outside," he explained quietly.

The outlaw, who had been drinking steadily ever since leaving the Lazy D, laughed his low, sinister cackle. "Afraid of me, are y'u? Afraid I'll push y'u off?"

"Not when I'm inside and you don't have the chance."

"'Twas a place about like this I drove four thousand of your sheep over last week. With sheep worth what they are, I'm afraid it must have cost y'u quite a bit. Not that y'u'll miss it where you are going," he hastened to add.

"It was very like you to revenge yourself on dumb animals."

"Think so?" The "king's" black gaze rested on him. "Y'u'll sing a different song soon, Mr. Bannister. It's humans I'll drive next time, and don't y'u forget it."

"If you get the chance," amended his cousin gently.

"I'll get the chance. I'm not worrying about that. And about those sheep—any man that hasn't got more sense than to run sheep in a cow country ought to lose them for his pig-headedness."

"Those sheep were on the right side of the dead-line. You had to cross it to reach them." Their owner's steady eyes challenged a denial.

"Is that so? Now how do y'u know that? We didn't leave the herder alive to explain that to y'u, did we?"

"You admit murdering him?"

"To y'u, dear cousin. Y'u see I have

a hunch that maybe y'u'll go join your herder right soon. Y'u'll not do much talking."

The sheepman fell back. "I think I'll ride alone."

Rage flared in the other's eye. "Too good for me, are y'u, my mealy-mouthed cousin? Y'u always thought yourself better than me. When y'u were a boy you used to go sneaking to that old hypocrite, your grandfather——"

"You have said enough," interrupted the other sternly. "I'll not hear another word. Keep your foul tongue off him."

Their eyes silently measured strength.

"Y'u'll not hear a word," sneered the chief of the rustlers. "What will y'u do, dear cousin?"

"Stand up and fight like a man and settle this thing once for all."

Still their steely eyes crossed as with the thrust of rapiers. The challenged man crouched tensely with a mighty longing for the test, but he had planned a more elaborate revenge and a surer one than this. Reluctantly he shook his head.

"Why should I? Y'u're mine. We're four to two, and soon we'll be a dozen to two. I'd like a heap to oblige y'u, but I reckon I can't afford to just now. Y'u will have to wait a little for that bumping off that's coming to y'u."

"In that event I'll trouble you not to inflict your society on me any more than is necessary."

"That's all right, too. If y'u think I enjoy your conversation y'u have got another guess coming."

So by mutual consent the sheepman fell in behind the blatant youth who had wearied McWilliams so, and rode in silence.

It was again getting close to night-fall. The slant sun was throwing its rays on less and less of the trail. They could see the shadows grow and the coolness of night sift into the air. They were pushing on to pass the rim of a great valley basin that lay like a saucer in the mountains in order that they

might camp in the valley by a stream all of them knew. Dusk was beginning to fall when they at last reached the saucer edge, and only the opposite peaks were still tipped with the sun rays. This, too, disappeared before they had descended far, and the gloom of the great mountains that girt the valley was on all their spirits, even McWilliams being affected by it.

They were tired with travel, and the long night watches did not improve tempers already overstrained with the expectation of a crisis too long dragged out. Rain fell during the night, and continued gently in a misty drizzle after day broke. It was a situation and an atmosphere ripe for tragedy, and it fell on them like a clap of thunder out of a sodden sky.

Hughie was cook for the day, and he came chill and stiff-fingered to his task. Summer as it was, there lay a thin coating of ice round the edges of the stream, for they had camped in an altitude of about nine thousand feet. The "king" had awakened in a vile humor. He had a splitting headache, as was natural under the circumstances, and he had not left in his bottle a single drink to tide him over it. He came cursing to the struggling fire, which was making only fitful headway against the rain which beat down upon it.

"Why didn't y'u build your fire on the other side of the tree?" he growled at Hughie.

Now Hughie was a tenderfoot, and in his knowledge of outdoors life he was still an infant. "I didn't know——" he was beginning, when his master cut him short with a furious tongue-lashing out of all proportion to the offense.

The lad's face blanched with fear, and his terror was so manifest that the bully, who was threatening him with all manner of evils, began to enjoy himself. Chalkeye, returning from watering the horses, got back in time to hear the intemperate fag-end of the scolding. He glanced at Hughie, whose hands were trembling in spite of him, and then darkly at the brute who was attacking him. But he said not a word.

The meal proceeded in silence except

for the jeers and taunts of the "king." For nobody cared to venture conversation which might prove as a match to a powder-magazine. Whatever his thoughts might be each man kept them to himself.

"Coffee," snapped the single talker, toward the end of breakfast.

Hughie jumped up, filled the cup that was handed him, and set the coffee-pot back on the fire. As he handed the tin cup with the coffee to the outlaw, the lad's foot slipped on a piece of wet wood, and the hot liquid splashed over his chief's leg. The man jumped to his feet in a rage, and struck the boy across the face with his whip once, and then again.

"By God, that'll do for you!" cried Chalkeye from the other side of the fire, springing up, revolver in hand. "Draw, you coyote! I come a-shooting."

The "king" wheeled, finding his weapon as he turned. Two shots rang out almost simultaneously, and Chalkeye pitched forward. The outlaw chief sank to his knees, and, with one hand resting on the ground to steady himself, fired two more shots into the twitching body on the other side of the fire. Then he, too, lurched forward and rolled over.

It had come to climax so swiftly that not one of them had moved except the combatants. Bannister rose and walked over to the place where the body of his cousin lay. He knelt down and examined him. When he rose it was with a very grave face.

"He is dead," he said quietly.

McWilliams, who had been bending over Chalkeye, looked up. "Here, too. Any one of the shots would have finished him."

Bannister nodded. "Yes. That first exchange killed them both." He looked down at the limp body of his cousin, but a minute before so full of supple, virile life. "But his hate had to reach out and make sure, even though he was as good as dead himself. He was game." Then sharply to the young braggart, who had risen and was edging away with a face of chalk: "Sit down, y'u!

What do y'u take us for? Think this is to be a massacre?"

The man came back with palpable hesitancy. "I was aiming to go and get the boys to bury them. My God, did you ever see anything so quick? They drilled through each other like lightning."

Mac looked him over with dry contempt. "My friend, y'u're too tender for a genuwine Ar bad man. If I was handing y'u a bunch of advice, it would be to get back to the prosaic paths of peace right prompt. And while we're on the subject I'll borrow your guns. Y'u're scared stiff, and it might get into your fool coconut to plug one of us and light out. I'd hate to see y'u commit suicide right before us, so I'll just natcherally unload y'u."

He was talking to lift the strain, and it was for the same purpose that Bannister moved over to Hughie, who sat with his face in his hands, trying to shut out the horror of what he had seen.

The sheepman dropped a hand on his shoulder gently. "Brace up, boy! Don't you see that the very best thing that could have happened is this? It's best for y'u, best for the rest of the gang, and best for the whole cattle country. We'll have peace here at last. Now he's gone, honest men are going to breathe easy. I'll take y'u in hand and set y'u at work on one of my stations, if you like. Anyhow, you'll have a chance to begin life again in a better way."

"That's right," agreed the blatant youth. "I'm sick of rustling the mails and other folks' calves. I'm glad he got what was coming to him," he concluded vindictively, with a glance at his dead chief and a sudden raucous oath.

McWilliams' cold blue eye transfixed him. "Hadn't y'u better be a little careful how your mouth goes off? For one thing, he's daid now; and for another, he happens to be Mr. Bannister's cousin."

"But--weren't they enemies?"

"That's how I understand it. But this man's passed over the range. A *man* doesn't unload his hatred on dead folks—and I expect if y'u'll study him,

even, y'u will be able to figure out that my friend measures up to the size of a real man."

"I don't see why if——"

"No, I don't suppose y'u do," interrupted the foreman, turning on his heel. Then to Bannister, who was looking down at his cousin with a stony face: "I reckon, Bann, we better make arrangements to have the bodies buried right here in the valley," he said gently.

Bannister was thinking of early days, of the time when this miscreant, whose light had just been put out so instantaneously, had played with him day in day out. They had attended their first school together, had played marbles and prisoners'-base a hundred times against each other. He could remember how they used to get up early in the morning to go fishing with each other. And later, when each began, unconsciously, to choose the path he would follow in life, they had been captains of opposing teams at school. For the rivalry between them was already beginning to settle into an established fact. He could see now, by looking back on trifles of their childhood, that his cousin had been badly handicapped in his fight with himself against the evil in him. He had inherited depraved instincts and tastes, and with them somewhere in him a strand of weakness that prevented him from slaying the giants he had to oppose in the making of a good character. From bad to worse he had gone—and here he lay with the drizzling rain on his white face, a warning and a lesson to wayward youths just setting their feet in the wrong direction. Surely it was kismet.

Ned Bannister untied the handkerchief from his neck and laid it across the face of his kinsman. A moment longer he looked down, then passed his hands across his eyes and seemed to brush away the memories that thronged him. He stepped forward to the fire and warmed his hands.

"We'll go on, Mac, to the rendezvous he had appointed with his outfit. We ought to reach there by noon, and the boys can send a wagon back to get the bodies."

CHAPTER XVI.

JOURNEYS END IN LOVERS' MEETING.


It had been six days since the two Ned Bannisters had ridden away together into the mountains, and every waking hour since that time had been for Helen one of harassing anxiety. No word had yet reached her of the issue of that dubious undertaking, and she both longed and dreaded to hear. He had promised to send a messenger as soon as he had anything definite to tell, but she knew it would be like his cousin, too, to send her some triumphant word should he prove the victor in the struggle between them. So that every stranger she glimpsed brought to her a sudden beating of the heart.

But it was not the nature of Helen Messiter to sit down and give herself up a prey to foreboding. Her active nature cried out for work to occupy her and distract her attention. Fortunately this was to be had in abundance just now. For the autumn round-up was on, and since her foreman was away the mistress of the Lazy D found plenty of work ready to her hand.

The meeting-place for the round-up riders was at Boom Creek, five miles from the ranch, and Helen rode out there to take charge of her own interests in person. With her were six riders, and for the use of each of them, in addition to his present mount, two extra ponies were brought in the remuda. For the riding is so hard during the round-up that a horse can stand only one day in three of it. At the appointed rendezvous a score of other cowboys and owners met them. Without any delay they proceeded to business. Mr. Bob Austin, better known as "Texas," was elected boss of the round-up, and he immediately assigned the men to their places, and announced that they would work Squaw Creek. They moved camp at once, Helen returning to the ranch.

It was three o'clock in the morning when the men were roused by the cook's triangle calling them to the "chuck-wagon" for breakfast. It was still cold and dark as the boys crawled from un-

der their blankets, hastily fed their mount of the day, and squatted round the fire to eat jerky, biscuits, and gravy, and to drink cupfuls of hot, black coffee. Before sun rose every man was at his post far up on the Squaw Creek ridges ready to begin the drive.

Later in the day Helen rode to the *parada* grounds, toward which a stream of cattle was pouring down the cañon of the creek. Every gulch tributary to the creek contributed its quota of wild cows and calves. These came romping down to the cañon mouth, where four picked men, with a bunch of tame cows in front of them, stopped the rush of flying cattle. Lunch was omitted, and branding began at once. Every calf belonging to a Lazy D cow, after being roped and tied, was flanked with the great  which indicated its ownership by Miss Messiter, and on account of the recumbent position of which letter the ranch had its name.

It was during the branding that a boyish young fellow rode up and handed Helen a note. Her heart pumped rapidly with relief, for one glance told her that it was in the handwriting of the Ned Bannister she loved. She tore it open and glanced swiftly through it.

DEAR FRIEND: Two hours ago my cousin was killed by one of his own men. I am sending back to you a boy who had been led astray by him, and it would be a great service to me if you would give him something to do till I return. His name is Hugh Rogers. I think if you trust him he will prove worthy of it.

Jim and I are going to stay here a few days longer to finish the work that is begun. We hope to meet and talk with as many of the men implicated in my cousin's lawlessness as is possible. What the result will be I cannot say. We do not consider ourselves in any danger whatever, though we are not taking chances. If all goes well we shall be back within a few days.

I hope you are not missing Jim too much at the round-up. Sincerely,

NED BANNISTER.

She liked the letter because there was not a hint of the relationship between them to be read in it. He had guarded her against the chance of its falling into the wrong hands and creating talk about them.

She turned to Hughie. "Can you ride?"

"In a way, ma'am. I can't ride like these men." His glance indicated a cow-puncher pounding past after a wild steer that had broken through the cordon of riders and was trying to get away.

"Do you want to learn?"

"I'd like to if I had a chance," he answered wistfully.

"All right. You have your chance I'll see that Mr. Austin finds something for you to do. From to-day you are in my employ."

She rode back to the ranch in the late afternoon, while the sun was setting in a great splash of crimson. The round-up boss had hinted that if she were nervous about riding alone, he could find it convenient to accompany her. But the girl wanted to be alone with her own thoughts, and she had slipped away while he was busy cutting out calves from the herd. It had been a wonderful relief to her to find that *her* Ned Bannister was the one that had survived in the conflict, and her heart sang a pæan of joy as she rode into the golden glow of the westering sun. He was alive—to love and be loved. The un-lived years of her future seemed to unroll before her as a vision. She glowed with a resurgent happiness that was almost an ecstasy. The words of a bit of verse she had once seen—a mere scrap from a magazine that had stuck in an obscure corner of her memory sang again and again in her heart.

Life and love,

And a bright sky o'er us,

And—God take care

Of the way before us!

Ah, the way before them, before her and her romance-radiating hero! It might be rough and hilly, but if they trod it together— Her tangled thoughts were off again in another glad leap of imagination.

The days passed somehow. She busied herself with the affairs of the ranch, rode out often to the scenes of

the cattle-drives and watched the round-up, and every twenty-four hours brought her one day nearer to his return, she told herself. Nora, too, was on the lookout under her long-lashed, roguish eyelids; and the two young women discussed the subject of their lovers' return in that elusive, elliptical way common to their sex.

No doubt each of these young women had conjectured as to the manner of that home-coming and the meeting that would accompany it; but it is safe to say that neither of them guessed in her day-dreams how it actually was to occur.

Nora had been eager to see something of the round-up, and as she was no horsewoman her mistress took her out one day in her motor. The drive had been that day on Bronco Mesa, and had finished in the natural corral made by Bear Cañon, fenced with a cordon of riders at the end opening to the plains below. After watching for two hours the busy scenes of cutting out, roping, and branding, Helen wheeled her car and started down the cañon on their return.

Now, a herd of wild cattle is uncertain as an April day's behavior. Under the influence of the tame valley cattle among which they are driven, after a little milling around, the whole bunch may gentle almost immediately, or, on the other hand, it may break through and go crashing away on a wild stampede at a moment's notice. Every experienced cowman knows enough to expect the unexpected.

At Bronco Mesa the round-up had proceeded with unusual facility. Scores of wiry, long-legged steers had drifted down the ridges or gulches that led to the cañon; and many a cow, followed by its calf, had stumbled forward to the herd, and apparently accepted the inevitable. But before Helen Messiter had well started out of the cañon's mouth the situation changed absolutely.

A big hill-steer, which had not seen a man for a year, broke through the human corral with a bellow near a point where Reddy kept guard. The puncher

wheeled and gave chase. Before the other men could close the opening, a couple of two-year-olds seized the opportunity, and followed its lead. A second rider gave chase, and at once, as if some imp of mischief had stirred them, fifty tails went up in wild flight. Another minute and the whole herd was in stampede.

Down the gulch the five hundred cattle thundered toward the motor-car which lay directly in their path. Helen turned, appreciated the danger, and put the machine at its full speed. The road branched for a space of about fifty yards, and in her excitement she made the mistake of choosing the lower, more level, one. Into a deep sand-bed they plowed, the wheels sinking at every turn. Slower and slower went the car; finally came to a full stop.

Nora glanced back in affright at the two hundred and fifty tons of beef that was charging wildly toward them. "What shall we do?" she gasped, and clambered to the ground.

"Run," cried Helen, following her example and scudding for the sides of the cañon, which here sloped down less precipitately than at other points. But before they had run a dozen steps each of them was aware that they could not reach safety in time to escape the hoofs rushing toward them so heavily that the ground quaked.

"Look out!" A resonant cry rang out above the dull thud of the stampeding cattle that were almost upon them. Down the steep sides of the gorge two riders were galloping recklessly. It was a race for life between them and the first of the herd, and they won by scarce more than a length. Across the sand the horses plowed, and as they swept past the two trembling young women each rider bent from the saddle without slackening speed, and snatched one almost from under the very hoofs of the leaders.

The danger was not past. As the horses swerved and went forward with the rush, Helen knew that a stumble would fling not only her and the man who had saved her, but also the horse down to death. They must contrive to

hold their own in that deadly rush until a way could be found of escaping from the path of the living cyclone that trod at their heels, galloped beside them, in front, behind.

For it came to her that the horse was tiring in that rush through the sand with double weight upon its back.

"Courage!" cried the man behind her as her fearful eyes met his.

As he spoke they reached the end of the cañon and firm ground simultaneously. Helen saw that her rescuer had now a revolver in his hand, and that he was firing in such a way as to deflect the leaders to the left. At first the change in course was hardly perceptible, but presently she noticed that they were getting closer to the outskirts of the herd, working gradually to the extreme right, edging inch by inch, ever so warily, toward safety. Going parallel to their course, running neck and neck with the cow-pony, lumbered a great dun steer. Unconsciously it blocked every effort of the horseman to escape. He had one shot left in his revolver, and this time he did not fire into the air. It was a mighty risk, for the animal in falling might stagger against the horse and hurl them all down to death. But the man took it without apparent hesitation. Into the ear of the bullock he sent the lead crashing. The brute stumbled and went down head over heels. Its flying hoofs struck the flanks of the pony, but the bronco stuck to its feet, and next moment staggered out from among the herd stragglers and came to halt.

The man slid from its back and lifted down the half-fainting girl. She clung to him, white and trembling. "Oh, it was horrible, Ned." She could still look down in imagination upon that sea of dun backs that swayed and surged about them like storm-tossed waves.

"It was a near thing, but we made it, girl. So did Jim. He got out before we did. It's all past now. You can remember it as the most exciting experience of your life."

She shuddered. "I don't want to remember it at all." And so shaken was she that she did not realize that his

arm was about her the while she sobbed on his shoulder.

"A cattle stampede is a nasty thing to get in front of. Never mind. It's done with now, and everybody's safe."

She drew a long breath. "Yes, everybody's safe, and you are back home. Why didn't you come after your cousin was killed?"

"I had to finish my work."

"And *did* you finish it?"

"I think we did. There will be no more Hole-in-the-Wall gang in my opinion. Its members have scattered in all directions."

"I'm glad you stayed, then. We can live at peace now." And presently she added: "I knew you would not come back until you had done what you set out to do. You're very obstinate, sir. Do you know that?"

"Perseverance I call it," he smiled, glad to see that she was recovering her lightness of tone.

"Do you remember that first day I ever saw you? You let me go away thinking you were the 'king.' Why did you do that?"

"If you knew how much vain explaining I had done before that. It was borne in on me that the only explanation I could give that would serve as proof. I had no proof then, and I had made up my mind to lie under the suspicion, since I must, until evidence was obtainable that would vindicate me. My only other course would have been to leave the country with my name under a cloud, and I could not bring myself to do that."

"But you might have told me."

"It was you that did the telling," he laughed. "You accused me of being the 'king,' and I expect I was too proud to deny without proof. Fact is, I was pretty sore at the suspicions against me."

"And so you left me to think for weeks that you were an outlaw and a desperado? Was that fair or kind?"

"Was it fair or kind to convict and punish me on suspicion?" he retaliated gently.

"No, I suppose not. But——" She flushed divinely. "I loved you all the

time, even when they said you were a villain."

"Even while you believed me one?"

"I never believed you one—not in my heart. I made excuses for you. I wouldn't let myself believe."

He loved her for the frank simplicity of her confession, that out of the greatness of her love she dared to make no secret of it to him. Direct as a boy, she was yet as wholly sweet as the shyest girl could be.

He cast an inquiring eye round the horizon. McWilliams and Nora, working slowly toward them over the plain, had gone into temporary eclipse behind a hill, whence they appeared in no hurry to emerge again into public view. When Bannister released her, Helen straightened her hat and blushed.

"And when shall we be married, Helen? Is the early part of next week too late?"

"That's ridiculous, sir. I haven't got well used to the thought of you yet."

"There will be plenty of time for that afterward. We'll say next week, if it suits you."

"But it doesn't. I want time to change my mind if I want to."

"I was afraid you might. That's why I insist on next week."

"Insist?"

"I've been told on good authority that I am very obstinate," he replied gaily.

"I have a mind of my own myself. If I ever marry you, be sure I'll set the day, sir."

"Will you marry me the same day Nora does Jim?"

"We'll see."

At this juncture of affairs appeared the foreman and Nora, very much oblivious of the outside world. They came to themselves presently, and recognized Bannister and Helen.

The two girls flew into each other's arms.

"We're allowing to be married in October," explained Mac, with a sheepish grin.

Ned caught his sweetheart's eye over Nora's shoulder, and read a blushing consent. "That's certainly strange, Jim. So are we," he answered immediately.



WHEN THE BISHOP PREACHED

IT was one of those sizzling days last July, and the famous bishop had left his cool resort in the mountains for a single Sunday to attend a special service in a down-town church in New York.

Several lengthy musical numbers preceded the sermon, and the congregation, perspiring under a temperature well up in the nineties, looked on with only a languid interest as the noted preacher mounted the pulpit steps.

Leisurely he took out a bulky manuscript and spread it on the desk. Then his eyes roved over the moving fans. A look of compassion overspread his face, and there was a twinkle in his eyes as he folded up his manuscript.

"Brethren," he said, "I had intended to speak to you on the duty of considering our fellow men. Instead I will apply the sermon to myself, and will preach to you from the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. This is the text: 'And in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torment.'"

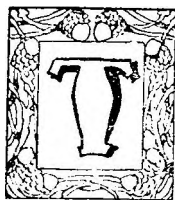
Every fan stopped waving, and with bated breath the congregation listened to the sermon. It was very short:

"Brethren, Dives was in a hot place, and he didn't like it. Nor do we. Let us pray."

Out of the Burning

By Theodore Roberts

How three strangers come to settle in King's Brook. A remarkably realistic description of a forest-fire which devastated the country and wherein is also shown that love works miracles in the fiercest heart



THE three Goodines appeared in the settlement of King's Brook, on the Miramichi, about twelve years before the summer of the big fire. They came in June; from where nobody knew. The people of the settlement never grew accustomed to the Goodines, and never felt quite sure in their minds as to the exact relationship of the three to one another.

Richard, the eldest of the Goodines, was a big fellow, black of hair and eye, hawk-nosed, swarthy of skin, and uncertain of temper. Conjectures as to his age ran from forty-five to sixty years; and all that the conjectures felt sure of was that he was either a moderately young man, who had suffered from a rigorous way of life, or a moderately old man, who was so seasoned by unusual experiences as to have fixed youth in his fibers. Simon, the second of the brothers, was also of dark complexion; but there the resemblance ended, for he was short and small-boned, and of a decidedly comfortable figure. His cheeks were plump and of a dusky ruddiness, and his age was very apparently between thirty and forty years. He smoked tobacco rolled in yellow paper, looked indolently upon life under a drooped eyelid, and had tiny incisions in the fat lobes of his ears. Mike, the youngest, was fair-skinned and fair-haired, and as large as Richard. Save for an anchor and a mermaid tattooed on his left forearm, he wore none of the hall-marks of mystery.

On the same day that they walked

into the settlement, each with a pack on his shoulder, they bought a farm from Dave Harris. Five hundred dollars was the price of it, for the house had been burned, and very little land was cleared. Dave was a young fellow who made his living by trapping, and just played at farming in the summer. He trapped, every winter, along the Little Southwest, and sometimes struck across into the Tobique country. He was living with Deacon Kendal when the Goodines turned up, and it was at the deacon's that the deal was made. Harris jumped at the chance to sell his land. With it gone, he would be a free man through all the summer months.

"Five hundred dollars is the price," said he.

The deacon was distressed by his frankness. That was not his idea of the way to sell a thing; for five hundred was a fair valuation, and the Goodines were strangers to the country. But he could do nothing.

"Spanish?" asked Richard Goodine, with something foreign in the twist of the word.

Dave looked at him uncertainly.

"Why, no, I'm not Spanish," he said. "I was born in Westmoreland County."

"He wants to know whether you mean Spanish or American money," said Mike Goodine.

"Oh! Well, I mean American money," said Harris, somewhat confused. "Of course, I'll take Spanish money; if it's worth any more," he added, smiling.

"It's not," replied Mike gravely.

"We'll pay," said Richard, looking at Simon. Simon nodded, and scratched

one of his ears, where a ring used to hang. Mike nodded, too, unbuttoned his coat, and drew a flat parcel from an inside pocket. He unfastened it, disclosing good Canadian bank-bills. He counted the bills awkwardly.

"Only four hundred and sixty here," he said to Harris. He turned to his companions and murmured something, which neither the deacon nor the trapper understood. The elder Goodines nodded their heads again, and glared at the offending greenbacks. Mike unfastened something from his waist, under his shirt, and pulled forth an article that looked like a canvas-covered rope. But it fell on the deacon's "settin'-room" table with a thud of solidity. He bent close to it, and worked at one end of it with a knife-blade. The light was failing, and the deacon turned aside and lit a candle. When he faced back again, to place the candle on the table, several gold coins were glowing in Mike Goodine's hand.

"Will you take forty dollars in gold?" asked Mike of Harris.

"I reckon I will," said the trapper.

"These are worth ten dollars each," said Mike, placing four coins in a little pile. The deacon grabbed them to the candle in suspicious scrutiny, then pushed back a cover of the table-cloth and rang them, one by one, on the bare wood. The two elder Goodines exchanged grim but amused glances, but made no remark.

"They are very good gold," said Mike, returning his ropelike purse to its hiding-place. And they were very good gold, though of a country the name of which neither Kendal nor Harris had ever heard. The deacon's daughter, Sarah, and his wife were called in from the kitchen to witness the transferring of the deed. The Goodines were invited to stay to supper, and accepted the invitation; but when the deacon told them that the spare bedroom was ready for their occupancy, Richard shot a glance at Simon, and Simon turned his secret eye on every corner of the sitting-room, and Mike politely declined the proffered hospitality.

"It is a pleasant, warm evening. We will build a little shelter on our own land," he said.

During supper Mike spoke three times, briefly, and his companions said never a word. They ate sparingly, with the air of men engaging in a doubtful adventure. It was evident, at a glance, that the pancakes were quite beyond their appreciation. They managed a little better with the apple sauce and Washington pie. But as soon as the meal was over they hurried away, their footsteps lighted by a borrowed lantern.

There was a log barn on the place, and Harris had put in a few acres of oats and buckwheat; so the Goodines ran up a shack, bought a few head of cattle and a team of horses, and set right to work at building a house. They cut most of the timber on their own place, and hauled it out, log by log, on wheels. The deacon, from whom they had purchased the horses and cattle, got a job at sawing boards and splitting shingles for the new house. That is, he accepted the undertaking and named the figures, and set a poverty-stricken brother-in-law and a poor Indian at the work. He tried to get Dave Harris into it; but Dave knew the deacon, and so, after kissing Sarah good-by, went away with his five hundred dollars.

It did not take the people of King's Brook long to decide that the Goodines had been seafaring men; and before the summer was half-over, the story went around that they had been pirates, and were hiding from the law. But even the deacon was afraid to ask any questions, for he had heard the three brothers jabbering together in a foreign language, on several occasions, and foreigners always suggested knives to the deacon.

It was Mike who always went over to the deacon's place on the business of the boards and shingles. Though he never did much talking, he acquired a habit of sitting in the kitchen and watching Mrs. Kendal and Sarah at their work. He always sat as if he were afraid the chair might blow up at any moment. When Sarah spoke to him, or smiled at him—as some girls are bound

to do with a man hanging around, even if he is suspected of deep-sea crimes—he looked both startled and delighted, as if she had pointed a pistol at him with one hand and offered him a priceless gift with the other. And, though he was slow to answer Sarah with his tongue, he could talk to her with his eyes in a way that was rather advanced for the Miramichi,

The Goodines' house was up and finished before winter, without any help from the neighbors that was not paid for in good gold. There it stood, low and solid, for twelve years, and not once between the building and the burning of it was a neighbor invited to set his foot across the threshold. All through the first winter, and well on into April, did Mike continue his visits to Deacon Kendal's, though the shingles and boards were all paid for and nailed into place.

For a long time he continued to behave as if his presence in the deacon's kitchen was entirely an accident; but he surprised them all, one mild, windy March night, by producing a musical instrument, the like of which had never before been seen in King's Brook. He began to play, pecking skilfully at the strings, without excuse or preamble. The gleaming, round-bellied instrument tinkled and jingled and twanged until the deacon closed his eyes, so as not to see the toe of his own left foot bobbing up and down in time to the music. Mrs. Kendal folded her hands in her lap and forgot about the undarned socks; and Sarah leaned forward in her chair, her lips parted, her eyes wide.

In April Dave Harris came back to King's Brook on a visit; and on the day after his arrival he and Sarah were married. They left King's Brook the same day.

When Mike Goodine heard of it, in the deacon's kitchen, the color went out of his face and he swayed on his feet. Then he turned and went out of the house, leaving the door slamming behind him in the spring wind. When half-way home he halted, stared for a moment at the guitar which he was carrying in his hand, and then struck the

instrument repeatedly against a fence-rail until it was reduced to silence and shapelessness.

In the years that followed, the Goodines worked their farm and paid not the slightest attention to their neighbors. Mike was as aloof and taciturn as the others. Except in matters of business, they had nothing to do with the other settlers, never entering their houses or receiving them in their own home. They were known to be heavy drinkers, and yet they worked late and early. Sunday was their usual time for carousal, and then they would sit indoors from morning until midnight, amid wrangling that never came to strange oaths and stranger songs.

II.

Then came the big fire. The woods roared for hundreds of miles, and the smoke rolled, black as thunder and hot as a furnace, across the whole country. The mills and shipping at the mouth of the Miramichi were licked out as clean as a bear licks honey off her paws. Men and animals were roasted as they ran; and all the little rivers boiled like tea-kettles. Salmon were cooked in the pools and trout in the rattles. Everything ran for the big river and waded in—men and women and children, horses and horned cattle, moose, caribou, deer, foxes, and bears.

Flames, smoke, and flying brands of fire, all seemed to have a special grudge against the three Goodines. Even the water in which they were forced to take refuge was too hot for them, for they had taken to a narrow part of the river. The fire was fairly cracking the pebbles on the shore behind them; so they had nothing to do but swim right across. On the other side they crawled into a cool hollow under the brush, and lay flat on the moss; but before they had recovered their breaths the flames leaped over after them, and licked at their feet.

All afternoon they fled before the roaring, red pursuers—fled, stumbled, and fled on. They managed to keep to-

gether, though the smoke blew down on top of them like a Bay of Fundy fog. If one fell, the others each caught a hand and dragged him along until he got his feet under his body again. Sometimes the fire dropped back for a few minutes, to worry through a bit of green alder swamp, and then they were able to recover a little of breath and strength. About sunset it slowed down and hung behind them, as if it were tired of the chase. Before dark they reached the edge of a big barren, where they found plenty of blueberries, which they ate with some hard biscuits they had brought along in their pockets. Before they lay down to sleep, the fire had sunk to a low, red wall along the south-west. Feeling sure of their lives, they slept soundly, too weary to dream.

Suddenly Mike awoke and sat up straight. He had forgotten the fire, the destruction of his home, and the awful chase; and for a second or two, while he was rubbing his eyes, he wondered who had left a lantern burning at the foot of his bed. Then the truth shot into his mind. There was the fire, within a hundred yards, licking across the grass and moss and bushes of the barren, like a herd of red, nameless monsters. Far and near it lay out on both sides, and in the timber-lands, where the big trees were going, it roared half-way up the sky. He awoke the others, and the awful race was continued in defiant and desperate silence.

When the sun rose, its light, striking through the smoke, stained all the wilderness a horrible red. The crackling of branches in the jaws of the fire, and the breaking of great trunks, filled the air with a confusion of sounds. And still the three Goodines raced forward, defiant as ever, though their throats were dry and their stomachs empty, and their legs crumpling under them at every leap.

At last the barren was left behind, and some time about the middle of the morning they crawled, almost beaten, over a brush fence and into a little clearing. At the far edge of it stood a log shack with a roof of hemlock bark, and across a corner, showing a border of

green bushes, ran a brook. The fugitives from death took the scene in at a glance. The shack would be in flames in a few minutes, and, no doubt, had been deserted ever since the fire had first showed itself.

But there were chances that it contained food. If so, they would have time to snatch it up and run over to the brook for water before the enemy got into the brush fence.

The door of the shanty was shut and fastened; but Mike broke it in with one thump of his shoulder. In the middle of the one room stood a boy—a little fellow not higher than your hip—his eyes staring with fright and a shotgun in his hands. On the table lay a plate of cold pancakes and half a loaf of bread.

"Don't shoot," yelled Mike, as quick as he could for the pain and thirst in his throat and the stiffness of his tongue.

"What d'y'e want?" asked the boy, laying down the gun. "Dad's away to Edge Corners, and won't be back till night."

"You had better not stay here. The whole country is burning," said Mike.

"Will it burn this shack?" asked the boy.

Mike nodded.

By that time the other two had cleared the table by stuffing the food into their pockets. They drank a pot full of cold tea that stood on the window-sill, and staggered out again into the red sunlight. They shouted to Mike, in Spanish, and again took up the race without turning their heads to see if he followed. They ran straight into the big timber. But Mike hesitated in the doorway of the shack—and now the fire was among the stumps of the clearing. He looked at the little boy, so thin and frightened, and then out at his red enemy.

"Who is your father?" he asked.

"Dave Harris," said the boy.

At that, Mike Goodine looked around the cabin with a queer, tender light in his eyes.

"And your mother?" he asked softly.

"She died las' winter," replied the boy, scarcely above a whisper.

"Come with me!" said Mike. He caught one of the small hands in his grimy palm, and ran from the shack and toward the brook in the corner of the clearing. He thought he heard the other Goodines calling to him, swearing at him, but he gave no heed. He seemed to hear another voice, a gentler voice, whispering close in his ear. With clearer eyes he saw that the little valley of the brook was free from big timber and bordered deep, where it left the clearing, with green alders. The fire raced along the brush fence, but hung back behind the alders.

Farther down the clearing it had already won to the big timber on the far side. Mike grabbed the child in his arms and dashed through the burning fence. Still carrying the boy, he ran down the bed of the stream for a hundred yards or so. Smoke hung among the tangled stems of the bushes and rolled thick overhead. He ran in a dreadful twilight, through lukewarm water that just covered his ankles. At last he set the boy down and fell on all fours. He dipped his face in the water; splashed it over him; washed his mouth; and, after that, very slowly, he swallowed one draft.

Refreshed by the water and brief rest, the two stumbled along, hand in hand. But the child soon tired, and his bare feet were bruised by the stones. Mike lifted him again, though every inch of his great body was aching. He forced himself along blindly. At last he tripped, and came down on hands and knees, spilling the child into a deep pool ahead.

"By God, I'm done!" he cried, and lay in the shallow water, pulling for his breath.

The little boy arose, spluttering, and, seeing that there'd be no more running for a while, crawled from the pool and sat down in the shallow water beside his companion. The light was clearer now, in the narrow gully between the alders. Looking up, he saw that the wind had shifted, and that the smoke was thinning overhead. The roaring and ripping of the fire came faintly from the old quarter and faintly from beyond.

The wind had shouldered it into the tall spruces—away from the useless alders and Indian willows, into thousands and thousands of dollars' worth of big timber. And that way had the elder Goodines gone!

Along toward sunset, when Mike and the boy were sitting on the bank of the stream, tired and hungry beyond words, they heard a desperate, blind sort of shout from somewhere back among the smoke. The boy jumped to his feet. "That's dad! He's lookin' for me!" he said, and started up-stream. Mike hoisted himself from the bank with a groan, and stumbled after. They heard the noise again—it was more of a cry than a shout, and pitiful enough to go right through Mike Goodine's heart. The boy tried to answer; but his voice was gone to a whisper. Again they heard the cry, sounding a little nearer than before. They crawled toward it—crawling was as fast as walking, and didn't hurt so much—and presently they came on a man lying sideways in a hollow. His eyes were shut, and he breathed hard and quick. His beard and hands were burned, and his flannel shirt was full of round, black-edged holes. But he opened his eyes when they were near, and sat up and drew the boy close to him with his burned hands.

"I went back an' looked for you, Billie. My God! the shack was burnin' like brush—an' I hunted 'round for you, Billie, among the red logs."

Then he noticed Goodine for the first time.

"Did you bring him out of that, Mike Goodine?" he asked.

Mike nodded, smiling.

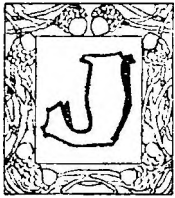
"I thought he was done for! My God, I jus' lay down here an' give up! I'd rather die than have anything happen to him. I owe you more'n my life, Mike!" said Harris.

Then Mike murmured something in Spanish—a line of a love-song it was—and turned to the stream for another drink. His heart felt big and glad within him; and, for some reason that he neither questioned nor understood, Sarah was forgiven.

Pearson of Princeton

By I. Rae

Will prove most interesting to all lovers of sport. Princeton's star end, seemingly immune, at length falls a victim. A lively narration of the great Princeton-Harvard game and what Pearson did at a critical moment



JIMMY PEARSON, of the Princeton football eleven, had but one ambition in his three years at college, and that was to keep on playing left end so well that the coaches would never think of putting any one else in his place; and so that no opposing half-back would ever want to try more than once in one half to get around his end on a play that was supposed to be starting for the other.

"See that bunch of steel muscles at left end?" students would ask strangers in the grand stand. "That's Pearson. You ought to see him play in a championship game. Why, last season——"

And then Jimmy Pearson's orange-and-black sweater would be seen moving down the field under a practise punt; and the crowd of students would shout "'Rah! 'rah! Pearson!" when he downed his man five yards from the scrub goal-post.

There was one thing that his friends did not understand, and that was why Jimmy Pearson took no interest in girls. Fellow students had never seen him any place where girls could look at him except when he was on the field mixing in every scrimmage that wasn't any of his business; and limping back to his position in the line with his stubby fists doubled up and his shock of hair hanging over his eyes, and every muscle aching in his stocky little body.

Girls had never interested Pearson. It seemed queer to him how fellows who might play football wasted their time by coming out to Nassau Field

on championship-game days with scores of angel-eyed, laughing, daintily gowned young ladies, who did not know the difference between a half-back and tackle; and who said "Oh!" every time any one had his nose broken. He had heard this from the field.

That was Jimmy Pearson when his third year began. One day that fall he wriggled out of a scrimmage where he had his arms around the legs of a scrub twice his size who had the ball, with his face all muddy, and swung around to his end of the line next to Smith at tackle. He stood on his toes and sprang in again past two scrubs and a tackle who had been instructed to stop him, and started with the kick, and slammed the scrub half-back on the ground with a thud, while the students on the stand clapped their hands and yelled "'Rah! 'rah! Everybody cheer for Pearson!" It was then that Freddie Cooper, talking to the captain, heard a newspaper reporter say to a coach who had just come in from the field:

"That chap Pearson, at left end, is a crackerjack. If nothing happens to him he will make the greatest half-back next year that Princeton ever had."

Freddie Cooper, who was interested only where football and Jimmy Pearson were concerned, related this to Jimmy that night from where he stood by the closed window facing the campus with Jimmy's Latin history that Jimmy couldn't read.

"There's sense in what that coach said. Now don't go and let anything happen to you!"

"Rubbish!" said Jimmy Pearson from the depths of a Morris chair, where he

was engaged in reading the latest news in the beef scandal. "What could happen?"

"Fall in love," said Freddie Cooper.

"Fall in love?" echoed Jimmy Pearson. He straightened up in his chair and looked at Freddie Cooper, who made a pretense of studying his Latin and laughed. "Fall in love!" That struck him as being funny, and he laughed again.

"Yes, fall in love," said Freddie Cooper. "It raises the devil. For example, I knew a chap once who fell in love with a girl, and got engaged to her just before a baseball-game. Strange, wasn't it? Well——" Freddie Cooper looked keenly at Jimmy. "He pitched that year for Yale, and imagined throughout the game that if he did not win she would not marry him. He got twisted in the ninth inning with three men on base; he pitched wild and gave the batter his base on balls, forcing a man to score and losing the game for his nine."

Jimmy Pearson glanced up at Freddie Cooper and smiled.

"What's that got to do with me?" he demanded.

"I want you to keep that story in mind and steer clear of girls, that's all," said Freddie Cooper.

"Rubbish!" said Jimmy Pearson.

And he steered clear—that is, until the following summer, which was just before his last season on the team, when he ran right into it.

It was this way: Her name was Elsie Elizabeth Crocker, and she had blue eyes and golden hair, and was just nineteen, and every morning walked down to the village post-office, with Jimmy Pearson following.

Jimmy met her one evening at a reception in the summer hotel where he was staying over the hot weather; and the moment she gazed at him he knew that she had searched his soul and understood him. And Jimmy Pearson, who had never paid any attention to girls before, capitulated. Every day for three weeks Miss Crocker allowed Jimmy to ride beside her on her morning canters over the country roads, and

carry her kodak and sit with her evenings in a secluded corner of the piazza, with the silvery rays of the moon upon them; and tell her about Princeton, and what a bully place it was, and what nice fellows went there, and how he could look across from his window onto the campus and see the boys playing leap-frog; and what a great football-team Princeton had, and how Princeton was going to make the Harvard eleven look like a bunch of schoolboys playing their first game, and how he was going to help them do it.

Which for twenty-one hot days was heaven for Jimmy Pearson. He had never met a girl like that before. When something happened.

It was on a Friday morning under the grape-arbor, with the sun peeping at them through the vines, and Miss Crocker raised her eyes to his, and they had a look of surprise and pity in them as she listened to certain words said in a hurried whisper by Jimmy. Twenty minutes later Jimmy Pearson leaned disconsolately against the door of the barn. She had been very nice about it; had said she would be a sister to him, and any time he was in Brooklyn he might call on her grandmother and have a cup of chocolate with lady-fingers on the side. That wouldn't have been so bad, and there would have been some hope in it if something else had not happened, too.

But that afternoon a large automobile stopped in front of the hotel, and a young man in linen duster and cap with goggles jumped out with a kodak in one hand and a suit-case in the other, while a crowd of natives gathered around the car and stared in open-mouthed wonder. His name was Stanley H. Hawkins, of the Harvard football-team. Jimmy Pearson saw him coming the same time that Miss Crocker did, and immediately went up to his room and wrote a letter to Freddie Cooper, inviting him to join him in a trip to the African jungle, where a young man might meet death in a battle with ferocious lions, and where there were no girls with blue eyes and golden hair to break fellows' hearts.

All of which Jimmy did because—because the moment Miss Crocker saw Hawkins she said "Oh!" in an odd way, and ran up-stairs in the hotel and put on a new dress made of Alice blue silk, with a lace yoke in it, for dinner.

Most fellows forget about that sort of thing soon after they think they never will, or else declare all woman-kind are the same until they meet the next one, and so on. But Jimmy Pearson was different. He told himself that he had been a heavy loser in love's lottery, and that it was a thing of the past; and also if she wasn't happy, that the next time he had a man named Hawkins within his reach where nobody could see him, there would be one more applicant on the waiting-list for a place in Hades.

He said this to himself when the football season began, and thought he was all over it: and then wilted like a plant without sunlight. You see, he thought a good deal more about Miss Crocker than he thought he did, which was not at all conducive to throwing ambitious scrub quarters on their backs under their own goal-posts, or to heading off visiting college tackies from getting around his end with the ball, or to keeping other men, like Hall, who had been playing for two seasons with the eleven—and who hadn't any such reason for a slump—from getting his place on the eleven.

Which was why when the boys asked Freddie Cooper what the matter was with Pearson, he shook his head and vouchsafed no reply. Later on he mentioned it to Jimmy, who tried to pull himself together. But the more he tried the worse he got. Just before the crash came, he played so well one afternoon that he thought he had banished her image from his vision; but he was mistaken. In the second half, when he was tackling Hall on a fake end play, her face suddenly appeared in front of him as he was jumping forward, and Hall made a touch-down. The whole audience held its breath on the stands, and Freddie Cooper jabbed Bill Courtney in the ribs as if it was his fault; and then Titus, captain of the eleven, who had

something besides friendship to think about, held a consultation with the coaches. The outcome of which was that the day before the Princeton-Harvard game, the papers had Hall's name in the place that had been Jimmy Pearson's for three years.

Which was the cause of Freddie Cooper's hurried trip to Brooklyn to see a certain young lady who had a good deal to do with the results of the game, as will presently be seen.

All through the first half, while the two elevens were struggling to score, Jimmy Pearson sat disconsolately on the side-line with his blanket thrown around him, and called himself everything he could think of, and stared out at his eleven on the field; each player so familiar to him, the great line bending to their knees till the giant center snapped the ball, then heaving upward and forward against the crimson line, while the alert half-backs shot to left or right, and stopped suddenly under an avalanche of red sweaters. If he hadn't been a silly, sentimental fool and thrown his chance away on a girl, Jimmy thought to himself as the stands cheered again and the second half began, he could have gone out there and done something. Hall was getting tired, but he could not go out. He did not have the courage. If things had only been different—if Hawkins—

A sharp, penetrating yell broke out from the Princeton stands, and Jimmy Pearson jumped. It rose to a rousing cheer that was taken up all along the lines. Hundreds of orange-and-black flags waved around the field. People were standing in their seats, imploring, yelling again, as they had done without effect, all through the game. But now Princeton was playing, and with twenty minutes left to play, the game had suddenly taken on new life. The Princeton quarter-back had kicked a long, low drop, and Hall, the Princeton left end, had tackled the Harvard quarter-back on his own twenty-yard line. A mass of Princeton men were on their feet shouting:

"Princeton! Princeton!"

The side-lines were singing; linesmen, dragging a string between orange and black and red posts, were running to take up their new positions. Up in the press-stands reporters were leaning over their operators' shoulders and waving their hats. Coaches were scurrying across the field to each other, boring their way through the subs. Jimmy Pearson nodded to one of them, Campbell, the head coach, who had a long list of brilliant plays on that field to his credit, and who ran past him, chewing a cigar exultingly. "We've got 'em," he shouted. Across the field stocky young men in heavy overcoats were crouching anxiously to watch the next play.

Jimmy Pearson watched the players excitedly. Even if he couldn't play, and if neither side had scored, and if there were but twenty minutes left to play in, Princeton could check their advances now and make a touch-down. Crouching low on their own thirty-yard line, the Harvard eleven were preparing for a final attack down the field. Their full-back was slapping men on their shoulders and giving final directions. The Harvard stands echoed with a long entreating:

"Harvard! Harvard!"

Then came a short, snappy signal. Harvard gained two yards; another and they gained one. Thrice more and the Harvard quarter-back shot around Princeton's end for five yards. Both elevens were fighting every inch, and at the end of every play men were stretched out on the frozen sod, while rubbers with bottles ran out under the deafening din and sponged their heads with water.

Jimmy Pearson could see, as every one in the stands could, that Harvard was making her last desperate attack at the game. His fingers itched to be out there. One man was brought in crying, kicking, fighting to go back into the game, while the coaches who brought him in tried to tell him that his arm was broken, and he couldn't play any more. He was crying like a child. Several others had been injured in a scrimmage, and now lay on the Prince-

ton side-lines, grimy and heart-broken, while rubbers bathed their faces.

In fifteen minutes the game would be over. It was already growing dark. At the end of each-play a stream of sweat rose from both teams like the vapor over a valley. The players, staggering back to their places, appeared hardly able to move until the next signal brought them to their feet in a play that again ended in a mixture of legs and arms. A continuous uproar of cheers filled the air. From all sides of the massive, swaying stands the colors of both elevens waved out incessantly. No one could hear the signals of the quarter-backs in the steady cheers.

But with ten minutes left to play a change was being made in the Harvard line. Jimmy Pearson, noting the change, understood what it was at once. Where Harvard had for ten minutes made but fifteen yards on Princeton a change had come. It seemed to Jimmy Pearson that if the sun should suddenly turn green, it would not be any more of a miracle than what was taking place now, right along out there on the field in front of him. Ten minutes of the second half was still left to play, and those Harvard backs were suddenly beginning to make big holes in the Princeton line. A certain easy play was going every time. Jimmy Pearson saw a man run out from the Harvard lines to take some one's place; it was this man who was making the gains. Every time the ball was snapped back this man would take it, there would be a smashing onslaught of crimson sweaters, and the new player would be around his end—Hall's end. Once he gained three yards, then five, then ten.

The ball moved from Harvard's twenty-yard line to Princeton's twenty-five-yard line. Jimmy, springing from his seat, crouched, tremblingly, to watch the next move. He saw big Jones, at center, shove and push, and Warner, at left tackle, lunge forward, and Hall, at his end, jump in each time and lose his man. The Harvard stands were on their feet, a mass of crimson flags, cheering in heavy unison, fran-

tically. The Princeton stands were silent. Jimmy Pearson hardly trusted his eyes. Each time his eleven were compelled to back off to take up their new position. Harvard was forcing Princeton straight down the field for a touch-down. As he groaned again, Jimmy Pearson could see the same crimson half-back dash around Hall's end to be downed only after he had carried the ball to Princeton's fifteen-yard line. Harvard men were crowding down to the ropes, standing on their seats, shouting, dancing, embracing each other.

"Oh, stop it—can't some one stop it?" wailed Jimmy Pearson brokenly. A coach told him to skiddoo.

And then something happened. Jimmy Pearson, watching every move, had straightened up a moment and caught Freddie Cooper's eye as he leaned over the bench on the other side. Freddie's face was pale. He pointed his finger at the Harvard line.

"Hawkins!" shouted Freddie Cooper.

Jimmy looked instantly, for the first time, into the face of the Crimson half-back who was making all the trouble for the Princeton eleven. It was he, Hawkins, the man who had taken Miss Crocker away from him. He bristled up suddenly—Hawkins! Why, then, Miss Crocker must be there, too! Hadn't she cast him aside for Hawkins? He turned quickly and stared into the crowded stands. In the sixth row near the aisle Jimmy Pearson looked straight at a golden-haired girl, who sat between an old man who waved his hat frantically and a young girl who had a sausage poodle on her lap with a red ribbon around his neck. But it wasn't that fact that sent the blood from Jimmy Pearson's face.

Miss Crocker was not in red for Hawkins! She wore an orange-and-black flag in her belt!

Jimmy stood upon the bench with his eyes bulging, and stared at her. The next moment she recognized him, and pulled out the orange-and-black flag and waved it at him. Jimmy gasped. In spite of the fact that a fresh yell for Harvard was going up at that time,

Jimmy Pearson sprang through a crowd of disappointed substitutes, and dived between two coaches who said things to him, and grabbed Freddie Cooper by the arm.

"Here, Freddie!" he gasped excitedly. "Drop that card. Come here." He pulled the conscientious Freddie to his feet and gripped him by his collar.

"Now, then," he said shortly, and his eyes blazed. "What do you know about Miss Crocker?"

Freddie Cooper smiled. Jimmy shook him vigorously.

"Out with it!" he commanded; he was hot all over.

"I——" said Freddie Cooper. "I knew a chap who knew her. I went to see her——"

"The devil you did!"

"I did. Stop choking me. I discovered that Hawkins was a Mormon. That he had three girls engaged to him at the same time he met Miss Crocker." Jimmy straightened up. If Hawkins had done that he would punch his head. "I told her. Hold on a minute. I told her that if she would give up that Mormon fellow, I'd find her a nice kitchen-table in your cottage in the suburbs. I told her that you had one cup and two saucers and three chairs that belong to me, an oil-lamp, and a cushioned seat on a typewriter's chair in my uncle's office in prospect. I changed her mind. Then I told the coaches all about it; and I told them to keep an eye on you, and notice when the disease broke. Now trot along to Campbell. There's five minutes left to play in—and beat Harvard!"

Jimmy Pearson sat Freddie Cooper down so hard on the bench that Freddie Cooper giggled. Just one thought was in his mind. Hawkins had tricked the girl he loved, and Hawkins was out there on the Harvard team, and was winning the game for Harvard. He didn't stop to consider that she might care for him; that she had come to the game to see him, Jimmy Pearson, play. All he wanted now was to meet Hawkins. The next moment he rushed out on the side-lines and nodded savagely

to Campbell, the head coach, who glanced from him to Freddie Cooper, and then smiled. Then he shoved Jimmy out on the field with a bull-like yell:

"Princeton! Princeton! Pearson!"

Pearson only turned to glance, on the run, just once as he put on his nose-piece, over the shoulder of Hall, limping back to the bench, at a girl in a fur jacket, who sat between an old man and a young girl, and who looked the other way quickly. Then he started in to play football.

The whistle blew. The Tiger full-back, running from one player to another, encouraged each Princeton man with a pat on the back. It was Harvard's ball, first down, ten yards to go, on Princeton's ten-yard line. One final rush, like those that had driven Princeton seventy yards down the field, and the game would be over. There was a moment's silence. The Harvard quarter snapped the ball; Hawkins took it. There was a crimson rush of men in front of him, and with a dive Jimmy Pearson broke through the Harvard tackle and end opposite him and slammed the crimson half-back on the ground with a thud three yards back of where he had started.

A terrific yell broke from the Princeton stands:

"Pearson!"

Another signal, another flash of crimson at his end, and Jimmy lay again with his arms around Hawkins' legs, with three more yards lost for Harvard.

"Third down, seven yards to go."

The Princeton stands were frantic. There were two minutes left to play. Jimmy knew what he was going to do. The Harvard backs dropped behind for a kick for goal. Jimmy Pearson, swinging forward carelessly at his end, watched the pass narrowly. He saw what ten half-shut other pairs of Princeton eyes failed to see, and that was the fumble that Hawkins made as he reached forward to take the ball. With the pass, Jimmy was over the line and on him with a rush. Suddenly swinging, he sprang forward, and, as

Hawkins kicked, blocked the ball with his hands and was after it. Before the audience could see what was happening, Jimmy had fallen under the Harvard half-back's feet: and Thompson, who was just behind him, had picked up the ball on the run and was ten yards down the field past the Harvard full-back for a touch-down.

It was all done so quickly that Jimmy Pearson was on his feet again before the spectators understood what had happened. If he hadn't regained Miss Crocker's affection he had beaten Hawkins, and there was some consolation in that. Crowds of yelling, happy Princeton men vaulted the fence onto the gridiron, and carried Jimmy off on their shoulders.

"Princeton! Princeton! Pearson!"

The vanquished eleven, not to be outdone, arose in a body, and stood uncovered in the late November afternoon, staring down at their team all alone on the field below. Then a slow, rolling, rising, thundering cheer broke from hundreds of Harvard men:

"Harvard! Harvard! Hawkins!"

An hour later Freddie Cooper was explaining certain things to Jimmy Pearson, in his quarters at the gym. "I told you that I saw Miss Crocker, but I didn't tell you all about it. You never want to believe a girl until you get her angry; I got her angry."

"Freddie!"

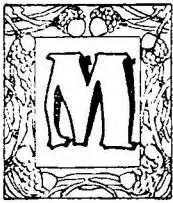
"On my word, I did. It was the only way I could persuade her. I told her you didn't care for her, anyhow. That you believed she was some one else when you proposed to her. That brought her down to earth, all right. No, that's my coat. Here's yours. You're excited. She threw down Hawkins herself. I told her to. Hold on a minute. I'm going to take the uncle and young sister around the town in one of those rubberneck coaches to see the sights. You can come around to the inn any time you want to. I guess she'll see you; and, by the way, don't forget to tell me what she says."

"Rubbish!" said Jimmy Pearson from the doorway.

A Forlorn Hope

By A. M. Chisholm

Mr. Chisholm's humor is always delightful, and this story is no exception to the rule. "The course of true love never runs smooth." It ran extremely rough, for a time, for Sam Morris, and you are sure to be amused at the interview between him and his prospective father-in-law, with its unexpected termination



R. SAMUEL MORRIS stood upon the Westport wharf, smoking. His hands were thrust deep in his trousers' pockets, and his shoulders carried the hump of extreme dejection:

even his pipe drooped at an angle of depression, and occasionally emitted a despairing gurgle. Gloom, utter overshadowing gloom, was expressed by his whole attitude.

For Mr. Morris was in love. Not as the successful lover—happy in his conquest, secure in the knowledge that unto him has been given the priceless possession of a woman's affection, but in love hopelessly, utterly, despairingly, after the manner of one in the Pit, turning yearning eyes upon an eminence he cannot hope to attain.

This love embittered Mr. Morris' pipe, and caused him to scowl darkly upon the world and eye the fair expanse of water glowing in the June sunset with sour disapproval.

"It's her old man," muttered Mr. Morris at length, removing the pipe and inspecting its empty bowl with indignation. "It's her old man, that's what it is. I'd have some chance if it wasn't for him, but I've been trying to see her alone for months, and he's always in the way. Looks like he thinks his daughter ain't growed up. And she's that under his thumb she won't help a fellow, and I don't know where I'm at. If he'd only go off into a fit in one of his tantrums and die! Old lob-

ster!" And with this respectful reference to the father of his beloved, Mr. Morris filled his pipe afresh and resumed a disapproving inspection of the world at large.

Mr. Samuel Morris was a comparatively new resident of Westport, having conferred his presence on that village for less than a year, but in that brief space he had found time to fall in love, desperately and irretrievably, with Miss Susan Block, the dutiful daughter of William Block, mariner, retired, an individual of pronounced views on most subjects and violent prejudices, who guarded her most carefully from the wiles of the young men of Westport, and looked upon their hesitating advances with strong disapproval. So discouraging was Captain Block's attitude toward prospective suitors, and so negative the attitude of Miss Susan herself, that one by one the young men had drawn off, until Mr. Samuel Morris felt that he need fear no rival.

That, however, was a poor consolation: the prize remained equally above his reach, and, though he had braved the captain's scorn and pointed remarks times without number in the sacred cause of love, not one sign of encouragement from the object of his affections could he now hug to his heart and cherish in the hour of his depression. But, though Miss Susan Block's affections appeared to be unattainable, and though her father's remarks were not calculated to increase, or even leave undiminished, a young man's self-respect, Mr. Morris stuck to his guns manfully;

and even as he stood upon the wharf wrapped in gloomy meditations he was screwing up his courage for a visit to the Block abode.

Having finished his second pipe, Mr. Morris tapped it out, placed it in his pocket, and walked away in the direction of the village. Here and there some one spoke to him, but Mr. Morris replied abstractedly. Turning down a quiet, elm-shaded street, he arrived at his destination.

Captain Block occupied a modest brick dwelling, with a tidy lawn in front and a garden in the rear. The lawn was bordered by flower-beds, and showed the effect of careful attention. The redoubtable captain himself was enjoying a pipe on the veranda, a mass of ivy and creeping plants concealing him from the observation of passers-by.

Mr. Morris mounted the steps with much the air of a criminal going to the guillotine, and wished Captain Block good evening.

"Ho!" said that individual, with a fierce stare, "so you've come again."

Mr. Morris admitted the fact reluctantly, and expressed a hope that he was not intruding.

"Intruding?" said the captain gruffly. "Intruding? No, you ain't intruding. Do you know what I do with intruders, my lad? I put 'em out, that's what I do."

This statement appearing to call for no response, and the only two chairs on the veranda being occupied respectively by Captain Block's body and feet, Mr. Morris balanced himself upon the railing and endeavored to look respectful, an endeavor much handicapped by an intense desire to look otherwise.

Captain Block continued to puff at his pipe and glare, and, the silence becoming oppressive, Mr. Morris ventured to hope that he found himself in good health.

"I do," said Captain Block. "I'm in the best of health, sound as a nut and strong as a bull, something none of you young fellers will be able to say if you live to be my age, which you won't. You ain't got the constitutions to start with, and you don't take care of 'em

if you had. There's you sitting on that rail now. How old are you? Twenty-five. It ain't likely you'll live to be forty. You're narrow-chested, and your lungs is weak, and probably your heart's bad; you're soft all over, just clerking in a store, and some little thing may carry you off any day. Look at me!" The captain brought his fist down on the arm of his chair with a bang, and endeavored to expand his chest, an attempt which, from his reclining position, merely resulted in bringing his aldermanic proportions into greater prominence. "Look at me! Lungs like a bellows, heart like a steam-engine, muscles hard as oak. There's a model for you! What have you got to say to that?"

"You've forgot your stummick," said Mr. Morris recklessly, with a meaning glance at the rotundity in question. "It's something remarkable, it is."

Captain Block reddened, glanced down at the organ in question, glared, and was about to make a fiery reply, when the door opened, and his daughter emerged upon the veranda, causing him to postpone retort.

Miss Block did not resemble her father. There was nothing assertive about her. Her expression was mild and pleasant, and her manner propitiatory, even apologetic, from years of endeavor to please her parent and deference to his moods. She was rather pretty, very quiet, and regarded the captain as the greatest man in the world.

Mr. Morris descended with agility from his perch upon the railing at the advent of his divinity, and greeted her.

"Are you quite comfortable, father?" said Miss Block anxiously, regarding the captain's disposition of his frame upon the chairs. "Shall I get you a cushion for your back?"

There was no double meaning in the remark. That the captain was occupying the only two chairs on the veranda excited no surprise in his daughter. He wanted two chairs, and therefore he used them, and that was all there was to it. The captain, however, did not want a cushion.

"Then I'll bring out a chair for Mr. Morris," said Miss Block.

"You needn't bother," said Captain Block. "he's only going to stay a minute, anyhow; he was just leaving when you opened the door."

"I think I'll stay a little while," said Mr. Morris, with unwonted hardihood. "Let me bring you a chair, Miss Susan."

The chairs were brought, and Mr. Morris entered upon an evening which was riot and license itself in comparison with other occasions upon which he had endured the hospitality of Captain Block, and caused him to bless his stars that he had not beaten a retreat under the captain's fire.

It so chanced that a boy arrived with an urgent message which required the attendance of Captain Block at the village hotel upon a business matter, and, finding Mr. Morris entirely oblivious to pointed hints that he should efface himself, the captain was forced to leave him and Miss Block together, which he did, reluctantly, with a parting reference to the lateness of the hour—it was eight o'clock—and an allusion to the necessity of Mr. Morris' appearance at work betimes on the following morning.

Mr. Morris had never before had the happiness of a conversation with Miss Block alone in her home. Heretofore the presence of Captain Block had been invariable and depressing. Released from it, and yet hardly able to realize his good fortune, Mr. Morris proceeded to make the most of the opportunity. Tactfully he led the conversation into channels of sentiment; carefully he maneuvered to keep it there, and to his surprise found that the hitherto unapproachable and diffident Miss Block was, when released from the constraint of her formidable father's presence, not altogether unresponsive. Encouraged by these unexpected findings, Mr. Morris was emboldened to declare himself, and, throwing restraint to the winds, poured out his passion in a torrent of words, in the midst of which he made a wild clutch at Miss Block's hand, and, gripping it desperately,

clung thereto, eventually falling upon his knees in self-abasement, but refusing to release his hold.

"Give me some hope!" pleaded Mr. Morris wildly, faint recollections of a play he had once witnessed influencing his speech. "Don't turn me down! My heart beats alone for you! If a lifetime of devotion can—can—say, I've got money saved up in the bank, I have, enough to start housekeepin', and my habits are good. I can show you testimonials from my employers. Your lightest wish shall be—be—what you say goes, and always will with me. I've been loving you for months, and never got a chance to tell you. I mean every blame word I say. Will you marry me, Susie? I'll make you the best husband you ever had!"

Miss Block received the passionate appeal with some consternation. Coming at the time it did it was entirely unexpected, but her feminine intuition had long caused her to suspect the purpose of Mr. Morris' visits, and to admire his tenacity of purpose in face of the reception he received from her dreaded father, whose peculiarities had kept other young men from making a second call. She was not indifferent to Mr. Morris, and she could not doubt his earnestness; she hesitated, and the woman who hesitates is proverbially lost. She temporized.

"I don't know what to say, Mr. Morris."

"Say 'yes,'" pleaded Mr. Morris, in entreating tones.

"You'll have to see father," continued Miss Block. "Maybe he wouldn't like me to marry you."

"Why wouldn't he?" said Mr. Morris bravely, but with a sinking sensation in the pit of his stomach. "What's he got to do with it? Will you marry me if I get his consent, Susie?"

"I didn't say so," said Miss Block. "And you mustn't call me Susie."

"My name's Sam," said Mr. Morris, recognizing in the lady's words merely the diplomatic language of surrender.

"Is it?" said Miss Block.

"It is," said Mr. Morris. "Sam and Susie; now and ever shall be." And

the formal protest of Miss Block was a smothered one, for obvious reasons.

"My goodness!" cried Miss Block, after an interval which to Mr. Morris had been one of sheer delirious ecstasy. "My goodness! father may be home any minute, and what will he say if he finds you here?"

"Let him find!" said Mr. Morris valourously; but he rose, nevertheless, and sought for his hat; nor did he linger overlong in his adieu. It was not wise, he argued to himself, by way of an offering to his self-respect, to start by needlessly irritating a most impulsive old gentleman. Therefore it was with a sense of relief that he found himself out on the road, with nothing to mar his blissful recollections of the evening.

When Mr. Morris reached the dingy bedroom which he called home, he removed his coat and collar, filled his pipe, drew a chair to the open window, and regarded the moonlight night with approval. Tender, not to say sentimental, thoughts filled his mind; he wondered if Susie were even then gazing from her window into the same moonlight and thinking of him. No doubt she was. No doubt about it at all. Mr. Morris felt his chest swell with complacency. He rested his elbows on the sill, took his chin in his hands, curled his feet around the legs of the chair, and lost himself in happy dreams. So profound was his reverie that he did not hear a knock on the door, and a masculine voice at his ear made him start suddenly, striking his head against the lower half of the window.

"What d'ye mean coming into my room like that?" he demanded angrily.

"Came to get a pipe of tobaccor," said the newcomer. "What you lookin' at so hard? I knocked twice."

"Oh, it's you, is it?" said Mr. Morris, recognizing his particular friend, Mr. Joseph Boak. He produced the tobacco and lit the lamp. Mr. Boak seated himself on the bed and began to smoke.

"Had a little game down at Steve's to-night," he announced. "I won dollar'n a half."

"Hüh!" said Mr. Morris scornfully.

"Goin' to a picnic Thursday," said Mr. Boak. "Goin' to buzz Della Mason. Wanta come? You can have her sister Katie if you like."

"Don't want her," replied Mr. Morris ungraciously.

"She's good fun," said Mr. Boak argumentatively. "I remember once me and her——"

"Aw, g'wan!" said Mr. Morris; "who wants to hear about her? You make me tired, you and your Mason girls."

"What's the matter with you?" said Mr. Boak, with some heat. "The girls are all right. If you'd go 'round with them some instead of chasing after one that won't look at you, you'd have a better time."

"Won't look at me, hey?" said Mr. Morris proudly. "Won't look at me? You'll maybe change your opinion when I ask you to be best man."

"What!" cried Mr. Boak, in amazement. "You don't mean——"

Mr. Morris nodded consciously and reddened.

"Yes, I do."

Mr. Boak grasped his friend's hand and shook it as one who takes a last farewell. He disappeared in the direction of his own room, and came back with a bottle of beer, a glass, and a cracked shaving-mug. The two toasted the future Mrs. Morris solemnly.

"Now," said Mr. Boak, "tell me about the accident."

Mr. Morris, overlooking the form of the question, furnished the details. "Of course I have to get the old man's consent yet," he concluded; "and I want to tell you, Joe, it won't be easy. You ain't got no idea what an old pirate he is."

"All wind," said Mr. Boak. "There's nothing to him."

"Ain't there?" replied Mr. Morris skeptically. "You just ought to hear him once."

"I have, often," said Mr. Boak, endeavoring to extract the last few drops of beer from the bottle. "It's only his way."

"Maybe you'd like to ask him for his

daughter's hand?" said Mr. Morris hopefully.

"Me? I don't want to marry her," said Mr. Boak, startled.

"For me, I mean," replied Mr. Morris. "Now I come to think of it, I hear it's the thing to do—to have a friend go and arrange for you."

"That's duels," said Mr. Boak, "and not marrying. You've been reading novels. What good does it do you for me to see him? Anyway, I won't, and that's flat."

On the following evening Mr. Morris betook himself to the home of his affianced, fully resolved to beard the captain in his den and extract a consent by fair means or foul. To this end he carried a box of cigars as a peace-offering, and also a box of candy for Miss Block. He wore his best suit of clothes, and his face was painfully clean-shaven. If despondency had been his portion when he traveled the same path the night before, he now felt absolute, craven fear, and an inclination to turn and run. This inclination he nobly suppressed, and presented himself at Captain Block's gate, outwardly calm, but inwardly in a state of nervous panic.

The sight of Miss Block upon the veranda partially restored his self-possession, but the pedal extremities of her parent protruding through the leaves above the veranda railing seemed to threaten him. However, he mounted the steps and stammered a greeting.

"Errand-boy now?" demanded Captain Block, eying the parcels in Mr. Morris' hands.

"It's a box of cigars I brought you," said Mr. Morris, handing over the uppermost package.

"Who from?" asked Captain Block.

"From me; it's a present," said Mr. Morris.

"What's the matter with them?" demanded Captain Block.

"Nothing. They're good cigars," replied Mr. Morris indignantly.

The captain grunted and tore off the paper wrapping, exposing a pink paper box, which he opened. A layer of candy met his astonished eyes.

"It's the wrong box!" said Mr. Morris. "Here's the cigars. The candy is for Su——"

"For who?" cried Captain Block, glaring at him.

"For Miss Block," said Mr. Morris, in a panic. "I wouldn't go and give you candy; I know better."

"I should hope so," said Captain Block. "Candy! Huh!" He bit one end from a cigar and lit it. "I've smoked worse—somewhere," he vouchsafed grudgingly. "Have one?"

Mr. Morris accepted the invitation and smoked, amid a desultory conversation. He felt that he was making progress. It was something to sit and smoke with his prospective father-in-law, even if that gentleman did not suspect the pending relationship. By the mysterious telegraphy known to lovers only, Miss Block signified to him her intention of withdrawing, and he demurred in a fresh panic. Miss Block, however, was determined, and, in spite of frantic, mute appeals from her desperate lover, bade him good night and vanished. Mr. Morris, his courage oozing out of the ends of his toes and a cold perspiration moistening his forehead, found himself alone with the captain.

"Time she was abed," said the latter meaningly; "time I was abed; time you was abed. Good night!"

"It—it ain't late," said Mr. Morris; "and I want to ask you about a—a business matter."

"Fire ahead," said Captain Block gruffly, "but don't be long."

"I won't," promised Mr. Morris; but having said so his brain refused to act further. Wildly he cast about for something—anything—to say, but his mind was a blank.

"What's the matter with you?" growled Captain Block. "Do you think I'm going to wait all night?"

"It's business," repeated Mr. Morris, finding speech. "It's like this. I've got a job that pays me seven hundred a year, and a little money saved up, and I'm thinking of—of making a change, you know."

"Oh, are you?" observed the captain. "Where are you going?"

"Nowheres," said Mr. Morris. "This change is just a sort of a change in the way I'm living. I've concluded to lead a different kind of life—a lot different. Every man should."

"Have you been and got saved at one of them revivals, or what?" demanded Captain Block. "Don't start telling me no experiences, because I won't stand it."

"It ain't that," said Mr. Morris. "I've been boarding around for some time, and I'm tired of it. I get lonely. It preys on me, it does; and I—I—well, I'm thinking of getting married."

"You're a fool," said Captain Block, in a tone of dispassionate conviction.

"Why am I?" asked Mr. Morris. "Every one gets married some time. You got married!"

"What of it?" demanded Captain Block. "Then I know what I'm talking about, don't I? Is that what you wanted to tell me? I thought you said it was business."

"It is business, in a way," said Mr. Morris. "I thought you'd like to know who I'm going to marry."

"What do I care who you marry?" growled Captain Block. "You ain't going to marry me."

"Not exactly," stammered Mr. Morris, "but——"

"Then I don't care," announced the captain. "Go and get married if you want to. It's no concern of mine."

"Do you mean that?" asked Mr. Morris.

"Do I mean it?" repeated Captain Block irritably. "Of course I mean it. Marry any one you like. Good night."

"It's—it's Susie," stammered Mr. Morris. There! It was out. Now let the heavens fall.

"What?" roared Captain Block, bounding in his chair with the violence of the exclamation. "Susie? My Susie! You're thinking of marrying her? I like your impudence. Why, she wouldn't look at you, and you can just get that notion out of your head!"

"I've asked her," said Mr. Morris,

"and she's willing if I get your consent; and I've got it."

"You've asked her!" repeated the captain, in amazement. "And she's willing, and you've got my consent. Oh, you have, have you? Well, you haven't—not by a long shot. You get out of here and stay out. Don't come back. If I catch you fooling around here again I'll wring your neck."

"You just said you didn't care who I married," observed Mr. Morris doggedly. "That's your consent. It's good enough for me, and you can't take it back."

"I do take it back," roared Captain Block. "I never gave it, anyway. Do I want a skinny-necked, humpbacked lubber like you for a son-in-law? A clam-mouthed, fresh-water loafer that can't call his soul his own?"

Now, Mr. Morris was touchy on one thing, and that was the shape and dimensions of that portion of his anatomy usually concealed by his collar. It seemed to him that his case was hopeless, anyway, and he strongly desired to tell Captain Block various things. Therefore, in the bitterness of desperation, he threw diplomacy and caution to the winds, and gave the captain a "Roland for his Oliver."

"Far as that goes," he observed, in conclusion, "you ain't the sort of a father-in-law I'd pick out, either. I don't know how you ever come to have a girl like Susie for a daughter. You look like a sea-porkypine, and you talk like a parrot raised in a slum, and you ain't got the manners of a starved pig. You can take your consent back and keep it; I don't want it, anyway. Me and Susie are going to get married whether you like it or not. She's twenty-one, and so am I. And if you ever come snooping around our house I'll set the dog on you, you old back-number, dough-headed cook on a wood-scow."

Captain Block gasped. Words actually failed him. Such unexpected and injurious language from a young man he had been accustomed to regard as a milk-and-watery individual filled him with astonishment, and, strange to

say, he was not at all offended. He had no respect for those who allowed him to bully them, and he had an immense respect for a man who hit back. The language addressed to him struck on his ears gratefully; leaving out the personal element, it was much the same in sentiment and fluency as the abuse he had hurled at refractory crews in years gone by, and he relished the tang and the force of the similes. A young man who could talk like that might make a good son-in-law if friendly relations were established; if they weren't he was apt to be a very unpleasant one.

Mr. Morris, all unaware of the subtle change in the captain's sentiments toward him, had unconsciously assumed a belligerent attitude, and waited for the storm to break and destroy him utterly. Judge of his amazement, then, when Captain Block said mildly:

"Young man, was you ever at sea?"

"No, I wasn't," replied Mr. Morris.

"It's a pity," observed the captain, with a sigh. "There's a good deep-sea mate thrown away in you, by the language you use."

"You started it," said Mr. Morris defensively.

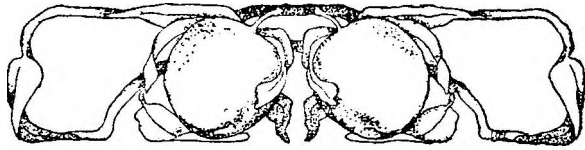
"Let that go," observed Captain Block. "Susan!" he roared, in a voice that made the windows rattle.

Miss Block appeared with suspicious alacrity in the doorway.

"Susan," said Captain Block, "this young man wants to marry you, and he says you want to marry him. Do you?"

"If you don't mind, father," replied Miss Block dutifully.

"I don't," said Captain Block. "Take him and be as happy as you can under the circumstances. There's a few things about language you don't know yet, young man, but you'll find 'em out in a year or so if Susie's her mother's daughter."



IN NATURE'S BALLROOM

AN astronomical writer has compared the journey of the earth and moon through the heavens to a sort of celestial waltz.

It is a wonderful dance, the distance covered by the whirling pair in a year being about five hundred and forty millions of miles.

The male partner—that is to say, the earth—is the more active of the two, for he turns once every twenty-four hours, while the "lady moon," although facing her partner all the time, revolves around her partner only once in a month.

In this connection may be mentioned the astronomical theory to explain the fact that the moon presents the same side to the earth at every revolution upon its axis. It is thought that millions of years ago the moon formed part of the earth, but by some great convulsion of nature was thrown off into space.

The earth being the larger body, offered the greater attraction to the molten matter of which the moon was composed, and gradually delayed its revolution, causing it to turn more and more slowly, until it revolved at only about one-thirtieth of the earth's pace.

If we could imagine a dance (it would hardly be called a waltz, however) in which the man pirouetted rapidly round the ballroom while the lady danced slowly round him always facing him, we should gain some idea of the kind of "measure" danced by the earth and the moon.

The Hemlock Avenue Mystery

By Roman Doubleday

What the public craves in modern story-writing is originality. Originality of theme, of character, something out of the beaten path. To lead the reader pleasantly and easily into a maze of difficulties, to have him rush breathlessly on for the climax, to put him in such a position that, for the life of him, he cannot solve the puzzle—that is the secret of a first-class detective story. Roman Doubleday's masterful handling of his wonderful plot gives Popular readers one of the best mystery stories ever published.

CHAPTER I.



YOUNG Lyon, lounging in the court-house to make up his daily tale of items for the *Waynscott News*, was perhaps the only man who knew exactly how the quarrel between Lawrence and Fullerton began, though when later events had made that quarrel take on an unexpected significance, he was exactly the one man who did not talk about it.

Through the glass side-panel of the door he had seen Lawrence coming up the stone walk from the street, and he had watched him with eagerness, meaning to get a nod as he passed, for Lawrence was not only a rising young lawyer, but, what was more important to the club reporter, he had just won the championship in the curling contest of the city clubs. Slight as was Lyon's acquaintance with him, it had the touch of hero-worship which a youth is always ready to pour out as an offering before a man who is at once an athlete, a social success, a man eminent among the men of the city, and withal magnetic and charming in his personal relations, as Lawrence was. So he count-

ed it luck just to have the chance to say "Good morning."

It seems that Fullerton must have approached the court-house at the same time from the side street, for the two men met at the foot of the steps and came up together. Lyon noticed that though they nodded to each other, they did not speak. At the top of the steps Fullerton pushed ahead so as to come first through the revolving pepper-box of a storm-door which made the entrance of fresh air to the court-house as difficult as was the exit of the foul air within. Lawrence swung through in the next compartment, pushing the door around much more rapidly than suited Fullerton's dignified gait. The knowledge that he had thumped his distinguished predecessor's heels probably cheered Lawrence's heart, for he cried gaily as he emerged:

"You see, I follow in your footsteps."

"Not for the first time," said Fullerton, in level tones, with a slow lifting of his lowered eyelids.

The effect of those quiet words on Lawrence's temper was surprising. Instantly his hand flashed out and he slapped Fullerton's face.

In a moment half a dozen men were between them. Some one restored Fullerton's hat, which had fallen off at his

sudden start, while others officiously laid restraining hands on Lawrence, who was trembling like a nervous horse.

"You may think a trick will win, but by my soul, I'll take the trick," he cried hotly.

Fullerton, who was quite white except where the marks of Lawrence's fingers burned like a new brand on his cheek, stood perfectly still for an instant, with his eyes on the floor, as though waiting for anything further that his opposing counsel might have to say. Then he replaced his hat, bowed slightly to the group, and walked away to the elevator.

"Jove, if I had the grip on my temper that Fullerton has, I'd be attorney-general by now," said Lawrence lightly. "Guess I'll take the other elevator, all the same." And he walked jauntily down the hall.

The collected group of men burst into excited cross-currents of talk.

"What was it all about?"

"What will Fullerton do?"

"Gee, but Lawrence might be disbarred for that."

"Fullerton, of all men! He must be getting old, if he lets that pass."

"Oh, this isn't the end of it, you can bet on that, all right."

"But what was it all about?"

"Why, Fullerton got a decision in the Symes case yesterday—beat Lawrence on a technicality. It was rather sharp practise, but Fullerton goes into a case to win, and he knows all the tricks of the trade. You heard what Lawrence said about taking the trick?"

Yes, they had all heard what Lawrence had said. Lyon listened to the gossip, but contributed nothing. He was perfectly certain that Lawrence's hot speech about a trick had been expressly intended for the bystanders. The champion was too good a sport to take a professional defeat like a baby. And the quick speeches that had preceded the blow no one had heard but himself. He walked down the steps thoughtfully. It was his business to understand things.

But the quarrel did not appear among

the news items he turned in to the city editor.

CHAPTER II.

"I follow in your footsteps." "Not for the first time."

The words echoed in Lyon's mind like a rebus which he must solve. There was a puzzle in them. Could he, by turning them and trying them, find the answer?

He had an assignment that evening to report a concert given at the Hemlock Avenue Congregational Church, under the auspices of certain ladies sufficiently prominent in society to insure a special reporter. He had timed himself to reach the church a little before nine, and as he walked briskly up the north side of Hemlock Avenue his attention was attracted by the opening of a door in a house on the opposite side of the street.

The light, streaming out toward him into the snowy whiteness of the night, showed a man at the door, parleying with the maid servant within. After a moment the door closed and the man came slowly down the steps. He appeared to hesitate when he reached the street, then he turned up the avenue in the same direction that Lyon was going, and almost opposite him. As he passed under the street-lamp, Lyon saw, with a sudden quick pleasure, that the man was Lawrence. He was walking laggingly, with his head bent. At the corner he turned south on Grant Street, and soon passed out of sight.

Lyon's lively personal interest in Lawrence made him glance back at the house where his hero had evidently made an ineffective call, and wonder who it might be that lived there. Hemlock was an avenue that carried its sublimated respectability in every well-kept lawn and unfenced lot. Each house was set back from the street and was "detached," with trees and concrete walks, and front lawn and back yard of its own. It was not a show street, but it was supremely well-bred. It struck Lyon, newly come from a busier city, as curious that, but for himself,

Lawrence was the only person moving in the street. Not even a policeman was in sight.

This same seclusion and peace brooded over the scene when he retraced his way down that block on his early return from the concert an hour later. He was commenting upon the stillness to himself when he heard the sound of running feet approaching, and in a moment he saw the figure of a woman come running wildly toward him. About the middle of the block she cut diagonally across the street, and ran into one of the houses opposite. Lyon had instinctively quickened his own pace, for her panic flight suggested that she was pursued, but he could see no one following her. Then he noticed that the house where she had run in was, curiously enough, the same house where Lawrence had called earlier that evening. He noticed that she had not gone in at the front door, but had gone around to the side of the house.

"Some servant-maid who has overstayed her leave," he thought. "She ran well, though—uncommon form for a kitchen-girl. Bet she's had gymnasium work, whoever she is."

Reaching the end of the block, he stopped and looked up and down the cross-street, Sherman, from which the girl had seemed to come. There was no one in sight. The street, snowily white and bare in the light of the gas-lamps, lay open before him for long blocks. The music from a skating-rink in the neighborhood came gaily to him on the frosty air, and an electric car clanged busily in the near distance. As he moved on, his eye was caught by something dark on the white snow at the edge of the pavement—a black silk muffler it proved to be, when he picked it up. Had the girl dropped it or merely hurried past it? It was a man's muffler. He was about to toss it back into the street, when some instinct—the professional instinct of the reporter to understand everything he sees—made him roll it up and tuck it instead into his overcoat pocket.

He hurried on, meaning to catch the next car a few blocks below, when the

shrill and repeated call of a policeman's whistle cut across the night. Lyon stopped. That sharp and insistent call suggested a more exciting "story" than his church concert. He ran back to Sherman, and half-way down the block, midway between Hemlock and Oak, he saw the officer standing. It was not until he came close up that Lyon saw the gray heap on the ground near the officer's feet.

"What's up?" he demanded.

"Man dead," the officer answered laconically.

Running feet were answering the signal of the whistle, and in less time than it takes to tell it, they were the center of an excited crowd. Donohue, the police officer, ordered the crowd sharply to stand back, while he sent the first watchman who had come up to telephone for the patrol-wagon.

"If any one is hurt, I am a physician," one man said, pushing his way to the front.

"He's hurted too bad for you to do him any good," Donohue said.

The physician knelt down beside the fallen man, however, and made a hasty examination.

"The man is quite dead," he said, at length. "There's a bruise on the temple—the blow probably killed him instantly. But he has been dead a few minutes only."

At that there were excited suggestions that the murderer could not have got far away, and some one proposed an immediate search of the neighborhood. But no one started. The center of interest was in that gray-clad heap on the ground.

"Who is the man? Do you know who it is, officer?" some one asked.

Donohue, obviously resentful of the presence of this unauthorized jury, made no answer. Lyon, watchful professionally for all details, suddenly recognized Lawrence in one of the men who stood nearest the body. There was something in the fixity of the look which he was bending upon the dead man that made Lyon's eye follow his, and then in his amaze he pushed past

Donohue and knelt to look into the face resting against the curb.

"Good heavens, it's Fullerton!—Warren Fullerton, the lawyer," he cried.

The volley of exclamations and questions which he drew down upon himself by this declaration was interrupted by the clang of the patrol-wagon, which came down the street at a run. The three men on the wagon swung themselves down and cleared the crowd out of their way in a moment, and expeditiously lifted the limp, gray body in. Donohue swung himself on the step, and the wagon drove off at a decorous gait, leaving another police officer on the ground to watch the rapidly dispersing crowd.

Lyon, well aware that a more experienced hand than his own would be assigned to work up the story he had stumbled upon, deemed it his duty to report at once to the office instead of trying to do anything further on his own account, and hurried away to catch the car down-town. A man came up behind and fell into his own gait to keep pace with him.

"You've struck an exciting story," said Lawrence's voice.

"Yes," said Lyon eagerly. His eagerness was more due to the pleasant surprise of having Lawrence single him out to walk with than to anything else. His secret hero-worship had never brought him anything more than a pleasant nod before.

"Are you going to write it up?"

"I'll have to report for instructions. They'll probably send some one else up to the station to follow matters up, but perhaps the city editor will let me write up this part of it."

"You have a good deal of responsibility," said Lawrence.

"Responsibility?"

"I mean in the way of influencing public opinion."

"I have nothing to do but to tell the facts, and there aren't many of them yet."

"You have to select the facts to speak of," Lawrence said. He was keeping up with Lyon's quick pace, but his voice

was so deliberate that it made Lyon unconsciously pull up.

"I suppose so."

"If you wanted to make a sensational report, for instance, you could work in the peaceful night and the deserted street, and other things that really have no relation to the facts in such a way as to connect them in the public mind."

"Yes, I suppose so."

"That's what I meant about your responsibility—responsibility to the public and responsibility to the individuals you may happen to work into your story."

Lyon nodded. He felt that there was something behind this not yet clear to him.

"You were fortunate in being on the spot. You must have been the first man there. I was close behind you. I think. I was not far behind you when you came down Hemlock."

Then suddenly Lyon understood. It was quite as though Lawrence had said: "I hope you will not consider it necessary to mention that a minute or two after the time of the murder you saw a woman running in terror from the spot and going into a house where I call." He had quite forgotten the running girl for the moment. Now the sudden bringing together of the two ideas staggered him.

"There are things that once said can never be unsaid," said Lawrence.

"Yes."

"That's why I am glad it has fallen into your hands to write it up, instead of into the hands of some sensation-monger, who would not have the instinct of a gentleman about what to say and what to leave unsaid. By the way, it was you who identified the man as Fullerton, wasn't it?"

"Yes," said Lyon slowly. He recalled the fixed look that Lawrence had bent upon the body in silence. It was impossible that he had not recognized his enemy in the dead man. Why had he held back the natural impulse to speak his name?

"I'll look for your report with interest. And, by the way, don't you lunch at the Tillamook Club? Look me up some day. I'm usually there between

one and two. Glad to have seen you. Good night."

Lyon found that "story" more difficult to write up than he had anticipated.

CHAPTER III.

To say that Waynscott was amazed on the appearance of the *News* the next morning would be to put it mildly. That a prominent lawyer should be found dead in the best residence quarter of the city at the early hour of ten, and that the police authorities should have nothing to offer, was enough to set the whole city talking. Fullerton had not been particularly popular, but he was a man of mark. A bachelor, he had lived at a fashionable apartment-house, the Wellington; he had no family, no intimate friends, and there were men at his club who would not play with him, but still he was a personage. The city buzzed with the decorous joy of discussing a full-fledged sensation of its own.

Was it murder? Was it an accident? Had he had any personal enemies? Was it highway robbery? What were the police good for, anyhow? The result of the coroner's inquest was awaited with the keenest interest.

The body had been taken to the morgue, and the inquest was held there the next day. The significant testimony, as it was sifted out, was as follows:

Donohue, the police officer, was called first. He testified that he had been at the corner of Oak and Grant Streets when he heard the court-house clock strike the quarter before ten. He had walked down Oak one block at a slow pace, and had turned south on Sherman Street, when his attention was caught by a gray something on the ground at the edge of the sidewalk. At first he thought it was a large dog. Then, as he walked toward it, he saw that it was a man fallen against the curbing. He touched him, lifted his head, and found that the man was not drunk, but dead. He had heard no outcry, no disturbance, no sound of running. After satisfying

himself that the man was dead he had blown his whistle to call the officer on the next beat, and had sent him to telephone for the patrol-wagon. The first person who came up was Mr. Lyon, but there soon was a crowd about them.

"Did you recognize the body as Mr. Fullerton?" the county attorney asked.

"Not just at first." Donohue answered with some hesitation.

"Did you know him by sight?"

"Yes, sir."

"Yet you did not recognize him?"

"It was his coat. He didn't have that gray coat on usually—not when I saw him before that evening."

"When and where did you see him before that evening?"

"I was coming up Oak, down by the Wellington, and I saw Mr. Fullerton come out with a lady. They walked so slow that I passed them. Mr. Fullerton wore a long, loose, black top-coat. I noticed because he had both his hands stuck in his pockets. So when I found the man in a gray coat it threw me off. Afterward——" Donohue hesitated again over his astonishing conclusion—"afterward we found that he had his black coat on wrong side out. The inside was gray."

The overcoat was brought out for the jury and examined. It was a long, loose garment, black on the outside, gray on the inner. Though not intended for reversible wearing, it was obvious that it could have been easily turned. The question that at once occurred to every listener was whether the garment had been turned by Fullerton himself, or whether it had been hastily and carelessly put on him by some one else after he had fallen unconscious. This was obviously in the examiner's mind when he asked next:

"Was the overcoat buttoned when you came upon him?"

"No, it was open."

"How was the body lying?"

"In a heap, as though his knees had crumpled up under him."

"Officer, did you see no one on the street from the time you left Oak and Grant until you found the body?"

"No one but Mr. Lawrence. It is a quiet neighborhood."

"When and where did you see Mr. Lawrence?"

"On Grant Street, going toward Hemlock. He passed me while I was standing on the corner."

"Just before you left the corner?"

"Maybe ten minutes before."

"If you had walked straight down Grant to Hemlock, down Hemlock to Sherman, and up Sherman to the spot where the body was found, how long would it have taken you to get there?"

Donohue considered carefully before he answered: "About seven minutes."

"Was Mr. Lawrence walking rapidly?"

"You might call it so."

"Officer, you spoke of seeing a lady with Mr. Fullerton when he left the Wellington earlier in the evening. Did you recognize the lady?"

"No, sir. I did not see her face. She wore a veil."

"Did you notice anything else about her or her dress?"

"She wore a short fur coat and a muff. Her dress was dark. I noticed as I passed by that she was crying under her veil—sort of sobbing to herself. That made me look sharp. Mr. Fullerton was walking kind of swaggering, with his hands in his pockets."

"Would you know the lady if you saw her again?"

"If she wore the same clothes, I might," Donohue answered somewhat doubtfully.

The physician, Doctor Sperry, who had pronounced Fullerton dead, was next called. He testified that he was returning from the concert, and was on Hemlock Avenue when he heard the police whistle. When he saw the crowd gathered on Sherman he had thought some one might be hurt, and had gone up to offer his professional assistance. He had found the man dead, with the mark of a severe blow on his temple.

"Doctor Sperry, will you describe the appearance of the wound?"

"It was a bruise rather than a wound. The temple was indented, showing that

the delicate bone there had been crushed in. The skin was broken, and the blood had oozed down the left side of the face."

"Should you say that it was the mark of a heavy blow?"

"Yes, or a swinging blow. It was undoubtedly made by some dull instrument, heavy enough to crush, and yet with a metallic edge that cut the skin sharply."

"Would such a blow cause death at once?"

"Instantaneously."

"Can you say how long the man had been dead?"

"Not less than ten minutes. Not more than half an hour."

After an intimation that Doctor Sperry would be recalled later, Lyon was called.

Lyon had made no mention of the running girl in his report for the *News*, but he foresaw that that matter would come out in this examination, and he hastily resolved that there was one point of information which he would not volunteer—the house which she had entered. Let them ask him, if they wanted to get at that!

He testified, in answer to the preliminary questions, that he was returning from the concert and was on Hemlock between Sherman and Hooker when he heard the policeman's whistle and ran back to see what the disturbance was.

"You had passed the corner of Sherman a few minutes before?"

"Yes."

"And you saw nothing unusual?"

"I saw a man's muffler on the ground. I have turned it over to the officers."

The muffler was produced and examined. At one place the folds were stiff and matted together.

"Was this spot wet when you picked the muffler up?"

"I did not notice."

"Did you see any one on the street?"

"While I was farther up on Hemlock I noticed a woman running across the street."

"How was she dressed?"

"I was too far away to see."

"Did she wear a veil?"

"I think not. I could not swear to it, however."

"Did you see Mr. Lawrence?"

"No, not until I saw him in the crowd afterward."

"I believe it was you who first identified the body?"

"Yes."

"Was Mr. Lawrence present when you did so?"

"Yes."

"Did you see him examine the body?"

"I did not see him touch it."

"Was he near enough to identify the body?"

"He was near enough, so far as that goes."

"He did not volunteer any information as to who the dead man was, though he was near enough to recognize him, and presumably must have recognized him?"

"I did not hear him say anything."

"Was the light sufficiently bright to enable you to see clearly?"

"It was rather a shadowy spot. There are lamps at the corners of the block only. We were standing about the middle of the block."

The next witness sprung the surprise of the day. He was a boy of eighteen, Ed Kenyon by name, who had been attracted by the quickly spreading report of a murder. Asked to tell his story, he said:

"After the rest of the crowd had gone home, some of us fellows thought we would hunt for the murderer, so we made up a party and looked in all the alleys and went through some of the back yards around there. Right across the street from where the body was found there is a vacant lot. It is a good deal lower than the sidewalk, and there is a fence at the inside edge of the walk to keep people from falling off. We looked over the fence, and we could see that the snow had been tramped down, as though there had been a scrap, or something, so we

jumped over and explored for what we could find. When you are down inside the lot there is a hole under the sidewalk, and we found this poked in behind some weeds in the hole." And he produced the two pieces of a broken cane.

Lyon happened to glance at Lawrence at that moment, and he was startled by the look he surprised there. In an instant it was banished, and Lawrence's face was as non-committal, as impassive, as any in the room. But Lyon, watching him now in wonder, felt that the passivity was fixed there by a conscious effort of the will.

The county attorney then recalled Doctor Sperry.

"In your opinion, could the fatal blow have been struck by such an instrument as this cane?"

"It would be quite possible."

"Would such a blow be apt to break the cane?"

"That would depend on how it was held."

"Will you examine the gold knob at the end of this piece and say whether you see anything to indicate that such a blow was actually struck with it?"

"There are a few short hairs caught by a rough place where the metal is joined to the wood. They look matted. It would require a scientific examination to determine whether that is blood or not."

Arthur Lawrence was then called.

"Do you recognize this cane, Mr. Lawrence?"

"Yes, it is mine. My name is engraved around the gold top."

"Will you inform the jury when you last had it in your possession?"

"I regret to say I cannot. I lost the cane some time ago."

"When and how did you lose it?"

"That I cannot say. I suppose I must have forgotten it somewhere. I simply know that I have not had it in my possession for some little time. I had missed it, but supposed it would eventually turn up and be returned to me, as my name was on it."

"Please search your memory, Mr.

Lawrence, as to the last time you had it in your possession."

Lawrence looked thoughtful.

"I remember that I had it last Wednesday when I was in the State Library, because I used it to reach a book on the top shelf."

"Did you leave it there?"

"I am under the impression that I took it away with me, but I have a careless habit of forgetting canes and umbrellas, and I had an exciting debate with Mr. Fullerton just before I left the room."

"With Warren Fullerton?"

"Yes."

"Did you leave the library with him?"

"No, I left alone. He was still there."

"You were on Sherman Street last night?"

"Yes."

"Will you give an account of your movements?"

"I was coming down Hemlock Avenue——"

"One moment. Where were you coming from?"

"I had been out for a tramp, and was coming back. I had not been anywhere in particular."

"How long had you been tramping?"

Lawrence seemed to consider his answer before he spoke. "Something over an hour," he said.

"Were you alone all that time?"

"Yes."

"Did you see any one to speak to?"

"I spoke to Officer Donohue as I was coming back. I don't remember noticing any one else on my walk."

"You may resume your account. You say you were coming down Hemlock Avenue——"

"I was midway between Grant and Sherman, when I heard the policeman's whistle, and I ran down to Sherman to see what the trouble was."

"Did you see Mr. Lyon on Hemlock?"

"Yes."

"Where was he?"

"He was coming down the street ahead of me."

"Mr. Lyon has testified that he was between Sherman and Hooker when the whistle was heard. That would put him nearly a block ahead of you. Did you identify him at that distance?"

"He was not so far away when I first saw him."

"Where was he when you first saw him?"

"On Hemlock, between Grant and Sherman."

"Then you stood still practically while he walked a-block?"

"He was certainly walking at a faster pace."

"Was there any one else on the street?"

"I saw no one, except the girl who ran across Hemlock, of whom Mr. Lyon spoke."

"Can you describe her?"

"I cannot. I was farther from her than Lyon was."

"When you heard the policeman's whistle, did you go at once to the spot?"

"No, I paid no attention to it at first. Afterward, when I saw a crowd was gathering, I fell in with the rest, to see what had happened."

"Did you recognize the body when you came up?"

"Yes."

"Did you have any reason for refraining from so stating?"

"I was shocked and startled to see who the man was. I had no definite reason, either for speaking or for silence."

"What were your personal relations with Mr. Fullerton?"

"We were not friendly."

"When did you speak to him last?"

"Yesterday morning, in the courthouse."

"What was the nature of your conversation at that time?"

"It was of rather a violent nature," said Lawrence, with the slightest drawl. "I had occasion to slap his face."

The boys who had been with Ed Kenyon were called to corroborate his story of finding the broken cane. Lawrence had changed his seat, and now

sat beside Lyon. He gave no sign of recognition at first, but after a few minutes, when there was a buzz of talk in the room, he turned to Lyon and said, with a casual air that could not conceal his intention:

"You see what this is leading to. They will arrest me for the murder before I leave the room. Don't answer me. Only listen and remember. I am going to ask you to do me a favor—the very greatest favor that any living man could do me. I want you to go to that house you know of and tell that young woman that I am sending her word by you to keep from speaking of this affair. Make her understand that she must volunteer no information, make no explanation, say nothing, no matter what happens. She will hear of my arrest. Make her understand that arrest is a long way off from conviction. Make that as strong as you can. Tell her that no jury in the world would convict on such evidence. Make light of the whole thing, as much as possible, but tell her that I implore and entreat—I would use a stronger word if I dared—that she say nothing to any one at any time in regard to this whole matter.

"To you I would say—and remember this—that I would rather die than to have her name entangled in this affair in any manner. I'll make a fight for it first, of course, but literally, I would rather go through with it to the bitter end than to have her life darkened by any shadow, and this would be a shadow that could never be lifted. If I could speak more strongly, I would. I am trusting this to you because I must get word to her at once and convincingly, and I dare not write—and because I believe you are my friend. Her name is Edith Wolcott."

And before Lyon could frame any answer, Lawrence had slightly moved his position again, so as to put a space between them.

Lyon listened to the remaining testimony with attentive ears but a throbbing brain. He had been suddenly swept into the very center of the mystery. He knew no more than before,

but knowledge was all around him, pressing against the thin walls of his ignorance. His own share in the evening's events suddenly became significant. Lawrence had made no mistake in choosing his envoy. Neither had he made any mistake in his diagnosis of the situation. Before he left the room he had been arrested for the murder of Warren Fullerton.

CHAPTER IV.

Percy Lyon had a natural gift for human nature, as some people have for music or for mechanics. Unconsciously and instinctively he could read character, and, as with all instinctive knowledge, he was utterly unable to say how he reached his conclusions. His judgment had so often proved to be truer than appearances that it had surprised even himself. His success in his newspaper work depended almost wholly upon this gift. In news as news he had little interest, and he often chafed at the routine drudgery of his assignments; but when his work was to "write up" some one, whether it was a drunken tramp arrested for disorderly conduct, a visiting diplomat surrounded with mystery and red tape, a famous actress or an infamous trust president, he was in his element. He would sit and look at his victim with quiet, dreaming eyes, listen with sympathetic attention to whatever he might say, and then go away and write up a sketch that would reveal the inner life of his subject's mind in a manner that was sometimes startling to the man himself.

"Who told you that? How did you find that out?" was frequently asked.

And Lyon would laugh and pass it off as a joke, or, if pressed, would probably answer: "Why, I don't know; that's what I would do, or feel, or think, if I were in his place. I got that impression about him, that's all." But the point was that the impressions he received were so apt to be psychologically correct that it seemed almost uncanny. It was something like clairvoyance.

As he turned away from the inquest

to carry out the mission that had so unexpectedly been intrusted to him, he felt perfectly convinced, in his own mind, of Lawrence's innocence.

In spite of the quarrel in the morning, with its proof of Lawrence's temper and Fullerton's self-control; in spite of the damning fact that Lawrence's cane, broken and hidden, would appear to be the instrument with which the fatal blow was struck; in spite of the curious fact that Lawrence had held his peace when he must have recognized the dead man, Lyon found himself inwardly committed to the faith that Lawrence was not directly involved. He faced and set aside as simply unexplained the fact of Lawrence's presence in the neighborhood. By Donohue's testimony, Lawrence was going in the direction of the tragedy about half an hour before the body was discovered. By Lyon's own knowledge, Lawrence must have been behind him on Hemlock Avenue as he came down that block, else how had he, too, seen the running girl? In other words, he had spent half an hour loitering on the street of a winter night within a compass of two blocks. Of course, the mystery involved the girl, for whose good name he was so deeply concerned.

How she was involved he could not even hazard a guess—until he should have seen her. Did Lawrence entertain the thought that she was involved in the affair in any other way than as a possible witness? If she was merely a disinterested witness would he have felt bound, at such cost, to keep her from being called upon? Lyon felt that was a forced explanation. No, Lawrence must either know or believe that the girl was vitally connected with the murder. Nothing else would explain his anxiety on her behalf. Now, who was the girl? It was luck, and great luck, that he had so good a justification for calling, as otherwise he would have been forced to invent an occasion. It was beyond all reason to expect him to relinquish the pursuit of such a clue.

He made his way at once to the house where he had seen Lawrence call. His ring was answered by an elderly serv-

ant, slow and stiff in her movements. Lyon recalled, with a smile, his fancy that the running girl might possibly be the maid, hurrying to conceal a tardy return to the house. This woman could not run for a fire.

"Is Miss Wolcott at home?" he asked.

The woman looked dubious and discouraging. "I'll see," she said.

"Please tell her that I will detain her only a moment, but that I have a very important message for her," Lyon said, giving the girl his card and quietly forcing his way past her into the reception-room.

The old servant went slowly upstairs, and Lyon took a swift survey of the room in which he was, striving to guess the character of the owners. Books, pictures, flowers, all betokened refined and gentle ways of living. Unpretentious as it was, this was evidently the home of cultured people.

A slow step was heard in the hall, and an old man came to the door of the drawing-room and looked in at Lyon with a mingling of mild dignity and childlike friendliness that was peculiarly attractive.

"I *thought* I heard some one come in," he said, with obvious pleasure at finding his guess right. "Did you come to see my granddaughter?"

"I have sent up my card to Miss Wolcott," Lyon answered.

"She is my granddaughter. Didn't you know?" the old gentleman asked, in surprise. "I am Aaron Wolcott, you know. Maybe you are a stranger in Waynscott."

"Yes, I am a good deal of a stranger yet."

"What is your name, may I ask?"

"Percy Lyon."

The old gentleman took a chair opposite and regarded him with cheerful interest. "I am pleased to meet you, Mr. Lyon. My granddaughter will be down soon. Eliza, our old servant, is slow because she has rheumatism. She's getting old—but that isn't a crime, is it? I'll be getting old some time myself, I suppose. But I've got all my faculties yet, thank Heaven."

"Have you lived in this house long?" Lyon asked.

"I built this house twenty-five years ago for my son—Edith's father, you know. There have been many changes, many changes. He died when he was thirty, and his young wife followed him, and left the baby, Edith, and me alone together. There's something wrong when young people die and old people are left. We should not outlive our children."

"Do you mean that you live here entirely alone with your granddaughter?" asked Lyon quickly. This was significant.

"Except for Eliza. Eliza is a good servant. Edith isn't much of a house-keeper. She doesn't care for anything but her music. But she's a good girl, Edith is."

"Did you wish to see me?" a cool, low voice asked at the door.

Lyon rose to his feet and bowed. "If you are Miss Wolcott, I have a message for you," he said; and by a pause he conveyed to her the idea that the message was for her alone.

Miss Wolcott regarded him for a moment with an observant scrutiny which she made no attempt to disguise, and then she turned to her grandfather.

"It is time for your walk, Dandy," she said. She got him his overcoat, hat, and stick from the hall, and herself buttoned his coat up to his throat.

"You see how she spoils me," Mr. Wolcott said, with evident pride in his voice. "I'm old enough to look out for myself."

Edith did not speak. In grave silence she gave him his gloves, and watched him put them on, while Lyon as intently watched her. She was a tall girl of perhaps twenty-five, with eyes of midnight blackness, broad, black eyebrows that drooped in straight, heavy lines toward her temples, and black hair that was drawn in smooth, broad bands at the side of her head, to repeat the drooping line of her brows. Her mouth drooped, too, in lines too firm to be called pensive, too proud to be sad. Altogether it was a face of mystery—a face not easily read, but not the less powerful

in its attraction. Lyon had a swift comprehension of Lawrence's feeling.

If this woman was in any way connected with the murder, the matter was serious as well as delicate. Before she spoke he had aligned himself with Lawrence for her defense and protection.

She let her grandfather out at the front door, and then came back to the room where Lyon was waiting.

Calmly seating herself, she bent an inquiring and unsmiling look upon him. It struck him that she had shown nothing of her grandfather's tendency to unnecessary words.

"I have come at the request of Mr. Lawrence, who wished me to bring you a message," Lyon said.

There was something like a flash of light in her shadowy eyes, but whether it meant eagerness or anger, love or hate, Lyon could not say. She bent that same intent, unsmiling regard upon him, with only a deepening of its intentness, as though waiting for his next word with held breath.

"Mr. Lawrence considered it important that I should see you at once, since he could not come himself to explain his reasons for what may sound like an extraordinary request," he went on deliberately.

She moved restlessly. "I have not seen Mr. Lawrence since——"

Lyon interrupted. "Pardon me, may I give you the message before you say anything more? Mr. Lawrence has been arrested on the charge of killing Warren Fullerton——"

"Oh, Heaven! has it come to that?" the girl gasped, with horror on her face.

Lyon raised a warning hand. "And his urgent request to you is that you refrain from giving any information which you may possess in regard to the matter to any one. That, of course, includes myself."

Miss Wolcott was holding fast to the arms of the chair, and her pallor seemed to have deepened visibly, but she did not lose her self-control for a moment. Lyon would have given much to be able to tell whether the feeling which she obviously held back from expression was fear or concern or contempt.

"You, of course, saw the account of the murder in the morning papers," he continued, deeming it advisable to put her in possession of the situation as fully as possible. "The inquest was held to-day, and Mr. Lawrence has been taken into custody—merely on suspicion, of course. It is known that he had had a quarrel with Mr. Fullerton, and his broken cane was found in the neighborhood."

Miss Wolcott's intense eyes seemed trying to drag out his words faster than he could utter them, but she asked no questions.

"This means that he will be held for the action of the grand jury, which will meet in about two weeks. Of course, he will have an attorney to present his case. You are not to think that his arrest necessarily means anything worse than the necessity of making his innocence as obvious to the world at large as it is now to his friends. But in the meantime his great and immediate anxiety was that you should be warned to say nothing about the whole matter. Frankly, Miss Wolcott, I don't know whether your silence is to protect him or to protect some one else, but I do know that he was profoundly in earnest in hoping that you would preserve that silence unbroken as long as possible."

"What do you mean by as long as possible?" she asked slowly.

"If you should be summoned as a witness at the trial, you will, of course, have to tell everything within your knowledge connected with the affair."

"Everything?"

"The lawyers would certainly try to bring out everything you know."

She frowned thoughtfully. "Am I likely to be summoned as a witness?" she asked.

"That will depend on whether the prosecuting attorney or Mr. Lawrence's attorney gets an idea that you have any information in your possession which will throw light on the case."

She sat very still, with downcast eyes, for a long moment. Lyon made a movement of rising, and she checked him.

"One moment. When the trial comes

off, will there be any way of my knowing how it is going?"

"It will be fully reported in the papers. You could be present in the courtroom if you think it advisable."

"I will think of it," she said quietly. Then her splendid self-control wavered for a moment. "If I should feel that I had to talk to some one, to understand things—would you—might I—"

"May I come occasionally to tell you of any new developments?" Lyon asked simply.

"Thank you. It will be kind of you."

"I shall be very glad to keep you informed." And then he added deliberately, intending that, however much she might veil her own sympathies, there should be no doubt in her mind as to his position: "I am a friend of Mr. Lawrence's. That is why he intrusted me with this word for you."

She bowed, somewhat distantly, without speaking, and Lyon left.

When he got outside he allowed himself to indulge in a moment of puzzled and half-reluctant admiration. What superb nerve! Her connection with this mysterious case was evidently a close and vital one, yet she had held herself so well in hand that it was impossible for him to say now, after this momentous interview, whether her sympathies were with Lawrence or not. She had most completely understood and heeded his injunction to keep silence, at any rate. Was the injunction needed, in the face of such self-control? What was it that lay behind that shield? Lyon felt as though his hands were being bound by invisible bands, and he had a frantic desire to break his way clear and force a passage to an understanding of things.

Turning a corner, he came upon the old grandfather taking his leisurely constitutional in the sun, and instantly he realized that Providence had placed in his hands the means of removing some of his assorted varieties of ignorance—if it is Providence who helps a man when he is trying to peer into his neighbor's business. There may be different points of view as to that. With a surreptitious glance at his

watch, he fell into step beside Mr. Wolcott.

"Your quiet neighborhood has made itself rather notorious," he began, at a safe distance from his objective-point. "I suppose you first learned of the murder through the papers this morning. Or did you hear the excitement last night?"

"I heard the grocer boy telling Eliza this morning," Mr. Wolcott answered. "I don't read the paper very much. My eyesight is all right—my faculties are all as good as ever—but they print the papers in such fine type nowadays, I don't care to read them."

"Well, Miss Wolcott would surely have read it and noticed about the murder."

"She wouldn't talk about it."

"Of course, it is not a pleasant thing to talk about."

"That isn't all. You see, Edith was engaged to marry that Mr. Fullerton at one time."

"Really?" This was so startling a piece of information that Lyon stopped short in his surprise, trying to fit it into its place with the other things he knew or guessed. "Really!"

"Don't let on I told you," said the old gentleman mysteriously. "Edith doesn't like to have me talk about her affairs. But that's the reason she is so strange to-day. Maybe you didn't notice, but she was very quiet all day."

"Do you think that she cared for him still?" demanded Lyon.

"Oh, no, no. That's all past. But it must have given her a queer feeling to have him killed so near her own door. No, she didn't care for him. If he had died in some other way, I think she would have been glad. I'm not sure she isn't glad as it is, though maybe she was a little scared to have her wish come true."

"What makes you think that?"

"Oh, I see things, if I am old. Edith doesn't know it, but I know more about things than she guesses. Once I heard her say she wished he was dead."

"Really? How was that?"

"I had gone to sleep on the couch in the library—not really asleep, of course,

but I was lying down to rest my eyes for a moment—and Edith didn't know I was there. I woke up, and saw her standing by the window looking out, and she was so excited that she was talking aloud to herself. She threw up both hands, like this, and said aloud: 'I wish to Heaven you were dead, dead, dead!' Then she ran out of the room like a whirlwind, and I got up and looked out of the window. Mr. Fullerton was standing on the sidewalk, looking up at the house. He touched his hat when he saw me, and smiled a nasty, sarcastic kind of a smile, and walked off."

"When was this?"

"Maybe two weeks ago."

"Did you ever speak of it to any one?"

"Never; not a word. Not to anybody except Lawrence."

"Oh, you told Arthur Lawrence?"

"Yes; you see, I like Lawrence, and I thought it was just as well to let him know that there wasn't anything between Edith and Fullerton any longer. I haven't forgotten about such things, even if I am getting to be an old man. You see, if Lawrence heard about that old engagement of Edith's, it might make him hold off, so I just thought I'd let him know there wasn't anything to it now. It was all off."

"What did Mr. Lawrence say?"

"Not much. But he made me tell him again just what she said, and what she did. I guess he was glad to have the old man tell him, all right."

"You know Arthur Lawrence pretty well, don't you?" Lyon asked abruptly.

The old gentleman chuckled. "Oh, yes, I don't have much chance to forget Mr. Lawrence. Of course, it isn't me that he comes to see; but still he's very civil to the old grandfather! A deal more civil than Mr. Fullerton ever was, by the same token. Edith was well off with that old love before she was on with the new."

Lyon was certainly getting more than he had expected. There was not much mystery now about the significance of Fullerton's slur on Lawrence for following in his footsteps, or about Law-

rence's resentment. He was so absorbed in his own speculations on the subject that Mr. Wolcott had twice repeated a question before he heard it.

"Do you know if Mr. Lawrence is out of town?"

"No, he is here."

"He said Sunday he would bring me some new cigars the next time he came. I thought he might come last night, but he didn't. For that matter, Edith wasn't home last night."

"Indeed?"

"No, she wasn't. Even if my eyes are not as young as they were, I can see things that are right under my nose. Edith said she had a headache, and would have to go to her room instead of playing cribbage with me. So I had to play solitaire, and I don't like to play solitaire of an evening. When I was young, the evening was always the time for society, and I'm not so old that I want to be poked off in a corner to play solitaire. So I went to her room about ten o'clock to see if her head was better. We could have had a game of cribbage yet. Well, she wasn't there. She had gone out without saying a word to me. And while I was looking around she came in by the side door, and came up the back stairs. I asked her where in the world she had been at that time of the night, and she never answered—just went to her room and locked the door. Now, do you think that is a proper way for a young woman to treat her elders? When I was young, we didn't dare to treat *our* elders in that way."

"I am sure you didn't," said Lyon soothingly.

"And do you think it was proper for her to be out so late at night without saying anything to any one in the house?"

"I am sure Miss Wolcott will be worried if you stay out so long," said Lyon evasively. "She'll blame me for keeping you talking. Good-by. I am very glad to have met you. Some evening you must let me come and play a game of cribbage with you."

He turned to leave him, and then, with a sudden second thought, he came

back. "Tell Miss Wolcott that I fell in with you, and that we had a pleasant chat," he said.

He had sufficient confidence in Miss Wolcott's discretion by this time to feel sure the message would set her to investigating the nature of the conversation, and possibly she would know how to sequester or suppress her garrulous relative until the peculiar circumstances of that evening should have faded out of his memory. The circumstances were so peculiar that Lyon could not help feeling it was fortunate that he, and not some police officer, for instance, had received the old gentleman's confidences.

CHAPTER V.

Lyon went straight to the jail to report to Lawrence. He had little difficulty in securing admittance, for the sheriff was sufficiently pliable and Lawrence sufficiently important to permit a softening of the rigors of prison discipline in his case. His arrest might, indeed, be considered merely a detention on suspicion until the grand jury had formally indicted him, and the sheriff had evidently considered that his duty was filled by insuring his safety without undue severity. The room was guarded without and barred within, but in itself it was more an austere furnished bedroom than a cell, and Lawrence had more the air of a host receiving his guests than a prisoner. That, however, was Lawrence's way. It would have taken more than a stone wall and a locked door to force humiliation upon him. He tossed circumstances aside like impertinent meddlers, and scarcely condescended to be aware of their futile attempts to hamper him.

At the moment he was in consultation with his attorney, Howell—or, rather, Howell was trying to hold a consultation with him, and, judging by his looks, not very successfully.

"It is unfortunate that your memory should be so curiously unequal," Howell said dryly, as Lyon entered.

"If it is equal to the occasion, that's sufficient," Lawrence said care-

lessly. "Don't you be putting on airs with me, Howell. I'm your associate counsel in this affair. You go and see if you can get me out on bail, and then we'll talk some more. Hello, here's Lyon, of the *News*! At last I have attained to a distinction I have secretly longed for all my life. I am going to be interviewed."

"If he succeeds in getting any really valuable information out of you, I'll take him on for associate counsel," grumbled Howell, as he gathered up his papers and took his departure.

"Well?" demanded Lawrence, the instant they were alone. His Celtic blue eyes were snapping with impatience.

"I delivered your message. Judging from the balance of our interview, your hint was accepted."

Lawrence laughed. He threw himself down on his chair and laughed with a keen appreciation of the situation suggested by Lyon's words, and a sudden relaxation of his nervous tension that struck Lyon as significant.

"Come, you might tell me something more, considering!" he said.

"There isn't much that I know," said Lyon. But he understood very well what it was that Lawrence wanted, and he went over his interview with a good deal of detail. Lawrence sat silent, listening, with his hand hiding his mouth and his eyes veiled by their drooping lids. At the end he drew a long breath, and slowly stretched his arms above his head.

"Well, that's all right, and you're a jewel of an ambassador," he said. Then suddenly he pushed the whole subject away with an airy wave of his hand. "You are here on professional business, I suppose. Are you going to write up my picturesque appearance in my barren cell, or do you want my opinions on Yeats' poetry or on the defects of the jury system? By Jove, old man! you'd have to hunt hard to ask for something that I wouldn't give you."

Lyon went away bound heart and soul to Lawrence's cause. No henchman of the days of chivalry ever felt a more passionate throb of devotion to his unfortunate chieftain than this quiet,

self-effacing young reporter felt for the brilliant and audacious man who was so evidently determined to play a lone hand against fate. This feeling was in no respect lessened by the possibility which he had allowed to enter his mind that Lawrence might, in fact, be much more nearly involved than he had at first supposed. He had simply taken for granted that such a man as Lawrence could not, in the nature of things, be a murderer. But the old gentleman's story, and the conviction that Lawrence would have been profoundly influenced by the incident he had related, led clearly to the admission that Lawrence might, as a matter of fact, be the slayer of Fullerton. Men had been swept away from the moorings of convention and morality by the passions of love and hate ever since the world began, and Lawrence, for all his breeding and gentleness, was a man of vital passions. No one could know him at all and fail to recognize that. But the question of whether he was, in fact, guilty or innocent, was merely secondary.

The first question for Lyon, as for any true and loyal clansman it must always be, was merely by what means and to what extent he could serve him. And that settled once and for all the question of his own obligation to speak. The cause of justice might demand that he should give Howell a hint as to important witnesses. The language in which he mentally consigned the cause of justice to the scaffold was not exactly feminine, but the sentiment behind it was peculiarly and winningly feminine. If Lawrence wanted to sacrifice himself quixotically, he should be allowed to do so, and the cause of justice might go hang.

At the same time he was absorbed in a constant speculation on the facts of the case. If Lawrence had, indeed, struck the fatal blow, how had it come about? Had he encountered Fullerton and Miss Wolcott together, and had there been a sudden quarrel, with this unexpected termination? Then Miss Wolcott was the sole witness, and Lawrence's injunction to silence was easy

enough to understand. That was, of course, the most obvious explanation, though on that theory it was hard to understand Lawrence's amaze when his cane had been produced at the inquest. On the other hand, if Lawrence's tale was true about his being *behind* Lyon on Hemlock, then his persistent evasion of all really conclusive proof of his alibi must be due to his determination to shield Miss Wolcott.

Did he think it possible that she herself was the murderer? It was necessary to consider even that possibility. Lyon recalled the girl's sphinxlike composure, and he was by no means sure he would like to meet her alone of a dark night if she had a grudge to the death against him. There was something unnatural in her steady, unflinching self-control. She had had a grudge to the death against Fullerton; she had prayed for his death; she had been on the spot when he was killed. Whether she struck the blow herself or not, it was easy to guess that her connection with the affair was intimate. If she was the woman Donohue had seen in Fullerton's company when they left the Wellington together, it would seem that she had been agitated to the point of sobbing aloud as she walked beside him. Any emotion that could reduce Miss Wolcott to sobs must have been powerful. All this Lawrence knew as well as Lyon, but it was conceivable that he knew more. Had he been a witness of the murder, if not an actor in it? How had his cane come to be on this spot, unless he had been there himself? And the fact that the overcoat had been turned seemed to indicate a deliberate attempt at concealment which did not accord with the girl's frantic flight from the spot.

Suppose the quarrel to have taken place on the high sidewalk by the vacant lot, and it was easy to understand that the body might have fallen or been thrown over the fence—which would account for the trampled condition of the snow that had caught the attention of the boys. If Lawrence had tried to conceal the body under the sidewalk, it was quite conceivable that he might

have pulled off the overcoat, and then, finding that plan impracticable, have hastily pulled it on again wrong-side out, and carried the body back to the street, with some idea of removing it, possibly.

It was not necessary, however, to assume that it was Lawrence. The same scheme might have been tried by any one else. Most minds work alike. But it was Lawrence's cane—and Lawrence was so concerned in protecting the girl that he had seemed almost to invite rather than to repel suspicion. Whether the grand jury would consider the evidence against him strong enough to warrant an indictment remained to be seen. That unfortunate public quarrel in the court-house was a serious complication, and since the murder that point had been much before the public. Half a dozen different versions had been given by as many positive eye-witnesses. That they differed so widely in detail only made the public more certain that there must have been something very serious in it.

It was merely from curiosity, and with no idea of the discovery he was about to make, that Lyon went to Hemlock Avenue that evening, at ten, to retrace the course he had taken the night before. He wanted to fix the scene in his memory definitely, and to take note of what he had seen, and what he might have seen if he had looked. He stopped at the place where he had seen the running girl, and looked about. Certainly she had come from Sherman, and, cutting diagonally across Hemlock, had crossed his field of vision squarely. He shut his eyes for an instant to recall the vision.

She ran well—he could see now that swift, sure flight. Was it possible that the statuesque Miss Wolcott could ever forget herself in that Dianalike run? Somehow the picture, as he now looked at it, was not like Miss Wolcott. It was lithier, quicker than he could imagine her. Yet there was no question about her running in at the Wolcott house. Stay, was he so sure of that? He had not seen her enter. She had simply run in by the walk that led to the

side door. Could she have gone through the Wolcott yard on her way elsewhere? If the running girl was not, in fact, Miss Wolcott, then his whole theory fell down. Trusting to luck and the inspiration of the moment if he should be challenged, Lyon coolly followed the concrete walk past the side door into the Wolcott back yard.

It was a sixty-foot lot, running back about a hundred feet. At the front it was unfenced and open to the street, but at the back and on the two sides back of the rear line of the houses it was enclosed by a close board wall six feet high. By the posts and the clothes-lines here, it was evident that the back yard was consecrated to Eliza and wash-day. So far as might be seen, there was no door in the enclosing wall. Was there an alley beyond, or did this lot abut on the lot which faced on the next street south—Locust? Lyon felt that might be an important question, and he went down to the corner of the lot and pulled himself up by his hands to look over the top of the wall. He satisfied himself on two points—that there was no alley between this lot and the adjoining one, and that the board which he had laid his hand upon was not firm. He bent down to examine it.

It was a broad board near the left corner of the wall. It was fastened to the upper crosspiece of the fence by a single large spike, and the lower end was unnailed. The effect of this was that, while it hung straight in its place so long as it was untouched, the lower end could be easily swung on that upper spike as a pivot, leaving a triangular aperture at the bottom quite large enough for a slender person to squeeze through. To test it, Lyon pulled himself through, and swung the board back into its place.

He found himself in a large enclosed space, boarded in on all sides except the front, where a high wire fence separated it from the street. With a certain astonishment Lyon recognized his surroundings. He was in the enclosed grounds of Miss Elliott's Private School for Girls on Locust Avenue—a highly select and exclusive establishment. Was

it as easy to get out as to get in? He hesitated a moment before deciding on further explorations, but the trees in the yard gave him the aid of convenient shadows, and he cautiously followed the wall around the lot, trying each board.

There were no more secret panels. Everything was as firm as it looked. He had thought to get out by the gate on Locust Avenue, for it somehow touched his dignity to crawl out by the little hole that had admitted him; but to his surprise he found that the wire fence, which enclosed the lot on the front, came up to the house itself in such a way that no exit could be made on that side except through the house. Moreover, the fence was too high to jump, even for him. Emboldened by the fact that the house was as entirely dark as though it were vacant, Lyon made another and even more careful examination of the enclosing wall. There was no break, and he was forced to make his way out, as he had come in, by Miss Wolcott's back yard.

He regained the open street with a tingling pulse. Perhaps his discovery meant nothing—but perhaps it meant everything. It might enable him, in time, to tell Lawrence that the running girl was not Edith Wolcott. The sudden recognition of that possibility excited him keenly. Could it be that Lawrence had mistakenly jumped to the same conclusion that he had? Were Lawrence and Miss Wolcott both keeping silence, each to shield the other, while the guilty person made her escape through the sacred precincts of Miss Elliott's select school? He would interview Miss Elliott to-morrow.

CHAPTER VI.

It was two o'clock in the afternoon the next day before Lyon found it possible to carry out his plan to interview Miss Elliott. As he approached the select school on Locust Avenue, he noticed a doctor's runabout fastened before the door, and, as he came up, a young physician whom he knew well, Doctor Barry, came down the steps.

Lyon had often found it useful to assume a curiosity when he had it not, and he at once seized his opportunity.

"How is your patient?" he asked, with an assured air.

"What do you know about my patient?" Barry asked, in obvious surprise.

Lyon, in fact, knew so little that he deemed it advisable to answer this question with another.

"Will she be able to see me?"

"You newspaper men beat the devil! How did you find out she was here? She particularly wanted to keep it quiet. Miss Elliott called me in with as much secrecy and mystery as though her guest were a royalty traveling incog., and here I find you on the steps ready to interview her for the benefit of the whole public."

"You don't understand," said Lyon quietly. "The only way to keep things out of the newspapers is to take the newspaper men into your confidence. By the way, is her ailment serious?"

"Puzzling. Disordered state of the nerves," said Barry, frowning.

Lyon laughed. "Don't put on professional airs with me."

"That's straight. It looks very much like nervous shock. I don't at all approve of her seeing visitors."

"Then why don't you forbid it?" fished Lyon curiously.

"I'm too young and she's too important," laughed Barry, as he jumped into the runabout. "I haven't the nerve to give orders to the wife of a multimillionaire." And he drove rapidly off.

Lyon rang the bell with a feeling of exhilaration. He was making progress.

While the neat servant who answered his ring took his card to Miss Elliott, Lyon waited in the reception-room and hastily reviewed his facts. The wife of a multimillionaire traveling incog., and suffering from nervous shock. How could he surprise Miss Elliott into giving him her name? In a few minutes Miss Elliott stood before him, looking from his card to him with a severe and discouraging air. It was an air which Lyon had encountered before when pursuing the elusive interview.

"I am not here in my professional capacity," he said, with a disarming smile. "I wanted to make some personal inquiries about your school in behalf of a friend in Cleveland."

Miss Elliott softened. "This is not a very good time to see the school," she said. "This is the Thanksgiving vacation, you know, and the pupils and teachers have all gone home."

"I didn't think of that. When did they go?"

"The term closed last Friday. The pupils all scattered on Saturday. We resume class work next Monday."

"Then you have been practically alone in the building with your servants this week?" Lyon said blandly. This was significant. The murder had taken place on Monday evening, and it was a big gain to know that he might eliminate a score of Miss Elliott's pupils from connection with the running girl. It seemed to make the problem much simpler.

"Might I look over the building?" he asked, as Miss Elliott responded to his last question with a somewhat chill bow. "My friend will be interested in knowing the general plan of the school-rooms."

"I shall be glad to show them to you," said Miss Elliott.

Lyon listened deferentially while Miss Elliott explained the uses of the various rooms through which she conducted him. The building was a large, square, old-fashioned house, the first floor of which contained Miss Elliott's own suite, several large schoolrooms, and, in the rear, some rooms into which she did not take him, and to which she vaguely referred as "my resident teachers' apartments." Lyon guessed at once that this was where her distinguished guest was quartered—a guess which was confirmed when the second story was thrown wholly open to him. He took special note of the window-fastenings, and saw at once that it would be the simplest thing in the world to throw open a window and slip out into the large enclosed yard.

"Your high wall suggests a convent-school," he said, with a smile. "Are

your young ladies as carefully secluded as that wall would suggest?"

"That is one of the features of the school," Miss Elliott said, somewhat primly. "We aim to give the care and guidance of a home to our pupils. During lesson hours, and at all other hours, they are safeguarded, and are never unattended. We know exactly where they are all the time, and what they are doing."

"A wise arrangement."

"During the school year this large yard is our outdoor gymnasium. The girls take outdoor exercise here free from all observation. There is no entrance to the grounds except through the house."

"An admirable plan. In fact, your arrangements are all so admirable that I do not wonder at the reputation which your school has achieved. And the social atmosphere is, I know, of the best."

"We are exceedingly particular about whom we admit," conceded Miss Elliott, with modest gratification.

"Oh, I am aware of that, and of your distinguished patronesses. The name of the lady whom you are at present entertaining is alone a sufficient guarantee. Oh, don't be afraid that I am going to put an item about her in the paper! A newspaper man respects confidences, and I understand that she does not wish her presence here to be heralded abroad. In fact, I may say that, professionally, I am quite ignorant as to her presence here; but personally and privately—you understand——" and he smiled intelligently.

Miss Elliott bowed. "Mrs. Woods Broughton is an old personal friend," she said simply. "She used to live in Waynscott, you know, before her marriage. There are so many people who used to know her that she would have no chance for a quiet rest if it became known that she was here, and she is very much in need of a quiet rest."

Lyon looked sympathetic. "Yes, a nervous shock, I understand from Doctor Barry. I hope she is improving."

"I think she is in better spirits than when she came, though any nervous disturbance is hard to understand."

"Will she remain after the school re-opens?"

"Necessarily, for a while. She is not in condition to travel."

Lyon left the building in so absorbed a state of mind that he fairly ran into a man on the sidewalk. With a hastily muttered apology he hurried on. The discovery that the mysterious lady was Mrs. Woods Broughton was, in a way, staggering. As well connect any other national celebrity with local affairs! Mrs. Woods Broughton's name was known throughout the country, not only because of her husband's wealth and position, but because of the more or less romantic circumstances attending her marriage. She had been Mrs. Vanderburg when Broughton met her and fell in love with her, and everybody knew that the divorce which she had procured shortly afterward had been merely a preliminary to the brilliant wedding which had set the newspapers agog. It had been a very decorous and unsensational divorce, without a breath of scandal, for Vanderburg had been an unknown quantity for so many years that no exception could be taken to the deserted wife's action in securing legal recognition of her practical and actual independence. Still, the need of securing a divorce might never have occurred to her if Woods Broughton had not come into her life. Lyon remembered the story in its general outline, though he had forgotten that the scene of it was Waynscott. The papers had been featuring the wedding at the time he began his career as a reporter in Cleveland, and the whole affair had taken on a special and personal interest to him from the fact that, about six weeks later, he had himself met the divorced husband, Vanderburg, under dramatic circumstances.

He had been traveling a long afternoon in Ohio, and had struck up a traveling acquaintance with a clever, cynical, world-worn man in the smoking-car. Percy Lyon's experiences at that time had been somewhat limited, and he had never before encountered the particular variety of liveliness which this sophisticated traveler afforded. He had

apparently been in all quarters of the globe; and, if his tales had something of a Munchausen quality, they were none the less entertaining for that. The interruption of his last tale had been tragic. There had been a sudden grinding of the wheels on the rails, a tearing crash, and then confusion, horrible and soul-shaking. When Lyon began to think consecutively again, he found that he was frantically tugging at the crushed seat, which was pinning his companion to the floor of the overturned car. Help answered promptly to his shout, and they soon had the man out, but he was unconscious and so badly hurt that the physician shook his head gravely.

"Better telegraph for his friends, if you can find out who they are."

Lyon, in the absence of any closer acquaintance, had searched the unconscious man's pockets for a clue to his identity, and in an inner pocket he found an old note-book with the name "William H. Vanderburg" written on the fly-leaf. The name had suggested nothing to his mind at the moment, and, while he was looking further for an address, the man's eyes had opened slowly, and taken the situation in with full intelligence.

"You have nothing to do with that book," he said harshly. "If it's my name you are hunting for, 'Enoch Arden' will do for my headstone. I have no friends to notify, and you will please me best if you bury me and forget about me, and particularly keep that other name out of the papers. I have a right——" But the effort was too much. He gasped and fell back dead. Lyon had been so impressed by the stranger's peculiarly commanding personality that he had respected his wish to be left unidentified. He considered that the bare accident that he had stumbled upon the man's real name did not justify him in disregarding the owner's wish to keep it concealed, and he did not change his view when he saw that a bunch of newspaper clippings which had fallen out of the note-book related to the divorce granted to Grace Vanderburg.

Lyon reviewed the situation as fully as it was known to him. Mrs. Vanderburg had secured a legal separation in the courts and had married again. The decree was based on the representation that William H. Vanderburg had deserted his wife and had been unheard of for over twelve years. Whether William Vanderburg had intended to make any difficulties or not, Lyon had no means of guessing; but if he had, certainly his death had closed the incident forever. The unintentional witness slipped the old note-book into his own pocket, and allowed the railroad company to bury the body of "one unidentified man."

That was all three years in the past, or thereabouts, and now he had been brought most curiously across the path of that dead man's former wife. Truly, the Goddess of Accident was throwing her shuttle with what almost looked like design. Was his imagination running wild in suggesting to him a possible identity between this woman of uncommon experience, wealth, and social standing and the woman who had fled in a panic from the scene of Fullerton's murder? He felt that he was in danger of making himself absurd by harboring such a thought for a moment, but, with the desire which was characteristic of him to get at the bottom facts, he went directly to the office of the clerk of the circuit court.

"I want to verify some dates in connection with that Vanderburg divorce case," he said to the lounging official in charge. "Would it be possible for me to look at the record?"

"I have the papers right here, as it happens," the clerk answered. "Curious you should call for them. I made a transcript of that case for Warren Fullerton a week or two ago."

"Did you, really?" Lyon exclaimed, in surprise. "What did he want it for?"

"Dunno. He was Mrs. Vanderburg's attorney, you know."

"I didn't remember," said Lyon thoughtfully. There was, then, an established relation of some sort between Mrs. Broughton and Fullerton. Just what did it mean?

He felt that he was on the way to finding out when he reached his rooms that evening, for he found awaiting him a special-delivery letter containing the following somewhat imperiously worded invitation:

Mrs. Woods Broughton will be greatly indebted to Mr. Percy Lyon if he can call upon her this evening. She appreciates his courtesy in respecting her wish that her visit should not be made a matter of public gossip. He will add to her obligations by giving her an opportunity for a personal interview.

Lyon got into his evening clothes with a jubilation that does not always accompany an evening call. He felt that the Fates were playing into his hands.

CHAPTER VII.

Lyon was evidently expected, for he was conducted at once to the rooms which had been closed to him in the afternoon, and there he found Mrs. Broughton awaiting him. He was prepared to be interested in the woman whose story had so curiously touched his own experiences; but when he came into her presence he forgot that he was before the woman whose first husband he had buried, and whose second husband was a man heralded by head-lines across a continent. He saw only a frail, slight, beautiful woman, with a wistful sweetness in her eyes, propped against high pillows on a couch. She looked so ill, so like a fluttering candle in the wind, that his concern must have betrayed itself, for she smiled at him with an air of reassurance.

"It was kind of you to come so promptly at a stranger's invitation," she said gently. "Miss Elliott told me of your visit this afternoon, and I wanted to thank you for respecting my wish to remain unknown to the general public. I wonder how you came to know?"

"It was mostly an accident," Lyon murmured. "I come across a good deal of incidental information, you know."

"You newspaper men are so clever," she said; and Lyon wondered whether his imagination was playing him tricks or whether there really was something like fear lurking in her eyes. Certainly

her hands were fluttering with nervousness, and her breath came and went in hurried gasps that meant either extreme weakness or emotion. With an obvious effort that awoke his admiration, she pulled herself together and went on in a stronger voice.

"That was not the reason I had for wishing to see you, however. I wanted to ask you some questions that you, as a newspaper man, could answer better than any one else; and, since you already knew of my presence here, I could speak to you without spreading that insignificant bit of information any further than it has gone already."

"I shall be very happy if I can be of any service," Lyon answered, with more sincerity than usually goes into the polite phrase. He felt, really, that nothing earth could offer would rejoice him more, just then, than to have her ask questions, for nothing would more certainly reveal where her own interests and anxieties lay. But she seemed to find it difficult to begin, for a long pause followed—a pause which he would not break, and which, apparently, she could not. At last she said, with an abruptness that made her voice tense:

"I was very much shocked by that tragedy Monday night."

Lyon nodded, and kept his eyes lowered to remind her of his presence as little as possible. But, he wondered, why did she say Monday night? If her knowledge of it came through the papers, the shock could not have reached her until Tuesday. And how else could she have known, unless—

"You see, I used to know—Mr. Lawrence," she said.

Had she meant to say Mr. Fullerton, Lyon wondered, and veered from the name? Since Fullerton had been her lawyer, she certainly had known him also.

"That is why," she continued, "I am anxious to learn anything that you can tell me—anything more significant than the reports in the public prints, I mean."

"There isn't much known. That is the difficulty of the situation. If you read the account of the inquest, you saw that Mr. Lawrence was merely held on

suspicion, because the police had not been able to find any one else to hold. Of course, it does not follow that they will not discover some other clue."

She listened with tense interest. "The law is terrible," she said, with an involuntary shudder. "You never know what it is going to do. It is like a wild beast waiting to spring. It terrifies me to think of Mr. Lawrence being actually in jail, but—they *will* have to let him go, won't they? He can't really be in any serious danger?"

"The circumstances were sufficient to warrant his arrest. Unless he can clear himself, or unless the real murderer is discovered, his situation is certainly serious."

"I can't bear to think of it!" she cried nervously, pressing an embroidered handkerchief hard against her trembling lips. "Why, Arthur Lawrence always was the very soul of honor. It's horrible to have him involved——"

"Yes, it is," said Lyon simply.

"Has he a good attorney? If it's a question of getting the very best lawyer in the country to defend him, would it be possible for me—— Oh, I have heaps of money, you know, and if it could possibly do anything for an old friend——"

"Did you wish me to make that suggestion to Mr. Lawrence?" Lyon asked.

"I don't know," she said helplessly. "I think I wanted your advice. If Mr. Lawrence is sure to be cleared, anyhow——" She hesitated irresolutely. "Perhaps I had better wait a while and see how things go," she concluded, as Lyon gave her no help.

"I think the help that Lawrence stands in need of," said Lyon deliberately, "is not money, but information that will clear up the case."

She started up nervously. "But I couldn't give that. I haven't any information. You didn't think——"

"I was only supposing a case."

"I should like to do something, but I don't know how I can. I have reason to be grateful to Mr. Lawrence. Will you remember that, and if anything suggests itself to you that would give me

an opportunity to do anything for him, will you let me know?"

"Is it your intention to stay here for some time, then?" Lyon asked.

She looked helpless and undecided. "I—don't know. I didn't mean to, but I don't feel very strong. I think I may stay for a week longer. I need rest."

"This is a restfully quiet place," Lyon said sympathetically. "It was fortunate that Miss Elliott's school was closed this week. You have been as quiet and undisturbed here as though you had been quartered in a rest-cure sanatorium, haven't you?" He had put the rather too personal question with intention, meaning to see how she would take it, but he was not prepared for its effect upon her. She looked at him with startled nervousness and laughed—and then continued to laugh and laugh, as though he had made an irresistible joke. Lyon waited for her to recover her poise; and it was not until her wild laughter changed suddenly to wilder sobs that he realized she was in the grip of nervous hysteria. He hastily rang the bell, and then went out into the hall himself to meet the slow-answering maid, and send her whirling back to bring Miss Elliott.

"Shall I telephone for Doctor Barry?" he whispered, when Miss Elliott had come and taken the still sobbing woman in her arms.

"Yes, do, for goodness' sake. What in the world started her?" Miss Elliott answered distractedly. The situation was so alien to her rule-regulated life that she looked bewildered by it.

Lyon neglected the second part of her speech to attend to the first. He found the telephone in the hall, and got Barry.

"Hello, Doctor Barry! This is a message from Miss Elliott. She wants you to come at once to see Mrs. Broughton."

"That you, Lyon?"

"Yes."

"What's the matter with Mrs. Broughton?"

"She's crying and laughing together in a way to make your blood run cold. For Heaven's sake hurry along."

"If you have been upsetting that woman, I won't answer for the consequences," exclaimed Barry, with indignant emphasis.

"Then get over here as quick as you can, and take it out of me afterward," retorted Lyon, hanging up the receiver.

He went back to Mrs. Broughton's door. The sobbing had ceased, and, after waiting a moment, Lyon caught one of the excited servants and sent her in to Miss Elliott with an inquiry and an offer of service. She answered that there was nothing more he could do, so he quietly let himself out of the house.

He had gone several blocks from the school when he became aware of the fact that a man on the opposite side of the street seemed to be keeping an eye on his movements. Was he himself an object of interest to some one connected with the case? He was conscious now that he had seen the man across the street without heeding him when he stepped out from the house, and he recalled the fact that he had fairly stumbled into the arms of a man in that same neighborhood when he came out in the afternoon. Possibly the man perceived himself observed, for he quickened his pace, and at the end of the block crossed the street and came back on Lyon's side. Lyon looked sharply at him as they passed each other, but the man's face was indistinguishable in the shadow. It was only after he had passed on that Lyon remembered that the light from the street-lamp must have fallen full upon his own face. Well, he had no reason to mind being identified.

When Lyon reached his rooms he proceeded to put into effect an ingenious little scheme that had occurred to him. He studied Miss Elliott's catalogue till he found the name of a pupil from a town where he had some personal acquaintance. He then wrote an appealing letter to an influential woman whom he knew there, telling her of his lonely state as a stranger in a strange city, and begging that if she knew a Miss Kitty Tayntor of her town, who was attending Miss Elliott's school in

Waynscott, she send him forthwith a letter of introduction.

CHAPTER VIII.

Conscience and interest in the "case" combined prompted Lyon to call upon Doctor Barry early the next day and inquire how Mrs. Broughton was.

"Just about as ill as she can be," the doctor answered grimly. "I had left special orders that she was not to see any one. What in thunder did you mean by forcing yourself upon her in that way?"

"I didn't. She sent for me."

"What for?"

"She wanted to ask me something about the Fullerton case."

"Are you serious?"

"Certainly."

"And was that what you had been talking about when she had that attack?"

"Yes, in general. She used to know Lawrence, and what she particularly wanted to know was whether his situation was serious. She did not seem hysterical at all, or even specially nervous, until she went off suddenly at the end into that awful laughter."

"Well, if she should send for you again, you are not to go without letting me know first. Frankly, I consider that her reason is trembling in the balance, and the greatest care will be necessary to pull her through the crisis safely. I have a trained nurse with her now, and she is not to be allowed to see any one till the danger point is passed."

"I wish you would let me know when I may safely call upon her."

"That won't be for some time yet. What do you want to see her about?"

"She entrusted me with a commission. I want to report upon it."

"She probably won't remember it when she recovers. I don't consider that she was really responsible for what she may have said or done yesterday. She has had some sort of nervous shock that has shaken her entirely out of the normal. It will take a long time before she is herself."

"When did she call you in?" Lyon asked abruptly.

"Tuesday afternoon. Why?"

"Oh, I just wondered how you came to know so much. Good-by."

He went away with a sense of bafflement. That Mrs. Broughton was in some way connected with the tragedy, and that the nervous shock from which she suffered dated from that evening, seemed to have been made so patent that he had all the eagerness of the hunter to run the facts down. And yet to do so under the present circumstances was almost brutal. How could he raise a breath of suspicion against a woman who was trembling on the verge of mental derangement as a consequence of what she had seen or had possibly had a share in? And yet, if the truth would serve to clear two innocent people from suspicion, could he justify himself in not speaking?

More and more he felt inclined to entertain the idea that the woman he had seen running across the street was Mrs. Broughton. If he could but establish this as a fact, and so clear Lawrence's mind of the conviction that it was Miss Wolcott, he felt that Lawrence would probably be able to clear himself of the shadow under which he rested without difficulty. Brutal or not, he must get at the facts—quietly if possible, but he must get them. It would be more brutal to let the innocent suffer than to fix the crime upon the guilty, however sympathetic he might feel toward the latter. He determined to go quietly on and gather what information he could without at present sharing his suspicions with any one. With this end in view he went around to the Wellington, Fullerton's home.

He hunted up the elevator boy in the first place, and soon established a thoroughly satisfactory understanding with him on the basis of some theater tickets.

"Now I want to see how good a memory you have, Johnny. You know that lady who came to see Mr. Fullerton that evening——"

"Yes, sir, I remember all about her."

"Did you know who she was?"

"No, sir, she kept her veil down all

the time. But she was an elegant lady. She had on a dress that swished when she walked, and an elegant muff and coat."

"What were they like?"

"Why, just fur."

"There are lots of kinds of fur. Did you notice particularly?"

"Why, dark fur, I guess," Johnny answered hopefully. "Yes, elegant black fur."

Lyon saw he was improvising, and passed on to another point.

"What time did she come?"

John brightened into positiveness. "Half-past seven. I know that for sure, because that was when I told her she would be apt to find him, and so I was watching out for her when she came."

"Oh, then she had been here before?"

"Yes, she came early in the afternoon, but Mr. Fullerton was out. I told her she would find him for sure if she came at half-past seven, because he wouldn't be going out in the evening before eight; but she was so anxious that she came again about four o'clock. I knew he wouldn't be here then, and it was just as I said."

"When you told her to come at half-past seven, didn't she look at her watch?"

"Yes, she did!"

"What kind of a watch was it?"

"A little watch. I don't remember. But, gee, it was on a dandy chain, all right!"

"I don't believe you remember the chain any better than you do the watch."

"Yes, I do. It was a long chain that went around the neck, and she wore it outside of her coat, dangling, with a purse at the end. The watch was inside the purse. The chain was gold, with red stones in it here and there, and they sparkled like anything."

Lyon recognized the fidelity of the description. Mrs. Broughton had worn a long chain of enameled gold links, set with rubies magnificent enough to have excited the admiration of even less appreciative observers than an elevator

boy. It would be crediting too much to coincidence to suppose that there could be another chain like it.

"Had that lady ever been here before?" he asked.

Johnny was positive on that score. "No, she was a stranger. The first time she came, early in the afternoon, she didn't know where his room was, and I took her around and rang the bell for her myself. I never seen her before. She had a funny way of talking—'Misteh Fullehton'"—and he mimicked the soft evasion of the "r" that had characterized Mrs. Broughton's speech.

"Good for you, Johnny. You are doing well. Now, do you know when she went away?"

"She and Mr. Fullerton went out together about eight o'clock."

"Now think carefully about this. Was there any other lady who came to see Mr. Fullerton that afternoon?"

"No."

"Or in the forenoon or in the evening? At any time at all on Monday?" Johnny looked a little uncertain of his ground.

"They don't always say who they want. They just say, 'Second floor,' or 'Fifth,' you know. And sometimes they walk up."

"Then, if there was any one else who came to see Mr. Fullerton that day, you wouldn't know about it?"

Johnny dived into his memory.

"There was another lady here that evening, but I don't know who she wanted to see. She didn't say."

"When did she come? What do you know about her?"

"She came just after the lady with the long chain, because I met her in the hall as I came back from ringing Mr. Fullerton's bell. I thought she was going to the Stewarts' apartment, because there isn't any one else at that end of the hall except the Stewarts and Mr. Fullerton. Then when Mr. Fullerton and the lady came out and went down together, this other lady was in the hall again. I held the elevator for her, but she turned her back, and I went down."

"Did you take her down later?"

"No, she must have walked down."

"Can you describe her? Did you see her face?"

"No, she had a veil on."

Lyon inly anathematized the feminine expedient of wearing veils.

"Can't you remember anything about her?"

"I didn't see her close," he said apologetically.

"Have you told anybody else about Mr. Fullerton's visitor, Johnny?"

"Mr. Bede was here, asking me all about her the next day."

"Did you tell him the same things you have told me?"

"I didn't tell him about the chain. I didn't think about her looking at her watch until you reminded me."

"Oh, well, that isn't important," said Lyon carelessly. "Did you mention the other lady to Mr. Bede?"

"No. Was she a-comin' to see Mr. Fullerton, too?"

"Not that I know of. What made you notice her, by the way?"

"She was a stranger. Most people that come here I know."

"You've done very well, Johnny. Now I want to see the janitor. What's his name?"

"Mr. Hunt."

He proceeded to look up Mr. Hunt, and preferred his request that he be allowed to inspect the rooms of the late Mr. Fullerton; but he found that functionary disposed to make the most of the temporary importance which the tragedy had conferred upon him.

"Them rooms is locked up. The public ain't admitted. The police has took the key."

"But you have a duplicate key, you know."

"And what if I have?"

"Why, you could let me in for half an hour."

"What for should I do that? This ain't no public museum, and I ain't no public information bureau to answer all the fool questions that people as ain't got nothing else to do can think of asking."

"I dare say that people have been imposing on you," said Lyon, with that

serious and sympathetic air which served him so well on occasion. "But that's the penalty which you have to pay for being a man of importance. I like to meet a man of your sort. You're not the kind to let every curiosity-seeker in. But this is different. You know I am writing this case up for the *Nets*, and I think I'll have to have your picture for the paper, with a little write-up. No reason why you shouldn't get something out of all this. You let me into those rooms for half an hour, and I'll see that you have a notice that your wife will cut out and frame."

He had his way in the end, of course, and Hunt, grumbling but gratified, took him up by the back stairs, admitted him, and locked him in, with the warning that he would come personally to let him out in half an hour.

Left alone, Lyon looked about him with a great deal of curiosity and interest. Fullerton was a sufficiently important person in himself to give interest to his rooms, apart from the accident that a mystery had settled down upon his death. And these were not the conventional rooms of the average well-regulated and commonplace man. There was a mingling of Oriental luxury and slovenliness, of extravagance and threadbare carelessness, that was a curious index to the owner's mind. The first room was evidently a combined study and lounging-room, for it contained a revolving bookcase filled with law-books, a large table, with papers and books spread promiscuously upon it; a couch, several luxurious easy chairs, a curious Oriental cabinet high upon the wall, a dilapidated rug, in which Lyon caught his foot, and a table, with all the paraphernalia of a smoker.

The feature of the room that especially attracted his attention, however, was the pictures. These were not of the character that one would have expected to find in a lawyer's private study. Instead of the portraits of jurists and lawgivers, the walls were adorned with ballet-girls of varying degrees of audacity. Some of them were so extreme that Lyon was distinctly

startled. From the pictures his eye wandered to the bookcase at the head of the couch. No law-books here, where he threw himself down to smoke at his ease, but novels, French and English, at least equaling the pictures in audacity. Evidently Fullerton had not had the tastes or tendencies of a Galahad.

He could hardly have received his clients in this telltale room. Yet the open law-books on the table indicated that he did occasionally do some studying here. Lyon was struck with the title of the first book he saw, and still more so when he found that of the half-dozen lying open or with markers in them on the table, all dealt with the same subject—divorce. The reason seemed clear when he picked up the file of legal papers on the table and found them to be a complete transcript of the Vanderburg divorce case. Evidently, for some reason or other, that matter had been uppermost in his thoughts of late. As he put the papers down, a filmy, crumpled-up handkerchief on the table caught his eye. It somehow called to his mind the handkerchief which Mrs. Broughton had pressed to her lips the evening before to conceal their nervous trembling, and he was not surprised, when he unfolded it, to find the initials "G. B." woven into the delicate embroidery.

"Well, what do you make of it?"

The amused voice from the bedroom door made Lyon start, for he had supposed himself entirely alone. He spun about and faced a quiet little man, who was regarding him with a rather satiric interest.

"Hello!" he said. "I didn't know you were there."

"You were not supposed to," the other man retorted. "You are not supposed to be here yourself, you know. Are you trying your hand at amateur detective work?"

"I'm looking for material for a lively story," said Lyon, with his most ingenuous air. He had at once recognized Bede, a detective connected with the police force. Of course, he had known that the police would be work-

ing on the case, but the actual presence of this shrewd-eyed, silent detective gave him a feeling akin to panic. Could Bede read his thoughts and tear from him the secret he was most anxious to guard—Miss Wolcott's connection with the affair? It was absurd to think so, and yet the idea made him extremely nervous. He thrust the thought down to the bottom of his mind and faced Bede with a blank aspect. "Help me out, can't you? Give me some interesting bits to work up for the public. What have you discovered so far?"

Bede laughed softly. "For the public?" He came over to the table and picked up the handkerchief which Lyon had thrown down. "You were interested in this, I noticed. Have you any idea who G. B. is?"

"I am a stranger in Waynscott," said Lyon casually. "Besides, my circle of acquaintances would hardly coincide with Mr. Fullerton's, I fancy."

"Oh, Fullerton had more than one circle of acquaintances. He was engaged to be married a few years ago to a young lady belonging to one of the most eminently respectable families of Hemlock Avenue. Ah, you knew that, I see, though you are a stranger in Waynscott."

"I think I have heard it mentioned," said Lyon carelessly, though his heart shook to think he had unconsciously betrayed so much. "One hears all sorts of rumors about the man."

"For instance?" Bede asked politely.

"Oh, nothing that would be news to you. By the way, what theory have you to offer in regard to his coat being on wrong side out?"

"What do you make of it yourself?"

"Nothing. I'm entirely at sea."

Bede smiled a little and dropped his guarded air. "Well, he didn't turn it after he was hit, that's evident. Death was practically instantaneous. And the girl didn't turn it——"

"The girl?"

"The woman you saw running across the street."

"Oh!"

Bede did not smile at the startled monosyllable. He only took quiet note

of it, and went on without a break. "Because a woman wouldn't touch a man who had been struck dead at her feet in the street. She would simply run away at once."

Lyon nodded attentively.

"And the man wouldn't have had time to do it after the girl ran away, because you were so near that you would have seen him if he had lingered in the neighborhood. He must have disappeared almost immediately."

"Not very gallant of him to run off in an opposite direction and let the girl shift for herself."

"Oh, I don't know. The girl had to get out of the way, and alone, as soon as possible. Besides, the man may not have run off in an opposite direction. He may simply have jumped off into that low, vacant lot until the gathering of a crowd gave him a chance to get away without being conspicuous." He was watching Lyon closely, but that young man's surprise was too genuine to be mistaken. "Therefore, to return to the question of the coat," he continued, "it is pretty clear that he must have turned it himself."

"But why?"

"As a disguise. To escape being recognized by a young woman who had seen him in a black coat a very short time before. It is possible that he trusted too much to the disguise, and so came too near, and provoked the quarrel which ended so fatally. Even a mild-tempered man doesn't like to be spied upon when he is, we may assume, making love on his own account, and Lawrence is not mild-tempered."

"It seems to me you are assuming that Lawrence killed him, and then building up a scene to fit that theory," said Lyon hotly.

Bede smiled ambiguously.

"We have to assume some things. If we only repeated what we fully know, where would we get? For instance, we must assume that it was a man who struck the blow."

"Why must we?"

"A woman doesn't kill in the open, even where she hates. She has the cat nature. She strikes from ambush, un-

less attacked. And she doesn't carry a man's cane, even for purposes of defense, much less for purposes of offense."

"There's one point about that cane business that I wonder whether you noticed," said Lyon thoughtfully. "Lawrence swore that he had it in the State Law Library a few days ago, because he remembered poking a book down from a high shelf with it—which is as characteristic of Lawrence as it must have been bad for the book. But he couldn't swear that he took it away with him, because he got into a dispute with Fullerton, and he doesn't remember what he did. Now, isn't it possible, and even probable, that being excited by that discussion he walked off without his cane, and that Fullerton, seeing he had forgotten it, picked it up and carried it off, meaning to return it, and then forget about it; and then, either intentionally or absent-mindedly, carried it with him that fatal Monday night on his walk? That would explain how Lawrence's cane got to be there, without involving Lawrence."

"The cane is not a vital point. As you have ingeniously demonstrated, it would be possible to explain it away. The essential point is somebody's antagonism to Fullerton. A casual stranger does not walk up and hit him a blow of that nature, either with his own cane or with one snatched from the hand of his victim."

"A man of Fullerton's character would be sure to have enemies," said Lyon argumentatively.

"But not all of his enemies would be roused to murderous fury to see him in company with a particular young lady."

In spite of himself, Lyon started. "Then you think you have identified the young lady?" he asked.

Bede was watching him closely, with a hint of a lurking smile.

"You don't ask with whom we have identified her? Quite right. Of course, I couldn't tell a representative of the press. But I don't mind saying that we do have theories as to her identity."

Lyon's heart sank. "Based on what facts?" he asked doggedly.

"Oh, all that will come out in due time. I'll ruin my professional reputation if I let you lead me on to gossip any more." His serious manner contradicted the hint of irony in his eyes, but Lyon guessed that the eyes came nearer to telling the truth. "By the way, Mr. Lyon, how did you get into these rooms?"

"Oh, I'm in the habit of getting in where I want to go."

"Good for you. But I'll have to instruct Hunt as to his duties. You won't get in so easily the next time."

And Lyon fully admitted the truth of that statement the next time that he did get into those rooms.

CHAPTER IX.

Lyon was distinctly nervous when he got away from Bede and had time to reflect on their conversation. Two things were evident—that Bede knew about Fullerton's former relations with Miss Wolcott, and that he suspected Lyon of knowing more of the situation than the miscellaneous public. Was it possible that he was trying to connect Miss Wolcott with the woman who had called upon Fullerton that evening and had gone out with him? Lyon was satisfied in his own mind that the woman was Mrs. Broughton, but Bede was certainly justified in entertaining the other hypothesis, since he knew nothing about Mrs. Broughton.

He had received a note from Howell, Lawrence's lawyer, asking him to call at his office, and he turned in that direction now. His way, however, led him past the jail, and he took the opportunity to carry out the scriptural injunction to visit those in prison. Poor Lawrence must need a little cheering up.

But poor Lawrence greeted him with a gaiety that did not suggest the need of sympathy. Indeed, his eyes were dancing with triumph.

"Do you see my flowers, old man?" he cried jubilantly.

A huge bunch of long-stemmed roses, still in the florist's box, was filling the cell with color and fragrance.

"Who sent them?" asked Lyon suspiciously.

"Divil a card or a scrap of writing with them."

"Oh, then it's merely because you have become a celebrity," said Lyon indifferently. "Silly women are always sending flowers to the principals in any murder case."

"Bad luck to you, you're jealous," cried Lawrence. "If you are going to slander my roses after that fashion, you can go—go and get me a dictionary of the flower language. I want to find out what American Beauties mean—when they come without a card."

"I'd like to know myself," said Lyon, taking note of the florist's name on the box.

Lawrence looked at him with mischievous eyes, that still were dancing with happiness. "Oh, but you are slow of imagination, Lyon," he said softly.

Lyon concluded that he was not needed at that moment as a cheerer of those in prison, so he soon got away, and hunted up Howell's office in a tall office-building down-town. He was taken into the lawyer's private office, where he found Howell with his hands behind his back, staring moodily through the window into a dingy court, instead of deep in his books, as a lawyer is supposed to be. There were exasperation and protest in every line of his figure. He turned to nod to Lyon without relaxing his gloom.

"I am glad to see you, Mr. Lyon. Sit down. I asked you to call in connection with this case of Lawrence's."

"Yes."

"Have you any influence with him?"

"I doubt it," said Lyon, with a smile. "I don't think that he allows many men to exert an influence upon him."

"At any rate, you are a friend of his?"

"Most certainly—so far as I am concerned. I am rather too new a friend to feel that I have much right to claim the title."

Howell regarded him frowningly, though with what was evidently intended for good-will.

"I think you will understand me, Mr. Lyon, when I say that a more pig-headed, exasperating, obstinate client never fell to my lot. He doesn't remember. He can't say. What I need in preparing my defense is not a law library so much as a kit of burglar's tools. I have got to break into his mind, somehow. He is hiding something. Do you know what it is?"

Lyon reflected that Bede had not asked that question. Bede had known! He must still keep faith with Lawrence, who had trusted him; but was it not possible to help Lawrence against his will through this lawyer? He picked his way carefully.

"I don't really know very much, Mr. Howell. I guess at some things, and I shall be glad to lay my little knowledge before you. But first, tell me is Lawrence's situation really dangerous?"

"Yes," said Howell tersely. "You see, an alibi is out of the question. He has admitted that he was in the neighborhood. Donohue's testimony shows that he might easily have been on the very spot. Certainly he was not far from it. Yet he offers no explanation as to what he was doing there. That Fullerton could have been struck down—there must have been some sort of an altercation—and Lawrence neither see nor hear anything is certainly curious. That his cane should have been found on the spot is certainly unfortunate. Frankly, Mr. Lyon, unless I can in some way discover the actual facts of that night's proceedings, the prospects for clearing Lawrence are not cheerful. Of course, the facts may not help him—but if that is the case, it is even more important that I should know them. I can't work in the dark. Now, do you know yourself what Lawrence was doing that night?"

"No."

"You didn't see him?"

"Not until the crowd had gathered."

Howell looked disappointed. "I hoped that possibly you might be able to give me the facts that he is withholding."

"Isn't it possible that he is withhold-

ing nothing—that there is nothing to withhold?”

“It is possible, but if that is the situation, it is a malicious conspiracy on the part of fate to trap an innocent man. It will be difficult to make a jury believe he is as ignorant as he wants us to think. No, so far as I can see into the situation, our only hope is that there is a woman in the case, and that we can work the jury for emotional sympathy.” He looked keenly at Lyon.

“You may think it a wild notion,” said Lyon, “but I have an idea that possibly there is a woman in the case, though Lawrence doesn’t know anything about her. I was in Fullerton’s rooms at the Wellington this morning——”

“How did you get in?”

“Blarneyed the janitor. On the table I found a handkerchief that is the mate of one I have seen in the hand of Mrs. Woods Broughton.”

“Well?”

“On the table was a transcript of the divorce proceedings in the case of Grace Vanderburg vs. William H. Vanderburg. You know, of course, that Grace Vanderburg is now Mrs. Woods Broughton.”

Howell nodded.

“There were a number of books on divorce on the table, as though he had just been looking up the subject—or discussing it with a client. You know, Fullerton was Mrs. Vanderburg’s attorney.”

“You are leading up to something.”

“This. The elevator boy gave me a more particular description of the woman who left the Wellington with Fullerton that evening than Donohue was able to give. I feel sure that woman was Mrs. Broughton.”

“Mrs. Broughton is not in Waynescott?”

“Yes. She is staying with Miss Elliott on Locust Avenue.”

“But the papers have not mentioned it. Are you sure?”

“She is very quiet—under the care of Doctor Barry, and suffering from a

nervous shock which dates from Monday night.”

Howell tapped his foot nervously upon the floor. “But all this is amazing, if not incredible. How do you come to know it—or think you know it?”

“I have seen and talked with Mrs. Broughton.”

“When did you see her?”

“Last night.”

“You must take me to her immediately. Here you have wasted hours——”

Lyon shook his head. “Doctor Barry has forbidden her seeing any one. He fears serious nervous disturbance—mental derangement, in fact. She has evidently had a very bad shock.”

“Does Doctor Barry know what you have told me?”

“No.”

“Does any one know?”

“No.”

“Not even Lawrence?”

“No. I didn’t know just what effect it might have upon—his policy of silence. In fact, I didn’t know how to proceed further until I had consulted you.”

Howell smiled grimly. “I am glad you allowed me some share in handling the matter. From the way you have been going on, I didn’t know but what you were going to take the case out of my hands entirely. Now, how soon can I see Mrs. Broughton?”

“I don’t know, but not immediately. I saw Doctor Barry this morning. He thinks her condition serious. I told him I wanted to see her as soon as possible, but he warned me not to attempt it until he gave me leave.”

Howell looked serious. “I see. Of course, I can’t force myself upon a woman in that condition. And until I know exactly what her testimony is going to be, I don’t want to have her appear in the case at all. It is possible, of course, that, after I have talked with her, my chief care will be to have her out of the way of the prosecution. I can’t tell *what* I shall do until I have seen her. If only Bede does not stumble upon this——”

"I came upon Bede in Fullerton's rooms this morning. I don't think he has thought of identifying the woman with Mrs. Broughton."

"Although you have?"

"Well, I had the advantage of knowing that Mrs. Broughton was in town. I don't think Bede does."

"How did you find it out?"

"By a sort of accident. I was at Miss Elliott's school, making some inquiries about the school, and Miss Elliott let it out." Lyon breathed a little more freely when that dangerous question was passed.

"You have given me a most important suggestion, Mr. Lyon. Of course, it may lead up to nothing. Even if Mrs. Broughton was the woman whom Donahue saw with Fullerton, it doesn't follow that she was still with him when the tragedy occurred. Indeed, it is more than unlikely, because if she knew anything about the affair, a woman of her standing and character would have spoken out at once. She would have nothing to fear."

Lyon said absolutely nothing, but Howell, watching him, caught some unspoken thought, and turned to him with swift amaze:

"You don't mean——"

"No, no, no," said Lyon. "I am sure not."

But Howell looked thoughtful. "He was her attorney in that divorce suit, and you say that the table was covered with books on divorce, and she had been there to consult him, as is evidenced by her handkerchief. If there was anything irregular about that divorce, and he knew about it, and threatened to use that knowledge—it is not impossible to believe that Fullerton would resort to blackmail on occasion. He was very hard up, and Mrs. Broughton is a very wealthy woman—so long as her marriage is not impugned. And if we suppose for a moment that that was the situation, it is not difficult to go a step further and imagine that his death would be a great relief to her—so great that it might have taken the form of a swift temptation. The blow may have been a sudden, desperate impulse, and

it would not have been beyond the strength of a woman, even a slight woman. But the means—the cane?"

"It has occurred to me as a bare possibility that Fullerton may have been carrying the cane himself, and that his assailant may have wrested it from him. You remember Lawrence's testimony that he had the cane in the library a few days before, and that, owing to an excited discussion with Fullerton, he did not remember whether he took it away with him or whether he left it there. Suppose he left it there, and Fullerton picked it up, it might have happened that he had it with him on that evening."

Howell started to his feet, and paced the room in suppressed excitement.

"It may be utterly fantastic and incredible," he said finally, pausing before Lyon, and looking at him with abstracted eyes, "but it is the first possible gleam of an outlet that I have seen in any direction. I must follow it up. I must see Mrs. Broughton just as soon as possible. I am walking on a mine until I know what she has to say for herself. It may all amount to nothing. It may be of the most vital importance. Now, how can I be sure of knowing the earliest moment that I can risk demanding an interview without danger to her health?"

"I know Doctor Barry."

"But you can't tell Doctor Barry why you want to know. It is important that not the slightest hint of this should reach the other side. Of course, Bede may work it out for himself. He is not a fool. Quite the contrary. We have to take our chances on that. But we don't want to help him. And if by chance Mrs. Broughton should have nothing to confess except that she saw Lawrence assault Fullerton, we don't want to help Bede to that bit of testimony. It is quite on the cards that that is what she will have to tell me, too. Have you considered that?"

"I don't think she will," said Lyon slowly.

"Do you happen to have any reason for that assurance? Your theories are interesting, young man. If you have

any more of them in reserve, I'd like to hear them."

But Lyon shook his head. "My theory is based on the assumption that Lawrence really knows no more about the affair than he has told you."

"I hope it may prove so," said Howell, somewhat dubiously. "In the meantime, bear in mind that I must have a chance to see Mrs. Broughton quietly at the earliest moment. Good Lord, man, the grand jury meets in ten days from now! Now, have you any suggestions as to how that interview can be arranged without notice to the public and without any chance of a slip-up?"

"I have written for a letter of introduction to one of the pupils in Miss Elliott's school—Miss Kitty Tayntor," said Lyon. "I thought that it might prove useful in keeping in close touch with the situation."

Howell's gray eyes twinkled appreciatively. "It strikes me that you are wasted as a mere newspaper man. You have talents. Go ahead and improve your acquaintance with Miss Kitty. That is safer than to depend upon Doctor Barry, because he might be biased. He might think it advisable to get Mrs. Broughton away quietly, without letting you know about her movements. Of course, a woman of her prominence can't be lost; but, on the other hand, if she wanted to get out of reach, she could make it difficult for us to find her. It is much better that we keep watch on her movements without letting her suspect that fact."

"I'll do my best," said Lyon.

"And that is a good deal," said Howell, with a sincerity that made Lyon flush with pleasure.

When Lyon left Howell's office, he went around to the florist whose name he had noted on the box of roses in Lawrence's room. After selecting a boutonniere and admiring the seasonable display of flowers, he asked casually:

"By the way, Maxwell, who sent those roses to Lawrence—Arthur Lawrence, you know?"

"I'd like to know myself," said the florist, waking up to sudden interest. "I don't have such an order as that every day."

"Why, what was there unusual about it?"

"Well, hundred-dollar bills are unusual in my business, and it isn't often that I get a letter with a hundred dollars in it, and no name signed to it, with orders to send flowers till the money is used up, and more will be coming."

"That does sound uncommon. I'd like to see that letter, if you have it around."

"Oh, yes, I kept it as a curiosity." He opened the drawer in his desk and threw a letter on the counter before Lyon. Lyon's first glance at it showed him plainly enough that the brief note was written in the same large, angular handwriting that had marked the note which he had himself received from Mrs. Woods Broughton. As he picked it up to examine it more closely, an unfortunate accident occurred. A man who had entered the shop shortly after Lyon, and who had possibly overheard their conversation, had come up close to Lyon's elbow, and now leaned forward suddenly, as though to look at the note over his shoulder. His hasty movement upset a vase of flowers on the counter. The vase was broken, the flowers scattered over the floor, and the water poured over Lyon's cuff and hand, as well as over the note which he had just picked up. The man was profuse in his apologies, and supplemented Lyon's handkerchief by his own to remove the traces of the deluge. Somehow in the momentary confusion the note itself was lost sight of, but Lyon had seen enough to satisfy him that this munificent order for flowers was simply another indication of Mrs. Broughton's interest in Lawrence and his situation.

Lawrence had wondered what the roses might mean in the language of flowers. Lyon could not help wondering whether, perhaps, they spelled "Remorse."

The Perfume of Madness

By J. Kenilworth Egerton

Author of "The Adventure in the Petticoat Maze," Etc.

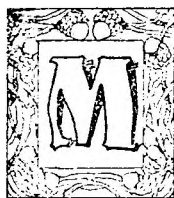
Being a Unique Adventure in the Career of Tommy Williams,
Artist, Hypnotist, and Detective

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

Le Garde, chief of the French secret police, is greatly puzzled over a case which he brings to Tommy Williams. Together they visit the scene of the tragedy. A woman, registering as Madame De Sauvigny at a small hotel, has apparently committed suicide. She left a note requesting that she be buried quietly, no efforts be made as to her identification, and that her hair be left undisturbed. The letter remarkably perfumed arrests Tommy's attention and he calls in Duclos, an expert perfumer, who pronounces it the "Perfume of Madness," a mysterious Indian concoction. A Count De Thonier had engaged the rooms for the deceased, but on being sought, he is found to have sailed for Africa. The Countess De Thonier is located in town and, seeking her out, Tommy is greatly mystified by her surroundings, servants, etc. She unexpectedly pays Tommy a visit, with Zafr, a negro, as her body-guard. During their talk Tommy discovers Zafr playing eavesdropper, and ordering him downstairs, the conversation is resumed.

(In Two Parts—Part II.)

CHAPTER V.



ADAME DE THONIER took no exception to the unceremonious dismissal of her servant; but, settling herself on the divan as only a woman of the East can, she deftly arranged the pile of cushions with accustomed hands.

"As an introduction, to avoid all embarrassment to you or to myself, let me tell you that I am proud of my origin; although I know that it is such as you gentlemen have been taught to look down upon and despise," she said, in a low-pitched, beautifully modulated voice.

"In the British possessions in the East, the lot of the Eurasian is not a happy one, and even royal blood, inherited from dynasties which ruled in splendor when England was inhabited by painted savages, is held in contempt

by the most ignorant 'Tommy Atkins,' whose ancestors for generations have ended their days in the workhouse and been buried in the Potter's Field. My father came to Burma long before the British occupation; it was then a sovereign state, and his union with my mother, according to Burmese law, was a legal one. He was an adventurer, I suppose; of small estate and good family; but, above all, he was a man!"

Her head was thrown back proudly, and the great eyes, which seemed capable of expressing all human emotion, fairly flashed defiance at us; as if challenging criticism or condemnation. In spite of our instinctive intolerance of anything which savored of miscegenation, there was nothing in the appearance of the beautiful woman before us to rouse antipathy: for—a rare exception—she had inherited the best, instead of the worst, from each of the radically different races whose blood mingled in her veins.

"Perhaps women of the East have

become different from others through long centuries of training and repression; perhaps a greater love than women of colder countries are capable of feeling renders them able to make greater sacrifices uncomplainingly; and my mother cheerfully made the great renunciation without a reproach," she continued sadly. "With Thebaw's downfall everything changed. The white people, who had formed but a handful of a population, came in myriads, and—without the slightest diminution of my father's tenderness to her—she learned from intuition the great lesson; that in the white man the call of the blood is stronger than his love. I was too young to know much about it; for she died when I was but a small child, and the manner of her death I need not go into; for it is an all-too-common story in the white man's East.

"My father had prospered—he was shrewd, honest, and a favorite with my mother's people; but no one knows the real origin of his wealth. With me he was more than just—no one of the children his English wife bore him was as dear to him as I; but as I grew to womanhood—and we women of the East mature early—he realized that my position would be unbearable if I were educated in Burma, so I was sent to Europe. I have been carefully trained; first in a French convent, then in an English boarding-school, and finally by extended travel in my father's company. In a manner he defied the opinion of the European colony in Rangoon; for when I returned there with him he installed me in his own house—he was again a widower—on a perfect equality with my half-sister, the only surviving child of his second marriage.

"Within the house my position was secure, for he was a man who brooked no disobedience or opposition; but in the social life of the place it was a different matter. The pettiness of an English community in the far East is beyond the comprehension of any one who has lived always in a broader atmosphere. People who in England have had no position become the traditional

beggars on horseback, and the meanest of them despises the native who may be descended from a hundred kings, whose word was life or death to millions, and whose ancestors were refined and cultivated people when the forebears of these sons and daughters of scullions were swineherds and serfs!"

The bitterness of her tone told, even more plainly than her words, how deeply the iron had entered into her soul, and her eyes glowed with passionate resentment as she told us of the petty humiliations to which she had been subjected by the wives and daughters of minor colonial officials, until we realized that her position had been even a more difficult one than that of the unfortunate inheritors of the blood of Ham in the United States.

"But the women were not the worst, for there was, at least, nothing covert about their insults," she continued. "Men came to my father's house, for he entertained with the lavish hospitality of the old East, and they wished to obtain favors. They were assiduous in their attentions to both my half-sister and myself; but there was always a difference; for no Englishman paid honorable suit to the despised Eurasian. Then the Count De Thonier came to Rangoon, and visited us on his way up-country. His stay was a prolonged one, for he was ill there for many weeks, and to me it was a never-ending delight. The French have not the prejudice of the English colonials against color, and—well, in the end he loved me. Mr. Williams, of myself I can, without reservation, tell you everything. Is it necessary also to tell you of others?"

"In so far as it may concern you and Count De Thonier, or throw light on the cause of your perplexities—yes, most decidedly," answered Tommy kindly. "Pray do not hesitate to be perfectly frank; for I assure you that we shall reveal nothing which may embarrass you or any one else unnecessarily."

"Of course, if it is necessary, I shall be perfectly frank about everything, and I hesitate only because it is not

pleasant to drag out family skeletons," she said reluctantly.

"It concerns my half-sister, Alicia; who, I am sorry to say, is a thoroughly bad woman. I use such a strong expression advisedly, and I mean it. With all the advantages of superior position which her birth gave to her, with exceptional beauty and a clever mind, she was thoroughly heartless, selfish, and unscrupulous. She, too, had been educated in Europe; she was given every advantage which money could procure for her; but she employed them to poor purpose. Our lives in Europe had been entirely distinct; she was recognized by my father's people, who would not even acknowledge my existence; but if our careers were set down in parallel, I believe the despised half-caste would have no cause to fear comparison. The details it is unnecessary to go into: for it was not until we were again in Rangoon that we knew each other, and that she grew to hate me. I cannot account for it, for I was prepared to do everything to make a difficult position as easy as possible. She affected to despise me for my inheritance of my mother's blood; but, in spite of her contempt for it, she was jealous of the position which it gave to me with my own people—for the Burmese are my people, gentlemen." Again the black eyes flashed defiance, and I looked furtively at Tommy, who scrupulously refrained from meeting my eyes.

"She was powerless to injure me, for nothing she could do or say could make my position more difficult among the English, while the Burmese secretly despise their conquerors. My father was almost the sole exception—the respect he tacitly paid to the memory of my mother by demanding consideration for me endeared him to them, and they gave him their confidence. Just how I do not know—although it was a secret which he intended to confide in me—but that confidence in some mysterious way permitted him to accumulate the large fortune which he possessed.

"It was a secret which Alicia was constantly trying to learn, and which he sedulously guarded from her. He spoke

all of the dialects of the country, and strange people came to the old pagoda in a corner of our compound which he used as his offices. Even in the disturbed state of the country which followed the conquest, he went fearlessly and unattended to the wildest and most remote parts; and it was commonly known that a safe conduct from him insured immunity from attack by the fiercest of the Dacoit chiefs. The visit of the Count De Thonier brought things almost to open warfare between Alicia and myself. Perhaps she loved him; I shall try to be just: but, at any rate, she tried her best and did her worst to win from me the only honorable love which a white man had ever offered to me. Mr. Williams, I can't go into the details—they are too disgusting."

"Never mind; I have considerable imagination and some little experience," answered Tommy sympathetically. "Judging from the fact that you are now the Countess De Thonier, I conclude that her arts and methods were unavailing."

"They were, for he is a gentleman," she exclaimed passionately. "I did not fight her with her own weapons, gentlemen: perhaps my Burmese blood made me despise them; but I do not hesitate to say that had she succeeded, I should have killed her." Tommy glanced at her quickly, a curious expression on his face, and seemed on the point of asking a question; but he remained silent, and Madame De Thonier made half-apology for her outburst.

"You see that I am not all white, gentlemen, and perhaps the blood of the East is warmer than that which has not known our Burmese sun," she went on more quietly.

"One result of her conduct was to increase a thousand-fold the love and close sympathy which existed between my father and myself. I had never complained to him of her conduct, nor confided to him the slights to which I had been subjected by the European society of the place. I doubt if he would ever have spoken of it, or have entered a contest which was hopeless, if he had not accidentally overheard Alicia at-

tempting to poison the mind of the Count De Thonier against me by retailing the petty gossip and prejudice of the English colony, and, unfortunately for her, attacking the reputation of my mother. It isn't a pretty story, gentlemen; but my father, who was courtesy itself to all women, raised his hand to strike down his own daughter for vilifying the memory of the one woman he had truly loved. Fortunately he regained control of himself before the blow fell, and that night he poured out his heart to me; confessing that he had known of every humiliation to which I had been exposed.

"It is only for a short time now that you will have to bear them," he said, when I told him that secure in the knowledge of my own decency they really meant little to me. "Here I have lived and loved, and here I would end my days; but for your sake I shall leave this land, which is no longer your dear mother's country, and find happiness in watching you in great and honored position, surrounded by every luxury which wealth can give you, until I may come to believe that I have not wronged you. Count De Thonier has asked my permission to marry you, and I do not believe that your own consent will be difficult to obtain."

"The next six weeks were the happiest of my life. Count De Thonier was devoted to me, and we spent every moment together which was not occupied in some mysterious venture which he had entered into with my father, who gave him the trust and confidence which he had withheld from his own countrymen. They teased me by being mysterious, but told me that they were preparing a great surprise for me. The favor which the natives showed to my father they extended to my fiancé, and for hours he and my father would be in close consultation with men of strange appearance and dress; priests and fakirs from the up-country, who were strange to lower Burma.

"My half-sister had practically withdrawn from all intercourse with us—in the great compound she had her own bungalow and ménage, where she re-

ceived her friends of the European colony, and we met only in the most formal way. The East is strange, gentlemen; in a country where the heat makes it necessary for screens to serve as partitions and curtains for doors, there can never be absolute privacy, and secrets are difficult to hide. The native servants know the innermost lives of their masters; and, in spite of our apparently separate lives, I learned that her seeming indifference was only on the surface. She utilized all of the mysterious channels of communication which run to the women's apartments to gain information; she organized a system of espionage among the most worthless of the servants, and herself descended to eavesdropping and spying to learn the reason for the conferences between the two men and the natives who visited them. Why she was so anxious to discover their secrets I do not know; but there was nothing to which she would not descend to obtain information.

"Unfortunately I did not report to my father what I had learned; not because I feared to harm her, but I wished to spare him. I have been suspicious that it was her meddling which brought about some interruption in their work, for very unexpectedly my father announced that it would be necessary for the count to return at once to Europe, and that we should follow as soon as he could close up other business affairs. "It was decided that our marriage should take place in Paris at just about this time; and in spite of business anxieties my father was happy in the thought that the future promised happiness to me." Her voice trembled suspiciously as she spoke of him and his solicitude for her, and the great eyes softened and filled with tears; but when she paused we both remained dumb for want of words to express the sympathy which we felt. That we were sympathetic, however, she must have felt intuitively—for there was that subtle change in her manner which, in a woman, implies absolute confidence and trust when she regained her self-control and went on.

"The bitterest regret in a life which has not been altogether without crosses,

is that he could not have lived to insure and enjoy my happiness," she said sadly. "Not that I consider my present condition an enviable one; but had he lived nothing of this kind would have happened. Everything had been planned for our departure from Rangoon: the passages engaged on the steamer and our trunks half-packed, when the great calamity of my life happened. The East is mysterious, gentlemen, and even I, who inherit a semi-knowledge of it, grope as in darkness when I try to understand. In nothing is it more mysterious than in the way death comes. A man dines with you the picture of health, and leaves your compound calling back a cheery good night. In the morning your bearer wakes you at daybreak to deliver the notice of his death, and, asking the cause, you receive only the stereotyped 'So it was written from the beginning of things.' So died my father, gentlemen—alone in the old pagoda, where his servants found him at daybreak, his head on his arms, which rested on his desk, the vultures on the roof proclaiming that it was the sleep of death."

"And was no reason for his death discovered?" Tommy asked, and Madame De Thonier shook her head.

"By the English officials it was called heat apoplexy, I believe—by the natives, Kismet—but the fact that he was dead stunned me so completely that I took no interest in the alleged cause, and I submitted without protest to the lesser loss of property, and when I was cast out from my father's house I went to my own people."

"Cast out?" exclaimed Tommy incredulously; and the laugh which came from her lips was not pleasant to hear.

"Yes, by the order of Alicia, my half-sister," she said bitterly. "Remember, gentlemen, the British law prevailed in Rangoon. Who was I?—the daughter of the native woman, Talasinjhi! Nothing existed to prove that I was also the legitimate daughter of the Sahib Richard Abercrombie; and Alicia, whose birth was duly recorded, and whose mother's marriage certificate was on file, was recognized as the

sole heir, and at her hands I received no mercy.

"I was absolutely helpless, and my just claims would have been laughed at: for my father left no will, and, in spite of the fact that he had always recognized me as his daughter, I had no rights which the English law respected. For the property I cared nothing, and I was so heart-broken that I was apathetic to everything but my father's death, when a long cablegram from the Count De Thonier begged me to come at once to England. Alicia had already sailed, for her treatment of me had not received the entire sympathy of the very people who had flouted me in my prosperity, and she found Rangoon hostile and unpleasant. I followed her, and a week since I arrived in London. As I told you, I was married almost immediately, and the result you already know."

"But did your father leave no message for you; nothing to guide you or to provide for you?" asked Tommy, and she shook her head.

"Nothing was given to me; but remember that the daughter of Talasinjhi was not permitted to examine the papers of the Sahib Richard Abercrombie," she said scornfully. "At the time, I had no reason to believe that a will existed, but the Count De Thonier assured me that a communication of the utmost importance was left for me: that he had seen it sealed up and addressed to me by my father, and that it contained the secret which he had confided to no one; the explanation of the mystery surrounding the source of his wealth. We intended to confront Alicia with this; to demand it from her, and, as his wife, I should be in a different position then that of a mere Burmese half-caste."

"And did the Count De Thonier know the contents of that package?" asked Tommy eagerly.

"Only in a general way," she answered. "It was to have been my dowry, given to me on my wedding-day. My father had taken the precaution to address it to me only on the chance of accident to himself—for he knew the

uncertainty of the tenure of life in the East. All that I know of it is that it had to do with the mysterious conferences in the old pagoda, and that it was, in some way, absolutely essential to the carrying out of the plans which he and the count had made. My husband told me that the loss was irreparable, and he was very much disturbed about it; but he was considerate enough to realize that I was wearied by my anxieties and grief, and said that we should try to banish all disagreeable thoughts until after our honeymoon. That is my story, and now, if you wish, I shall tell you why I come to you with my troubles."

"That is not the least puzzling thing in the affair," said Tommy, smiling at her; and she looked him straight in the eyes.

"First let me assure you that my disobedience of my husband's request to remain incognito was not from pique nor because I do not trust him," she said quietly. "In my judgment it was necessary to establish my position immediately, and I did it in the most public way possible. I did not intend to remain in an equivocal position at the *Hôtel De Thonier*, but I decided that after appearing publicly at the opera, and asserting my right to his name, I should safeguard it against possible scandal by receiving no one. When your cards were brought to me this morning I was startled, for I feared that the visit of the chief of the secret police implied trouble; so I watched you gentlemen while you were in the garden. When Lal Tana interposed to prevent your entrance to the greenhouse, it was because I was inside, watching you through the glass, and in your face I read something which told me that you were a strong man, and one to be depended upon."

"Then the fumigation story was pure fiction—I thought as much!" exclaimed Tommy, disregarding her complimentary estimate of his character.

"No, not entirely—at least, the French gardeners believe it," she said quickly. "I don't understand it; but for some reason only Lal Tana and his na-

tive assistants, who accompanied my husband from Rangoon, are allowed inside, and the fumigation story was circulated among the others to scare them out. I don't know why, for the only plants are those horrible orchids, whose sickening perfume I seem unable to get away from."

"Did you know them in Burma?" asked Tommy, and she made a gesture of protest.

"Know them?—my father seemed mad about them!" she exclaimed. "They came from some mysterious, Dacoit infested jungle up-country, and were unknown in Rangoon; but around his pagoda office there were hundreds of baskets of them, and he kept a small army of servants to care for them. Lal Tana was their chief, and the servants' gossip asserted that he had once killed a thief who attempted to steal one."

"But your father gave the specimens to Count De Thonier?" said Tommy interrogatively.

"Yes, the greater part of his large collection, and Lal Tana and a half-dozen assistants to look after them, as well," she answered impatiently. "I am not interested in them, Mr. Williams; but I do want you to aid me in clearing up the mystery which surrounds me."

"You may count upon such aid as I can give you; but everything, however trivial in appearance, may be of value in reaching a solution," he answered. "What became of the remainder of that collection?"

"Mr. Williams, I have told you that I was driven from my father's compound, and the orchids were there when I left," she said rebelliously, but suddenly she paused, and her face expressed bewilderment. "Wait—let me think," she continued. "Why—it is strange! The night before I left Rangoon I stole back to pay a farewell visit to the place where he died, disguised as a native servant. I went all through the pagoda, where everything but his papers still remained as he had left them, and the perfume of the orchids in his study was almost overpowering; but now I remember that not a

single one of the baskets was left in its place!"

"And Lal Tana—is he an old servant?" asked Tommy eagerly.

"He was there when we returned from Europe, but I never saw him before," she answered thoughtfully. "He is an up-country man, but my father trusted him implicitly, and his position was hardly that of a servant." Tommy's face was very Mephistophelean as he rose from his chair and went to his work-table; and I knew that somewhere in this tangled tale of the East and West, of white skins and brown, he had found a clue which he considered of value. With a mumbled apology to Madame De Thonier, and a request to me to entertain her for a few minutes, he set to work rapidly with his water-colors, and in ten minutes gathered up his work and returned to us.

"Madame De Thonier, will you kindly look at this sketch, and tell me if it resembles any one whom you——" He did not finish his question, for her face grew deadly white; the great eyes fairly blazed with hatred, and from her lips came a sound as sibilant as the hiss of an angry serpent.

"Alicia—she-devil—murderess!" she exclaimed, and with a glance of triumph at me he turned the paper, and I saw a perfect likeness of the woman whom we had seen lying dead in the Rue de l'Echelle!

CHAPTER VI.

It was almost beyond belief that the mysterious death of a beautiful woman in the heart of Paris could be the result of a chain of circumstances which had its inception in far-away Burma; but I knew that Tommy had reached that conclusion, and had formed a plan of investigation.

"That I should have seen your sister probably surprises you; but I shall explain the circumstances in due time," he said before Madame De Thonier had sufficiently recovered her self-control to question him. "Your surprise, however, served a good purpose, for it proves that you have not been entirely

frank. May I ask why you concealed your belief that your sister was concerned in your father's death?"

"I told you facts, and facts only, Mr. Williams," she answered frankly. "Suspicions which I could not confirm by evidence I did, perhaps, conceal."

"And have you strong suspicions that your father's death was not due to natural causes?" he asked sharply.

"I have not the slightest proof that he was murdered, in the commonly accepted meaning of that word," she replied evasively. "If anxiety, humiliation, and unhappiness can be regarded as contributing causes to an untimely death, then Alicia certainly hastened his. I told you that I was omitting certain details, Mr. Williams."

"Do those details concern any one by the name of De Sauvigny?" he asked, and her eyes dropped under his sharp gaze and a flush came to her pale cheeks.

"Y-e-s—Paul De Sauvigny Krakovitch; a man who was mixed up in a part of her life which in no way concerned me," she answered reluctantly. "He was, I believe, a Russian, and was connected with my father's business in Rangoon. During our absence in Europe my father dismissed him; but he renewed his acquaintance with my sister when he reached Europe, and I—well, there was a scandal of some sort in which both of their names were involved."

"Did your sister speak Russian?" asked Tommy, and Madame De Thonier made a little *moue* of annoyance.

"My dear Mr. Williams, I can't see the reason for harping on her delinquencies and accomplishments," she said irritably. "Probably she did, for she was a natural linguist, and spoke several European languages perfectly, and easily acquired the dialects of the East. I have told you that she was clever."

"Just one more question concerning her, then," he said soothingly. "Was she left-handed?"

"She is," answered Madame De Thonier, ignoring the fact that Tommy used the past tense.

"Then, madame, if you will give me a seat in your brougham, I think that we may obtain information of value by returning to the Hôtel De Thonier," said Tommy, and, rapidly jotting down some memoranda on a slip of paper, he handed it to me.

"If you will take this to Le Garde, supplementing the information which it contains by answering such questions as he may ask, you will materially assist us," he said, and, although I should have much preferred to accompany them, I knew that it was useless to protest. Within the quarter of an hour I was at the prefecture, and gained immediate admittance to Le Garde's office.

"I trust that your interview with the Countess De Thonier has been productive of better results than my effort to have this document translated," he said, indicating the slip of parchment which he had carefully returned to the flask. "I have six different reports upon it, each assigning the characters to a different portion of the world; but no one has been able to turn it into French." I handed him the memoranda which Tommy had made out, and his eyebrows arched with surprise as he read them.

"Paul Krakovitch?" he said thoughtfully. "That name is familiar—wait!" He went rapidly through a bundle of papers which I noticed were docketed "*L'affaire de la femme dit De Sauvigny*"; and after running his eye over a list of names which one of them contained, he summoned one of his assistants.

"You will convey my compliments to Mr. Paul Krakovitch, who is a guest of the *dépendance* on the Rue de l'Echelle, and request him to accompany you to the Hôtel De Thonier, where I shall be waiting for him," he said. "You will take the precautions usually employed in delivering similar messages to Russians." The assistant smiled and bowed, and when he had gone, Le Garde motioned to me to follow him to a waiting carriage.

"Your friend Mr. Williams has not the patience which we of the regular

police have acquired through long experience; but he has something which we lack—the enthusiasm of the amateur," he said, as we drove rapidly in the direction of the Hôtel De Thonier. "In the event of his having made a mistake, I shall be in an uncomfortable position; but you can see how much I trust him; as by his direction I have ordered the arrest of a man against whom I have no other evidence than his suspicions."

"And from my previous experience with him, I do not believe that you will be compromised," I answered confidently, and Le Garde smiled.

"Unless a clever woman has played upon his susceptibilities," he suggested, and for a moment doubt came to my mind; but it was quickly dispelled by the memory of Madame De Thonier's expression as she recognized the sketch as a likeness of her dead sister. Le Garde gave demonstration of his patience by refraining from questioning me; a virtue which I found it difficult to assume when we got out of the carriage at the gate of the Hôtel De Thonier, for the dozen men who arrived simultaneously seemed to have sprung out of the ground. Nothing in their dress or appearance betrayed their connection with the police; but they were evidently well schooled in their duties, and at a sign from Le Garde they separated, most of them going to posts of observation which must have been previously assigned, while two of them awaited admittance with us. In a great drawing-room overlooking the garden we found the Countess De Thonier and Tommy waiting for us, while Zafir, with imperturbable face of ebony, stood behind his mistress' chair.

"One of our puzzles, that of identity, is solved," said Tommy quickly, and Le Garde, after courteously acknowledging Madame De Thonier's salutation, gave a nod of comprehension. "Can you locate the man whose name I sent to you?"

"Yes, in a hotel *dépendance* on the Rue de l'Echelle," answered Le Garde, and satisfaction was plainly marked on Tommy's face. "I have sent for him,

directing that he be brought here," continued Le Garde. "The other steps which you suggested have also been taken." I happened to have selected a seat near the window, and the involuntary glances of both men toward it prompted me to turn my head and look out. The garden seemed swarming with men who were searching every pathway, and Lal Tana, volubly expostulating, was held by two of them, while the French gardener, realizing the futility of resistance, was calmly submitting to the adjusting of handcuffs.

"Then I think that we may proceed to find the explanation of this Burmese-Parisian mystery," said Tommy confidently, and Le Garde seated himself so that he could closely watch the Countess De Thonier's face when Tommy turned to address her.

"Madame De Thonier, I have very serious news for you," he said quietly. "The true reason for our first visit here was the investigation of the mysterious death of a woman in the Rue de l'Echelle. At first sight it appeared to be a case of suicide, but closer investigation suggested the possibility of foul play, and we suspected murder."

"And may I ask why a murder in the Rue de l'Echelle prompted a visit to the Hôtel De Thonier?" she asked coldly, the change in her manner indicating that she had lost confidence and was assuming the defensive.

"Because the owner of this palace had mysteriously disappeared and his name was connected with that of the dead woman," answered Tommy, with brutal frankness, and her face grew white as she started from her chair.

"And in your wonderful discoveries of mare's nests, did you find the name of the woman whose death you make a pretext to smirch the name of an honorable man?" she said, and Tommy bowed assent.

"We will leave the Count De Thonier's honor out of the question, if you please," he answered sharply. "A man who is so little solicitous about it that he voluntarily disappears when it is threatened, will not be troubled by anything I may say. First let me tell you

that when he left you on the evening of your arrival here, his mysterious business was to visit this woman, for whom he had engaged an apartment at the *dépendance* of a hotel which he frequented. What their previous relationship had been can only be surmised, but perhaps you can aid us in finding a solution when I tell you that the woman whom he left you to call upon is the one whose picture you recognized as that of your half-sister, Alicia!" I knew that there was a method in Tommy's cruelty which, on the surface, appeared wanton; but never had I been so little in sympathy with him as while I watched the beautiful face of the woman to whom his words were like a scourge of scorpions. Doubt, fear, jealousy, and rage appeared in her great eyes in quick succession, and, springing to her feet, she faced him with tightly clenched hands.

"Coward—liar!" she exclaimed passionately. "I came to you for assistance, and you take advantage of my confidence in you to try to destroy my faith in my husband; to imply that he leaves me to go to the woman who has injured me in every way possible and——"

"Just a moment, please," interrupted Tommy sharply. "I imply nothing—I state it as a positive fact. He left unmistakable traces of his visit—although I will say that he took precious good care to conceal it—and I fear that when he reappears he will have many troublesome questions to answer." Madame De Thonier was speechless with rage, and I thought she would strike Tommy, who kept his eyes fixed upon her; but Zafir made an unexpected diversion. Coming quietly from behind the chair which she had quitted, he stepped between them, and respectfully motioned for the countess to be seated.

"I, Zafir, who have the confidence of my master, must defend his name in his absence," he said quietly; and Madame De Thonier started to protest, but he stopped her with a gesture, which, from a servant, seemed strangely imperative.

"That he should confide in you, rather than in his wife in an affair of this kind,

does not surprise me," said Tommy cynically; and Zafir apparently restrained himself with difficulty under the taunt. "If you can give a plausible explanation, I shall be glad to hear it, and it may set madame's doubts at rest." The negro hesitated for a moment, looking from one to the other.

"I offered no explanation, sir," he said defiantly. "I said that I must speak for him; to maintain that he is an honorable man and innocent of any charges which might be brought against him in his absence, when he cannot defend himself." A look of intense chagrin and disappointment came to Madame De Thonier's face, and Tommy laughed scornfully.

"That is hardly a convincing defiance, and if your master has no better one he is apt to spend a very bad quarter of an hour with my friend, Mr. Le Garde, when he deigns to reappear," he said; but when he turned to Madame De Thonier it was with all the courtesy of his ordinary manner. "Madame, it distresses me that to convince myself, and, perhaps, others, of your absolute sincerity, I was forced to be brutal," he said kindly. "It is not my habit to betray confidences, nor to slander the absent, and perhaps I can convince you that I have done neither, and have appeared cruel to be, in reality, kind. Le Garde, will you have Lal Tana brought in?" The detective stepped to the window and made a sign, and a moment afterward the Burmese was half-dragged into the room by two officers.

"Madame De Thonier, kindly ask this man to tell you everything he knows concerning the mystery of the orchids over which he watches," continued Tommy seriously. "Believe me, it is not idle curiosity which prompts the question; it is necessary for your husband's safety that we know the truth." There was such evident sincerity in his tone and manner that her newborn doubt of him disappeared, and she complied with his request; but, although her question was unintelligible to us, there was no mistaking the curt refusal of Lal Tana's reply, and she made a little gesture of helplessness.

"He will tell nothing!" she exclaimed in bewilderment, and Tommy looked significantly at Le Garde, and held out his hand.

"Which one?" asked the detective.

"Both—together I believe they make the chain complete," answered Tommy, and Le Garde handed him the dead woman's note of farewell and the flask taken from her hair. Concealing the latter, Tommy waved the closed note before Lal Tana's face, and, although the Burmese could not suppress entirely an exclamation of surprise, he obstinately refused to speak. Mysterious as the whole proceeding was, to me the most interesting part of it was in watching Tommy's face. It was as tense and set as that of the gambler who is risking his all on the turn of a card; but there was nothing of uncertainty or hesitation in it. Suddenly he withdrew the letter, the long, slim hands held up the flask before the beady eyes, which watched their every movement, and when the deft fingers withdrew the stopper, and the sickening sweetness of the perfume permeated the room, I realized that he had won.

With a cry of surprise, the Burmese wrenched himself loose from the men who held him and groveled at Tommy's feet, pressing his forehead against the floor, and mumbling something which sounded like an incantation. Zafir sprang forward as if to take the flask from him, but Tommy quickly replaced the stopper and put it in his pocket.

"Be quiet!" he said sternly, when the negro started to speak. "The defense of your master is in my hands, and if you love him, be careful and hold your tongue!" Le Garde, himself a past master in the art of bringing off dramatic dénouements, looked at Tommy admiringly; but before he could ask a question he was interrupted by the entrance of two officers with a manacled prisoner between them.

"This is Paul Krakovitch," reported one of them to Le Garde, as he drew a package of papers from his pocket. "It was necessary to force the door to his apartment, and we found him trying to destroy these papers." Tommy, as if

it were a right, stretched out his hand for them, and Le Garde, tacitly conceding it, motioned to the officer to hand him the packet. Save for the rustling of the papers as Tommy rapidly went through them, and the mumbling of Lal Tana, who still groveled at his feet on the polished floor, the silence in the great drawing-room was absolute, and every eye was fixed on his face until he finished his examination and looked up with an exclamation of triumph.

"Madame De Thonier, I congratulate you upon the recovery of documentary evidence of the marriage of your father and mother; of your right to your father's name and half of his fortune," he said, advancing toward her with the papers. "It would be a pity to leave your happiness marred by worry about your husband, and—it gives me great pleasure to restore him to you!" With a quick movement he snatched a well-made woolly wig from Zafir's head, leaving exposed a white scalp, which shone under closely cropped brown hair, and there was no doubt of the identification when Madame De Thonier threw her arms about his neck and covered the ebony face with kisses. Krakovitch, taking advantage of the excitement, made a break for the door; but his captors hauled him back with no gentle hands.

"I am sorry to interrupt connubial bliss, but there are certain details which must be cleared up," said Tommy, who was thoroughly in his element in the center of the stage, with the lime-light full upon him. "In the first place, I shall recite the prologue, and then each of you can fill in a proper part." Le Garde leaned forward eagerly, and Tommy motioned to the officers to raise the Burmese from the floor.

"First, my story concerns Richard Abercrombie, an English gentleman, who, after the manner of his kind, having no fortune, went to a far country to seek it," said Tommy impressively. "He found it in Burma, and incidentally lost his heart to a native of the country—Talasinjhi, a member of a family which could claim royal blood. The source of his fortune was a mystery

which he always concealed most carefully; but one of his employees, a Russian, gained an inkling of it—I believe that I am right in stating that you are a Russian, Mr. Krakovitch?"

The manacled prisoner answered with a curse, and Tommy smiled complacently.

"It is a matter of small importance, but it will do you no good to be uncivil," he went on. "At any rate, Abercrombie realized that he was a dangerous man, and dismissed him. Krakovitch was wise enough to appreciate that his life was not worth a moment's purchase in Burma if Abercrombie withdrew his protecting hand, and he fled to Europe; but he was playing for a high stake, and had no intention of giving it up. He was good-looking after a fashion—as you can see for yourselves—plausible and attractive to women. I can't tell you whether he was entirely a villain; but he used his attractions to gain a marked influence over a very young girl—Abercrombie's daughter by his second marriage."

"I married her!" exclaimed the prisoner, and Tommy shrugged his shoulders.

"I believe you, because it would better serve your purpose to bind her to you," he said sarcastically. "You can appreciate how great an heiress she would be, gentlemen, when I tell you that Richard Abercrombie's wealth came from the control of the greatest deposit of pigeon-blood rubies which has ever been discovered. You may wonder why he found it necessary to maintain secrecy, but the answer is that the value of a precious stone depends upon its rarity. In this special place, the stones existed in such immense quantities that greed in marketing them would have led to tremendous depreciation in value. Abercrombie was shrewd enough to see this, and he did not kill the goose which laid such golden eggs, but secretly sorted out and sold the finest specimens in such a quiet way that their source of origin was never even suspected.

"Fortunately the deposit was known only to the native priests, who had

been aware of it for generations, and he treated them fairly. It is situated in an almost inaccessible spot, and by a strange chance a peculiar variety of orchid grows there. Abercrombie utilized this fact to have the rubies transferred to him in safety through a disturbed country. He apparently became a monomaniac on the subject of these peculiar flowers; and when basket after basket of them was brought to him, it was regarded only as a manifestation of the collector's mania; while, as a matter of fact, each of the baskets contained rubies worth a king's ransom. The priests themselves, to guard the territory from intrusion, gave to the orchids a sacred character, and the perfume in this flask is distilled by them and sold as a love philter and universal panacea, which gives them a side income to account for their wealth. Krakovitch discovered only that there was a connection between Abercrombie's wealth and the orchids, and it was he who sent the specimens to our fat friend Duclos—that is to say, the *Maison Poirrot*—in an effort to get at the secret." He hesitated a moment, and looked apologetically at Madame De Thonier.

"There are many things which it is disagreeable to go into, and I shall be as lenient as I can," he continued. "For a moment I must speak of Abercrombie's daughters—one by his native wife, Talasinjhi; the other by his second wife, an English woman. The latter is dead, and, while I cannot follow the traditional injunction and speak only good of her, I will simply give her father's estimate. Realizing the importance of secrecy, he had no confidants, and he was bound by his agreement with the priests to transmit his knowledge to but one person. Choosing between his two daughters, he, who knew them best, selected the lady who is now the Countess De Thonier, trusting to her honor to deal fairly with her sister. Unfortunately he did not anticipate his early death, and the package which he prepared to give to his eldest daughter on her wedding-day fell into the hands of his younger daughter, Alicia, who

secreted it. As it contained among other papers the only documentary proofs of Abercrombie's marriage to Talasinjhi, Madame De Thonier was left absolutely without legal status, and—well, the sister was jealous of her good fortune in other ways, and behaved badly." He took the flask from his pocket and held it up impressively.

"This is the key to untold wealth, but it is useless without the lock which it fits; and it is characteristic of Abercrombie's shrewd caution that his eggs were not all in one basket," he said. "When it was arranged that the Count De Thonier was to marry his daughter, he entrusted him with part of the secret—and this will explain to him much of which he is ignorant—but a part without the whole was valueless. Alicia—and this precious rascal who claims to be her husband—held the key; Count De Thonier the lock. The parchment contains a cipher, which can only be read when joined to the one given to the Count De Thonier. This perfume—the love philter and universal panacea—is the one distilled by the priests from the fresh flowers. The so-called 'Perfume of Madness' which Duclos—that is to say, the *Maison Poirrot*—obtained is also distilled by them from dried specimens, and I believe that the count's portion of the cipher is impregnated with that, and that, in trying to read it at his desk, everything about it became saturated with the perfume. Some place in all this complicated tangle—probably in the effort to piece the sundered parts of the cipher together—Alicia met her death. Now, Mr. Le Garde, I have told you the facts which led up to the woman's murder or suicide. To explain it and the motives which led to it, a knowledge of femininity—of which I confess my ignorance—is necessary, and I leave it in your hands." Le Garde looked at him with twinkling eyes, and shrugged his shoulders.

"You have, I think, discovered adequate explanation," he said, smiling. "With jealousy and self-interest granted, it requires only the filling up of details. I have no doubt that the

Count De Thonier can give us an explanation of the affair which will entirely exculpate him."

"I can, but it is most unfortunate to be forced to speak of the dead woman as I must," said De Thonier, looking uneasily at his wife. "Mr. Williams is absolutely accurate in everything which he states. The orchids, which are now in the greenhouse, were sent here to carry on the deception, and would have been followed by regular shipments containing the rubies. This was arranged by Abercrombie and myself. My authority to demand them was to be made absolute on my wedding-day. The parchment in that flask, together with the one I have, would have caused Lal Tana to communicate my orders to his brother, the high priest. Gentlemen, there are some things I can't go into—but you will understand that Alicia was actuated by jealousy as much as by greed, although I give you my word of honor that I had never given her reason to suppose that I cared for her. That she was married is news to me. She knew that the documents which she possessed were of inestimable value to me, and when she communicated with me, I was weak enough to go to London to try and make terms, instead of demanding restitution. Finally I consented to give up my half of the secret on condition that she gave me the documents concerning Abercrombie's marriage to Talasinjhi. She agreed to that, and we arranged that the documents should be delivered to me in Paris, and parted amicably. I even arranged for her apartment, and, as an evidence of good faith, delivered to her my portion of the cipher. I did not inform her that I was expecting her sister, and that we were to be married immediately. When we arrived in Paris I found a note from her on my dressing-table, enclosing the cipher I had given to her. Here is the note."

He handed a sheet of the familiar letter-paper to Le Garde, who read its contents aloud:

"Stupid I have been, but at last I know all. The news of your marriage has reached me, and I realize that the proof of your

wife's legitimacy means more than riches to you. I, too, despise riches; but you have denied me what I desired, and I shall deny you. Those papers you shall never have, but I return your cipher. The location of the key to it will be indicated in the letter of farewell I am leaving. Perhaps greed will lead you to give the caress to the dead which your coldness withheld from the living; for when you read this I shall be dead by my own hand."

"And you immediately rushed off to try and save her?" said Le Garde interrogatively, when he had finished.

"Naturally, but I was just too late. I did not wait to send up my name; in fact, the concierge did not see me when I passed in. She was not in the salon, and I opened the bedroom door just as she shot herself, and the pistol seemed to be jerked from her hand, and fell at my feet. I turned to go out, my one thought being to escape unobserved, when I ran into this man Krakovitch. I had met him some two weeks previously when he recommended a gardener to me, but I did not know that he was acquainted with the dead woman. He laughed at my declaration that she had killed herself, and accused me of murder. I knew that appearances would be against me, and I was weak enough to promise anything for silence, so we finally agreed on the preposterous terms which he demanded, and he managed to get me out unobserved. I was to meet him the following day, but as soon as I was free from his presence I realized that he would blackmail me forever; so I was again weak, and ostensibly disappeared. In my African explorations I had frequently assumed this disguise, and I gained admittance to my dressing-room by a secret passage, and donned it, after announcing at my club that I was departing for Africa. My wife had never seen me without my beard, and I trusted that I could remain undiscovered, and at the same time be near her to protect her if Krakovitch attempted blackmail. That is the story of my connection with the affair, gentlemen."

"Krakovitch, alias a dozen names which are registered in every prefecture in France, you owe it to the Count De

Thonier that Monsieur De Paris will not make you shorter by a head," said Le Garde, turning to the prisoner. "There is a little matter of burglary which I wish to talk to you and your friend the gardener about later, but now I want you to tell me, as a matter of scientific interest, how long you held the pistol in the dead woman's hand."

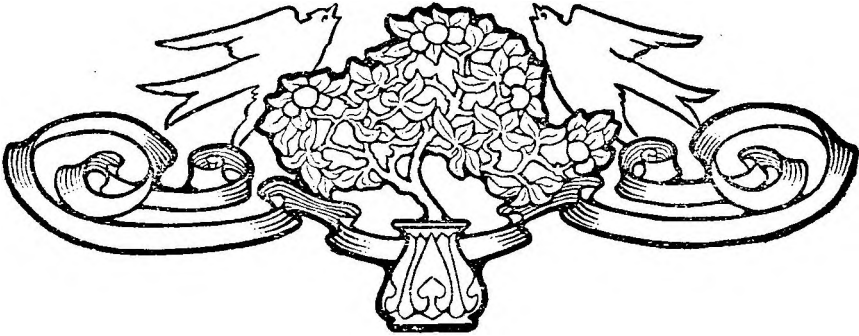
"About ten minutes, I suppose—it seemed an eternity," answered Krakovitch sullenly.

"Then I'll give you advice in return: the next time you try to improve on nature, be sure that you don't place the pistol in the right hand of a left-handed woman." He made a sign of dismissal, and the officers led Krakovitch out, while we made our adieu to the Count and Countess De Thonier. The latter, considering Tommy's services to her,

was extremely distant and formal in curtsying to him, and I remarked upon it as we walked away from the house together.

"It is not altogether inexplicable," remarked Le Garde cynically, looking at Tommy mischievously. "You must remember that we were concerned only with his guilt or innocence of Alicia's death, and he was able in five minutes to convince us of the latter; but I imagine that he will find it the task of a lifetime to convince Madame De Thonier that he was equally innocent of encouraging her attentions to him."

"Confound 'em, they're as much past human understanding as the effect on our fat friend Duclos—that is to say, the Maison Poirrot—of the Perfume of Madness!" exclaimed Mr. Thomas Williams hopelessly.



THE DOG AND THE OFFICER

"Oh," said the prospective buyer to the man who had a dog to sell, "that bull-terrier of yours looks as though he could make himself felt when the occasion arose, but from what you say I don't think he has been sufficiently well trained for my purpose. I want a dog that can leave his mark on a burglar. I'm a bit of a judge of dogs myself. Why are you so anxious to sell him?"

"Well, I don't mind tellin' you, sir, but the fact is I trained that there dog myself. Even if a person opened my garden-gate he would bark and growl, and of course I thought I was safe from burglars. One night I heard the dog a-barkin' furiously. So, armed with a thick stick, out I went. Instead of burglars, I found a policeman who had called to know the reason for a moving light at my window; the dog had kept the officer from waking me up."

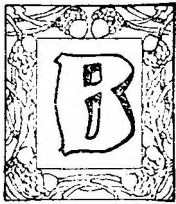
"Then there were no burglars?" asked the would-be customer.

"Oh, yes, there were; they entered by the back door, and while Jake kept the policeman off, they escaped with a good haul through the door by which they entered!"

On the Middle Guard

By B. M. Bower

In his own style, Spider, "one of the boys," tells this delightful story. It deals with Noisy Jim's peculiar romance, the remarkable culmination of which took place at a long-to-be remembered night-guard on the range



BECAUSE the night happened to be fine and the cattle quietly sleeping, the night-guarding of the Four Eleven beef herd was a mere matter of form and not the wearisome work it usually is. At least, the way Spider and Delaney went about it when they came out for middle guard, it was not particularly wearisome. They sought the nearest knoll where they could keep an eye on the herd, got off their horses, and sprawled in the ripened grass, and smoked cigarettes and told stories.

Below them, a dark blotch of shade against the yellow moon-lightened prairie, the cattle slept. Sometimes an animal coughed, or breathed long, deep-throated sighs of content, and slept again; and to the nostrils of the two came the peculiar animal odor of the herd. Sometimes, off in the distance, a coyote paused in his wanderings to lift pointed nose and clamor querulously at the moon. Straight over their heads it swam, a trifle past the full; a sphere caught somehow in its whirl through space and jammed out of perfect roundness. Spider said it looked as if somebody had been holding it against a grindstone to find out if it was phoney, or if the gold went clear through.

He lay on his back—did Spider—with his gloved hands under his head and his knees drawn up, looking at the moon and taking solid comfort.

"When the moon gets to shining straight down like that, it always makes me remember things, like they say yuh do when you're about to pass in by the

water trail," he remarked. "Just cast your eye over the bunch, Delaney; I hate t' move."

"Aw, they're all right," Delaney told him lazily. He, too, had a particularly comfortable position and hated to move. "Yuh couldn't start 'em with a six-gun to-night."

"Oh, I don't know," Spider drawled, feeling for a match. "Yuh can't most always tell. Some uh the things I've been remembering could easy change your opinion. Did yuh ever live right in the middle of a popular romance—marked down to one-forty-nine on the left-hand table as yuh go in, lady—that yuh wasn't mixed up in no way yourself, Delaney? One where you was just plain audience in a reserved seat?"

"Are yuh sure you're awake?" Delaney wanted to know. "Romances on the left-hand table ain't, as a usual thing, perused from reserved seats. You've mixed your drinks wrong."

"Well, did yuh ever go up against one? Because I did, once, and it's sure absorbing while it lasts. I wonder, did yuh ever know Jim Vanderson? Noisy Jim, we called him, 'cause he wouldn't talk unless he had to."

Delaney disclaimed all knowledge of the man, and Spider smiled reflectively up at the moon.

"Well, he was the romance, and he sure was on the bargain-table when he first struck the Four Eleven for a job. He wasn't none wise to cow science, and he didn't look like he was a toiler—nor yet a real pilgrim. I remember us fellows had some trouble reading his brand, right at the start. He wore good clothes, and brushed his teeth down by

the creek every day—first morning he done it between breakfast and breaking camp, but he never repeated the offense, which shows he learnt easy—and had all the earmarks uh the effete East. But he could ride pretty well, and after he'd been with the outfit a while he could top any horse in his string, which was all anybody could ask of him.

"I read him for a prodigal calf that had drifted off his home range, and kinda chummed up to him soon as I seen he didn't mean no harm, and could roll his own cigarettes. But he was almighty quiet, and kinda droopy by spells, and yuh couldn't get a word out uh him on night-herd. So, by all them signs and tokens, I also savvied that there was a girl tangled up somehow in the prodigal business. He wasn't the sort you could walk up to and ask, though, so I had to take it out in guess-ing.

"He'd been with us all through spring round-up, and it got along into shipping-time, and Noisy Jim had got wised up some; but still he wasn't handing out no family history, so we don't know any more about him than when he come, except that he's a damn fine boy, all right, and we all like him first-rate."

"I'm waiting a lot for that ninety-eight-cent romance," Delany reminded.

"You've been getting the first chapter. I was going to put in a lot uh fine touches, but I won't now. You get the last chapter without any filling.

"To-night kinda put me in mind of it, only the moon wasn't doing business quite so brisk, and it had been whittled down more; and most times there was a bunch uh clouds in the road so we couldn't see her. But it was a nice night, all the same. The cattle bedded down at dark and fair snored, they slept so sound.

"Do yuh mind that little flat over by Bad Medicine Spring?—that round one that slopes off easy on all sides, like a pie-tin turned bottom up? Well, there's where we bedded 'em down, and the outfit was camped below, right by the spring. It tastes rotten, all right, but it was the best we could do; the whole

country was almighty dry, I remember. Old Frog Wilson was cooking, and he made tea in a candy pail, and we drunk it that way."

"I will say that as a romancer yuh ain't a real success," Delaney complained. "Yuh keep quitting the trail and ambling off over the prairie, regardless. I ain't burning up with desire to know about Bad Medicine Spring, nor how it tastes; it's been my unpleasant misfortune to water there myself. And I don't give a cuss whereabouts yuh bedded the cattle down; I'm willing to believe they was somewhere round. Come back to the trail."

Spider smiled a superior smile, and emptied his lungs of smoke. "All is, yuh ain't got the artistic sense to appreciate fine local color," he retorted. "It's all necessary to the romance; it's scenery.

"Well, right there's where we was located, and we had eighteen hundred big, rollicky steers—which is also local color—and every darned one fat and sassy and hunting trouble. But they was sure fired, and was singing 'Come, put me in my little bed,' before sundown. Me and Smoky was due to stand middle guard, and when we went out we seen right away that things was coming easy and no singing to 'em for Little Willie. So Smoky, he beds down right away and commences to pound his ear, and tells me to call him, after an hour or so, and he'd give me a chance to slumber.

"Well, I rode around the herd a couple uh times for luck, and there was nothing doing, so I gets off my horse and takes it easy myself. I didn't go to sleep, though; I just sat there on a rock fanning my lungs with nicotin and thinking that a poor devil of a puncher sure earns any little snap like that—which he does, all right. Look at the nights when he's got to stand double shift in blizzards that's cruel for a sheep-herder to be out in; and them cold rains that comes in the fall, and times when the wind uses yuh for a colander and the bunch gets up and tries to walk into a change uh climate—which I don't blame 'em for doing—"

"Oh, damn the local color!" Delaney murmured pensively.

"So, if a fellow gets a chance, once in a while, to set down on a rock and snort one, and think about his best girl and about how he can make a play to see her again before the next dance, I say, go to it! And here's hoping the wagon boss don't ride up and catch yuh at it.

"So, I was setting there absorbing comfort and moonlight, and casting my eye over the bunch now and then. Every son-of-a-gun was dreaming things, and the way they laid, and the poor light, made 'em look like a dark patch uh prairie—they laid so close and so still. I was just wondering if it wasn't time enough to wake Smoky up—and that's all uh the local color, if yuh want to know.

"All to once, I seen two little moons a-rising up over the edge uh the flat. I rubbers hard for a second, and says to myself: 'Now, that there's a hell of a note!' which it sure was, all right. I rubs my eyes and looks again, and there they are, large as life, coming right along toward me. I says again: 'You've sure got 'em, old boy,' and I wonders, kinda sickly, if an engine has flew the track and come cutting across country; only engines never run in pairs, that I ever saw.

"So—oh, well! you know how it feels to get a crimp over something that you've gone up against unexpected, and that yuh can't savvy.

"Somehow, it didn't look human to me, to have them two big eyes sliding at me through the dark, and no body, or no face, or anything. First I tried to figure out what the dickens it was—but it wasn't half a minute till I was too scared to care a cuss; and the way I mounted my horse wasn't slow. I wonder why it is that a cow-puncher always wants to face whatever's coming from his saddle? Put a horse between his legs, and he's ready for any kind of deal; but catch him afoot, and he's plumb helpless. Anyway, them's my symptoms.

"So, when them eyes headed for me out uh the dark, I climbs my horse first

and yells to Smoky afterward. Smoky, he chokes off reluctant and sets up; and I guess them goo-goos was the first thing he seen, for he let a yell out uh him you could 'a' heard a mile, and the hull bunch lifted up on their feet to once. Smoky hops on his horse and lit out—and t'hell with the stirrups! he never knowed he had any.

"I was riding Mascot that night, and things didn't look a bit good to him, neither. He was all for burning a streak in the atmosphere, same as Smoky done; but I'd kinda come to, and wouldn't have it that way. Recollect, I was straddling a horse, so I wasn't feeling quite so goose-pimpily, and my hat set better.

"Just then Goo-goo runs foul of a big, red four-year-old that had been slow waking up, and he bellered a lot—which was some excusable—and the herd hit the high places. The Goo-goo commenced to goggle around in a kinda wobbly half-circle, and I knowed right away then what it was. It was an automobile, and it was sure on the fight. But there wasn't nothing left on that flat for it to pick a quarrel with but me and Mascot, and Mascot was trying to bluff me into thinking he wasn't scared, but just plain insulted. I'd 'a' tried to turn the bunch; but as it was, I couldn't turn nothing but my rowels, and hang on. I did pull leather some that night, Delaney, but yuh needn't tell nobody."

"I won't," Delaney promised, "if you'll kindly tell me where the romance comes in. I've heard stampede yarns before."

"I guess yuh ain't next to romances that's handed out proper: they've got to be led up to gradual, which I'm doing. I ain't wise to the general dispositions uh automobiles, but that one acted, to me, like a cayuse that's anxious to cache his head between his knees and argue with yuh some. I don't know, either, what the steer done to the infernal organs uh the thing; I asked Noisy, and after he told me, I had to go off and lay down till my brain kinda settled.

"Anyway, if it hurt the automobile as bad as it done the steer, its condition must 'a' been sure serious. The ex-

citement kinda went to its head, and it went scouring that flat looking for trouble; but there wasn't any more cattle for it to go in the air with—they was vanished plumb off the face uh the earth. There was just me and Mascot, and he was objecting to it.

"Well, we played tag a while, and sometimes the automobile was It, and sometimes it was us. It must uh looked some like a rough-riding contest.

"The chaffer, he hollered something at me, and it sounded kinda unpolite, only I was too busy to listen close, and it wasn't my quarrel, anyhow. Then Mascot commenced singing 'Home, Sweet Home,' and hit for camp, with His Royal Goggles crowding us close. The chaffer told me afterward that he couldn't help it, and something had gone wrong with the gee-pole, but it looked to me like he done it malicious.

"We hit camp about neck and neck, and our arrival sure created a lot uh interest. Smoky had been handing it out to the boys, and they was guying him a plenty about getting snakes on that spring-water. But when me and His Nibs bore down on 'em over the hill, they resigned, and sought retirement all they could.

"Mascot turned off to the horse corral, and I got him stopped, but Goo-goo goes straight ahead like it had something on its mind. First pass, it tries to walk into the bed-tent, and then's when the boys scattered. You could see male humans melting away into the gloom, any way you was a mind to look. There being no one to home there, it goes on over to the cook-tent, and shoves its nose in and says 'Ka-chuckety-chuck,' real amiable—meaning 'Howdy,' to old Frog Wilson. Them females—oh, uh course there was females—squawked, but it wasn't nothing to the disturbance old Frog created. He wraps himself in a dish-towel—which I will say wasn't none adequate—and it's him to the hills, yelling every jump. He acted like he'd never saw an automobile before; and, seeing this was five or six years ago, I admit they wasn't none common on the range.

"Well, Goo-goo ambles clean through the cook-tent, sending the stove out into the night and putting a wheel into old Frog's pan uh bread dough; and goes on a piece till it comes to them rocks piled up one side uh the spring. It climbs them a ways till it's standing on its hind legs, and gets hung up on its stomach so it can't go on over. And that was sure lucky, too, for if they'd got stacked up at the bottom uh that gully on the other side, somebody would certainly 'a' gone home in the good-by wagon.

"So there it hung, and pawed the air with its front wheels, and snorted and chuckety-chucked; but it couldn't do a blame' thing, for all it looked so hostile. The chaffer and another gazabo got down and peeled the cook-tent off'n the ladies, and helped 'em out. Then they pried the pan uh dough off a wheel—Frog was terrible sore at losing all that dough—and the chaffer went to tinkering with the slip-along buggy.

"The ladies, they set down on a rock and the old, leathery one took on something fierce, till the young one said she'd go and rustle some coffee or something to settle her nerves.

"Right there's where the romance commences, for she bumped slam into Noisy Jim. He was coming out uh the bed-tent about the time they slid past, and was walking over to see what was up, and he fair run into the girl.

"She gave a little squeal, and says: 'Oh, Jim!' like I'd want my girl to say it to me. And the chaffer's partner crawls out from under the devil wagon and looks at 'em black; so did the chaffer, in a minute, and I knowed right there that it was a love-story with all the fixings.

"Noisy, he acted kinda dazed, but he wasn't so far gone but he could hang onto her hands, all right; and he didn't seem to give a cuss who was looking when he gathered her to his bosom and kissed her slap on the mouth four times. I counted.

"So then they went off and set down on some rocks, quite a piece from the old lady, who was still mourning for coffee—which she never got till break-

fast-time. And the chaffer and the other fellow crawled back under the automobile, and swore awful.

"Pretty soon the boys come sneaking back to camp after more clothes and an explanation; all but Frog. Him and his dish-towel stayed in the hills till the horse-wrangler went out, about sunup, and packed his clothes to him so he could come back and get us some breakfast.

"Well, after a while Noisy and the girl come back looking like they'd just been to a Methodist revival and had gone forward and got religion—you've seen that *still* kind of look—and the fellow that wasn't the chaffer went off and sulked by himself, and wouldn't come when breakfast was called.

"Noisy talked the chaffer into letting him work on the automobile while the chaffer ate; I don't know what Noisy done to it. He tried to tell me afterward, but I couldn't savvy. Anyway, it wouldn't go. Us boys helped get it down off the rocks, and the chaffer turned a crank, and it just give a grunt, like it was disgusted at the whole blamed business, and sulked and wouldn't answer to the rein at all.

"Uh course, then, they had to stay at camp, and go on with us to Chinook. The old party rode in the mess-wagon, with Frog, and the chaffer and the other fellow got some grub and stayed back with the balky wagon, still doing things to it and cussing a lot. And I bet a dollar yuh can't prognosticate the end of the love-tale."

"I don't want to. You go ahead; you're doing fine," Delancy answered.

"Well, Noisy roped a gentle old cow-pony out uh his string, and had a talk with old Johnny Knott. Then he told the old party that Mildred—that's the girl—would ride a horse instead of in the wagon. The old party objected a lot, and said things about a riding-habit, and Mildred not having any. But when she got on—there was an extra saddle in the outfit that Noisy borrowed, and she rode his, which was a peach—you could tell right off that she

had the riding-habit, all right; she went off as calm and easy as an old cow-puncher. But the old lady didn't like it a bit, and Frog said she kept asking questions about Noisy, and handing out mean remarks about the country.

"Us fellows had to go and hunt up the herd, and so couldn't keep cases on Noisy and the girl. Say! I forgot to say that girl was sure a peach.

"We pulled into Chinook and got the herd in the stock-yards about four o'clock, and rode over to camp for supper. Noisy and his girl had just rode up to camp when we got there, and oh, doctor! but there was a fine row going on.

"First I heard was the girl, talking up to the old woman. 'But we're married, mama!' she says, calm as anything. 'There's no use making a scene now. We've been married three hours, and I'm of age, and of sound mind, and so is Jim. You can't do anything now but be nice about it.'

"But mama wouldn't lay down her hand. She seemed to want to call for a new deck and go on playing, even if her chips was all on the wrong side uh the table. She didn't have sense enough to pull out uh the game. She said a lot, and there wasn't none of it that Noisy need to feel flattered over.

"Mrs. Noisy tried to choke her off, and finally she said to mama: 'Well, we're married, and I'm very happy, and hoping you was the same,' or something like that. 'And,' she says, 'I'm going to live out here in the West with Jim, and I don't care if he is poor. There's worse things than marrying a poor man, marrying Mace Wildermere, for instance.'

"So that kinda settled the old lady, and she went off to a hotel, walking so straight her back was bent the other way, to wait for the automobile to pull into town. And Noisy and the Mrs. went to another hotel, and soon as they could rustle the furniture, they went to keeping house right in Chinook. They've got two kids now, and he's running the Triangle V. And I call that a romance."

The Devil's Pulpit

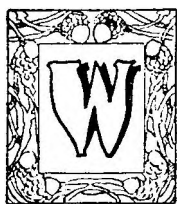
By H. B. Marriott Watson

Author of "Hurricane Island," "Twisted Eglantine," "Captain Fortune,"
"Galloping Dick," Etc.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

Captain Mark Wade and Ned Herapath, chief engineer (who tells the story), are offered berths on the English tramp steamer *Duncannon* by a smooth-talking American, Vincent Halliday, and his friend Davenant. The probable destination of the tramp is Baltimore, but there is some mystery about the cruise—a mystery that appeals to Captain Wade, who is something of a free-lance. Arrangements are concluded, and Wade and Herapath board the tramp and put to sea, accompanied by Halliday and several of his friends. On the way out from Southampton they run down a yawl and rescue Jean Carvaulx and his niece, Miss Sylvester, who, at their urgent request, are allowed to remain on board. When well at sea Halliday takes Herapath and Wade into his confidence and tells them that the *Duncannon* is on a treasure cruise, with an island in the West Indies for her destination. Following his discovery of a chart indicating the location of the treasure, he had organized a company and with his partners had chartered the *Duncannon* to search for the treasure. This chart, he declares, has been stolen from his cabin. When, off the island of treasure, mutiny breaks out, Byrne, Clifford, Crashaw, and fifteen of the crew make off in a provisioned boat. Halliday declares that they have the chart and are bent on securing the treasure. Captain Wade and the party follow the mutineers to the island and camp for the night. They find Miss Sylvester has smuggled herself ashore, so they allow her to accompany them. They ensconce themselves in a natural fortress at the foot of Devil's Rock. Marley falls sick and next day Captain Wade is shot to death. That night Miss Sylvester and Herapath sitting together, the latter perceives something unusual, high up the wall of rock.

CHAPTER XII—(Continued.)



"WHAT is it?" murmured Miss Sylvester drowsily.

She was near sleep now, exhausted by the day and its troubles; I laid her gently down, and covered her from the night air.

The blotch descended, dropping into the area of lesser darkness, and becoming plainer by comparison. I knew what it was now, and I went forward to where McLeod sat by the fire. I pointed it out to him.

"What?" he said stupidly, for he, too, had been dozing.

"It's some one descending by a rope from the top of the cliff," I said. "See, just there! He's clearer now."

McLeod rubbed his eyes. "Gosh!" he said, and stared.

"It's an attempt to drop on to the Pulpit," I said. "We must give the alarm to Davenant."

"Hell!" cried McLeod, in his Scotch voice, and ran quickly away from me.

Within two minutes he was back, but I did not notice in the darkness what he carried until he leveled a gun.

"McLeod!" I called, but the report was my only answer. The camp awoke about us, and voices engaged together. Davenant came tumbling out of his hut to our side. ●

"What is it?" he demanded.

We did not answer, for we were both looking hard at the figure on the rope through the night. It had come to a pause in mid-air a hundred feet, I judged, above the Pulpit, and fully six hundred feet above the earth below.

"Did you hit?" I whispered.

"I don't miss," he rasped back.

The figure hung still, and now it dangled to the moving of the rope. The fire, kicked into a blaze, belched flames to the sky, and flickered on the dancing figure. In that light it had the appearance to me of a monstrous monkey toy that jumps to strings from above. It was lurid; it was horrible. And of a sudden it ceased, and yet the cessation was as horrible. Nevertheless, I was glad it had gone, though I cried out, even as it fell. For above some hand had ruthlessly cut through the now useless rope, and the body dropped with a revolting thud through six hundred feet of empty space. I heard McLeod's voice steady by me:

"That's one for old Wade."

The camp was troubled, and silent. Men spoke in whispers, realizing now what all this portended. McLeod put away his gun, and went back to the fire. Davenant had said not a word, and I thought he was silent because he did not know what to say. The shooting of this hapless wretch had not been authorized, but McLeod might easily have defended it. Some action had to be taken at once, and the mutineers were practically outlaws. This was no man's land, as I have said. But the deed had been done, and nothing could avail to recall it. There was nothing to be said.

I went back to where Miss Sylvester lay, and found her awake and startled. I watered the truth down into something more innocent and less hideous. There had been an alarm, I told her, and a sentry had fired; but all was well now. Well! I began to have a deeper dread myself, now that man's unbridled and naked passions had been roused. I was all the more determined that the girl should return to the ship when daylight came.

This proposal I made to Davenant in the morning, and he cordially agreed.

"It just fits in properly, Herapath," he told me, speaking briskly, for he quite seemed to have discharged from his memory the unpleasant event of the night. "I was going to make a sug-

gestion to you. You see, we're likely to be here some time; at least, we've got to be prepared for that. And that makes your proposal all the more necessary. But we'll want a store of provisions; and so I suggest that you should take some of the men, and bring up some grub from the ship. There's some in our cache, but we'll want more. You can get down to the boat by an easier way than we came up, and you're not likely to be interfered with. You should be back by nightfall."

"Good," I said; "an excellent idea, killing two birds with one stone. I'll want two men. Can you spare them?"

"Oh, we're safe enough here; they wouldn't dare attack in daylight, with our stiff brushwork. I'll undertake to hold them off till you return, if they do come."

"Right," I assented. "I should like Collins and Carter."

"The very men I was going to propose you should take," he replied cheerfully. "Yes, you're right to get Miss Sylvester away, and the sooner you start the better."

The news of the mutineer's horrid death had drifted to the girl's ears by this time, and she welcomed my suggestion as to her departure.

"Yes; I don't want to be here any longer," she said. "It's dreadful. I didn't know people were such cruel savages."

"Oh, life is cruel, as cruel as death," I said. "But you're too young to learn it. That is a lesson which is better left to come slowly."

We started at eight o'clock on our journey back to the cove, where we had landed only thirty-six hours before. How much had happened in that brief period—how much that was irretrievable! It was a fine, cool morning with a promise of later heat, and we set off slantwise from the stream with alacrity, keeping a course on the lower slopes of the wooded hills toward the east.

In our night journey we had kept to the summit, and had thus needlessly, as we discovered, experienced greater difficulties, for the lower slopes were

more sparsely wooded, and progress was not arduous. As we went, however, the sun grew stronger, and beat upon us fiercely, so that we were glad to rest and take some refreshment on the banks of a pleasant little crystal stream which ran merrily toward the blue water, which we could see a mile below us sparkling and brightening under the sun. The bluff of a headland hid the *Duncannon* from us.

Miss Sylvester's spirits had risen since our departure from the camp. She was of an essentially volatile nature, and lived in the present. I do not say that she had forgotten the tragic incidents which had scared her, but she certainly was able to keep her mind from them, and this I guessed from her rapt contemplation and enjoyment of the phenomenon around her. There was much to observe, and much to stimulate. Other people's thoughts might be flying forward to the cache and the *Duncannon* and our ultimate destiny, but not so Ariadne Sylvester's—for that I now learned was her name. She lived in a riot of her senses on the way down, touched to sensitive issues by the sunshine and the sparkling sea, by the green, green woods, the bird life, and the cool water. And the lithe grace with which she moved was wonderful and exquisite to the eye.

If it had not been for the serious issues of the impending conflict, and the tragic facts of the past four-and-twenty hours, it would have been possible to enjoy our excursion. We ate our biscuits and tinned salmon and drank of the cold, clear water, and were refreshed by the shade and the swirl of the stream. Miss Sylvester let herself drift on the current of her feelings. She gazed dreamily down toward the sea.

"Is that the Spanish Main there?" she asked. "And is this where Drake and Raleigh and all those old adventurers sailed and fought?"

"The Spanish Main is not the sea," I explained, "but the land. This is the Caribbean Sea, which, I think, is romantic enough in sound."

"Romantic!" she echoed, and her face changed, swiftly clouding. "Oh, I don't

want that kind of romance. If that is romance I don't want it. But it isn't. Romance is—oh, it's different. Drake and Raleigh and those gallant seamen——"

"Were buccaneers, some say," I put in. "They sacked cities, they ravaged the settlements, they sank ships, they took lives."

She sighed. "Why is it all so confusing?" she asked.

"Romance is the cream of tragedy," I said. "It is thrown up by sordid adventures: it emerges from rough and horrid facts. It's all in the eye of the mind. We can see with a romantic cast, if that is our temperament. Personally I see no glory and no haloes in blood and mud. But blood and mud are necessary. We mustn't be sentimentalists. And out of that ugly admixture may arise great and noble deeds. There you have the quintessence, then, of romance and the romantic."

"But that," she said, in a low voice, glancing back toward the hills from which we had descended—"that was not necessary."

"No; but our struggle with it is necessary. Wade died finely, if foolishly. I should not like to say that no noble thing would be accomplished even here on this empty tiny island before we have done. Nobility and magnanimity and all great virtues are born in the dust-heap and in the charnel house, amid the lusts and cruelties of human life."

She relapsed into silence, and I respected her mood, falling back to talk with Collins and Carter. The former was anxious to know if there was any likelihood of an attack on the camp, and I told him that Davenant was confident of holding it in safety.

"There's none too many, sir," he said doubtfully, "and now we're away."

"I'd trust Mr. Davenant," said the slow Carter. "He's a good sailor, and he knows his mind. I think he's took this a bit anxiously. He was up all night, and off in the bush, exploring. He ought to be dead beat. Why, I was wore out when on watch this morning, and I nearly fell asleep, when I seed

him climbing back over the barricade. 'Twas only then he seemed settled like in his mind. I reckon he'd put things all right then."

Davenant had evidently been busy, and I wondered that he had not spoken to me of his nocturnal expedition. On the whole, I thought he made a better head than Marley would have done with his free-and-easy methods.

We climbed the bluff by a low-lying saddle, and descended into the cove beyond; where after some exploration we discovered the boat high and dry under some bushes, and were able to identify the cache. This we opened, but were disappointed at finding the provisions therein to be fewer in quantity than we had anticipated. Doubtless in the haste of our flight there had not been time to collect a great deal. The matter was, however, of slight consequence, since we had the ship to draw from; and there she lay, floating tranquilly on a tranquil sea, barely a mile away.

We soon pushed the boat down the slope and over the sand, till it ran with a splash into the pellucid blue waters. The bay shelved steeply, but I could see far down into its depths, where little crabs walked crossways, and shells were buried in the sand. Miss Sylvester, charmed by the unaccustomed sight, hung over the side of the boat as under the powerful strokes of Collins and Carter we drew out of the quiet cove toward the sparkling waters of the broad ocean.

It was by now high noon, and a little ripple lapped about the boat, and a light breeze blew in our faces. The flag at the peak of the tramp fluttered gently. It was hazy weather. When we drew close enough to hail, I raised my voice, and a figure appeared in the stern of the *Duncannon*. "Hello!" it said.

"Mr. Digby there?" I called out.

"Yes, sir," said the man, after a moment's pause.

"Right; make ready when we come along. We'll want the gangway."

I steered her against the side, and the gangway was let down. Two or three of the hands were above, looking down,

but not Digby. I passed Miss Sylvester up, and proceeded to follow her. As I stepped aboard I asked the quartermaster, who stood with a grin on his face, where Digby was.

"In his cabin, sir," he replied.

Collins and Carter were busy with the boat below.

"Come along," called Edwards, "we'll see to it. Anxious for a job these days."

Collins and Carter clambered up, and as the latter stepped over the side I was seized by the arm. I swung about, amazed; and found I was in the hands of three men.

"What the devil's this?" I demanded.

"We weren't going to take no risks with you," said Edwards, with a chuckle. "One apiece is good enough for the others."

"So," I said, making no attempt to struggle, "you're Clifford's dirty party, too, eh?"

"We're going to take you to Mr. Digby, sir," explained the ringleader. "You won't come to no harm here. There's lots of grub and drink."

I understood now. These men whom we had supposed loyal had been left on board to deceive us, and to hold the ship for their companions. They had made a prisoner of Digby, probably immediately we had gone, and now they held us captive. In the light of this fresh discovery it was plain that we had undertaken a desperate task in the defense of the Devil's Pulpit. Our fortress was weaker by the loss of three men, and its source of supplies was cut off. Only a miracle or an accident could save it now. I looked about. Miss Sylvester had vanished.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE STORMING OF THE ZAREBA.

Our captors took us down into the saloon, thrust us into a cabin, and there ironed us. They did not display any animosity in doing so, and the quartermaster, at least, did not seem averse to conversation. I saw he was anxious to learn exactly what had happened on

the island, but I had no intention of letting him know. I wondered what instructions he had and when he received them. It was probable that the mutineers ashore had not communicated with their fellows aboard, and that the latter were acting on general instructions received when Clifford, Byrne, and Crashaw left the ship. So I returned my jailer's good humor, but told him nothing. We were given food and left to our own comfortable thoughts. The sun streamed through the port-hole, but it was dark on the floor where we lay, and the closed cabin was stuffy from the heat. Digby was not with us, but we assumed that he was somewhere near, probably in the next cabin.

"This ain't a nice situation," volunteered the equable Carter.

"If I could only get my thoomb free, I think I could manage to get rid of these irons," said Collins in his broad accent as he struggled.

But I had no such hope; my mind was busy in another way. I wanted a visit from the quartermaster. But it was not he whom we saw first; for when the door opened at last it let in the face of the little Frenchman. He peered down on us, cautiously, without any expression in his eyes, as if he were contemplating some strange and rather uninteresting animals. Then he saluted civilly enough, and inquired if we were comfortable.

"It's not our bodies we're thinking of," I told him. "It's our feelings that suffer. This means the ruin of Halliday's enterprise."

"Pouf!" he said contemptuously. "I did not believe in that treasure. It was all——" He shrugged his shoulders. "I have heard many tales like that, monsieur. There has never been one word of truth in them. They will find it out, too—these mutineers; and then we will sail away comfortable and at convenience for Baltimore."

He was cool and collected, and capable. He had the air of standing aloof from the contending parties, and waiting patiently until they should come to their senses.

"I wish I could help you," he said politely, "but what will you? I have no authority here." Again he shrugged his shoulders. "Yet if the irons hurt, I would see what could be done."

As they did not specially incommode us he left us, and we fell to brooding over the situation again. I wondered how it was Monsieur Carvaulx came to be free, while Digby was under restraint, and concluded that the mutineers saw no reason to fear anything from a weak and helpless old man. We were left to our dismal reflections for some hours. Collins struggled at intervals with his gyves; and occasionally Carter made a remark which was, more or less, fatuous if honest. His philosophy annoyed me, who was chafing in my bonds.

"I knowed there was something on," he said once, like Mr. F.'s aunt, to the air. "But I didn't know so many was in it."

"Why on earth didn't you say so?" I asked, out of patience.

He shook his head. "'Tisn't for the likes of me. I wouldn't take it upon me. I knows my place."

He was imperturbable in his stupidity, and really thought he was holding the scales of justice by strict neutrality. I gathered that it was a grief to him to have had to take sides.

"Not but what I'm in it now," he added, more reassuringly. "And I do my dooty when I has to. I'll lay I'm in it now," he repeated cheerfully.

Collins had paused in his operations, red of face. "D'ye think you could reach the door, sir?" he inquired, in a mysterious whisper.

"I can try," I said, and, being nearest it, I rolled over. A crack on my head brought the water into my eyes.

"Eh, pardon!" said a voice.

I gathered my body and my senses together and looked up. Monsieur Carvaulx stood with his hand on the open door, and beside him the quartermaster, Edwards, with a sheepish smile on his face.

"Will you give us your word of honor, sir, not to attempt to escape, if I knock the irons off of you?" he asked.

"My good scoundrel, what's the use of that to us?" I said. "I'm not pining for your company."

He cast a glance at the Frenchman, who observed us without expression; then they went out, and I could hear their voices issuing from the saloon. In half an hour they returned, and the quartermaster began silently to loosen the irons.

"I am glad to say, Mr. Herapath, that they have consented to release you," said Carvaulx airily. He looked on with indifferent eyes. I was puzzled.

"You must promise not to give us away," mumbled the quartermaster awkwardly. "I'm taking a risk with this job."

"You're taking a bigger risk by associating yourself with those mutineers," I said sharply. "What do you suppose will be the end of that?"

"Damn it, sir, if you had Crashaw to buck up against, you'd think twice," he protested sullenly. "Anyways, I want your word of honor to be mum on this."

"We're not likely to be seeing Crashaw in a friendly way," I said sarcastically. "You can depend on that."

By this time I was free, and I rose and stretched myself. "I don't know how it has been managed," I said, "but I can only conceive, sir, that we are indebted to you for this."

Monsieur Carvaulx smiled faintly. "I have been at pains to explain to these gentlemen," he said, "my opinion of treasure."

"Then they give up?" I queried, in surprise.

He shrugged his shoulders. "Not exactly that; but have you not an old—oh, yes, a proverb which says 'a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush'?" He smiled. "They have the bird in hand."

I understood. He had bribed them, but why? And even as I thanked him I knew, and even as I knew he told us.

"My niece was *exigeante*," he said, with admirable frankness. "She took your capture much to heart. She is

impulsive," he added, after a contemplative pause. If it had depended on Monsieur Carvaulx alone, I am sure we should have been still in irons, but, nevertheless, we were deeply in his debt, and I acknowledged the fact.

"It is nothing," he said, deprecating my thanks. "A few of your English five-pound notes, *voilà!*"

By this time the others had been released, and now joined us in the saloon, followed by the quartermaster.

"We shall want our boat," I said to the latter authoritatively. I did not know how far the compact with Carvaulx went, and so I bluffed.

"You can't have any stores," he said hastily.

I was relieved. It was not intended to keep us on the ship.

"Look here, my man," I said bluntly. "I'm willing to look over all this, and forget it, and I can promise others will forget it, if you'll come back to duty."

"You couldn't buck up against Crashaw," he said, after a pause. "No, we've gone too far."

"Well, you at least have hands clean of blood," I urged. "Stop while it's yet time."

"Blood!" he echoed, staring at me.

"Yes, man, didn't you know? They've killed the captain. A deliberate, foul murder!"

His jaw dropped. "By the Lord!" he said.

"Come along," said the Frenchman in my ear. "We must get that boat."

I thought of Digby, but I knew that our own fortunes depended upon immediate action now, and so I turned and followed him up the stairs, and we came on deck. The sun was declining away in the west, but still shone strongly. The water lapped the sides of the tramp. A few sailors watched us curiously as we descended the ladder to our boat, but no one endeavored to prevent us. Evidently they had all enjoyed bakshish. And they were too far away from the scene of action to take things strenuously, and I know now they were in ignorance of what had happened.

"While he is in this confusion and doubt it is our time," said Carvaulx to me. "He may change his mind on considering your news."

"Are you coming?" I asked.

"Yes," he nodded. "And Ariadne must come, too. She cannot be left. Stay, I will bring her."

He ran from the gangway toward the deck-cabin, the door of which was thrust open ere he reached it. And Miss Sylvester emerged, her young face bright and eager. Next moment they had joined us, and were descending. There was no time for words between us.

"If you please, cast off!" said the Frenchman urgently. The quartermaster appeared above, looking down on us in perplexity.

I laughed. "There is no fear," I said. "Barring firearms, the whole ship's crew could not take us now."

We pushed off, and Edwards' face was still directed toward us, racked with doubt and fear.

"So the captain is dead," said the Frenchman, seating himself comfortably in the bows. "So Ariadne said. Ah!" He meditated, while the distance between the boat and the steamer lengthened. Ariadne looked at me, her eyes shining with joy.

"You are not afraid to be going back?" I whispered.

She shook her head. "I could not have stayed there. They are mutineers, too."

"We owe everything to your pleading and your uncle's generosity," I said gratefully.

"No; nothing. I am with you. I am on your side, and I was glad to do even so little. Perhaps I shall do more. Who knows?"

We skirted the island westward without landing in the cove, as I had an idea in my head, which was to explore the creek into which the stream from our camp ran. I supposed that here the mutineers would have their boat, for, although they had landed at the back of the island, they would not be likely to leave the boat so far distant from

their permanent camp. Accordingly, we beached within the creek quietly, and I began to make an examination.

There was no boat on the water, nor could we discover any signs of the presence of one in that tidal basin.

I was disappointed, for I had promised myself that I should deliver an unexpected blow at the enemy by the capture of their lines of communication. However, our immediate duty was to report the situation to Davenant, and so, having bestowed our own boat in a safe place, we set out in the cool of the evening up the course of the stream. We had been absent ten hours, and had accomplished nothing. We were even returning with Miss Sylvester, whose presence we had decided was inconvenient in the camp.

This part of the island, as I have explained, was not so roughly wooded, and we made easy progress, arriving below the stockade just at dusk. Here occurred an event which at once began to trouble me.

I was ahead of the others, and we were walking in silence as a precaution, when my ears detected a noise in the bushes on my left. I brought the others to a halt with a gesture and stole forward, parting the bushes carefully with my hands to make way for my eyes.

Beyond was a little clearing, and under the trees were seated two men, conversing in a low voice, and at the same time engaged in some occupation, which I could not at once determine. Nor could I recognize them at the distance, although it was obvious to which party they belonged.

Presently, as I looked, one got to his feet, and picked up something from the ground. I knew him now for a big dago, by name Benuto, and simultaneously I recognized what he had in his hand. It was a large Colt's revolver.

Here was an alarming discovery, which was intensified next moment when the second man rose; for I saw now that they had been engaged in filling a pouch with cartridges. My heart began to jump, for what might this portend? Without noise I left the point

of espial and returned to my companions.

"It looks as if an attack were contemplated," I said. "We must hurry forward at once. Monsieur Carvaux, I advise you to take Miss Sylvester, and retire to the creek below. This is no place for non-combatants."

He pondered. "Yes, you are right," he agreed. "But we will not go so far. You may be mistaken. We will part now and go that way." He pointed eastward through the falling evening.

I nodded. We must act now, and not talk. We had, I discovered, two revolvers between us, and these we looted. Then we set forward, making a slight détour, so as to avoid falling in with the mutineers, if any of them should be in the direct line of our course.

Of a sudden the silence was broken by a shot, and, as if this had been the signal, a confused outbreak of voices and sounds ensued. A revolver was banging away on my left, and I directed my steps toward the sound, falling into a run. Carter and Collins joggled along behind me; and, as I ran, I heard Carvaux's voice raised in command.

"Ariadne! Ariadne!"

I glanced round. The girl, breathless, was following in our tracks.

"Back! Back!" I shouted, gesticulating, but I dared not stop. I saw her waver and come to a pause, and then the bushes hid her.

The noises increased ahead, swelling into a fusillade of yapping pistols. I remembered, with regret, that only two of us were armed in this emergency; and as I did so an idea came to me. I turned, and scarcely pausing, threw my revolver to Carter, who was weaponless.

"Use that," I panted; "and use it well. You're with us, mind."

"Aye, aye, sir," he called back, with an energy which dissipated my doubts of him.

In my direct path was the ruin of a fallen tree, and, swiftly detaching one of the stouter branches with an abrupt wrench, I darted forward with my new weapon. It formed a sort of rude, barbaric club with a long handle, and I could feel it plying and giving elastically

in my hands as I ran. The next moment we came out of the wood upon the barricade.

The dusk was gathering, but the figures were plainly visible in that theater of battle. Davenant stood upon the brushwood, elevated against the sky and in full view from either side of the barricade; and as he stood there, so rashly exposed, he pointed and shouted something which I could not hear. His back was toward us, and he was not aware of our approach. In the middle distance I recognized two of our men in hand-to-hand conflict with mutineers; and a constant popping of revolvers enhanced the confusion.

The mutineers were over the brushwood barrier, and the camp was all but in their hands. We took the barricade as a Lurle, and dashed up. Collins' weapon flashed out near me, and one of the mutineers struggling by the stream fell. Then oblivious to all else save my personal share in the matter, I fell on with my mace.

Two mutineers were descending into the camp from the brushwood, and the first of these went down with the club on his crown; the second fired at me pointblank, and a ball singed my face. Then his skull cracked as he tumbled on his fellow. More men were mounting out of the dusk, and it was evident that the stronger part of the attacking force was still to come.

"To me! To me!" I cried, leaping forward to the barricade.

Collins hurried to my side, panting and puffing. I glanced round. The two mutineers by the stream had disappeared, but one body lay outstretched along the bank. McLeod and another man were fighting at the back. Where was Davenant? He had gone from the brushwood pile, and I could see nothing of him.

"We've got them checked now," I said to Collins. "McLeod is holding that side and we can hold this."

His revolver promptly answered the appearance of a head beyond the barrier; and it was hurriedly withdrawn. Except for the sounds which came from McLeod's side there was now silence.

"Keep this!" I said to Collins. "Have you cartridges? Shoot on the slightest provocation!"

I ran back, crossed by the shelters, and joined McLeod as his companion stumbled heavily and fell. There were three mutineers on this side, and one was armed with a gun, which he was using as a club. This club met mine and crumpled up; he lost his balance and staggered. My mace recovered and descended ere he could recover. He lay beside our fallen sailor.

McLeod, from behind a tree, began to spit fast, and one of the mutineers uttered an oath, dropped a useless arm by his side, and, turning, fled. I took the third as he, too, turned—well, somewhere in his hindquarters, to assist him in his retreat. He was a little out of reach, but he yelled like a red Indian, and the last I saw of him he was scrambling futilely at the barricade of bushes, and being helped over by his companion.

I turned to McLeod. Silence had fallen. We were victors. The deepening dusk was broken by a leaping light, and I saw some one against a pyre. I went over, and found it was Davenant.

"We're well out of that," was his greeting. "You came in the nick of time."

"It's a wonder we came at all," I said.

"How's that?" he asked. The flames lapping up the dry wood ascended in tongues to heaven. The camp flared with it, and the darkness of the surrounding woods was enhanced by it.

"We were seized by the remainder of the crew," I explained. "They've joined the mutineers. We were jockeyed there. We played into their hands like lambs."

"Seized, were you?" he said, staring. "How did you escape?"

Before I could tell my story Carter came up.

"There's one of 'em dead along the stream, sir," he said, in his matter-of-fact voice; "and that there one you hit—he ain't going to give much trouble—an Italian he was, called Bellows."

"Belloso!" I corrected. "How many on our side?"

"Let's go and see," said Davenant. We encountered McLeod, breathing hard, but very well satisfied with himself.

"You've broken that fellow's skull, Herapath," he said. "Lord, what a flail to lay on with!"

"Much damage?" I asked.

"That poor beggar, Atchison's, gone," he said. That was the man who was shot just as I reached him.

"It's a bad business all round," said I.

Collins was lighting another pyre by the waterside. We walked in brightness, a mark for any sharpshooter, but I don't think any one of us gave a thought to this. And as for the mutineers, they had had enough for that day. There were no signs of them.

We reckoned up the losses. One of our men had been killed, and three, including Collins, wounded. Collins' wound was only in the hand, and he made light of it. On the other side the casualties were heavier. Two of the mutineers had been killed, and we had two of them wounded in our custody. How much more they had suffered we could not say. Suddenly I recalled Halliday. Where was he?

We found him, on searching, near one of the fires, where he sat with a piece of paper and a pencil busily engaged in making notes.

"Say, Herapath," he eagerly exclaimed, looking up at me, "I've just got the most all-fired notion to get that treasure out of there. You sit down right here, and I'll show you. It came upon me like a flash just as I was pulling the trigger of this engine. Say now——"

He rose excitedly, but I interrupted somewhat curtly: "Oh, hang it! We've got other fish to fry at present. Let that keep. Do you know that Atchison's dead, and that two of their men are dead, too?"

"Say, now, that's a nuisance about Atchison," remarked Halliday, scratching his head reflectively. A handkerchief untwisted itself on his arm, and dangled.

"What's this?" I asked.

He looked out of his dream. "That?"

Oh, I guess I got stung by one of those wasps," he said indifferently.

His coolness staggered me; his power of abstraction was something utterly unfamiliar. The idealist was in full play, and nothing mattered but the "scheme." He came back slowly to earth.

"I reckon this was pretty tough," he remarked, glancing about.

"We couldn't stand much more of it," said I.

"I'm just going to make it nice and comfortable for all those sailors who have stood by me loyally," he said, with the complacency of one who is already in possession of a fortune. "You must just make me out a list, Herapath, and I'll square generously with the widows and orphans. They won't find Vincent Halliday a cold stone, you bet. Come along, now, and we'll tot up how we stand."

He made a move for the big tree under which he had built his shelter of brushwood, and I followed him, affected in a strange way by his remarkable attitude. Here was I come back with the worst of news, and the camp saved by the skin of its teeth, so to speak, from the mutineers; and this bright-eyed, sanguine man was seated, feverishly plotting out what he should do with the fortune which was not his, which might not even exist, and from which, at any rate, he was cut off by virulent enemies.

"Say, Herapath," he said, lighting his lantern, which hung on the brushwood break-wind, "we'll have to fix up a fresh deal. That original agreement's in the melting-pot, I guess. We'll have to hand round slices on another footing. I'll have you and those men in, anyway."

I turned at a sound, a rushing, whirling sound of skirts, and into the light of the lantern broke Ariadne Sylvester.

"Miss Sylvester! You!" I said.

"Yes—I came to—I came to——" She was breathless, and did not finish. "I'm so glad you're not—oh, I'm glad you beat them."

She was glowing; she looked like a creature of fire, a radiant nymph of the

woods, with her disheveled hair. Halliday had stuck his pencil behind his ear and risen. He offered her welcome, as if he had been receiving her punctiliously in a soft-goods store.

"Now, it's right down good of you to come along and look after us," he said courteously. "But I'm blamed if I didn't think you were on board the *Duncannon*."

"Halliday, that's my story," I put in; "and it's ugly."

He stared; and I told him.

CHAPTER XIV.

IN THE PULPIT.

I cannot honestly say that my dismal tale affected Halliday much. He contorted his brows in thought for a minute or two, and then they cleared.

"We'll fix them up all right," said this unmitigated optimist. "I guess we'll freeze them out, so as they'll be glad to quit. I got a notion or two."

Well; it must rest at that. Halliday's notions were innumerable; he hatched them out prolifically; and it was odds but one among so many would serve. At any rate, he was confident. One notion he revealed that night, as we rested after the toil and hazards of the assault.

"I don't take no stock in a man that can't turn and face about," he said complacently. "You got to legislate for emergencies. And here's one. Well, I've got the prescription to cure it, and that's dynamite."

"Dynamite!" I echoed.

He seemed pleased with my surprise. "Yes, I thought that maybe it would come in handy, and so I scheduled a bit; and, what's more, it's cached along with the cans in the cove yonder."

But of what avail could dynamite be? I pressed him, and gasped at the brave ingenuity of his confident mind. If dynamite wouldn't blast the Devil's Pulpit, it might blast the traitors' camp. He had faith in dynamite—as a last resource. But other resources were not exhausted. He fixed his gaze contemplatively on the precipice, and he was

owning it in his inmost thoughts. His possession of it was legible on his mobile face. There was no contending with such assurance.

Yet our case was bad enough. On the one hand we had lost the ship; on the other, our embittered and unscrupulous enemy lay in wait for us. Doubtless we had given them a lesson which would keep them quiet for a time, but I felt certain that they would not abandon their designs on the treasure—if treasure there were in the ledges of that abominable wall above us.

Diminished in numbers, therefore, and with growing misgivings, we kept strict watch throughout the night. Miss Sylvester, it appeared, had deserted her uncle out of an irresistible curiosity to know what had happened. At least that was what she told us.

"I knew we could thrash those scoundrels—those murderers," she said, with vehemence. "I wasn't afraid of being beaten."

And yet her confusion and distress on her hasty arrival was hardly compatible with the assurance which she afterward professed. She still remained the problem for us, but I was in hopes that I might persuade her in the morning to return to her uncle in the safer woods.

Despite the excitement of the day's adventures, or, indeed, perhaps because of it, I was unable to sleep more than a few hours, and it must have been one o'clock in the morning when I at last gave up the attempt and strolled out into the light and shadow of the fires. I passed one of our men on sentinel duty near the water, and exchanged a friendly sentence with him. Saving for the fires, the night was profound and still. A cool air fanned my face very agreeably, rolling in from the sea. I looked up at the vague wall behind, from which the projections of the Pulpit stood out darkly. And then I remembered an earlier thought of mine regarding the stream.

I went down to this, and walked into it up to my thighs. The mutineers' quarters could be seen in the flame of our fires on the distant mound. I won-

dered if they kept so strict a watch after their repulse and disaster. Could Crasshaw keep his men in hand after so signal a defeat? Bending my body down toward the face of the stream, I crept across toward the bushes on the other side. The torrent broke over me a dozen times, and I all but fell on a round boulder underfoot, but I succeeded in reaching the bushes, and rested under their shelter for a little while, meanwhile making observations from my new place of vantage.

The stream brawled out of cavernous darkness some fifty yards away, and I meant to reach this as my second stage. Consequently, I once more crawled, waist-deep, with bent head, along the bed of the water. The current was tremendous, and every step I took was as if some heavy blow was delivered on my body. Still I made my way, if slowly, upward, and, without causing an alarm, arrived at the mouth of the gorge through which the stream tumbled. Once there I was safe from observation, even if I could accomplish nothing more. Here darkness hung between the walls, and I could at first make out nothing of my surroundings.

But presently the dim mass of the precipice on both sides emerged upon the sight, and as I pressed forward and upward, still in the stream, which ran cold as ice, I was aware by my ears of a cascade somewhere at the back of the little cañon. The stream must rise somewhere high up, and come down in falls on its abrupt and sudden way to the sea. I was momentarily getting more and more chilled, and I decided that I must leave the water.

On each side was rough rock, in the interstices and ledges of which bushes and creepers were growing. I clambered out of the water on the east side—that is, toward the wall of the precipice which rose into the Devil's Pulpit on its south side.

At first I found the ascent easy, for the numerous bushes were of invaluable assistance in climbing; but presently they became sparser, and the elevation almost perpendicular. I was afraid of making a mistake in the darkness, and

of being precipitated down upon the rocks and boulders below. I tried every projecting stone or bush thoroughly before trusting to it, and I mounted very slowly. When I had reached the height, as I guessed, of about one hundred feet, the precipice suddenly eased, and I found myself climbing under the boom of great walls at an angle of sixty degrees. It was as if I had slipped unawares into a narrow valley path, cut in those rock mountains; and I wondered, as I went, if by chance this could be the way in which the former ascents to the treasure had been made.

I was by now full of the spirit of my adventure, and I moved with greater speed and confidence. Nothing, I think, would have turned me back. The track between rocky spurs, like a gutter on the leads, now twisted and began to crawl over a shoulder, and presently my eyes, which had been peering through black night, were saluted by a gleam. I took a few steps farther, and the light increased. Next moment I was looking over a projecting rock down at the blazing fires of the camp. A dozen feet below me was the floor of the Pulpit!

The sky was full of stars and a falling moon, which shed soft radiance upon the sheer and jagged wall above me. Earthward the flare of the pyres threw leaping shadows on the base of the precipice. For a moment I stood resting on the rock by which I had mounted, and drinking in this scene with curious eyes. It was wonderful in its strangeness and in its beauty. Upon that ledge I was but an emmet, safe from the notice of any observer on the earth beneath.

The waning crescent shed a glow westward upon the dark woods, that descended to the sea, and far out upon the quiet ocean left a luminous track. From my aerie I could see over the projecting headlands, where the coves indented the shore-line, and the dark outline of the *Duncannon* was dimly visible. Beneath, the smoke ascended in wreaths from the watch-fires, which shone like fiery jewels through five hundred feet of space.

I stepped down upon the floor of the

Pulpit fascinated; and then I remembered the treasure. The ledge on which I stood was some twenty feet square, and rose on the outside edge into a natural parapet. On each other side the rock fell away into the space which it overhung. By the light of the moon I took in these facts, and also others.

The rock was overlaid by a slight surface of earth, but this was only a few inches deep, and it was, therefore, obvious that no treasure could have been buried there.

I was fast coming to the conclusion that the whole story was a figment, as I had always in my heart conceived, when I approached the perpendicular wall from which the ledge jutted out. Here my interested and now excited gaze was caught by a hole yawning in the rock. I explored it, and found that it opened into a cavern of some dimensions. Was it the Treasure House? And was there something, after all, in the wild story?

I had some matches in my pocket, and, striking one, by the flickering light I scrutinized the cave. In one corner was a rude chest, bound with heavy iron. My heart leaped. I went forward, and threw the lid open. It was empty!

Lighting a succession of matches I examined the floor of the cave, which was uneven. It was composed of black earth, and a mound of this lying by the chest suggested that the latter had been dug up. I probed with my pocket-knife, loosening the earth, and scooping it out with my hands, until I had got down a foot. Then the knife struck something hard. Was it a second chest? Or was it merely the rock? I was profoundly moved, and I went on working, loosening and scooping, scooping and loosening with the utmost energy.

My matches were by this time exhausted, and I worked in the dark, feeling with my fingers, and striving to dig round this object that claimed my attention. Presently my knife struck again on something hard, and my fingers precipitately groped about it. It was a small thing, but even through the adhesive dirt I judged it to be oblong

and regular in shape. In a word, I put it down as the work of a man, not of nature. I scraped off the encrustation of earth, and my knife this time unmistakably rattled on metal. So far, good. I put the metal in my pocket and resumed my digging.

I had by this time worked down to an edge—that is to say, to where the hard surface ceased, and my hopes of discovering this to be a chest increased. I dug along it, and each time my knife slipped off into soft earth. I could feel the woodwork now with my hands. Crouched on my knees in the circumambient darkness of the cavern I greedily toiled, oblivious to all else.

I was conscious of a ray of light, and looked up, wondering that the moonlight had struck through the aperture so opportunely. A shadow loomed behind me, there was a flash and then a report, and I fell forward with a sharp pain in my shoulders.

The bullet fired by my assailant lodged under my left shoulder-blade; but, though taken by surprise, I did not lose my consciousness. On the contrary, something braced me for the impending struggle.

It was pitch-dark again, and nothing was visible, nothing audible. I had lifted myself up, and stood on guard wrapped in the darkness, listening. I could not even hear breathing, yet I knew the man was in the cave. He, too, evidently was on guard, waiting. I had carried a revolver ever since we had landed, but to fire would serve no purpose; and, indeed, would only disclose me to my enemy. A terrible silence prevailed for five minutes or more.

At last I could endure the situation no longer, and I edged slightly away from where I imagined the back of the cavern to rise. This I accomplished without any noise, and so, encouraged, I repeated the movement. This time my boot kicked with a dull sound against an inequality in the floor; and upon that ensued a report. But the bullet missed me, and by the flame I detected where the other stood. Instantly I fired.

I could not tell what result my shot

had, but under cover of the noise I slipped a couple of feet away; and then it occurred to me that he might have pursued similar tactics. To my satisfaction, my maneuver by the merest luck brought me into a position from which the mouth of the cavern was accessible. I could see sideways a vision of blue-black sky and of stars. My best course was the boldest; I had to take a risk; with a swift step I darted for the opening, lowering my head as I did so to get through. The crack of my foe's revolver acquainted me that I was visible between the cavern's entrance and himself, but his shot whistled by. It was, however, owing to my increased precipitancy at this alarm that I tripped and stumbled, and came down just over the threshold of the cave and on the outlying floor of the Pulpit.

Before I could recover myself some one was upon me.

I struggled to rid myself of the enemy, but he was astride me, and held me about the right arm with steel tentacles. My left was underneath, and was practically useless, owing to my wound. I felt, as I struggled, that I was being shoved and dragged, and I suddenly guessed, with something like a chill of the heart, at his purpose. We were slowly approaching the edge of the Pulpit, and below were five hundred feet of space!

I renewed my efforts and redoubled them. I was frantically aware of my danger, as those slender but remorseless and unyielding arms drew me forward inch by inch. I managed to raise my head and free my left arm, with which I gripped my assailant. He struck at it with the heavy butt of his pistol, and the blow shuddered through every bone, yet in releasing one arm to do this his grip upon me had weakened. I lifted my head still higher and wrenched my right arm free of him.

All this time no word had passed between us, and only the sound of our struggles and our laboring breath could be heard. In my new position I glanced aside, and to my horror perceived that we were within two feet of the precipice. He was straining every muscle

to repossess himself of my right arm; but, as if he, too, had suddenly become aware of our proximity to death, he ceased now, and, exerting himself, pushed me forward. I felt my feet dangling over the edge, and then I seized him with both arms, and the damaged one, if it was no longer of active use, could still cling passively. If I were doomed, I swore to myself he, too, should go.

I think he saw my idea in that instant, for he ceased, and began to withdraw himself from my clutches. I held on like a vise, and he squirmed and wriggled. I could feel in his bones and muscles as he fought me that he was no match for me, even in my crippled condition. He pulled against me, and I let him go, and jerked after him. This performance I repeated until we were well away from the edge, and then I rolled over, and straddled him by a supreme effort. The low-hung moon distributed but a faint glow, but it was sufficient, lighting that upturned face.

"Davenant! Good God!" I cried.

The answer panted out of his breathless body: "Herapath!"

I relaxed my grip. "Man, you nearly had us both over. What a tragic mistake!" I exclaimed.

He sat up, breathing heavily. "I thought it was one of the mutineers," he said, "I followed."

"When did you see me?" I asked.

"I saw some one moving up-stream, and I tracked you. You vanished up the precipice, and I went after you. I thought you had designs on the treasure."

"Well, so I had," I replied grimly. "Lord, what luck! What luck!" and then I remembered. "The treasure!" I said.

Davenant did not reply for a moment, and when he spoke it was with some significance in his voice.

"Don't you think that you made a mistake—let's call it an error of judgment?"

"How do you mean?" I asked.

"Oh, well, it's of no consequence: it was only an idea. But, you see, Halli-

day is the person immediately concerned in the treasure."

"I'm not a formalist," I answered bluntly. "I wish to Heaven you'd not been so free with your pop-gun." My shoulder ached bitterly, and my arm was growing stiff.

"My dear sir, how could I tell?" he asked.

"All right," said I. "I'll try to forget it. Anyway, the mischief's done, and so's my error of judgment. The treasure's there."

"Are you sure?" He spoke in a new voice.

"I was just digging about a heavy chest when your infernal pellet took me."

He moved toward the cavern quickly, and I followed.

"Have you matches?" I asked.

"No," he said.

"Mine are gone, but you can feel. It's pretty dark, as you know. I think I can guide you. Here, give me your arm."

We entered, stooping, and I felt my way toward the chest, blundering somewhat in the dark.

"Here we are," I said. "Put your hands down there, and tell me what you make of it."

He bent, and I heard him fumbling in silence.

"It's a chest, right enough," he said presently, in a low voice.

"Well, we can do nothing more," I remarked. "We've learned the way up, and that the treasure's here. That's enough for one night. I wish it had stayed at that."

"So do I," he agreed. "My ribs are nearly cracked. Halliday will go wild. He'll dream dreams. Come along."

We passed out into the radiance of the starlight, and began to clamber over the rock behind which gave access to the broken pathway. I went in front, and Davenant came about a dozen paces in the rear. What with our bruises and our breathlessness and my wound, we were neither of us in the mood for conversation, even if that had been advisable. Slowly we groped our way downward by the shelving gutter toward the

steeper part of the wall that ascended from the gorge.

As I entered this difficult descent at an angle of some eighty degrees, I happened to cast a glance backward, and found Davenant's figure had disappeared. I hailed him.

"All right," he said, from the invisible. "I twisted my ankle slightly."

I plunged over the verge with all the more caution because of my disabled arm, and slowly, step by step, went down, as though I were descending by so many rungs of a ladder. I had got some distance down when there was a rumble above, and with a rush and a crash a big lump of rock flashed past me on the right. It shot by too closely to be pleasant, and I called out again:

"Hi! Look out! I'm just below!"

The words were scarcely out of my mouth when a second rock, larger and more formidable than the other, came clashing down upon me. My eyes went up as the noise reached me, and I could see it flying toward me directly in my track. There was no time to spring aside. It had a fierce momentum, and it drove down upon me. I instinctively pressed my head into the wall.

It must have struck a peak just above me. The wind and sand and dust and horror of it were in my face. But it cleared me with a leap that sent it twenty feet beyond, where it bounded and rebounded from the rock face, and broke into shivers in the gorge below.

"Good Lord, man!" I called out angrily. "This is too hot. You're bent on doing for me to-night."

There was a moment's silence, and then Davenant's voice sailed down to me:

"Good God! Did they touch you? It is my ankle. I dislodged them in the dark."

I grumbled in an indistinct voice, for, to say the truth, I was all in a sweat.

"I'll wait for you, by your leave," I called up. "I'm not going to take any more risks."

He joined me soon, descending awkwardly and limping, and we kept close together during the remainder of the journey down. We reached the bottom

without mishap, and began to wade down the stream toward the camp. Weariness had set in with me, and Davenant did not seem disposed to talk. We successfully made the passage, and entered the zaréba. The banners of the dawn were breaking out in the east, and I was dog-tired. I sought my rude shelter, and was soon buried in slumber, oblivious of bruises and wound, and even of my strange discovery.

CHAPTER XV.

THE CAPTURE.

I awoke when the sun was well up, and found the camp in a bustle about me. Davenant had acquainted Halliday with the events of the night, and the news went from lip to lip; our party was all agog. My first sensation was one of extreme pain, which slowly evoked in my mind a recollection of the night's affray. I made my way to McLeod.

"I'm afraid I'm another subject for your prod," I said, in a feeble jest.

"I've just heard," he returned. "Awkward business it might have been. Let's have a look."

His examination showed no occasion for alarm. At the cost of a few sharp pangs the bullet was extracted, and the application he made soothed the wound mightily.

"If they'll leave us alone another day, there won't be much the matter with you," he said cheerfully.

Halliday was already bustling about, showing manifest signs of suppressed enthusiasm. He was all over the camp with questions and with orders.

"Say, my scheme's in the gallery now," he declared cheerfully. "Yours is the copper-bottomed proposition, I guess. We'll soon run it through. What's the matter with to-night? Anyway, we'll have a conference on this."

He dashed off to make a kindly inquiry about Marley, who was distinctly better, and showed it in a reluctance to remain quiet.

"We're in sight, Mr. Marley; we're right on it," he said, smiling; "and I'm

going to let you boys in a bit more. It's taken a heap more getting than I thought, and I reckon it's worth it."

"Good luck, old man," growled Marley. "Sorry I've not been able to do much myself."

At eight o'clock we were hailed from the wood, and looking over the stockade I saw Monsieur Carvaulx approaching. He came up, gave a civil bow, and said:

"Can you give me any provisions, monsieur?"

"We can manage it," said Halliday. "Come right along in. This is a great day with us. We're on the treasure."

The Frenchman stared. "Have you found it?" he asked incredulously.

"Why, yes, right away in its crevice, sir, and make no mistake," chuckled Halliday. "Come right along."

Carvaulx crossed the barrier with some difficulty, and tapped Halliday on the arm.

"Monsieur, if then this is accomplished, it will be possible to pursue the voyage to Baltimore——?" he hesitated, and looked anxious.

Halliday also hesitated; then he spoke in his measured voice. "That's all square. I contracted to take you and your niece to Baltimore, but I didn't say how long it would take or where we went first. It was your own fault, monsieur. You were pressing."

"I do not mind," said the Frenchman, with a gesture, "if it is agreed."

"I reckon Baltimore would maybe suit me as well as any place, too," said Halliday thoughtfully. Monsieur Carvaulx had, I observed, not yet inquired for his niece. He did not seem a very considerate uncle. She had risen later than the rest of the camp, and came to meet us now, greeting the old man affectionately.

"I'm glad you're safe, my uncle," she said in French.

He wagged his finger at her almost playfully, for he was in a smiling humor. "Ah, it was naughty of you," he replied, in the same tongue, "to run away like that into such dangers."

"Herapath, find Mr. Davenant, will

you?" said the bubbling Halliday, "and we'll fix up things. Lord, this is great!"

"What's the matter?" inquired Miss Sylvester.

McLeod told her the story, and, as I overheard, I'm bound to say he told it generously enough. She came to me a little afterward, and inquired solicitously after my arm. Then we sat down to a cheerful breakfast.

It was difficult to restrain Halliday from rash and immediate action. The cliff beckoned him; his eyes moved to it a dozen times an hour. It was the Mecca of his prayers. It was only by our united persuasion that an attempt upon the treasure was postponed till night. He yielded, however, to the demonstrated risk of an adventure in the daylight, particularly as during the morning there were renewed signs of the enemy. One or two figures appeared in the clearing, and the smoke of their fires ascended to the blue heaven. Perhaps Clifford and Byrne were allaying their disappointment with cards, but I was certain Crashaw was alert and active; and I had my fears of that oily rascal, Heaven. Davenant was even for delaying the expedition for another day in order to make sure of success; but he was overruled by unanimous voices. We were to set out after dark that evening.

There were certain preparations to be made, which we at once undertook. The idea was to leave the camp in charge of the sentinels, and for the rest of the party to ascend by the bed of the stream and the gorge to the Pulpit. These were to be armed with lanterns and picks and ropes, with which simple equipment it was hoped that our aim could be accomplished. Under the light of the lanterns the picks could unearth the buried chests in the cavern, and then these would be hauled down the steep face of the rocks by means of the ropes. It would undoubtedly prove an arduous task, and might occupy us well into the morning; but it was our one chance, and the prospect of ultimate success sweetened the thought of it.

I say our one chance, because it was becoming evident that our food would

not hold out. You will remember that when our expedition to the *Duncannon* failed so miserably, we did not return to the cache where the few remaining provisions were stored. As it fell out, my decision was fortunate, seeing that it enabled us to arrive in the nick of time. But when I surveyed the larder after breakfast, I confess that I wished we had brought back the stores in the cache.

We had decided to hazard all that night, but I could not but ask myself what remained after that. Even if we were successful in recovering the treasure, was our position an enviable one? The mutineers were hostile, and would remain hostile, and the ship was in their hands. Our one base was cut off, and we were practically without food. The outlook was black, at the best, unless we were able to make terms.

Yet I do not think that these considerations weighed very much with me: for the fascination of the treasure overpowered all other feelings, and, indeed, all reason. We were feverishly anxious to be at work, and we awaited the evening with ill-concealed impatience. It was toward midday that a diversion occurred. I was hailed across the barricade from the thick wood by a voice which was unmistakable.

"That you, Herapath? Where's the boss? I've got a proposal to make."

I stared, and made out the figure of Clifford lurking in the bushes. I called to Davenant.

"Here's a bloody mutineer with a proposal," I said loudly. Davenant came up slowly, and stood by my side, staring also over the brushwood.

"Who is it?" he asked.

"Clifford," I said; "and he's got a proposal. Sounds funny, doesn't it?" I went on cleaning the gun I held. Davenant dropped his eyes to it, and thence to the revolver on the grass, and to a roughly shaped club I had manufactured.

"We might as well hear it," he suggested.

"As you like. You're in command," I said lightly. "I argue only with these things."

"Well, I'd better hear him," said Davenant doubtfully, and glancing again at my weapons. "You never know."

"Here you are, Clifford," I called. "What do you want? Speak up, and keep your distance, or I'll drill holes in you."

"Caesar's ghost! What a horrid man!" said Clifford jeeringly. "Cap'n Davenant, I offer terms."

"Terms be damned!" growled McLeod.

"Don't use swear-words," urged Clifford sanctimoniously. "Remember the days you spent at your mother's knee, and the Sunday-school marm that spanked you. Look here, Davenant, you're in a hole, and we're now engaged in the interesting occupation of starving you out. It's only a matter of days before the last gaunt skeleton staggers on the dying embers of his fire and expires, as per sample. So let's be sensible. I offer Halliday a third to quit the camp; and I'm dog-rotted if it ain't generous."

Halliday, who had joined us, passed his long white hand nervously over his smooth, lank hair. "Good Lord!" he was muttering. "Good sakes! A third! O my hat!" He seemed too greatly overcome to make any audible or official retort; and it was Davenant who spoke.

"It isn't likely that Mr. Halliday will agree to——"

"Oh, stow that bilge!" said Marley's deep voice from behind. And we turned and found him supporting himself on a stick. "Damn it, man, of course we won't. Don't be mealy-mouthed with the reptile."

"Excuse me, Mr. Marley, I am in charge——" began Davenant stiffly: "and I must be allowed to manage things my own way."

"Right, old bird," returned the even-tempered Marley. "I'm not on duty here. But give the bounder his deserts."

Davenant approached Halliday, who was gazing with fascinated amusement at the man who presumed to offer him a third of his own treasure. They spoke together so that I could not hear them.

"If it will anyways make it easier for you, sort of soothe your conscience, I guess you'd better," said Halliday at last.

Davenant mounted the barricade. "Where are you going?" I asked. "Don't fool with that scum."

"I'm only going to parley with him," replied Davenant.

"It's not worth it," said Marley.

"Let him, if it eases his mind," said Halliday, smiling.

"Herapath, I'm relying on your gun," called back Davenant mellifluously, as he leaped to earth the other side. I put the barrel over the stockade and covered Clifford, who was not at all disconcerted.

"All right! Flag of truce," he called out. "I'm fly."

Davenant reached him, walking slowly, and stopped. For some minutes they talked together, and then Davenant turned away abruptly.

"It's not the remotest use," he called back from a little distance. "But I'll communicate what you say." Under our interested eyes he came deliberately back and climbed over.

"He says they're sure of starving us out," he said to the group; "and he's willing to allow a third of the treasure and a safe passage to any port desired, providing no report of the voyage is made to the authorities."

"Gad, he's a daisy!" tolled Marley's bass.

"Oh, give up the farce," I cried, and raised my voice, and my gun. "I fire, Clifford, after I count ten. One—two—three—four——"

"Could you do with a bottle of fizz?" he shouted, and was gone; but back from the bush into which he had vanished streamed an echo of song:

"Don't you leave the girl in the lurch,
Take her away right off to church——"

"He's a daisy," repeated Marley. "God, what cheek!"

"He couldn't have expected we should accept!" said Halliday incredulously. "What does he take us for?"

The author was dismissed with ridicule by all; so deep were we under the

influence of that treasure. Only Davenant seemed to be reasonable about it.

"We're not out of the wood by finding that treasure, or even getting it," he said to me later.

I agreed. "But, my dear man," I said. "When we come to straits like these, it is sufficient to think ahead twenty minutes. As we've thought ahead till nightfall, we're not doing so badly."

"Do you think we have?" he asked curiously. "Have you inspected the supplies?"

"Yes; they won't last over to-day; but then we mayn't," I said bluntly.

"It would be a good thing to replenish them. There's the cache," he said.

"There's the cache," I agreed. He said nothing for a time, and then:

"I think we ought to make an effort to get the provisions up here," he said significantly. "What do you say to having a shot at it?"

I shook my head. "I daren't risk it," I said.

"Afraid of Clifford's sentries?" he asked coolly.

I felt angry. "A comment of that sort is better not made," I said. "You ought to know better. What I'm afraid of is splitting the party."

"Oh, we're in no danger just now," he said.

"You said before," I reminded him.

"They've had their stomach full," he said, ignoring this.

"Anyhow, I'm not going," I remarked. "After to-night it's another matter. We stand or fall by what happens to-night."

I turned away. "I thought I was in command here," he lisped, in his satiric way. "But it seems I'm not."

I was annoyed, although I knew I was technically in the wrong. "My own impression is that Marley's in charge again," I threw back at him.

"When I receive an intimation from him to that effect I'll act on it," he said; and I went away, leaving him the honors of the field. He was, as a rule, of so neutral a color that it surprised me to find him assert himself so openly. Nor could I understand why he had so

unwarrantably attributed to me a reluctance on the score of my own personal safety. I grew somewhat ashamed of the little squabble when I considered it, which made me all the more relieved that I was able to back him up a little later in what appeared to me an important matter.

Halliday was busy drawing up a scheme for the distribution of his unseen treasure, an elaborate scheme, as far as I could make out, in which we were all allotted shares in a joint-stock company. He was feverishly anxious to be just, and more than once sounded me as to what I considered I was entitled to. It seemed to me that that was a matter which might very well wait until we were, so to speak, out of the wood, and I told him so bluntly.

"Well," he remarked amiably, "I guess this is little Willie's show. You go right ahead, and I'll answer for the rest."

Accordingly, Davenant and I outlined our plan by which the cliff was to be scaled and the booty recovered. Operations were to be started between ten and eleven. And in the late afternoon Davenant brought forward his proposition—that Monsieur Carvaulx and his niece should withdraw from the camp.

"It will be much safer for you," he told the Frenchman. "Because at any moment we may be exposed to danger here. And I think in Miss Sylvester's interests you should withdraw to some temporary place of safety."

I agreed, and added my arguments.

The Frenchman shrugged his shoulders. "I do not fear," he said. "But I do not wish to run unnecessary risks. I have nothing to do with your quarrels. If you would only compose your differences——" He shrugged again. It was immaterial to him that lives had been lost on either side. He stood aloof, anxious to get on with his journey, and impatient of our delay. He desired us to patch up our foolish quarrel and get to business. "As for this treasure," he pursued, "I have had much experience. During my career as a banker I have had dozens, more than dozens, of people

anxious for me to what you call finance their treasure expeditions."

"Well, monsieur," said I, to cut the argument short. "You will go? We will keep in touch with you in case of necessity."

He bowed. "It is very wise," he said. "I will take my niece now. I have no dispute with these sailors yonder."

Miss Sylvester received our decision with a fallen face. "I—I don't want to make a fuss, or to disobey orders," she said hesitatingly; "but I'd much sooner stay here." Davenant pointed out the danger, and she looked doubtfully at him, and then at me. "I'd much rather——" she began, and then suddenly and impulsively: "Do you think it would be better, Mr. Herapath, for every one's sake?" she demanded, throwing the decision upon me.

"For every one's sake," I repeated gravely. "Your uncle already has a hiding-place, and you will have provisions, and we will communicate with you in the morning."

"Very well, I will go," she said quickly, and went straight away to make her preparations, like an obedient child.

It was close on dusk when they left the camp on the eastern side, for Monsieur Carvaulx had constructed in the woods a shelter for himself in that direction the previous night; and then, our fires lit, we settled down to await the hour of the great venture. But half an hour had scarcely gone by when a voice crying far beyond the barricade reached us. Halliday and I started up.

"What is it?" I called. "Who's there?"

There was a shout, a challenge from the sentry staring at the black wood, and then voices rose together on the evening air.

"It's the Frenchman!" called out Carter.

"What is it?" cried Halliday, hurrying to the spot, to which I, too, hastened.

Monsieur Carvaulx was on his knees, having tumbled over the barricade and caught his foot in the brushwood.

"What has happened?" I demanded.

He was breathless; a little old shrimp of a man in a fright.

"The sailors!" he exclaimed. "The mutineers! The mutineers!"

"For God's sake tell us," I said roughly, in my sudden access of alarm.

"They attacked us. I have no weapon," he exclaimed, in staccato sentences. "They were drunk. They knock me down. Ariadne is taken. Ah, it is infamous!"

"Good Lord!" cried Davenant, and stared at me. "They have the girl, and they are drunk."

"And she threw herself on me, and I advised her to go," I said grimly.

I looked toward the black wood. "I must go, Davenant," I said.

"Will you have some one with you?" he asked, without contesting this.

"No; you can't spare any one; besides, I shall suffice. Good Lord, how I shall suffice when I have them in my hands! I'll tear——" I found myself tearing the stick I held in my hand unconsciously. I think, somehow, I "saw red" at that moment. I could, in my mind's eye, see Clifford, that gross reptile, with his hands——

I leaped on the brushwood. "I'll be back in time," I called out, as I jumped down.

There was no time to waste. I knew the direction of the Frenchman's shelter, and I made for it through the dark wood. I do not think I had any definite plan in my head, but I was sure I should succeed. And when I was nearly arrived at the place, my eyes, sharpened by passion in the obscurity of the wood, noted the breakage of some undergrowth, as though by the passage of bodies. I paused, sensed the trail rapidly, and was off upon it westward. The raiders had turned for their camp.

I followed this perceptible track for a quarter of an hour through the trees and shrubs, and then came out on the stream. Opposite I thought I could detect the mark of feet where the party had landed, and I crossed. Yes, the footmarks were manifest. I picked up

the scent and sped onward. I felt in my pocket where my loaded revolver lay, and with my right hand I gripped the heavy club I carried.

And by now real night had fallen, as it falls abruptly in those latitudes, and I had to pick my path with care. No longer was I able to follow the trail, but, as I had made up my mind long since that the mutineers' camp was its destination, this did not trouble me. I had an excellent sense of topography, and I knew I was steering northwest from the stream, which should bring me into the neighborhood of the camp.

I now began to realize something of what it all meant. I had not understood, perhaps had not time to understand, my own feelings. When first I had seen Miss Sylvester she had seemed to me but a coquettish girl of a type common to the sex, if singled out by especial beauty and a strange grace. Later, I had come to appreciate the simplicity and innocence of her girlish nature. And then—now I knew, indeed, and I ground my teeth at the vision in my brain of that slender form in the hands of those gross sailors, in the power of that black scoundrel, Clifford.

I emerged from a covert of bushes slowly, my body taut, my spirit stiffening. The smell of wood-fires was in my nostrils—but then a flash was in my eye. The bullet arrived coincidentally with the flash of the hammer, but I had by instinct and chance thrown out my club, and it struck that and glanced off. I made two steps forward and smote.

Some one went down with a smothered ejaculation, but at the same time I was seized from behind. I struggled fiercely, but it seemed as though a score of hands held me, and gradually I ceased. I was taken, caught in the web, and lay as still, as exhausted, and as helpless as a fly.

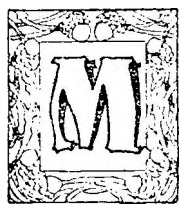
"Snakes! He's hot stuff!" said Clifford breathlessly. "But we've done him, all the same."

"Good old Jacko!" cried Byrne cheerfully.

High Treason

By Bertrand W. Sinclair

"The wicked shall flourish like the green bay-tree." Old King Cole, a cattle king, his daughter, and a young ranch owner, named Dick Sutton, are the *dramatis personae* in a remarkable tale of cattle-stealing, told by Brazos, a cow-puncher on King Cole's ranch



Y old man was a pillar of the church and a great student of the Bible, when I was a kid, back in Iowa; and there was one stock verse out of the good book that he used to roll forth in a chesty tone whenever it was brought to his notice that some ungodly man was prospering: "The wicked shall flourish like the green bay-tree."

I never could see much sense in that; not till lately, and 'specially till this morning, when I happened to pick up an old Utah paper some stray stock-hand had left kicking around camp, and read where old John Cole had been elected to the legislature—the measly old skunk! There's sure a case uh the wicked flourishing like a whole blame grove uh bay-trees.

It's a wonder to me how that old jasper has managed to fool a trusting public so long—and now they've let him break into the law-maker bunch. Oh, he's a rare old bird. I suppose if he'd happen to cash in unexpected, Twin Buttes'd be wrapped in a blanket uh sorrow, and the local papers would hand out big chunks uh hot air about his gilt-edged respectability and sterling worth. I reckon it'll be all the same a hundred years from now, but I've always had a grouch against that old Siwash, for one time he come near bustin' my youthful faith in human nature.

When I was about eighteen I quit the corn-field country on account of an

argument I had with the old man—he was a pretty muscular Christian, that old feller—and piked West, to grow up with the country. After drifting around considerable, I rambled into the Twin Buttes locality, and liked the looks uh the place. They didn't raise corn there; raising hell was the principal industry. I made Twin Buttes my home range for several summers, and it was there I got introduced to long-horned cows and festive broncs, and such other evils as follow hard in the wake uh most cow outfits. I was pretty well through the kindergarten stage uh the business when I went to work for old King Cole—that is, I'd begun to *sabe* that it wasn't the length of a man's six-shooter, nor the amount uh bug-juice he could put under his belt and ride, that made him a success in the cow business. There was still a heap for me to learn, but I didn't know it, and I didn't lay awake nights worrying over the cow science that wasn't stowed away back uh my youthful forehead.

Old Cole was the cattle king uh the Twin Buttes range. A venerable-looking old monarch he was, with white whiskers flowing down over his ample bosom, and an expression uh humility that was warranted to wear; such a mild-eyed, fatherly sort uh being that yuh was forced to believe that he was plumb full and running over with the milk uh human kindness. Oh, he was a jolly old soul, all right, and I was most willing fiddler—for a while.

He'd lots uh cattle, and he kept a sharp eye on the same. For a big old

roly-poly feller, he could put in some strong licks on the saddle; and he was about as smooth with a rope as any puncher that ever wore a boot. Cows wasn't his only valuable possession. He had a daughter that was a direct temptation to every man that laid eyes on her—eighteen, curly-headed, and blue-eyed; just as much at home on a plunging cow-pony as she was in the old man's parlor. She was a lady, every inch of her, and every puncher in the country was swinging a big loop for Cole's girl. Any time between breakfast and sundown yuh could see from one to half a dozen saddle-horses dozing on three legs before the Double-O Bar hitching-rack. But by and by a big strawberry roan, with an arched neck and a rolling eye, had it all to himself. It was no go for the rest of us gay young sparks after Dick Sutton struck Twin Buttes. He and Lexie Cole took to each other like pigeons in mating-time. Everything went lovely for a while, and then old King Cole put his foot down like the hammer of a pile-driver, and Dick was forbid the ranch.

That sort uh fazed Dick. He hadn't been around Twin Buttes long—a year or two—but he had a nice little bunch uh cattle, and everything was coming his way until King Cole butted in on the courting deal. Of course, Lexie wouldn't go against the old man's wishes—he stroked them hoary whiskers uh his, and talked to her low and mournful about his one ewe lamb, and how he was getting old, till she got all worked up and promised she'd be a dutiful daughter. Dick used to see her sometimes on the quiet, for she thought a heap uh him, and I guess he struggled powerful hard to have her break away and marry him, anyhow; but she wouldn't, though I guess she was sure between the devil and the deep blue sea. The old man, in the meantime, wouldn't have a blamed thing to do with Dick.

Beginning uh shipping season, that fall, comes old Cole to me, extra meek, and fairly exuding paternalism.

"M' son," he says, "you're getting to be real handy with stock. You've worked for me a long time, and I ap-

preciate faithfulness; so I'm going to put yuh in charge of a wagon."

He did, too; it wasn't any bluff. He took the shipping layout himself, and gives me the range-wagon, and shoots me into the hills to gather beef. When I'd get a herd rounded up, he'd receive 'em and drift for the railroad, while I'd go back for more. This thing got monotonous; and monotony is one thing that a bunch uh cow-punchers has no use for. Why, the old varmint would come away out onto the range to meet us. Maybe he thought he was keeping us out uh temptation. Anyway, he kept me and the boys that was doing the real work out in the wilderness all fall—we never got within forty miles uh town.

Last of October, when we was getting the range pretty well trimmed up, I was working a round-up one day north uh the Buttes, and Dick Sutton rides up. Of course, we had a lot uh things to chew the rag about. Pretty soon I see that something was bearing down hard on his mind. We was pretty crony them days, so I says to him: "What's the trouble, old-timer? Throw it out uh yuh."

"I'm up against a mystery," he says, sort uh reluctant. "Did yuh ever hear of a man's cattle just naturally vanishin' off the face uh the earth, leavin' neither hile nor horns behind?"

"The hell!" says I. "Is that what's pulling your face out uh shape? Is it rustlers?"

"I don't know," Dick growls. "It's been going on for about six weeks or so. About every ten days a little bunch uh my best beef stock comes up missin', and I don't see 'em no more. I ain't no cattle king, yuh know, so I keep close cases on what I've got: up to date I'm out about a hundred and fifty head. I've had two of the boys range-ridin' all the time, but they go just the same. I *know* they ain't being killed and sold in this country, and I've had the inspectors at Chicago and Omaha and Kansas City report every brand that's been unloaded in their yards. Still they go. It's like being held up in the dark. It'll bust me, too, if it keeps up, for I'm about ten thousand dollars in the hole,

and I've held off from shippin', countin' on that beef gettin' in good shape. Do yuh wonder my jaw hangs low?"

I sympathized, uh course, and we did considerable speculating. Dick finally rode off, telling me to keep it dark.

I thought a heap about them steers the next few days. Cattle don't melt away like dew off'n a sage-bush; there's generally a man behind. And it took smooth work to fool Dick Sutton.

Well, we made the round all right, and met ole Cole on Slippery Elm with a nice bunch uh beef. The old boy had worked a piece uh country himself, and had quite a respectable-sized herd—I'd noticed he often did that. When we got together, he says to me: "M' son, the market is down a bit. We'll just cut the tops for this shipment, and hold the others for a while."

So we flew at the herd right there. Everything went smooth as silk. He cut what he wanted, and when he was through he turns the culls over to me. My day-herders takes 'em over, and then me and Billy Parsons goes along to help throw the good stuff into the old man's herd, and visit a while at the other camp. The old man went on ahead.

We hazed the layout down into the flat where the old man's bunch was grazing, and turned 'em in. We was all sitting at the edge uh the herd making a smoke and joshing the day-herders, when I spies a bald-faced steer with an OC a foot square standing out on his ribs, as plain as the nose on your face.

"Hello!" I thinks to myself. "These fellers has got a stray in their herd, and the chances are they'll never cut him out till they get to the railroad; and the Lord knows where he'll ramble to then." So in I rides to separate the longhorn from his brothers and haze him back to my herd, where Dick could get him without any trouble. I knew blamed well that old King Cole wasn't going to put himself out to hold any uh Dick Sutton's cattle that might be picked up on the outside range. Well, I wasn't more than a hundred feet from that steer, and I never took my eyes off him, but when I turned my horse

in behind him, there's the Cole brand—OO, two O's and a bar below—as large as life and twice as natural! I like to fell off my horse.

"I guess I've got 'em," I tells myself, and rides out. A couple uh rods away I looks back: Baldy has an OC where the Double-O Bar was peering forth at me a minute before! I didn't say anything—my think-works was in too much of an uproar. I rode back to the boys and finished my smoke, all the time keeping the proper focus on that steer. Finally they break for camp, and about that time I discover my cinch is loose and must be fixed immediate. I gets down, and, uh course, Parsons wait for me.

"As a disinterested cow-gent," says I, tinkering with the cinch, "just cast your eye over that bald-faced steer with the stub tail and curving horns, and tell me how yuh read his brand."

He looked a minute. "OC," he says, kinda scornful; "plain as a prairie-fire on a dark night. I s'pose the old man has picked up one or two uh Sutton's cattle, and is goin' to ship 'em for him."

"Yes?" say I, humble, but unconvinced, like a burro after his first trip under a pack-saddle. "Let's take a good look at him."

Down we rides, and when we got close to him, Billy remarks in a plumb disgusted tone: "Shucks! I guess I can't see straight any more. That's a Double-O Bar."

"Does look that way," I observes, and we start back. I pulls up as before. There she is; OC, bigger'n a wolf. Parsons sees it, too, and throws a load uh cuss-words out uh him.

"Hell's fire!" he winds up. "D'yuh reckon my eyes is chuck full uh alkali dust?" And back he goes to Baldy, rides round him a couple uh times for luck, and comes out uh the herd looking worried.

He was a pretty wise boy, that Billy Parsons. I've often thought that he smelled a rat, right there, but hated to let go uh his suspicions for fear uh stirring up trouble. "Brazos, there's something wrong with that brand," he

announces finally. "She's a regular optical delusion."

As I observed in the beginning, there was still considerable cowology laying around on the flats for me to assimilate. I couldn't make it out. It takes six months for a brand to hair out smooth when it's been worked with an iron—I was that wise. And the Sutton business hadn't been going on more than six weeks. Besides, I'd just as soon suspect myself uh working brands as old King Cole—them copious whiskers and his venerable person was hollering contradiction to such ideas even while they was floating through my noodle. But it stuck in my gizzard: them panorama brands wasn't to my liking, no-how. I went back to my own outfit an I dreamed all night about bunches uh longhorns with OC's and Double-O Bars coming and going on their ribs like an electric cigar-sign I seen once.

Next morning the old gent pulled his freight, to ship at Rocha Novo. My outfit was to lay around and hold what was left till further orders. So when the drag of his herd was kicking up a dust-cloud around the tail-end of a long mesa to the south, I catches me the best horse in my string and heads for Dick Sutton's home ranch—hell bent for election!—that stub-tailed, bald-faced steer laying heavy on my mind.

I figured it was best to be diplomatic about breaking the news, so I visited a while. Then I starts in casual, romancing about running onto this brand combination some time previous. Dick was qualified for a diploma when it came to brand science. When I asked how he figured it out he smiles, and begins to roll a smoke.

"Did yuh ever hear of a sweat brand?" says he. "I reckon that's what yuh bumped into."

"I'm plumb ignorant," I admits. "What's the recipe?"

"Simplest in the world," he tells me, grinning to beat the band. "All yuh need is a half-dozen layers uh wet bur-lap and a red-hot iron. Yuh lay the burlap on the critter's hide, smoothing it down over the old brand, and then press the iron on top uh that wherever

yuh want the new design to show. It blisters, yuh see; ridges the hide without scorchin', and lasts about three weeks. As long as it stays, yuh can't tell but what it's the brand that's been there from when the critter was a calf. It has one disadvantage. Sometimes, if yuh look at it just right, the old mark will show up plainer than the new one. But it's pretty smooth."

Then I told him the truth, without any frills, and his grin faded away like a thaw in the spring.

"But, damn it, Brazos," he growls, "are yuh sure? It don't seem like the old man would be in on anything like that."

"Two of us seen it," says I, "but yuh don't have to take my word for it. Catch him at Rocha Novo, before he loads out, and go through his herd. I'll go along, seeing I've started this."

"If that old whitened sepulcher *has* been trillin' with my stock," Dick says to me as we starts off, "I'll sure make him step about some. I ain't so overburdened with cattle that I don't know the personal appearance uh some uh them, and that critter yuh describe is a dead ringer for one uh mine."

Noon next day we hit the Double-O Bar herd on the creek below Rocha Novo, a mile or so from where a wheezy old engine was kicking cars in on the stock-yards track. The herd was standing quiet on water; the Mormon day-herders taking life easy on a pinnacle. Dick passed the time uh day to 'em, real pleasant, and headed into the bunch.

One uh the Mormons spurs up his horse kinda quick, and heads Dick off. "Say," he bawls, in a loud, important voice, "what yuh prowlin' in there for? Get out uh the herd!"

"I'm just sizin' up your beef stock," says Dick, soft and friendly. "Yuh wouldn't run a man off for that?"

"The hell I wouldn't!" this Mormon hollers, getting his nerve up good and strong. "Yuh get out uh that or I'll drag yuh out on the end uh my rope."

Oh, he was a real wolf, that Mormon, but his savage bearing vanished with surprising suddenness when he found himself looking along the barrel uh Dick

Sutton's six-shooter, and catches the North Pole glimmer in Dick's eye.

"Just trot back to your gay confederates, sonny," Dick murmurs soothingly, "and smoke a cigareet in peace, while I take a look around."

That youth didn't lose no time following Dick's advice, only he didn't stop at his partners: he hit for the far side uh the herd, laying on whip and spur. It took Dick about twenty minutes to size up that herd. When he come out he was smiling.

"Yuh can dance at my weddin' inside of a week," he says to me, "or put coppers on my eyes before sundown. It is a sweat brand, sure enough; there's more than a car-load uh my cattle in that herd with the Double O Bar run over the OC. I've got King Cole right where I want him—the pusillanimous old mucker!"

We loped to their camp and found the old gent was gone to town. So we rambled after and come across his horse standing in front uh the Overland Hotel. King Cole was in the office, reposing his frame in a big chair.

I reckon there was something in the air; maybe that old cow monarch had a hunch that Dick Sutton was about as unhealthily to fool with, just then, as a stick uh thawed-out dynamite; but where I looked for 'em to open up a large-sized package uh trouble there was nothing but the calm of a spring morning. The old man rose up when Dick announces in a frigid tone that he has some private business to talk over in the next room, and follers with the trusting innocence of a six-weeks-old calf when his mother blats for him to come along. I expected fireworks—and there was nothing but pastoral peace.

Dick had a cinch, uh course, and I guess he played it for all it was worth, for when they come into view once more it didn't take field-glasses to see that old King Cole had capitulated. His expression uh royal dignity was gone. He'd been caught with the goods.

But he had one more bolt to shoot. He wasn't the boy to overlook a chance to get even.

He kept it up his sleeve till after the

wedding, which come off on mighty short notice, I want to tell yuh. Dick and Lexie had taken the train for their honeymoon trip. I was down the street a piece, with some more uh the boys, celebrating the solution uh Dick's mystery and stowing away a few to the health uh the bride, when along comes a kid from the Overland, saying that the old man was desirous uh my presence.

So up I went. He met me with a check in his hand and a look uh profound sorrow on his fatherly physog; his lofty brow was corrugated like a tin wash-board.

"It grieves me very much, Brazos," he says, talking hurried and backing toward a door, "to know that you've betrayed the confidence I reposed in yuh. Mr. Sutton has told me everything, but out uh consideration for your past faithfulness I'll overlook it. But we've got to part. Good-by, Brazos, good-by!" And he throws the check at me and dodges out uh the room before I'd quite swallowed what he meant. I sails after him, red-eyed, hot-foot for vengeance, but he'd too good a start uh me, and I failed to connect.

When I cooled off I gets my bed and other truck from his ranch, and starts out looking for another string uh horses. But d'ye think I got 'em? Not on your war-bag! That old Ishmaelite had passed the quiet word among the other cowmen that I'd been doing a little crooked iron-work on the side, and I was blackballed from Twin Buttes to the Grand Cañon. It was me for distant ranges.

That's how I come to be here in the north, wasting my sweetness on this Montana air. I don't know but I've done better than if I'd stayed with old King Cole, and Dick was certainly all to the good on that deal. But Lord! It grinds me to think uh that old degenerate sitting in the Utah Legislature, wearing the robes uh honor and righteousness, when he ought to be rigged out with a suit uh that zebra clothing the State furnishes for cow-thieves when they're caught.

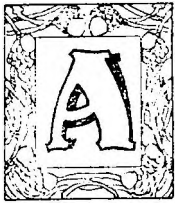
There's a case uh the wicked flourishing, a'll right.

Tales of the Lost Legion

By Francis Whitlock

VI.—THE FINDING OF FIAMETTA

(A Complete Novelette)



AMONG conservative men of business Mr. Jabez Cooper had the reputation of being imaginative and given to reckless speculation; for no matter how fantastic the proposition which might be presented to him he was always willing to listen, and—provided that the reward for success was in proportion to the risk involved—he was open to conviction. That his judgment had been correct oftener than at fault was demonstrated by the fact that in his peculiar ventures he had amassed a large fortune, but he had not yet reached the stage when he was willing to retire and rest upon his laurels, when a card bearing the name "Fleetwood Busker, Attorney and Counselor-at-law" was laid upon his desk.

It was part of Mr. Cooper's system to keep thoroughly informed about men and affairs, and, although he had never seen Mr. Busker until he was ushered in, he knew him by reputation as a shrewd member of the legal profession, who did not believe in waiting for business to come to him, but ingeniously ferreted out peculiar items of information upon which he built imposing legal processes which usually led to the profit of Mr. Busker, although his clients were not invariably enriched by them.

"Mr. Cooper, the proposition which I have to lay before you may sound like a fairy-story; but I can assure you that I have worked out more incredible ones to my—er—to the profit of my clients," said the attorney, after the

usual curt greetings had passed between them.

The capitalist, insinuating that he had also derived profit from many propositions which at first blush appeared to be romances, lighted a long black cigar, tilted his office-chair back to a comfortable angle, and, joining the tips of his fat fingers over an impressive expanse of waistcoat, nodded to him to proceed.

"The prize I am aiming at is the Lattimer fortune," continued Busker, and Mr. Cooper's eyes twinkled sympathetically, for the millions which composed it made a tempting bait. "You are, of course, aware that at the present moment, for lack of a legitimate claimant, it is liable to revert to the State; there being—so far as any one knows definitely—no living descendant or kin of old John Lattimer."

"While you have reason to believe that one may be produced?" said Cooper interrogatively, a significant pause before the final word.

"Exactly—and not a manufactured one, either," answered Busker hastily. "I have looked into the entire matter, and I believe that a legitimate heir—or heiress—exists. You have read in the papers, I presume, the history of the family: how old John Lattimer made his fortune, and was killed at Gettysburg before he had much time to enjoy it. It was inherited by his two sons, George and Frank, who were his only known relatives. George, the elder, married soon after the close of the Civil War and went abroad on his wedding trip. Some six months later his carriage was stopped by brigands while

they were traveling in Sicily. All that was ever known of the details was learned from their courier, who was desperately wounded, and died soon after telling the story. He asserted that George Lattimer, instead of submitting quietly like a sensible man when they had the drop on him, tried to put up a fight, and was shot; while his wife was killed in attempting to escape, falling over the edge of the road which wound around a precipice into the sea. His story was universally accepted, for George Lattimer's body was found with several bullet-holes in it, and a famous bandit leader known as 'Il Diavolo' operated extensively in that particular neck of woods."

"Therefore, the surviving brother, Frank, inherited the entire fortune, I take it?" commented Mr. Cooper.

Mr. Busker nodded assent. "Yes, under the conditions of the will, although it might have been entirely different if Mrs. George Lattimer had managed to escape; for it was known that an heir was expected in due course. In any case, she disappeared, and the courier's account of the tragedy explained why her body was not found, for it was supposed to have sunk in the Mediterranean. Frank Lattimer, as you know, never married. When the news of his brother's death arrived he went to Sicily and made an investigation of the affair, which was apparently fruitless, and when he returned to America he led the life of a recluse. He saw very few people and had no intimate friends, and, owing to some legal work which I did for him, I suppose that I knew him as well as anybody. You know that he died intestate, and consequently the Lattimer fortune is going begging; while, if Mrs. George Lattimer had been spared a short time longer, there is every reason to believe that there would have been an heir."

"And in some of your peculiar investigations you have come across circumstances which lead you to believe that such an heir may, in fact, exist?" suggested Mr. Cooper.

The lawyer looked at him cunningly. "I know, at least, that there is a nigger

in the wood-pile some place; for Frank Lattimer never confided to any one all the information he obtained during that investigation in Sicily," he answered, grinning. "No matter where I dug up the information; but I have every reason to believe that Mrs. George did not absolutely disappear from human ken when she went over that precipice. While Frank Lattimer was staying at Girgenti some six months after the tragedy, there was great excitement because this same Diavolo carried off a priest and a young girl. This was not at all according to the rules of the game, as the bandits never molest their own people, who are all, more or less, in sympathy and in league with them. Therefore there was great indignation in the town, and it would probably have led to the betrayal of the entire band if the couple had not reappeared four days later not a bit the worse for wear. It appears that Diavolo was a picturesque sort of a rascal—rather like his namesake of the opera—and a strange mixture of piety and ferocity. His captives had been treated with every consideration, and the sole object of their abduction had been that the priest might baptize and the girl act as godmother to an infant born in the outlaw's stronghold in the mountains. When the girl was led back to civilization, Diavolo put a small package into her hands, impressing upon her that she was not to open it until she was safely at home. When she did open it, she let out a howl of terror and dropped it, for the paper contained a pair of ears recently sheared from a woman's head."

"And I suppose that Frank Lattimer, by means of the traditional strawberry-mark, identified these human fragments as part of the anatomy of his lost sister-in-law?" said Mr. Cooper incredulously.

Busker smiled. "No, not quite as bad as that," he answered. "You are getting 'warm,' though; for in those ears were a pair of earrings worth a small fortune, and these he identified as the wedding present which he had given to her. There was not the slightest doubt as to that; for the setting was of peculiar workmanship, and the private

mark of the New York jeweler who made them was stamped upon the gold."

"That's all right as far as it goes—it seems to prove that Diavolo, at least, found her body—but what's behind it?" asked Mr. Cooper, with carefully assumed indifference.

The lawyer smiled aggravatingly. "There's plenty; but I'm not giving it up until we know just where we stand," he answered cautiously. "Here is the case in a nutshell. Suppose that an heir to the Lattimer fortune exists, absolutely ignorant of his—or her—rights. Suppose, further, that I am able to establish those rights beyond all question of doubt and remove the said heir—or heiress—from a position of poverty to one of wealth. Granting these suppositions, shouldn't I be in a position to make the claimant agree to pay a liberal commission as a contingent fee for legal services?"

"Sure," answered Mr. Cooper promptly. "It looks like such easy money that I can't understand your delay in picking it up."

Mr. Busker was silent for a moment, rubbing his chin, as was his wont, when he reflected how much he might demand for his own services or how little he might safely offer for the services of others.

"Well—er—there are difficulties to be surmounted before the claim can be established, and as I understand that they are of the nature which you may aid me to remove, I apply to you," he acknowledged finally.

Mr. Cooper nodded. "Then, before going further, we'll state some other propositions," he said dryly. "We'll suppose that you have very strong suspicions that such an heir—or heiress—does exist. Suppose, further, that for lack of financial means, or for want of a proper agent to carry on the necessary investigations, you are obliged to apply to me for assistance. Granting these suppositions—as well as yours—and that the thing goes through, shouldn't I be in a position to demand, at least, fifty per cent. of that commission?"

Mr. Busker rubbed his sharp chin harder than ever; for the "at least"

sounded ominously in his ears. The capitalist was quick to realize that he held the whip-hand, and in such cases he was not in the habit of foregoing any of his advantages; but, although the lawyer squirmed and twisted for some time, a satisfactory agreement was finally reached.

Thereupon Mr. Busker recited the details, and Mr. Cooper listened attentively, making copious notes and asking curt questions, which were always to the point.

At the end of their consultation he rapidly went over his list of available agents, and as a result of that mental review wrote a letter, which he addressed to Mr. William Winkelman, and despatched by a special messenger to a small restaurant situated on a quiet side street of lower New York.

II.

While the capitalist and the lawyer were planning to produce a claimant to the Lattimer millions, the kindly face of Madame Hortense, who presided so gracefully over the restaurant to which Cooper's letter was addressed, was wreathed in smiles. Madame had every reason to be happy, for at a corner table sat all of her favorite customers, reunited this evening after long absences in far corners of the world. Furthermore, the accounts of these wanderers in her ledger, which at the times of their respective departures had shown large debit balances, were now credited with corresponding sums, and she was thereby relieved of much financial worry.

Never for a moment had madame doubted the honesty of any man at that table; but their occupation fell under the head of "perilous pursuits," and, with all the will in the world, a man who has met with personal disaster is unable to discharge his obligations to others. Never had one of her customers wilfully defrauded her; but more than once she had been obliged to charge up an account to profit and loss; oftentimes a tear from her sympathetic eyes falling on the page as she did so, for that entry

was always made as a result of an obituary notice.

There was nothing extraordinary in the appearance of the diners at that corner table; they were well-dressed and of average good looks, but any leader who was a judge of physiognomy would have been glad to have them at his back if he was about to conduct a forlorn hope. In the life of each one of the veterans had been crammed enough of adventure to make a dime-novel hero's career commonplace by comparison; for they were all soldiers of fortune, adventurers, and trouble hunters; members of that strange Lost Legion whose doings are seldom chronicled in print, but which have much to do with the making of history which will be read by future generations.

For instance, a paragraph in a recent daily paper had stated that President Palmas, who for five years had been dictator of Equatoria, was deposed—and incidentally hanged—while General José Calientes had been chosen to succeed him; but no mention was made of the fact that Mr. Albert Jenkins, who occupied the head of the table, had really engineered the whole revolution.

The discovery of a tremendous source of supply of crude rubber in the middle of South America had caused great excitement in the commercial world, but no one associated the actual discovery with the name of Halliday, which was borne by the man on his right, and who had narrowly escaped death in a dozen forms, each more disagreeable than the last, while making his explorations.

Accounts of the wonderful escape of a band of political exiles from Siberia had filled column after column in the daily press, but the readers did not suspect that every detail of that flight had been carried out by the quiet man named Simpkins, who had himself narrowly escaped death by the knout, and now laughed good-naturedly at the pessimistic opinions expressed by Mr. Richard Redgreave, whose prospecting tours, carried on at great personal risk, had materially added to the world's visible supply of gold.

Little incidents of this kind were all

in the day's work of these four and the others at the table; every one of whom had many times walked hand in hand with death, and found in danger the stimulus which gives zest to life.

Naturally, these gentlemen of fortune were not in the habit of departing on their mysterious missions for their health nor purely for the love of adventure; for there was a limit even to Madame Hortense's credit, and none of them possessed independent means. Fortunately for them, that eminent capitalist, Mr. Jabez Cooper, was acquainted with their respective abilities, and, depending upon their resourcefulness to carry through apparently hopeless expeditions, kept them profitably and congenially employed.

He was well known as a philanthropist by the professional beggars for educational and charitable institutions, but there was neither charity nor undue liberality displayed in his arrangements with his employees. He was too shrewd a man to employ any one whom he could not trust implicitly, and too far-sighted, once he had given his confidence, to haggle about an expense account; but beyond that the reward was always contingent upon success.

He never gave a commission to any one until he was satisfied that so far as was humanly possible he would make good, and that being the case, he accepted failure philosophically, being assured that he had had a fair run for his money, charged up the expenses to profit and loss, and wasted no time in listening to hard-luck stories. It might be remarked that opportunities for such relations were rare; for he did not often meet with failure, and when he did his agent usually remained permanently in the territory where it occurred.

For this particular investigation Mr. Cooper had decided that Mr. William Winkelman possessed the qualities which would be valuable to him. He was a new recruit to the Lost Legion, who had forsaken journalism to adopt a life of adventure as a profession. For several years he had been an ornament to Park Row, driving editors crazy by

his skill in making himself appear the hero in every story he was sent to write up, and turning the most ordinary assignments into front-page sensations.

It was he who had invented the "Red Foot Society" to account for a commonplace murder in Mulberry Bend, and he didn't care who knew it. If two Chinamen had a dispute over an entirely personal matter, Mr. Winkelman wrote stories about it which implied the existence of an acute Yellow Peril and arraigned the police as incompetent, while some of his flights of imagination had involved his employers in tremendous libel suits, but all had boomed their circulations.

Such peculiar talents had not escaped the attention of Mr. Cooper, who was an inveterate reader of the papers, and a few weeks earlier he had employed him to attract public attention in another direction while he was quietly cinching up some valuable franchises. Realizing that a man with such a vivid imagination and the power of making other people believe that the moon was made of green cheese would be valuable to him, he had kept him in mind. Mr. Winkelman, admiring Mr. Cooper's disregard of expense so long as results were achieved, had resigned his position on the press to await his further orders, and consequently his face evinced his pleasure when the messenger handed him the note.

A hush fell over the others as he read it, for those little envelopes were usually the harbingers of adventure, and they were all curious. The contents were evidently satisfactory, for Mr. Winkelman felt justified in ordering a couple of magnums to celebrate in anticipation his speedy and, of course, successful return from the expedition.

"It's a little too much like counting chickens before they're hatched, which is always unlucky," remarked Redgreave, commonly known as Doleful Dick, as he raised the foaming glass with one hand and knocked on the wooden table-leg with the other. "Where might you be going, Willie?"

"Judging from the expression of commiseration on your face, I might

be going to the devil—but I'm not," answered Winkelman, grinning and tossing the note on the table.

Jenkins promptly read it aloud, and ended with an exclamation of disgust.

"Gee! this makes me tired!" he said. "When there's any particularly tough bit of chewing to be done, the old man always puts it up to us old birds, and when there's a nice little slice of tenderloin, he hands it over to a squab like you. Why, this is a regular kid-glove job—Sicily in the height of the season, and all that sort of thing. Just pack your spiketail coat and all your glad-rags and——"

"Not forgetting a forty-five or so, and the old advice about keeping your powder dry," interrupted Halliday significantly. "Having been employed by Mr. Cooper on several little matters, I might remark that no matter how good they may look on paper, I never found one of them to be a picnic when it came to a show-down."

Mr. Simpkins, who had been inveigled into matrimony on one of his missions, nodded sympathetically.

"If it was a cinch, the old man would take it on his own," he said. "Bill, don't you count those scads 'til you get 'em, if you'll take my tip, and then be sure you haven't got more than you went for before you shout for joy."

His remarks were emphasized by the appearance of an imperious Oriental beauty in the doorway, who demanded his immediate home-coming, and Mr. Winkelman decided that, at least, marriage was one danger which he would avoid.

Many other suggestions were made to him before the party broke up, but he was lacking in neither self-confidence nor assurance, so that his hat was cocked very jauntily on his head when he boarded the steamer bound for Naples the following day after a long consultation with Mr. Cooper and his legal accomplice, Mr. Fleetwood Busker.

III.

Mr. William Winkelman, who stood six feet two in his stocking feet and

was built in proportion, had received from his intimates the obvious nickname of "Wee Willie Winkie." Those same intimates asserted that the position of his hat on his head was an infallible barometer of his mental state; for, whether it was the stovepipe of formality, the Panama of *négligée*, or the derby of business, it seemed to assume automatically the angle which indicated his frame of mind at the moment. Particularly when its owner was putting up a bluff—which was not at all unusual—it rested so far back that it appeared as a halo, and gave the impression that Willie either used adhesive plaster to keep it there, or had a hat-peg permanently attached to the back of his head. Jauntily set on the right side, it was an indication that things were coming his way; and when he was perturbed or hurried it was jammed on straight and so hard that it appeared to rest upon his ears.

Never once during his journey across the ocean, or his rapid progress through Italy and the picturesque trip along the Sicilian coast, did its position vary from a graceful pose on the right side; and the landlord of his hotel at Girgenti was the first to see it gradually assume the perpendicular and settle itself firmly.

The mission entrusted to him seemed simplicity itself; for it consisted only in ferreting out information concerning the history of Diavolo, who had contributed much to the local history in the good old days of brigandage, and more particularly to locate the child of Mrs. George Lattimer, suspected to have been born in his camp some forty years earlier. Diavolo himself was known to have died peacefully of old age, and the Italian Government, realizing that a large part of its revenue is derived from tourists, solemnly asserted that brigands, except in the licensed forms of hotel-keepers and its own employees and officials, no longer existed.

Mr. Cooper had impressed upon him that an heir was to be produced with documents to prove his authenticity which would bear the closest scrutiny,

and had furnished him with all the details in his possession. To a man who had invented a whole Italian secret society and cast a halo of romance and mystery about the New York Chinatown this seemed like child's play; and it was not until he got on the ground that he remembered the prophetic utterances of his fellow legioners.

After the manner of his kind, he intended to go immediately into the mountains and pick up the trail, but the fervid protestations of his landlord when he ordered a saddle-horse for the expedition gave him pause.

"But what the signor proposes is impossible," he said, emphasizing his objection with eloquent hands. "To go alone into the mountains is to be robbed."

"And judging from the bill I just paid for your spaghetti and salad it isn't much better here," remarked Winkelman. "Now, if you'll just stop disturbing the atmosphere with your hands and get down to business, I'd like to know who's going to interfere with me up yonder."

"The signor has heard of Diavolo?" asked the landlord.

Wee Willie nodded. "Sure, but I'm not afraid of ghosts, and as near as I can make out, he cashed in several years ago, and his band has taken to hotel-keeping and acting as guides, which is more profitable and less risky."

The Italian smiled and shook his head. "Not all of us—I mean them, signor," he answered, hastily correcting his involuntary slip, but not before Winkelman had noticed it.

"Now see here, Emilio, just between man and man, what are you trying to convey?" he said earnestly. "Let me tell you as a starter that I'm here on business. I'm looking for information, and any one that can help me get it won't lose. Did you know Diavolo?"

"Every Sicilian had that honor," answered the Italian proudly. "He was a great man, signor, and his mantle has fallen on unworthy shoulders; for there is no longer faith and honesty among the brigands."

"But I understand there are no more brigands," suggested Winkelman.

The landlord made an expressive gesture with his eloquent hands. "Of a truth there are not, signor," he answered disconsolately. "The successors of Diavolo's men are not worthy of the name. They are robbers and outlaws—yes, and they pursue some of the old methods; such as sending in fragments of their captives to hurry the ransom; but they do not play fairly. In the old days, did the keeper of a hotel give us—I mean the followers of Diavolo—news of a guest who would pay ransom, we—I should say Diavolo—always paid a proper commission for the information. Now all is changed; the men of the hills do not pay, nor do they come to spend their money in merry-making in our wine-shops. It is of more profit to us to sell information concerning them to the Carbonari than to deliver tourists into their hands."

"So that you play on a sure thing—skin the tourists yourself, and make easy money on the side by peaching on the brigands," said Winkelman admiringly. "I reckon you are trying to tell me that they still exist."

"Is the signor, perhaps, of the police?" asked Emilio suspiciously.

"Do I look that much of a chuckle-head?" exclaimed the American, in disgust. "Now, see here, I'm onto your curves, all right, and unless I've made a bad guess, you were an out-and-out brigand before you bought this hotel with the fruits of your industry and took out a license to steal. If that's right, you were probably a member of Diavolo's band."

"Young blood is hot, signor, and perhaps I sometimes walked in the moonlight to cool it," acknowledged the Italian, grinning. "Il Diavolo was truly a great man."

"Of sorts, yes," said the Legioner. "Now, what I want to find is some one who can give me information about his private life and some of his captives, and I'm willing to pay for what I get. Are you open to engagement?"

The Italian gave quick assent, and to prove it started a detailed relation of

many of that outlaw's performances; but Winkelman checked him curtly.

"I don't care to know about all of his devilries and the exact number of cars he cut off," he said sharply. "I take it that you're close on sixty years old. Now, about forty years ago there was an American named Lattimer killed near here by Diavolo or one of his band. Do you know anything about that particular case?"

"Truly every one knows of it," answered the Italian, shrugging his shoulders. "In the Campo Santo of Girgenti his monument is the most imposing, and it is remembered that his death was an unfortunate accident; for alive he would have been worth many thousands of lira. It was the fortune of war, signor."

"It was blamed poor management, if you want my opinion," answered Winkelman. "I'm not bothering about dead men, though. What I want to know is what happened to his wife."

"If the signor will walk with me to the Campo Santo, he will see it all carved in marble on the monument which was erected by the brother of the Signor Lattimer," said the landlord hastily. "Her body was not found, but it relates how she fell over the precipice and was drowned."

"Emilio, I've been something of a romancer myself, and I don't believe all I read in obituary notices and on tombstones," answered the Legioner dryly. "I'm not paying for information of that kind, and I want to know what happened after they fished her out of the drink."

The expression of surprise which came to Emilio's round face did not appear entirely genuine and spontaneous, and the American was quick to follow up his advantage.

"What's more, I intend to know," he continued savagely, and the Italian looked at him wonderingly as his hat, with no apparent aid from his hands, gradually slipped so far back on his head that it was in imminent danger of falling off. "Don't you give me any song and dance about not being wise to it, for if you're not, you know who is."

"It is dangerous to know too much, signor," answered the Italian, looking about cautiously.

Winkelman made instant denial. "That's where you're mistaken, my friend, unless you like money less than I think you do," he said positively. "In this particular case you can't know enough to satisfy me, provided that it's the kind of knowledge I'm looking for."

"And the signor does not believe that the signora was drowned?" asked the Italian cunningly, his cupidity excited by Winkelman's constant reference to money.

"I know she wasn't," answered Winkelman, and his hat remained on only by a miracle, so precarious was the angle. "According to the contemporary accounts, she was drowned on the fifteenth of April; but I happen to know that the blood was hardly dry on the ears which were cut from her head on the twentieth of the next September!"

Emilio gave a gasp of astonishment, and the hue of his olive skin changed to a sickly yellow.

"Signor, if you know so much you must come from the brother of the man who was killed," he exclaimed, in a shaking voice. "If so, and you have that which he has neglected to send for the last six months, all is well. If not, then you know too much to be safe in Sicily, and I advise you to go back to your own country in peace while you may."

"I know just enough to make me curious to know it all," answered Wee Willie eagerly. "I'm not going to be scared out until I do know it, either, so you may as well give it up now, Emilio."

"Signor, you have guessed that I was once of Diavolo's company," answered the innkeeper solemnly. "You are right; I was, and I served a just man. Brigandage was an honorable profession in those days, and I was proud of it. Now all is changed, for, in spite of what the guide-books tell you, a certain form of brigandage exists. If you have that which Signor Lattimer has sent, you can forward it in the usual way. If not, do not venture out

of doors at night, nor out of the town in the daytime. You may live just about long enough to regret it if you do, for Massalino, who controls the banditti of this district, does not love your countrymen. You offer me money for information, but, signor, money is of no use to buy chianti and spaghetti if one's throat is cut so that they will not reach his stomach."

"But you can tell me, perhaps, where I can find it if I'm willing to take that chance myself," suggested Winkelman, and the Italian made a gesture which indicated the mountains behind the town.

"It is buried there, signor, but be guided by me and——"

"Now you're talking!" exclaimed the Legioner quickly. "That's just what I want—a guide who knows his business, and I'm willing to pay him well."

"The signor is too impatient to allow me to finish," answered Emilio. "I was about to say that if you would be guided by me you would peacefully return home. Not for all the gold in the world would I accompany you to yonder mountains, and you will need no guide; for only trouble awaits you, and that will find you of itself."

Every warning of his comrades at the restaurant came to Wee Willie Winkie's mind as he listened to the earnest words of the Italian, and his hat gradually slipped forward and settled itself firmly on his head; but more especially did he remember Halliday's advice, and the weight of the large revolver in his belt comforted him.

It never occurred to him that he might abandon his quest; and an hour later Emilio bade him a tearful farewell as he rode out of the courtyard on a sorry-looking horse, his only comforting reflection being that he would not be exposed to the danger of matrimony which had overtaken his confrère Simpkins.

IV.

Mr. Fleetwood Busker sat in his private office engaged in the pleasant but unprofitable occupation of building

castles in the air. The substructures of these charming edifices were constructed of the dollars which he hoped to realize as a result of the mission on which Wee Willie Winkie was at that moment proceeding into the mountains north of Girgenti; and Mr. Busker congratulated himself that should that mission prove abortive he had another card to play of which his associate, Mr. Cooper, was entirely ignorant.

The lawyer had traveled by crooked paths for so many years that he had no scruples in holding out on his partner in the venture, and he had seen so much of the baser side of human nature that he judged all men to be as crooked as himself. In this he did the capitalist injustice; for, although no one would drive a harder bargain than Mr. Cooper, where once the bargain was made he observed it religiously, both in the letter and the spirit.

"Cooper has the main facts, but I guess I've got enough up my sleeve to whipsaw him when it comes to the settlement," he mused. "He knows that Frank Lattimer was a rascal, and that instead of coming up with a ransom to buy Mrs. Lattimer's freedom, he squared Diavolo to dispose of her. The story about the ears and the possible identity of the child was enough to make the old codger furnish a man and the money to investigate, but I didn't let on about the best part of it—that Frank Lattimer was systematically blackmailed from the moment he made that bargain until the day of his death. It only shows what a blame fool a man is not to employ a lawyer before, instead of after, he does something crooked. His bargain with Diavolo was that, for a lump sum, the brigand would guarantee that no one should ever appear to claim George Lattimer's share of the fortune; but there must have been a hole in that contract that you could drive a load of hay through, or the dago would never have been able to pull his leg for forty years; and that's where I come in."

The result of his cogitations was that he fell to figuring with pencil and paper: reckoning up the prospective prof-

its and forgetting entirely that his lack of frankness bade fair to prevent him from reaping them, cause Mr. Cooper to lose his money, and Mr. Winkelman to forfeit his life.

In the meantime, Mr. Cooper, who was not accustomed to worry about possible failure, reckon upon probable success or bother about the safety of his agents when once a matter was under way, had practically dismissed the matter from his mind. Many other ventures had been undertaken since Mr. Winkelman's departure, and the restaurant was again temporarily deserted, but no one of the case-hardened veterans of the Legion was steering into deeper trouble than the latest recruit, who, with his hat set squarely and pulled down to his ears, was belaboring a stiff-legged scarecrow of a horse under the burning Sicilian sun.

"Now, old bag-o'-bones, before you're converted into the succulent *hors-d'œuvre* of a dago table d'hôte, see if you can't get a move on you," he said, as with vigorous heels and nimble crop he beat a tattoo on its ribs. "I reckon this is the road where the bride and groom ran up against the real thing; but I haven't time to admire the scenery, so bump along."

It took considerable exertion to urge the beast over the three miles intervening between the town and the scene of the tragedy; but when they finally reached it, Mr. Winkelman made no objection when the animal came to a dead halt.

The Legioner had been surfeited on the beauties of inanimate scenery during his short stay in Italy; but no man with a proper appreciation of feminine loveliness would ever tire of looking at the girl who was leaning on the stone parapet and gazing out over the blue water.

At that point the road curved sharply to avoid a steep hill which jutted out into the Mediterranean, and it was cut in the very face of the cliff. At the edge was a wall of masonry to prevent carriages from tumbling over into the sea some forty feet below; and it was on this that the girl leaned her shapely

arms, while her face rested on her hands. Such hands and arms as Praxiteles might have dreamed of, but which his art could never have modeled, supported a face which Sir Joshua could not have flattered; and in her simple native costume of the bright colors which the Southrons love she was a vision of beauty which called forth an exclamation of wonder from even so practical and unemotional a man as Wee Willie.

The sound aroused her, and when she turned and looked up at him, he restrained another exclamation with difficulty, for her face, in full view, was even more beautiful than in profile; and the grace of her supple, erect figure was a joy to watch.

"Er—I beg your pardon if I startled you," stammered Winkelman, removing with considerable difficulty the hat which was jammed upon his head so tightly. "You seemed to fit so perfectly into the scenery that I did not realize that you were alive."

"It is beautiful, is it not?" answered the girl, open and unabashed admiration in her large eyes as she took in at a glance the attractive face and well-proportioned figure of the Legioner. "I often come here to admire it, and it is only when I look at those three crosses behind you that I find anything disagreeable about it."

The Legioner had noticed these mute memorials, which are raised in Catholic countries on the spot where travelers have met violent deaths; and her remark recalled his mission, which had temporarily been banished from his mind by the sight of the girl.

"There appears to have been considerable trouble about here," he agreed, replacing his hat—this time jauntily on the right side—and dismounting from his horse. "It makes me grateful to think that the government has suppressed brigandage when I realize that in the old days our tête-à-tête might have been interrupted by Il Diavolo."

"His interruptions were always sudden and effective," answered the girl, looking at him. "Those three crosses are a result of his handiwork. Two of

them commemorate the deaths of your countrymen, signor; the husband who was shot and the wife who threw herself over this parapet."

"You know that story, do you?" asked the Legioner, looking at her attentively; for there seemed a peculiar significance in her speaking of the matter which had brought him to Sicily.

The girl nodded and smiled. "All Sicilians know it—and many more tales of Il Diavolo's prowess," she answered. "The great brigands were heroes to our people, signor."

"And yet they were exterminated?" said Winkelman interrogatively.

She shrugged her graceful shoulders and pointed to the road below where a couple of Carbonari in their bright uniform were patrolling; the regulation fifty paces separating them, that they might not fall into an ambush together.

"Those men have made it—difficult, signor," she said, with just a touch of regret in her voice. "They are everywhere on the traveled roads; but in the fastnesses of the mountains perhaps it survives. Sicily is a large country, signor."

"I hope that all of the traditions, at least, have not been lost," he answered frankly. "Signorina, I am not trying to avoid the gentlemen of the mountains—I seek them."

The girl gave a little exclamation of surprise and drew back from him.

"The signor is an American; he is not of the police?" she said doubtfully. He shook his head emphatically. "You wouldn't suspect it if you'd read some of the roasts I've given 'em," he answered. "On the contrary, I want to get next to information concerning the supposed death of the very people in whose memory these crosses have been erected, and I'm willing to make it right with——"

"The signor, then, perhaps has a message for me," interrupted the girl, looking in the direction of the Carbonari, who were slowly approaching the hill on which they stood. "Unless he can deliver it quickly and give me that which he carries, it would be better that

we leave this road, where we are liable to interruption."

Winkelman looked at her in surprise, for he had no reason to suppose his coming was expected, but he never believed in throwing away opportunities, and his hat gradually worked around to the back of his head as he assured her that nothing would give him greater pleasure than to accompany her to a more secluded spot. The girl led the way by a small path up the hill, and he followed, leading his horse and admiring her graceful walk and the shape of her small, bare feet and trim ankles displayed beneath the short skirt.

A quarter of an hour of steep climbing, which tired the girl not one whit, brought them to a spot high above the road which commanded a wide view in all directions, and which could not be approached unobserved by watchful eyes. Here the girl paused, and, after assuring herself that the Carbonari were pursuing their way along the road, looked at him inquiringly.

"Now, signor, I am waiting," she said expectantly, and the Legioner was glad of the opportunity to plead shortness of breath to delay answering. Those who knew him well would have argued, from the position of his hat, which was perched on the extreme back of his head, that he was preparing to bluff, and the girl watched him with frank curiosity, not unmixed with equally frank admiration, as she waited for him to speak.

"Well, it's just as I told you; I'm looking for information," he said finally. "First, I want to know——"

"No, first you must satisfy me by delivering the packet for which I have waited each day for two months," she interrupted.

Wce Willie did some hard thinking while he sparred for time.

"It would be more comfortable if I knew your name," he said irrelevantly. "Mine's Winkelman; William Winkelman, and Willie for short."

"And mine is Fiametta," she answered, smiling and disclosing two rows of pearly teeth. "I shall call you Willie, and I am glad that the Signor

Lattimer has changed his messenger. The other was so old and fearful."

"Gee, this is getting interesting!" thought the Legioner. "There's been some one else on the job, and it's up to me to get busy if I'm going to pull off a beat. May I ask how well you knew the other guy?" he continued, aloud.

Fiametta shrugged her shoulders and made a wry little face.

"Well enough to take what he brought and give the token in return—no more," she answered. "He was always so frightened that he said not a word, but fled as if Il Diavolo himself was at his heels."

Winkelman rapidly arrayed the facts which she had unwittingly betrayed, but as yet could make nothing of them beyond the suspicion that the late Frank Lattimer had, for reasons of his own, kept in communication with the surviving brigands, and that Fiametta had been one of the intermediaries. This was a place where his trained faculty of acquisitiveness—so far as information was concerned—stood him in good stead, and for a half-hour of apparently airy persiflage he managed to lead the conversation away from his own mission, while industriously but unobtrusively he led the girl to betray her past connection with the affair.

"Perhaps I'm playing it a little low-down; but I reckon I can keep my mouth shut about her part in it, and I've got to know where I'm at," he reflected, as she prattled on, apparently nothing loath to pass the time in his company.

Winkelman, if he had not been puzzled by the suspicion that some one had attempted to make a monkey of him, would have found the tête-à-tête equally agreeable: for there was something wonderfully caressing in the way she pronounced his name, and, in her naive unconsciousness of conventionality, she employed no coquetry to conceal the very favorable impression which he had made upon her.

It was not until she had unconsciously placed her freedom entirely in his hands by confessing that she was, in fact, an active agent for a gang of banditti, and that ever since she had been

able to walk she had received the blackmail which formed a large proportion of their income, that he realized their respective positions. Among other things, she had told him that a representative of Frank Lattimer had met her twice a year at the scene of the tragedy, giving her a packet, which she delivered, unopened, to Massalino, the leader of the brigands, and hurrying away as soon as he received from her the token which served as a receipt. For two months she had now waited for him every day; and among her companions in the mountains there were savage mutterings at the delay and threats of reprisal upon the messenger when he should finally arrive.

"But now that you are here at last, Signor Willie, I know that they will be appeased," she concluded, drawing nearer to him and looking up at his face confidently. "Only it is long past my time to return, and I must hurry; so give me the packet and never be late again, will you?"

"Fiametta, I have deceived—I am not—oh, hang it, see here!" he stammered, and then, the beautiful face being nearer to his own than safety warranted, he threw his arms around her and pressed a dozen kisses on her not unwilling lips.

"That is part of the payment which I will not transmit to Massalino," she said, smiling, as she half-reluctantly disengaged herself from his embrace. "But, Willie *mio*, time presses, and I must get back."

The Legioner looked at her as if he would have found a repetition easier than an explanation; but the girl eluded him and held out her hands for the packet.

"Fiametta, I've buncoed you," he said sheepishly. "I'm out here on the Lattimer business; but I don't come as a representative of Frank Lattimer, who, if he got all that's coming to him, has been roasting in Hades for the last six months. Here, what's the matter? What have I done?" The girl had let her hand drop to her side, all color left her face, and she looked at him with eyes distended with terror.

"You are not the messenger from

Signor Lattimer?" she said, almost in a whisper. "Then, Signor Willie, it is I who have led you to your undoing unless you fly. Go, *caro mio*—do not stop to question me, but get back to Girgenti as quickly as you can and leave Sicily this night."

"And you?" he said anxiously, for there was no mistaking the sincerity of her warning.

"Do not think of me—you will not betray what I have told you, and my own people will not harm me," she said imploringly. "But go—go—go before it is too late!"

The Legioner felt that he was in danger, but flight was the last thing that occurred to him, which, under the circumstances, saved him from considerable disappointment. For a moment he turned to look down at the road, to assure himself by the sight of the patrolling Carbonari that he had not been transported back to the Italy of forty years before; but it would have needed stronger proof than that to banish the vision of the man who stood on the path up which they had climbed.

In dress and appearance he might have personated the hero in the opera of "Fra Diavolo," but the weapon which was leveled fairly at the Legioner's head was a repeating pistol of the latest type, and the glint of the sun on a dozen gun-barrels which showed above the rocks convinced the adventurer that he had arrived at the fountainhead of information.

V.

Perhaps a veteran member of the Legion would not have allowed himself to be so completely surprised as Mr. Winkelmann had been; but no one of them would have more quickly realized the hopelessness of resistance against overwhelming odds than did he. He accepted with good grace the ill fortune of war which had made him the captive of the man to whom he had hoped to go as an envoy; and trusted sincerely that, at least, the latter part of his interview with Fiametta had been unobserved.

It was the girl herself, in response to the sharp order of the brigand in the path, who relieved him of the useless encumbrance of his revolver while he stood with hands above his head; finding opportunity to whisper as she did so that she would do her best to serve him, and incidentally advising him to conceal his knowledge of their language.

At a word from the leader, the plateau on which they stood swarmed with his ragged and picturesque followers.

In his wildest flights of the imagination, when Willie had graphically described the members of the mythical "Red Foot Society" meeting in solemn conclave in their subterranean council-chamber, he had never pictured such a villainous-appearing gang as this; but his first feeling was one of wonder that, so beautiful a creature as Fiametta should have been their voluntary companion and agent.

They were a dirty and repulsive collection of gallows-birds; the outcasts of the slums of Naples, Palermo, and Syracuse; escaped criminals, thugs, and tramps. Only their leader, a handsome, swarthy man, with jet-black hair and eyes and a well-knit, slight, and graceful figure, seemed to place the slightest value upon personal cleanliness, while his dress—although it was theatrical in cut and color—was of the finest material, and fitted him to perfection. All were heavily armed, and the condition of their weapons told of the careful supervision of a watchful eye; for, no matter how ragged and unwashed the men might be, their guns, revolvers, and accouterments were of the most effective pattern and spotlessly clean.

Massalino—for he it was who led them—maintained a strict discipline, and at a sharp command from him they formed about their captive, indicating by gesture that he was to march back into the hills when he looked at them blankly after they had given verbal orders. One of them stepped out and put an end to the tribulation of the Legioner's horse with a deft slash of his long knife; a precaution of which Winkel-

man acknowledged the wisdom as they clambered over a faint path which a goat would have found it troublesome to negotiate.

Up and up they climbed into the hills, his captors wasting no breath in conversation, but urging him on by expressive taps on their long knives when he threatened to drop with fatigue from the unaccustomed exercise. Three hours of steady climbing and they paused long enough to bandage his eyes, one of them good-naturedly pouring him a draft of sour, thin wine from a flask of goat-skin. Never had a more villainous concoction passed his lips; but it was like nectar to his dry, parched mouth.

Their progress for the next hour was slower; for between fatigue and blindness the Legioner constantly stumbled and fell, receiving in stoical silence the curses and threats of the bandits who held him by either arm. Finally, when he had about determined to give it up and let them finish him as they saw fit, the party halted at a hoarse challenge, and soon afterward he was pushed violently forward and the bandage removed from his eyes.

There was only one reassuring thing in the prospect before him when sight was restored, and that was the presence of Fiametta, who flashed one glance of encouragement and commiseration at him before turning to chat and laugh with a group of better dressed men, who were gathered about a fire on which a large caldron was boiling.

"Gee-whiz, this is a mixture of *Carmen*, *Gil Blas*, and *Don Quixote*," thought the Legioner, as he surveyed his environment.

On a perfectly level, grass-grown plateau of half an acre in extent the outlaws had established a permanent camp. Rough lean-tos were against the high and jagged rocks which surrounded it on every side, and in the center was a great camp-fire, where members of the band were preparing a savory meal of soup and goat-flesh.

Perhaps a dozen men had formed Massalino's escort; but here were at least fifty, and among them he instinct-

ively recognized many who were of a different class from his captors. Many women, several of them young and pretty, mingled with the brigands on terms of easy familiarity, and more than one of them looked curiously at the handsome and well-dressed newcomer.

Except for that, no one paid any particular attention to him, and he was free to walk about where he pleased; but a glance at the summit of the rocks showed the firelight reflected from bright gun-barrels at regular intervals, and he knew that a cordon of sentries overlooked the plateau as well as the unknown approaches to it.

Winkelman ate of the rough fare, which they gave him in abundance, with an appetite born of hard exercise; washing it down with the sour, red wine, which was as free as water. By the time he had finished and stretched his tired limbs luxuriously on the soft grass, he had decided that there were compensations even in the life of a hunted outlaw, and, on feeling for his cigarette-case, the touch of the fat bundle of bank-notes, which remained undisturbed in his pocket, reminded him that his pistol was the only thing which had been taken from him.

"I'd have been touched quicker than this on the Bowery, so perhaps they're not so bad as they look, after all," he reflected under the soothing influence of tobacco smoke. "Perhaps their little joshing as they boosted me up that path was only to throw a scare in me, and I hope I can convince 'em that the person of an envoy is sacred."

His meditations were interrupted by a tap on his shoulder, and, looking up, he saw a handsome boy dressed in the goat-skin jacket and ribboned leggings of a shepherd, who informed him in broken English that Massalino wished to speak with him.

The quarters of the chief were in a cavern of the rocks, the entrance guarded by a ragged sentinel and the interior furnished with a certain rude luxury. Massalino had apparently just finished his supper, for the dishes had not yet been cleared away from a rough table at one side; and the Legioner no-

ticed that places had been set for two. It was not without a little pang of disappointment that he guessed who his companion had been; for gracefully stretched out on a low couch covered with goat-skins, her hands clasped behind her head and a cigarette between her red lips, was Fiametta.

Massalino himself sat beside a table on which was scattered a miscellaneous assortment of junk which would have stocked the show-window of a curio-dealer; and among it he noticed the useless revolver of which Fiametta had relieved him.

The girl looked at him indifferently when he entered, and Massalino motioned to him to be seated.

"Signor, you will pardon my apparent lack of courtesy in not receiving you before; but I have had much business since my return," he said in excellent English; and the Legioner looked at him in surprise, while a twinkle of amusement came to the brigand's eyes. "I speak your language, as you perceive, for a very accomplished Englishman honored me by remaining as my guest for several months, and I improved my opportunities," he continued. "May I ask your name and your business in Sicily?"

"My name won't mean anything to you; but it's Winkelman," answered the Legioner. "Perhaps my business will, though; for it was principally to see you that I came here, and it is connected with the affairs of Frank Lattimer."

It was the bandit's turn to be surprised, and he turned and spoke to Fiametta in a patois which was unintelligible to the American. The girl answered with a monosyllable; and had Wee Willie's hat not been removed in deference to her presence it would have perched on the back of his head, for he realized that she had not betrayed him, and felt hopeful that a bluff might extricate him from a difficult position.

"Then I must apologize for our rudeness, which arose entirely from a misunderstanding," continued the outlaw, turning again to the Legioner. "My—er—agent did not recognize you as his messenger, so you were brought here in

the usual course of business. The fact that the remittance was delayed for two months made us suspicious; but if you will deliver it now you will be returned in safety to-morrow and an allowance made for the horse."

"That won't break you, unless some one has cornered the sausage market; but there is still a little misunderstanding," answered Winkelman, grinning. "I'm not a messenger from Frank Lattimer, and I came here to get information, not to deliver money."

"But the signor has money with him?" demanded Massalino, in a voice which conveyed a menace.

The Legioner promptly pulled out his well-filled wallet.

"Only enough for current expenses," he said as he handed it over.

The bandit threw it carelessly on the table after counting the not inconsiderable contents.

"We shall talk of this later; but now to your business, signor," he said.

Winkelman, after looking vainly at Fiametta for inspiration, plunged ahead. "In the first place, the goose which has semiannually laid golden eggs for you has gone out of business," he said. "Frank Lattimer died six months ago, and he doesn't seem to have left any directions about continuing the payments."

"May I ask how the signor happens to be his messenger, then?" said Massalino incredulously. "We have never betrayed his connection with us, and I am sure he would have carried the secret with him."

"He did. I reckon; or I shouldn't have come here," answered Winkelman. "I want to know all about it—he couldn't tell me, so I came to you."

"You are a brave man, signor—or a fool," answered the outlaw, grinning. "This place does not give up secrets; it hides them."

"At a price, and a very considerable one, yes; but for a higher bid the custom might be changed," insinuated the American. The bandit looked at him cunningly.

"How much?" he asked, and Winkelman breathed a sigh of relief.

"It would sound outrageous in your money, so I'll talk dollars, and about five million of 'em," he answered.

Massalino nearly lost his balance. "What? The signor has five millions of dollars—twenty-five millions of lire—at his disposition. Truly, this is better than many messengers, and I will at once put pen and paper at his disposition to send for ransom!"

"Hold on—you're getting ahead of your horses," answered Winkelman quickly. "I wouldn't assay five hundred if you sent me back piecemeal; but if you can deliver the goods, that tidy little sum is waiting to be picked up. Don't you understand that it's Lattimer's fortune? The old pirate has stalled you off by paying a few thousands every year, and all the time you've had the legitimate heir to millions hidden away some place."

Massalino looked at him blankly, and Winkelman patiently repeated the entire details of old John Lattimer's fortune and the provisions of the will under which Frank Lattimer had inherited, in default of issue of the marriage of his elder brother.

"So you've been buncoed right along," he concluded. "The ordinary common or garden American capitalist can give you dago brigands cards and spades when it comes to robbery, and that genial gentleman who has cashed in did you brown."

"Perhaps, and then again—perhaps not," answered Massalino, shrugging his shoulders. "This much I will tell you, signor. Il Diavolo, my honored predecessor in command of the Sicilian banditti, may have had a power over your countryman; but if he did, he carried the secret of it with him to the grave when he died some twenty years ago. Since that time Frank Lattimer has regularly supplied us with money on the supposition that the secret had been transmitted to us; when, as a matter of fact, we have traded only upon the fact that such a secret must have existed."

"What! You are not wise to what the old boy knew?" exclaimed Winkelman, in consternation; and the bandit

calmly nodded assent. The Legioner looked at him blankly; the probable success of his mission melting like snow before the south wind.

"Signor Massalino, if I had my hat on I'd take it off to you; for you've worked a bunk that would make Hungry Joe turn green with envy," he acknowledged. "If my respected employer, Mr. Jabez Cooper, hadn't given me the tip that the heir I was to produce must be the real thing, I'd trust to you to manufacture one who would fill the bill."

"That also might be possible," answered the Sicilian reflectively, his hands straying to the wallet which contained Winkelman's money. "I have often thought that we were, perhaps, too conservative in our methods; but, after all, we have managed to prosper. On the whole, perhaps the bird in hand is worth two in the bush, and an employer who supplies his agent so liberally with expense-money would undoubtedly pay well rather than permanently lose that agent's services. I will give you the opportunity to communicate with him, signor, before resorting to other measures."

"Signor, you may just as well save postage," answered Winkelman positively. "My boss pays only on delivery of the goods, and he wouldn't value me at a canceled two-cent stamp."

"But it is always possible to make partial delivery in advance," suggested Massalino, gazing significantly at the Legioner's right ear. "For instance, the friends of the Englishman who stayed so long with us were most obdurate. It was not until we had sent weekly instalments of his anatomy, beginning with his right ear, followed by its companion, and then by his fingers, that they would listen to reason. If I remember correctly, it was his right big toe, carefully wrapped in cotton and sent by registered mail, which finally produced the ransom. I have wondered if the results would have been quicker if we had pinned one of his ears to the first letter."

"I don't know much about English business methods, but I can assure you

that Mr. Cooper is no souvenir-collector," answered the Legioner quickly. "What he's looking for is an heir to the Lattimer fortune, and it cuts a small figure with him whether I show up in fragments or as an undivided total unless I have him with me. If you're looking for big money, the easiest way to get it is to dig up the facts concerning the birth of that heir, and then produce a man to fit 'em."

The bandit eyed him curiously for a minute before answering, and Winkelman shifted uneasily on his seat whenever his gaze seemed to wander in the direction of his ears.

"Signor, what you suggest is worthy of consideration," he said finally. "Of a truth, there exists a tradition that the American signora was rescued from the sea, and afterward gave birth to a man-child in this very apartment. Unfortunately, we do not know where that child is; but who knows what we may discover? Even I, who speak to you, may be the heir to the Lattimer fortune, for I am of the proper age, and genealogy is not carefully recorded in this place. I shall look into it, and if it promises well we may reach an agreement. If not, your visit will not have been entirely without profit to us; for I shall forward portions of you by post to Mr. Cooper until he decides to pay our price for the part of you of which we shall retain possession. Now, Fiametta, the signor is weary; so tell the sentinel to allow him to pass to his bed."

The girl rose languidly from the couch and beckoned to him to follow her, finding opportunity to whisper a word of encouragement, which she emphasized by a tender pressure of the hand as she escorted him through the opening.

A half-hour later Wee Willie was snugly rolled in a goat-skin rug beside the camp-fire, carefully examining each of his ears to assure himself that they were still there before he composed himself to sleep.

"If my respected friend Massalino gets control of the Lattimer millions and introduces his improved methods into Wall Street, it's up to Harriman

and Ryan to take to the tall timber," he concluded, and, thinking regretfully of the material for a front-page "thriller" which was going to waste, he sought oblivion in slumber.

VI.

Daylight did not make the appearance of the camp more attractive when the Legioner rolled out of his blankets at dawn, and his frame of mind was so unsatisfactory that his hat was jammed firmly on his head as he hunted about for his breakfast.

"It's a sort of satisfaction to feel it against my ears, for it reminds me that they're still there," he reflected, as he watched the sleepy brigands stretching themselves and shaking their disordered clothes into place. "I wonder what Cooper's face will look like when he opens a packet in which he expects to find the missing documents and discovers only a personal souvenir of me. Also what I'll look like without 'em; but there's no sense in spoiling this appetite with disagreeable forecasts."

Mr. Winkelman found the outlaws hospitable in sharing their meal with him, but their conversation while he ate it—carried on in entire ignorance that he understood their language—was not comforting. They were men who apparently placed little value upon human life—when it happened to belong to any one else—and, as he had suspected, the band was largely composed of convicts escaped from the sulfur-mines of the district.

They chaffed each other and joked about the enormities they had committed with perfect openness; and it did not conduce to his comfort when they laughingly disputed as to which of them should have the privilege of slicing him up when their leader gave the word.

The shepherd-boy, who had summoned him the night before, carried a generous proportion of the breakfast into the cave where he had interviewed Massalino; and he watched him anxiously, hoping for another summons which would put an end to his uncertainty; but the boy made no sign.

Escape did not occur to him, for he knew that it was impossible, in spite of the apparent freedom which was allowed to his movements, and there would be no object in returning to America with only negative information. Listening to the bandits only enlightened him as to the fate of comparatively recent captives, and told him nothing of the history of Mrs. Lattimer, of which they were probably ignorant in any case; and when he saw Fiametta come from the cave, climb a steep path cut in the rocks, and disappear past the sentinel with a cheerful wave of her hand, he felt that his only friend had left him.

An hour later Massalino came from the cave and sent squads of his followers away upon their peculiar business; and the Legioner noticed that at irregular intervals he made the round of the sentinels upon the rock to assure himself of their watchfulness.

"The place isn't impregnable, then," he concluded as he watched the careful precautions against surprise. "I'll bet the bunch from Madame Hortense's could round up the whole outfit; and if I had that blamed heir corralled I wouldn't care how quick they tried."

By noon the camp was almost deserted, but Massalino remained, watchful and alert, recognizing his prisoner's presence only by a curt nod when he passed him. It was not until darkness was falling that the bandits commenced to return, some of them bearing food and others great skins of wine, while one squad drove before them a whimpering peasant with hands tightly bound behind his back. Winkelman watched him curiously, wondering what profit they could hope to obtain from so poor a captive; but the peasant's pleas for mercy quickly convinced him that he had been taken as a matter of vengeance.

"It is but natural that a man should love his child, signors," he whimpered. "She was all I had, my little Carlotta; but if I had known she was with you I should never have asked the Carbonari to help me find her."

"You lie, Giacomo; you knew she

was here, and you had promised to show them the path," answered one of the bandits, striking him in the mouth. "You know what that means, and you will pay the penalty."

The peasant fell on his face, imploring their mercy, but they raised him, and with a facility which spoke of much practise bound him to a post. A moment later four of the bandits stepped in front of him with leveled carbines, there was a sharp report, and his clothes seemed to contain no human form as they sagged over the ropes; while a small, red pool formed slowly at his feet.

It had all happened so quickly that half of the bandits did not know what was going on, and they paid but slight attention to the report of the carbines but a young and pretty girl who had been dancing and singing with a group of them in the corner of the plateau came running over to the scene of the tragedy. One look at the sagging form which the ropes supported and she rushed toward it, raising the head, which had fallen forward, and covering the dead face with kisses.

Could a single pressure on a button have annihilated the whole band at that moment, Winkelman would have unhesitatingly pressed his finger upon it; for all the romance with which his vivid imagination had clothed this picturesque stronghold of the outlaws vanished before this tragic instance of their brutality. With the callousness of depravity they listened to the girl's lamentations with utter indifference; and when Massalino, disturbed by her outcries, came from the cave, the Legioner secretly rejoiced at the expression of black rage on his face as his eye took in the details of the scene, and the quick blow which floored the squad leader when he boastfully finished his report.

"I didn't think he'd stand for anything like that," Winkelman thought, as Massalino, with no light hand, administered chastisement to every one concerned, and ordered them into confinement for future punishment. "I'm sorry for the poor beggar, but it's an ill wind that blows nobody good; and perhaps

it will impress upon these gazabos that I'm not to be vivisected without orders from headquarters."

Discipline in the camp was apparently maintained by prompt punishment, for within ten minutes the body had been removed, and the executioners with bared backs were triced to the same post, while a lusty brigand administered forty lashes to each of them with a most effective cat-o'-nine tails.

Massalino improved the opportunity to give a stern rebuke to their comrades who had assembled to witness the flogging; but at his words Winkelman's hat assumed an entirely new position, for it rested on the top of his hair, which slowly rose on end.

"Let this be a lesson to you that in this camp there is but one law, and that is my word," said Massalino sternly. "Throughout the countryside it is known that he who would betray us dies. Four times within the past three months it has been necessary to remind the peasantry of this, and you know that in spite of that we are still in danger of betrayal. And now, when the means to impress them lay ready to me, these blunderers have robbed me of the chance by granting a merciful death. It was my purpose to have made such an example of him that all men would have trembled at my name; for had these fools not robbed me of him I should have had him crucified!"

"And that's the gent whose say-so will settle me!" thought Winkelman, sick at heart as the assemblage broke up after seeing a soothing application of salt and vinegar applied to the bleeding backs of their squirming brethren. "I'm beginning to think that perhaps I was a little premature in blowing the boys to those magnums, and maybe there's something in Doleful Dick's hard-luck signs, after all."

Wee Willie's hat for the remainder of the evening alternately rested on his ears, and rose well above his head as he thought of the cold brutality of Massalino's speech; and it was not until late, when he saw Fiametta descending the path, tenderly supporting a black-robed priest, whose white hair and

kindly face spoke eloquently of benevolence, that he could discern the faintest hope in the future.

Two hours later, after every one but the sentinels on the rocks above had sunk into slumber, he was again aroused by the shepherd-boy, who led him to Massalino's cave. Seated about the table were the old priest, the bandit leader, and Fiametta, while spread upon it was a mass of documents and papers, many of them yellow with age and bearing imposing-looking seals.

"Signor, the heir to the Lattimer fortune has been discovered. I am the son who was born by Mrs. Lattimer in this very cave, six months after the death of my father at the hands of Diavolo," said the outlaw triumphantly.

The end of the Legioner's mission, should Massalino's claim be true, was in sight, and his employer could find no fault with the speed with which it had been accomplished; but as Winkelman looked at the documents a sudden desire came over him to gather them in his arms and make a race for the camp-fire with them. He knew the hopelessness of it, for the sentry at the door would have shot him like a dog; but when he spoke, his own voice sounded strangely in his ears.

"You speak confidently, signor; but remember that it is a court of justice you will have to satisfy, not a man who is in your power, before you get possession," he said.

Massalino laughed boisterously. "Ah, but here are papers to prove it beyond question," he answered. "It was the good father who was brought here to christen me, and always since I could walk, twice a year, has he heard my confession. Tell him, father, that I am the child of the American signora, and that your records prove it."

In spite of the confidence of his tone, he looked at the priest with a little trace of anxiety, and there was an expression of relief on his face when the white head nodded assent.

"Of that there is no doubt, my son; and if the fact will enable you to obtain riches, I can only hope that you will forsake this life of crime and violence

and try to atone by good works and penitence for forty years misspent."

"Twenty-five million lire will buy forgiveness for my little peccadilloes, father, and there are plenty of idle priests to do my penances for me," answered Massalino brutally. "Fiametta, girl, you shall have diamonds and silks to replace your wool and corals, and I—— Oh, but I shall live like a lord!"

The girl looked at him curiously for a moment, and then turned to the Legioner.

"This is all true, is it not, signor; there is no mistake about this fortune?"

"The fortune is there safe enough—of that you may be assured," he answered quietly. "For the inheritance, that is another matter. Signor Massalino, will you show me your proofs?"

"First, there is the father's word," said the brigand. "Then here is the baptismal certificate, showing that the son of Signora Alice Lattimer, widow of George Lattimer, was christened here six months after the father's death."

"And the mother?" asked Winkelman.

"Died in childbed, as this certificate testifies," answered Massalino, and the priest crossed himself.

"These facts are of your knowledge, father?" asked the Legioner.

The priest bowed. "Absolutely, signor," he answered almost reluctantly. "There is no question of the identity. Il Diavolo was a stern man, and with none of the graces of civilization save his devotion to the church. The knowledge of his crimes have weighed heavily on me; but I knew them under the seal of the confessional. These papers have been in my charge for many years, but I knew nothing of the fortune which might depend upon them, or—God help me!—I believe I should have destroyed them."

Winkelman's face grew very white as he bundled them together—the certificate of birth and baptism, of Mrs. Lattimer's death, and the correspondence and agreement between the bandit and Frank Lattimer. He tied them carefully and thrust them in his pocket.

"Father, I, too, regret that you did not," he said quietly, while Massalino looked at him with a sneer on his cruel lips. "I came here to find the heir to the Lattimer millions, and I have accomplished my mission. Now I shall break faith with those who have employed me; for, rather than place that fiend in possession of a fortune with which he could do the evil his black heart prompts, I shall kill him with my own hands."

As he spoke his hand had rested on the table, and in a flash he had regained possession of the revolver which the girl had taken from him the day before; but as he raised it and fired she knocked up his arm, and the ball he had intended for Massalino's brain flattened against the rocky ceiling of the cave. The girl threw her arms about him, interposing her body between him and the bandit; but the latter laughed cruelly as he drew his own pistol from his belt.

"Signor, for that you die," he said mockingly, as he covered them both. "Not now, but before my men, to make them sport to-morrow, before I leave them to elect a new leader."

He whistled shrilly, and the sentry entered, calling others at his command; and a moment later Winkelman was bound securely and thrown in a corner of the cave. Massalino leaned over him and laughed as he reached out his hand to draw the papers from his pocket, but his laugh and gesture were cut short by outcries and a fusillade of shots from the plateau.

Snatching up a rifle, the bandit rushed from the cave, and Fiametta, who had thrown herself, sobbing, on the couch, quickly rose and, cutting the ropes which bound the Legioner, motioned to him and the priest to follow her behind a curtain which screened the back of the cave.

VII.

A massacre is not a pleasant thing to contemplate; but Wee Willie, with the memory of the brutal murder of the peasant Giacomo, and the thought of

the fate which had been promised to himself fresh in his mind, listened to the sharp crack of carbines with considerable satisfaction when they emerged from the rough-hewn staircase up which the girl led them.

They were under a ledge far above the plateau, and it was plain that the outlaws were hopelessly hemmed in; for the place, which had served so admirably to conceal them, was a perfect death-trap when once the walls above them were held by an enemy.

The attack must have been carefully planned, for the Carbonari had come provided with torches, which they had dropped on the thatched roofs of the lean-tos, and as they blazed up they made the plateau as bright as day, while the soldiers crouched in the shadows of the rocks above and poured in a deadly fire on the men who were without shelter below.

There was no question of surrender; every one of that band fought with a halter about his neck; and Massalino, who seemed to bear a charmed life, led them again and again to assault the steep path which formed the only exit, say the secret one by which they had ascended through the rocks.

Winkelman watched him, paying unwilling tribute to his desperate bravery as, time after time, he was beaten back, the only living member of the forlorn hope which followed him; but he knew that the unequal contest could have but one ending. It was but a pitiful remnant of the band, most of them wounded, which finally begged for mercy, throwing down their arms and dropping on their knees; but even then the leader cursed them that they would not follow him once more up the path. Finally he threw his empty pistol at them, and with a shout of defiance to the soldiers ran toward the cave.

The priest had fallen on his knees, and, with hands extended toward the bloody amphitheater, was mumbling the prayers for the dying; but Fiametta clung to the Legioner's arm, her breath coming and going in sharp gasps, her beautiful eyes distended and blazing with excitement.

Her first impulse had been to join her old companions, and she had turned to the staircase, after bidding the two men whom she had guided to fly; but Winkelman had restrained her, and she had not struggled against his embrace. But now, when Massalino had been deserted by his men and was fleeing to the cave for safety, she turned to the American pleadingly.

"You will not harm him, nor hinder his flight, Willie *mio*," she said softly. "Remember what he is to me, and let him go in peace."

"That's small recommendation to my mercy, unless these papers contain a marriage certificate," he said savagely. "Tell me, girl, quickly, if you would save him, has the brute married you? My God, look there!"

There was no opportunity for her to answer, no need for him to come to a decision, for just as the flying bandit reached the entrance of the cave the form of a woman came from its shadows, and a knife in the hand of Carlotta, the daughter of the murdered peasant, ended the life which for a half-hour had seemed to bear a charm. The man fell at her feet, and then the body of the girl crumpled up and fell over him, for nearly every bullet of the last volley fired at the fleeing bandit had found its billet in her breast.

Fiametta gave a cry and buried her face in her hands, but their position was visible from the plateau, and Winkelman had no wish to be made a target for the Carbonari, who were filing down the path to make prisoners of the few survivors.

"Come on," he said, pulling her hands away from her face. "This is no place for us; for if they take you it will need a lot of explaining to get you out of jail. If you know a way out of this we'll take it mighty quick, and I'll help you get out of the country."

Winkelman's hat was jammed so tightly on his head that it would have left no doubt in the mind of an intelligent observer as to his mental condition; but, although the sudden death of the Lattimer heir rendered his mission futile, and being lost in the mountains

of Sicily was not the pleasantest position in the world, the girl whom this strange chain of events had made dependent upon him was the chief cause of his perturbation.

This was not lessened when, ten minutes later, the shepherd-boy, who had acted as Massalino's servant, overtook them, bleeding from a bullet wound in his arm and his face white with terror.

"The Virgin be praised that you have escaped, signorina," he babbled, as the girl with deft fingers ripped open his sleeve and bandaged the wound with strips torn from her petticoat. "They searched the cave for you, and the captain swore like a very brigand when he found you were not among their women prisoners. They are to search the whole countryside for you as soon as they have taken their captives to Girgenti, and they swear to hang you when they take you."

The girl smiled sadly and shook her head.

"It matters little, Giuseppe; to-day or to-morrow, or a year hence, is all the same. There is no escaping them now that we have been betrayed, and I am too tired to go far."

"Here—hang it all—what are you talking about?" exclaimed Winkelman uneasily. "Nobody's going to touch you so long as I'm around, and if you're tired, I reckon I can carry you until we reach a hiding-place."

The girl looked at him and smiled sadly.

"It is useless, Willie *mio*," she answered. "It would only lead you into danger, and I am not worth it. One thing will drive you from me—when I answer the question you asked a little while since, I was not Massalino's wife!"

Winkelman fell back as if she had struck him in the face; but whatever the girl might have been she was helpless now; and, while he felt that had he himself been the heir to the Lattimer fortune he would gladly have relinquished it to have had that question superfluous, he put out his hand.

"I am sorry, Fiametta," he said kindly. "I only know that you were the

girl who would have saved me from capture; and now I shall, at least, repay you in kind. So long as I live you shall not fall into the hands of the Carbonari, so come now when we have the chance to escape."

Fiametta hesitated for a moment, and their eyes met; while the old priest, who had had so many hearts laid bare to him, watched them observantly.

"My children, listen to me," he said kindly. "You, Fiametta, are correct—in Sicily there is no escape for you, and your only hope is to get out of the country. I have heard your question, signor, and I know what is in your mind; but unless I know nothing of human nature, I read in your eyes that your heart struggled against it. Am I right, signor?"

"Yes," answered the American, flushing.

The priest rose wearily from the rock on which he was seated and took the girl's hand.

"Signor, my memory is heavy with the knowledge of evil which it has learned through many years in the confessional," he said, looking at her affectionately. "Even to save this child's life I cannot disclose those secrets; but will you accept an old man's word when he tells you that, save for the manner of her bringing-up and the years of evil association, she has known nothing of evil herself? I know her, signor; I have listened to her confessions for many years, and there is nothing to prevent you from offering her the only chance for safety—to leave Sicily as your wife."

Winkelman suddenly felt as if all his troubles had dropped from him, and, springing forward, he caught her in his arms, while his hat automatically moved about and assumed a jaunty position over his right eye.

"In the eyes of God you are man and wife," said the priest ten minutes later, as he closed his breviary after a simple service. "Now, signor, go boldly to Palermo, and get out of Italy as quickly as possible. They will hesitate to touch the wife of an American without

orders from Rome, and during that hesitation you must escape."

"It will take bigger men than the Carbonari to take my wife from me," answered Wee Willie, laughing merrily.

VIII.

Mr. Winkelman's further adventures in Sicily led him to the conclusion that as a brigand Massalino was but an amateur; for the commencement of his honeymoon was spent in bribery and corruption, mixed with much judicious bluffing.

Fiametta had been smuggled into the inn at Girgenti, and Emilio, after receiving a promise that the dead horse would be valued at the price of a Derby winner in the eventual settlement, held his tongue.

The Legioner found the Carbonari absolutely unapproachable; but fortunately their efforts were confined to scouring the country for the girl whose ingenuity had led them so many wild-goose chases; and, after he had secured possession of the wallet of which Massalino had relieved him, he rapidly dissipated its contents among the local authorities with such good effect that he was able to get a launch to convey him to Malta in time to catch a homeward-bound P. & O. steamer.

It was nearly a month later that he walked into Mr. Cooper's office in New York, leaving Fiametta in the waiting-room; and an expression of displeasure came to the capitalist's face as he looked up from his writing and saw that he had returned alone.

"I take it that there was nothing doing—you didn't find the heir?" he said interrogatively.

Winkelman grinned.

"You've made two bad guesses," he answered. "It was a regular three-ring circus for excitement, and I didn't have to find the heir—he found me."

"And you failed to bring him with you!" exclaimed Cooper disgustedly.

"That's what! I might have hesitated if he'd been alive, but I was blame sure he was no use dead. Mr. Cooper,

that guy Busker gave you the double-cross."

For once Mr. Cooper consented to listen to a recital of failure, and Wee Willie produced the documents, giving a brief history of the events which had led to Massalino's death, and arranging the papers and certificate which proved him to have been the legitimate heir to the Lattimer millions.

"But here's what I found at the post-office in Girgenti," he said, producing a letter addressed to Massalino which had been given to him by one of the officials he had bought. "Busker had more information than we knew of, and the blamed pirate was trying to play both sides and take a large bite out of the middle."

Mr. Cooper read the following epistle, and his lips settled into a grim smile.

— MASSALINO, ESQ.

DEAR SIR: I learn that you are about to be approached by one Mr. William Winkelman on behalf of Mr. Jabez Cooper, of New York, in regard to producing an heir to the fortune of the late Frank Lattimer. As you are probably without a legal representative in New York, I would suggest that, after finding out from Winkelman just what proofs are required, you should detain him and forward the documents direct to me. You will find Mr. Cooper a difficult man to deal with, as he is notoriously rapacious, and I am willing to protect your interests on a purely contingent fee. I would further suggest that you detain Winkelman indefinitely.

Awaiting your early reply, I am,

Very truly yours,

FLEETWOOD BUSKER.

Mr. Cooper carefully folded the letter, and, calling up the attorney's office on the phone, requested his immediate attendance.

"Busker, the jig's up," he said curtly, when the lawyer came in. "Winkelman located the heir, all right, but he's dead."

"And your man didn't have brains enough to rig up a substitute!" exclaimed the lawyer furiously. "What kind of a business man do you call yourself, Cooper?"

"Possibly a rapacious one, but no one ever said I wasn't a square one," answered the capitalist quietly. "Have

you your copy of our agreement with you?"

The lawyer pulled it from his pocket and threw it on the desk. Cooper examined it carefully, and, after tearing off his signature, handed the lawyer his own letter.

"Read that, Busker, and you'll find the kind of a man I'm not," he said curtly. "Then I'd remind you that there are two exits from this office. If you don't use the door in thirty seconds, I'll ask Winkelman to throw you out of the window, and if you ever come back I'll break your neck myself."

The Legioner pulled out his watch and looked eagerly at the second-hand, but before it had made a quarter revolution Mr. Busker had reached the street.

"Winkelman, you've done your best, I reckon—you boys usually do. I'll bear you in mind next time I have anything on hand," remarked Mr. Cooper, turning to his desk. "Oh, by the way—here's a letter from Girgenti for you."

Winkelman opened the large envelope, and blushed when he pulled out the contents.

"It's from a priest I met out there," he said, glancing over them. "It's—er—my marriage certificate, and—eh, hello! what's this?" His eyes had run rapidly over the first document, which was, in fact, a marriage certificate, but it bore a date of twenty years earlier, and the names were those of Massalino Lattimer and Giulia Lunardi. He passed it to Mr. Cooper while he read the second, the certificate of birth and baptism of Fiametta, daughter of Massalino Lattimer and his wife Giulia. A moment later he had dragged the waiting girl into the office, and they stood hand in hand before the capitalist.

"Mr. Cooper, I reckon I made good, after all," he exclaimed proudly. "That blame shyster seems to have been laid out with his own boomerang; but I've produced the heiress to the Lattimer fortune, and I've annexed the finest wife a man ever won."

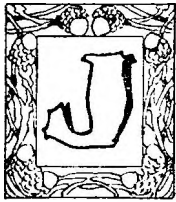
And Mr. Cooper for a moment forgot his prospective profits as he looked into the large black eyes of Fiametta.

Bunked

By T. Jenkins Hains

Author of "The Wind-jammers," Etc.

The peculiar ending of a little playing with fire indulged in by an unusual type of seaman who combined survey work with engineering and sometimes assisted the government in matters of valuation



JONES had been to sea in several capacities, serving as sailor, mate, and master during ten years' knocking about. He had also been aboard steam vessels as an engineer. This latter occupation had come to him more by force of circumstances than in any other manner, and was due to his peculiar education and adaptability to life as he found it.

Anyhow, he was left one day without a ship, without the friendship of any business house doing shipping, and with no one to push him ahead where the competition had become so intense that there were fifty captains to every American ship going out, and perhaps twenty engineers.

Without money or friends he wandered about the streets of New York waiting for his "chance," but, as he did not find it coming, he gave up the waterfront and took to the busy thoroughfares farther up-town. He soon found it necessary to "do something," and, like many of the outsiders, drifted into the yachting circles where the season is short but the pay good. In this manner he fell in with Mr. Dunning, yacht agent and ship-broker.

Dunning ran a large outfit on lower Broadway, chartering and selling yachts of all classes; but, as he knew nothing of the vessels themselves, he sometimes found his lack of knowledge put him at a disadvantage with an excellent

customer. Jones being an expert on both engines and sail power, besides having studied a bit as a naval architect, his services were of some value to Mr. Dunning, and that gentleman, finding that money was a necessity for the expert, hired him upon all occasions when a question of value or survey happened to agitate and annoy his clients.

Jones could "size up" a ship quicker than any government official, and his charge was reasonable. He knew just where to bore for the "soft" in old hulls, knew just what to look for, what to expect in badly shaken-down engines; and, moreover, he always gave a perfectly fair valuation of the property.

He was busy over some plans of a large schooner when Mr. Duffy, of the Eros Yacht Basin, came to see him, bringing with him a Mr. Miles, owner of the large screw steam-yacht *Mollyhawk*, and a rich young Westerner, who was announced as a prospective buyer.

The young Westerner had been stopping in town—at least, Jones had seen his name advertised on the Waldorf register. Mr. Duffy was well—if not favorably—known about the docks. It seemed just right that he should bring his client to see the expert before trying to sell a large vessel, whose price would run up into the thousands.

A report from Jones was as good as legal tender for the price; and among yachtsmen this was so well recognized that his valuation was never contradicted, even by the owner himself.

The *Mollyhawk* was an old tub, very old, and when Jones thought of her he was reminded of several things which were not much to her credit. But she had been newly painted, scrubbed, and polished, and to an unnautical observer she certainly looked what she had been twenty years before, a splendid ship.

"You know the *Mollyhawk*, Mr. Jones," he began; "she's the finest vessel in the harbor to-day. Mr. James, from Nevada, would like you to pass on her; make a proper survey before buying her. We all know you, and know you are sure to put a true valuation on her. When can you make the examination?"

"I reckon I can do it day after tomorrow," said Jones, looking keenly at the obsequious Mr. Duffy.

Mr. Miles, the owner, gazed steadily out of the window, his face showing plainly the effects of a late debauch. He had the reputation of leading a very rapid life, and his ship had been tied up more than once for debt. He listened carelessly to the conversation.

"That will do very well, indeed," said the gracious Duffy; "we'll bring the papers around Monday. I'll have the bill of sale and license looked into; see she's all clear," he added, turning to Mr. James.

The three left Jones' office together, apparently well satisfied that Jones should make the survey and report accordingly on the following Monday. They would all come together and meet him, bringing the papers, so if the ship proved to be in the condition represented, there would be no further delay in the sale. His certificate of survey would be accepted by the young Westerner, James, who appeared rather in a hurry to purchase without waiting for the government survey, which he could get by waiting some weeks.

Hardly had the three men been to the bottom of the elevator-shaft, where there happened to be a café, when the telephone rang up.

Jones took the receiver. "Coming right up—stay in a moment—it's Duffy——" and he rang off.

Five minutes later Mr. Duffy knocked and entered.

Jones started from his chair, where he had been looking over the plans of a schooner, but Duffy held up his hand warningly.

"You're on—hey?" asked Duffy.

"Clean report, everything right—that's it. Pure case of selling a gold brick—what? You know as well as I do she's as rotten as punk, absolutely unseaworthy, and will only pass the inspectors for inside work," said Jones heatedly.

"Of course, what else?—you're not a fool," said Duffy placidly, taking out his wallet and ripping out a thousand-dollar note with something of an air of a great financier. Jones wondered where on earth he got the money.

"This for you on Monday—hey! Are you on?"

"Not on your life," said Jones.

"Oh, I say, old man, don't be an ass," began Duffy; "business is business——"

"Get out of this room before I fire you," said Jones, rising.

"Oh, very well, then, if you're going to act like a blamed idiot over it—but how do you make a living—what?" And he grinned sardonically as he stepped through the doorway with Jones' snarling curse flung after him.

The door slammed, and Jones sat down again, his feeling ruffled and his whole being vibrating with anger. "Grafting" was something to be expected, perhaps, from boat-jockeys, for if there is guile in horse-trading there is crime in boats. Nowhere is the "business" instinct drawn so strongly as among sellers of craft. One may look over a horse, but one cannot always look over a ship; and even if one does, it is not a necessity at all that he will find the "soft," or weak, parts.

Jones pondered over the matter, and grew very indignant. The face of the young Westerner was before him in his mind; and the thought of the young man being "skinned" by a dock-rat yachtsman increased his ire. Suddenly a knock sounded upon his door, and instantly the young Mr. James from the West entered.

"Well," said Jones, amazed, "you've come back."

"That's quite evident," assented the young Mr. James; "and now to business. I may be green—I reckon I am—but I'm not from the West all the time. I'm a master mariner"—here he pulled out his license—"and if you think I'm easy, you make just a little miss. I want you to make that survey and bring in a fine report—see? I want that ship. If you bring in a bad one, she'll be turned down for junk, the inspectors won't pass her; but you can tell me just where she's to the bad—tell me privately—see?"

"But where did you get that ticket?" asked Jones.

"Well, I was not always a rich man—I went to sea seven years before the old man struck the pay-dirt. That's how I got it. You bring in that report for me and get the thousand from those rascals—and then tell me just what the old hulk is worth. It will be a lesson to those sharks, you will get your money, and I'll know just what I'm buying. If they want a good report, there is no reason why they shouldn't get it by paying for it; but they'll not deceive me one bit. I'll have your true report to base the price on. You'll do it for me, won't you?"

Jones was still quite angry at the fellow Duffy; so angry, in fact, that the idea of getting his money for the piece of rascality proposed tickled him. He would deceive no one, for Mr. James would be told exactly what the ship was worth. He would bore her, sound her to the limit, and every bit of soft material in her would be known. He grasped the phone and called up Duffy.

"It's a go—I'll bring in that report; be here Monday," said he.

"Yes," he said, putting down the receiver, "those fellows need a lesson, and I'll be the one to hand it to them this time."

"Good," said James. "I'll be on hand by Monday next—that'll give you a week to finish. You can hand me the true status in the morning, two hours before they bring up the ship's papers."

The survey was made, and the old *Mollyhawk* was found to be in the condition Jones supposed her to be, rotten

all through her garboards. Her boilers were patched up, however, so that she would pass inspection. Jones knew that as long as her engines and boilers passed it would be easy enough to pass her hull, for inspection on these lines is notoriously lax. He drew up his report on the Saturday preceding the meeting, and on Monday was in his office ready for business.

James was on hand early. He looked over the two papers, and appeared satisfied. He folded the one relating to her unseaworthiness, placed it in his pocket, and drew forth his check-book. He wrote a check for five hundred dollars, and handed it to Jones, who accepted it reluctantly, without giving a receipt.

"Your report upon her ability to proceed to sea is a good one," commented the young millionaire; "it covers the ground entirely."

The obsequious Mr. Duffy entered shortly afterward with the debauched-looking Mr. Miles, whose nose was now redder than usual.

"It is good," said Duffy. "It's all right—that's the report I want—here is your check." And he handed Jones the amount drawn upon the Farmers' Bank instead of a note. "There is nothing more for us to do now to stop proceedings, so if Mr. James will kindly draw up his chair, we will make out the bill of sale and get the transaction over—will you allow me, Mr. James?" And the young man sat down, smiling, in Jones' seat.

"I'll be back in a moment," said Jones; "long before you get the papers ready." And he hurried out into the next room, where Smith & Green had an office for marine insurance. He snatched up their telephone.

"Is Charles Duffy's check good for a thousand?" he called quickly to the Farmer's Bank.

"Yes," came the response. He rang off.

In a few minutes he came back into his own room, where the parties of the first and second parts were affixing their signatures to the yacht's papers.

"Ah, we are all through," said Duffy. "Mr. James is satisfied with your sur-

vey, and for the sum of one dollar—and other considerations—will buy, purchase, and possess the gallant ship *Mollyhawk*—”

“How much is he paying for her?” asked Jones bluntly.

“It is well known, my dear Mr. Jones, that the owners of vessels never care to have their prices advertised. You know that as well as I do, and a fine ship does not go for nothing. You have made good money this morning—you have nothing to learn, nothing to forget—”

“Oh, I don’t mind telling I’m paying sixty thousand dollars for her,” said young Mr. James, with a smile. “But keep it mum—come on, we must get to the custom-house before it closes.”

“Good day, Jones,” said the amiable Mr. Duffy, and Mr. Miles nodded indulgently as all three withdrew and went their way.

Jones sat thinking over the matter for a few minutes. It seemed rather queer to him. The whole transaction was irregular in the extreme, and he was sorry he had gone into it at all. It seemed best, at first thought, to catch the smooth Mr. Duffy, accept his graft, knowing all the time that Mr. James knew just what the value of the ship actually was. But the quick manner the deal was carried through awakened his suspicions. He sat a short time gazing out over the harbor. Then he grasped his hat and started for the bank.

“N. G.”—account withdrawn,” said the cashier, after taking the check and examining it for some moments. “Mr. Duffy drew out his money less than ten minutes ago. This is not good at present. Of course, if he makes a deposit—”

But Jones did not wait for further words. He started for the trust company on which the check offered by the young millionaire was drawn.

“Mr. James closed his account here this morning,” said the cashier, looking quizzically at the check.

“I see,” said Jones; and he went slowly back to his office.

Late in the afternoon his telephone rang up.

“Mr. Dunning wants you to-morrow morning,” called a clerk.

Jones wondered, but attended to business during the day, calling at the agency before ten the next morning.

“I sold the *Mollyhawk* last evening,” said Mr. Dunning, eyeing him suspiciously, “to a Mr. Seaforth, from San Francisco, who took your survey of the ship to base his valuation on. Don’t you think you gave her a pretty high showing?”

“Who sold her?” asked Jones.

“Three young fellows headed by that rascal Duffy, the man discharged from the Eros Basin. They had your report of survey, all right, and it seemed to me that you might have made a mistake in giving her such a perfect score. You know she’s pretty well gone along her garboards, soft as mud, and dangerous for work at sea—what?”

“You say there were three young men in the game?” asked Jones, thinking hard.

“Yes, three men—Duffy, a man with a red nose, named Miles, and a young fellow who claimed to be from the West. They bought her for a song last week, and I reckon they cleared twenty thousand on her. I wouldn’t have sold her if you hadn’t given her your report—I stood to that.”

“Well, I made the report, all right—but I didn’t receive a cent for it,” said Jones thoughtfully. “I might have overlooked some small details in her hull, but I guess she’s all right—I hope so, anyway—is that all?”

“Yes, but I think you better take a vacation—not do any more work for a short time—you need a rest, been working too hard lately. You can draw your traveling expenses for a trip to Bar Harbor—and don’t come back too soon—good day.”

Jones walked slowly to the cashier’s desk and drew the money. He needed it, and would leave that day.

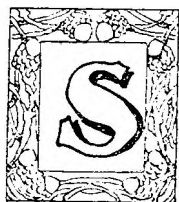
“It don’t pay to play with fire,” he added, as he headed for the depot, speaking to himself in contemplation—“it don’t do to play with fire, for if you do you’re mighty apt to be burned—hey?”

Zollenstein

By W. B. M. Ferguson

Author of "Garrison's Finish," "Strange Cases of a Medical Free-lance," Etc.

CHAPTER XVIII—(Continued.)



HE fell silent. We sat thus for a time. I was the first to speak.

"Madame, we must find the young king before it is too late."

"Aye," she agreed absently. Then earnestly: "You speak as if you had but to stretch out a hand. What possible chance have you of finding him? None—none at all."

"I must," I repeated doggedly. Above all, I must be true to the hand that paid me. I had forgotten my resolve to flee from Zollenstein. In this crisis I could not. I must be loyal to the chancellor. Besides, in a measure, the kingdom's destiny had become merged with my own. I hated the Hohenstauffen; hated with an active hatred. And the thought of the young king a prisoner, waiting for his death like the princes in the tower, alone in that dark castle, would have enlisted service from any man.

I arose. "I must go, madame. I can conceal myself somewhere, and let Boris unsuspectingly lead me to the hiding-place."

"No," she said swiftly. "You must not."

"Madame," I returned, "I must. It is the only way for your safety; for the life of the young king. I will have it out with Boris."

She arose a little unsteadily, facing me in the dark. "No," she whispered again. "You will have no chance."

"Loyalty, madame," I reminded.

"You owe loyalty to none but yourself," she cried impetuously. "This is not your country. . . . Have—have you come back but—but to leave me again? Oh, you cannot know what I have suffered—the thoughts—the fears——"

"Your highness," I broke in, with difficulty, "it is not a question of country, but of common humanity. Your heart, your honor, tells you that. I alone am between the young king and death. I must take the chance. His necessity demands me——"

"I—I need you more," she whispered, raising white, mute face. "The woman's need is always the greater."

I dared not interpret the words. I could feel her piteous presence, her fluttering breath. Something rose in my throat. I felt honor slipping away; slipping—slipping—— "Madame," I said hoarsely, "you are the daughter of kings. It is my place to remind you——"

"Don't say it," she whispered. "I know—I know—— Give me time—— There!" she drew a great breath and raised her head proudly. "See, I have found sanctuary. Go!" she said quietly. "Forgive my weakness. I was but thinking of myself; only of myself. Go! I will leave the door unbarred. God guard you."

I kissed her hand and went—blindly, desperately. It was a victory over self on which I can look back upon with some pride. Alone with her highness in that dark room, God knows I was near enough that night to forever discarding my last claim upon honor; of forfeiting whatever little respect she might have

entertained for me. Passion receded as the door closed behind me: leaving me alone in the hall, listening fearfully for the slightest sound.

I was conscious that the only feeling that owned me completely was one of impotency: a vast, vague, impotence. What could I hope to accomplish against Heimruh's might? This feeling at length succeeded by one of anger. What had I ever done to Zollenstein that I should be skulking there, afraid of my very shadow? Then came recklessness.

"Here goes," I thought, and gun in hand marched warily down the stairs, determined to face the wolf in his den. I would accept any odds that were not absolutely suicidal. For I had Zenia's welfare to consider, however careless I might be of my own. Then I stopped in my tracks, and my heart commenced to beat slowly, thickly.

From the corridor above, the one I had just quitted, there came a strangled cry. A feeble, piteous supplication. I could not distinguish the theme: the tone alone was barely loud enough for my startled ears to clutch and hold. I listened intently, hoping, and yet fearing, hating to hear it again, to trace its location. All was silence.

Mightily disturbed, overwrought, unstrung with the night's events, I stood hesitatingly on the stairs. As the silence seemed to deepen a curious sensation stole over me, akin to that experienced the day of my adventure at the red mill. I felt like one in a nightmare. Had I really listened to that strangled cry, or was it but the fruit of an overwrought imagination?

Suddenly, like a physical blow, a sound struck my ears. I became conscious that in reality I had been listening to it for some time past. My senses overconcentrated, waiting with such intensity for the greater, had overlooked the lesser. No, this absorption almost proved my undoing. For the sound was that caused by men's feet; and as I looked over the balustrade I saw two men about to ascend the flight of stairs on which I stood.

They were breathing heavily, labor-

ing mightily. One was the old butler; one was little Uncle Boris. Between them they carried the body of Captain Kienert. Curiously enough, I remember noting the sickly pallor of his face; the shadows grimly playing with it. Boris at his head, the butler at his feet, Kienert was doubled up in a meaningless, inert mass; merely a disorderly heap of clothes. One hand was lying clenched upon his breast; the other dangling down, rapping each stair. All this I noted before realizing that I had been given something else beside eyes, and that it was high time to do something.

Uncle Boris was leading the cortège, no trace of overexertion apparent on his sixty odd years of villainy.

"One more flight, Hauptner, my man," he encouraged cheerily, "and we'll soon have this gentleman decently in his bed."

"He's quite dead?" quavered the old serving man. I could see his white, pinched face and terror-stricken eyes. Evidently Heimruh owned one soul unversed in the game of death.

"Undoubtedly," said Boris shortly. "A bad accident."

And, rising to meet the third step, he looked up—up into my eyes, glaring upon him. For a moment, I fancy that I was all he could discern against the gloom. He stopped, the picture of arrested motion, one foot in the act of meeting the stair. Then little by little he picked out my waiting figure; picked out the gun staring him flatly in the face.

Hauptner, too, mouth agape, saw, and understood. He dropped the captain's legs with a clatter, and stood there, shivering. Slowly Boris released his portion of the body, and it lay there, a tumbled heap on the stairs, only restrained from sliding to the hall below by the serving man's irresolute legs. On the whole, it made a very effective tableau.

"Well met," said I. "And now up with your hands—quick! You Hauptner, my friend, forget your fright for the time being, and go through your master. Weapons of any kind lay here

at my feet. Hurry, or I may forget my patience and your years."

I saw that there was nothing to fear from the old butler. Obediently, in an ecstasy of fright, he searched Uncle Boris, and tremblingly laid a revolver at my feet. His master remained politely impassive, hands extended ceilingward. One of his strong characteristics was the knowledge of when to obey.

"Now," I said to him, "it's your turn. Take off your sword-belt, and, together with your handkerchief, bind and gag Hauptner. Be thorough."

He shrugged, and, smiling, under the eye of the Colt, obeyed. There was no alternative, or he would have taken it. The serving man offered no resistance. In fact, he was evidently well-pleased at thus being eliminated from any further developments.

Kienert's body, as the supporting bulwark of Hauptner's legs was removed, slid to the hall, and there I let it lie, ordering Boris to place the butler beside it. It was no time for niceties.

"Now," I said, "you sit there in the turn of the stair with your back to the wall. I'll sit on this stair, gun on knee, like this. That's it. Make yourself comfortable, for we're going to have a little talk, and it may be your last chance to be greatly concerned about anything." I spoke in German, the tongue he affected. Thus we sat for our tête-à-tête; he at the bottom of the stairs, I half-way to the top.

"If you're quite ready," he said matter-of-factly, "I would like to ask if you're insane. This is the second time, viscount, you have acted in this abominable manner. Is it a hobby with you? And how and when did you return to Heimruh?"

"I think," said I, "that you have got our relative positions somewhat mixed. I am to ask the questions—you to answer. However, it is time for explanations. I am not the Viscount Greystone, but the Englishman whom you considerably desired to kill. The Englishman of the Toison d'Or. The man who knows all your treachery and guile: all your scheming for a throne.

In short, I know you for the murderer and regicide you are. Now that we are acquainted with each other's true identity, we can discuss more pressing matters. You are going to tell me where Johann von Bulowe is secreted, or I'm going to kill you. I'm not quite sure that I won't kill you in any case."

"In that event," he returned equably, "what would I gain by telling? Permit me to suggest that you are not logical." His face had remained perfectly impassive during my speech, but I surmised what a hell of passion must be throttling him as he realized how he had been tricked. For a long moment, as I made no comment, he sat gnawing his wolf's lip, apparently digesting my words and what they meant.

"I may as well tell you," I added at length, fingering the Colt, "that I was an ear-witness to all that transpired in the gun-room to-night. You'll save time by speaking the truth for once."

When Boris at length spoke it was to completely ignore my question.

"I think," he said, considering, "that you are a very bold man, Mr. Englisher. A man after my own heart——"

"Spare the compliment," I interrupted. "Come, answer my question. Where is the young king?"

He started to equivocate, bargain, in his courteous, indifferent way, but I cocked the gun, and he finally gave in with a whimsical shrug.

"I know nothing of the Von Bulowe," he said sincerely. "As you know, Captain Kienert suffered his accident—very unfortunate, by the way—before he could confide the hiding-place. I was about to seek it after putting the captain decently in his bed, when you interrupted me in this hospitable manner. This is the truth, my dear sir."

CHAPTER XIX.

I AM BROUGHT TO BOOK.

Truth or not, I was forced to believe this. I felt his eyes measuring me hardly.

"How many men are in Heimruh?" I asked sternly.

"Only the domestics. The troopers' quarters are in the rear."

I considered. I could not leave the castle without the young king. It wanted but an hour or so of morning. And I could not kill Boris in cold blood, no matter how richly he might deserve it. Then, if I bound and gagged him, and escaped with Zenia to summon help, Heimruh's troopers would soon awaken, release their master—and so the king would meet his death. It could not be proved that he had ever been the castle's prisoner. Boris could rightly say that he had had no hand in the capture.

Thinking it over, viewing the question from all sides, I determined to make a hasty search of the place, then, successful or not in my quest, win away with Zenia, and take Boris with us. We three alone knew that his majesty lay in Heimruh. Kienert was dead. I must chance that he had kept the secret of the hiding-place. At all events, if the young king was discovered in our absence, the castle would not dare act with Boris away. Yes, this was the best plan: the only plan.

"Listen," I said sternly, "you are going to lead me to every room in this place. The least treachery or outcry will mean your death. If we are discovered by one of your men, I'll kill you out of hand. We will begin at the floor above. Come!"

I kept him covered as he preceded me slowly up the stairs and down the corridor.

"I think you're wasting time," was the only comment he offered. "Heimruh has many secret rooms, which even I am not acquainted with. You know I did not build the place. Besides, doors may be locked, and I have no keys."

"I think a voice can be heard through all bolts and bars," said I grimly. So we searched the corridor faithfully, but without success.

Boris did his best: that I will say for him. The persuasive powers of the Colt were excellent. And aside from this I knew that the Hohenstauffen was anxious, curious, to discover where the Princess Zenia was located. Unsuspect-

ingly he searched the anteroom, while I waited in the hall, watching his every movement. Her highness in the connecting room made no sound. Perhaps she heard our voices, and understood conditions; perhaps, weary, spent, she had fallen asleep.

"There's a door at the head of the stairs, to the right of the hall, which we have not tried," said I at length, as Boris, shrugging, emerged.

"Oh, that's the storeroom," he yawned. "It's always locked."

"Try it," I ordered curtly.

Obediently he preceded me, and tried the handle.

"Locked, as I said," he commented. "That dog Kienert must have lied to me. Neither the young king nor the Princess Zenia is here. He met with his accident too soon."

We stood confronting each other; he easily conscious of the revolver.

"What is next on the program?" he queried at length, stifling a yawn. He was a very barefaced, indifferent scoundrel for one of his years. Knowing I knew him for what he was, appreciating his peril, he stood there regarding me amiably, as if we were host and guest discussing some trivial matter. But I did not let this attitude deceive me for an instant. I thoroughly appreciated this gentleman's criminal potentiality.

I could give no more time to search. I must think of Zenia's welfare, though, in truth, now that Kienert was dead, she had little to fear. However he might feel, I thought, Boris could not afford to keep her highness prisoner in the face of all Saxonia and Zollenstein.

"The next move on the program," I said curtly, answering him, "is your trip to the castle and the chancellor."

"A guest?" he queried, smiling.

"Yes: an enforced one."

"My dear fellow," he argued blandly, "you are only inconveniencing yourself. I will be released instantly. You forget that I am king of Zollenstein."

"Among other things, you will have to answer for first," said I, "is the murder of Captain Kienert."

"An accident," he shrugged. "You see, I was the only witness. Come, my friend," he added persuasively, "cannot we arrive at some terms? Every man has his price—what is yours? Tush, don't be insulted. It is the wise man who accepts no insult until he can afford it. If you are acquainted with my true personality, I am with yours, Mr. Mortimer. What is the chancellor paying you to play the young prince, eh? Name it, and I'll double it, and give you passport out of the kingdom. You must see that I will inevitably come into my own, despite all machinations. Come, name your figure. Better to have my good-will than enmity. We'll call it quits. Upon my honor, I bear you no ill-will. The lining of his pocket is the soldier of fortune's first and only consideration—as it is with us all."

"If you are quite finished," I said, "we'll continue with the program." And as he turned, shrugging in his old supercilious, courteous manner, I pocketed the gun, and, suddenly springing in upon him, bore him to the ground, and had him bound and gagged in a trice. He offered no resistance. It would have been futile.

"You'll pilot us from the gates when I return," I said grimly, and went to the Princess Zenia's room.

All was dark and silent. Surmising that sleep had overtaken her vigil, I knocked gently on the inner door. There was no answer. Again my knuckles met the wood.

"Your highness," I called. Then I slowly opened the door and tiptoed in. I struck a light. Even before the meager yellow flame had shattered the gloom, but accentuating the shadows, I felt a strong premonition of the truth. I had tarried too long. The room was empty. I stood there staring dumbly at the bed.

At length, the flame of the match, licking my fingers, brought me to myself. My first thought was that she had escaped while I held tête-à-tête with Uncle Boris. It was possible that she had discovered a rear stairway and exit. I earnestly prayed that this might be so, but knowledge forbade it; knowledge

of her character. She would not have gone without leaving some message. She would not have left in this manner under any circumstances. That I felt.

Ugly possibilities came crowding thick and fast about me as I stood in that midnight room. An abysmal sensation of absolute loneliness drowned me. Like a blow the fact struck home, just how much Zenia had come to mean to me—everything in the world worth living for. Now that she was gone, I estimated the loss. I knew that I could not exist without seeing her. She was as vitally necessary as the sun to the earth.

The thought that she had been deceived, carried prisoner from the room, came only as a secondary train. I cursed myself for the time spent with Boris, necessary as it then seemed to me. With the hasty but irrevocable resolve to search Heimruh from garret to cellar, I stepped into the corridor. No matter what the odds, come what might, I would not leave the castle until I had found her.

I soon discovered that the night had further uncanny incidents with which to regale me. As the vista of the dimly lighted corridor met my eyes, a chill slowly fingered my skin. I became conscious of another loss. This time it was Boris. He, too, had vanished.

Standing there, gun in hand, peering at the many shadows, expecting I knew not what, I commenced to break out in a fear-sweat. A curious, creepy, ghastly sensation I do not care to sample again. The silence, the gloom, the night's happenings, the knowledge of being absolutely alone, must have worked on my already overwrought nerves, for I suddenly called out fiercely:

"Come out, you cur, and fight like a man!"

Ridiculous, childish invitation, but for the moment I was as a frightened child alone in a darkened nursery. My nerve had gone. I listened as my voice echoed itself down the corridor, shattering the silence, and it gave me courage; brought back some confidence, balance. Every faculty was on the war-path, keenly

alert; and it was due to this fact alone that I was somewhat prepared for the next incident.

My ear caught it first—footsteps: many footsteps ascending the heavily carpeted stairs, creeping, stealing. I recognized that the crisis had arrived. Boris had managed to set free his feet, gone for help, and now was seeking to trap me in the room I had but left. For a moment I stood irresolute, bracing myself to look death fairly in the eye. Again came my ears to the rescue. For a breathless space, a sob sounded in the night, rising supreme above the subdued travail of the stairs. A slight sound it was, almost inaudible; checked as soon as uttered. Unconsciously my eyes traveled the path hewed out by the sound-waves, and rested on a door at the opposite side of the corridor and near the stairway; the door Boris had said was locked: the room used for storing various unnecessary articles.

But now the door was not locked; against its dark mahogany I saw a line, the breadth of a hand, running from floor to extremity of frame. Standing thus, heart pounding like racing engine, prepared for an attack from front and rear; reckoning nothing; knowing only that this haven alone was open to me, I swung across the hall and slipped into the darkened room, whirling the door fast. Kneeling by the keyhole, I saw Uncle Boris and four troopers steal past. The men, evidently roused from slumber, were in all stages of disarray. At the rear came the old butler, Hauptner, shaking like a wet cat, afraid to advance, more afraid to be left alone.

"He's in that room," came the Hohenstauffen's whispered voice. "Two stand guard while I lead the rest." A man no whit afraid of his skin, nor of his neighbor's, was Uncle Boris.

I awaited developments, already completely oblivious as to what might lie behind me; entirely forgetful of whom might occupy the room with me. Absorbed, in truth I had forgotten how I had come to find the haven; forgotten the utterer of the sob. Nor did I greatly care; my mind was only capable of focusing upon one thing at a time.

A second passed; perhaps two or more. Then came an oath.

"Gone," came Boris' voice. "Curse the sleep that made it so difficult to rouse you dolts! After him! After him! He has a bare five minutes' start, and is horseless. Rouse the stable! Away, you scum!"

The men came clattering down the hall, growling under their breaths. Robbed sleep had set them in a surly humor. I heard them stamping heavily down the stairs. Then came the distant, silvery strains of a bugle sounding boots and saddle. Finally my attention was again drawn to the corridor. Boris was speaking, coldly, precisely.

"This is woman's finery, Hauptner, my friend. This, and this. See? How came they in that room, eh? What wench dare sleep in Heimruh's chambers? Answer, my friend."

"Your highness, your highness," stammered the old steward, "they look like no wench's. No scullion wench of Heimruh ever owned those. See, your highness, the lace, the dainty texture? Surely a lady's, your highness——"

"Aye," said Boris gently; "a lady's—and whose?"

"And it please your highness, I do not know," said Hauptner.

"And it does not please, my good friend," mused Boris, still gently, sweetly. "You are Heimruh's steward. Surely you are not guilty of such a dereliction of duty. Surely not, good Hauptner. Surely it is not in this manner my absence is treated. So wenches can sleep in my guest-chambers—and you do not know of it? Surely not, good Hauptner. Surely not. Surely you know the punishment of the faithless."

And Hauptner knew, as I knew, the danger that lay behind that honeyed accent, and straightway fell into a panic; the panic that had been surely encroaching upon his semblance of composure. Piecemeal the truth came out. Kienert was dead, so why be loyal when the tardy truth might save his, Hauptner's, neck?

"My niece, the Princess Zenia," mused Boris simply. "So—so,

Brought here by Kienert. A prisoner for days. . . . So. Then he spoke the truth, after all. And Mr. Englishman has escaped with her while I was arousing my faithful warriors. . . . So. She has gone with that play-actor. . . . And so it seems Heimruh is divided against itself. . . . And you, good Hauptner, you knew all this? . . . Fie, fie, what if your life was threatened? Is it any the safer now? . . . I fancy not. . . . I fancy not, my friend. Come, good and faithful servant, I wish the names of those troopers who owned sovereignty to Captain Kienert. Come, come."

Falteringly came the names, Boris making some bantering comment upon each.

"A worthy roster, a most magnificent total," he finished, in the same simple, idle humor. "Is it not, good Hauptner? And you knew all this. . . . What scum a man will finger for a little gain. Aye, we are all pitifully weak. 'Tis a common failing. And have I your loyalty and fidelity now, my friend?" he asked, half-sadly. "'Among the faithless, faithful only ye—to paraphrase the sentiment."

"Aye, my lord," whispered the old steward, in a dry, fluttering voice. "My lord knows he has ever had my loyalty and fidelity. But my life was at stake." He was whimpering like a frightened puppy. "Truly, my lord," he pleaded, "you have my loyalty and fidelity——"

"So," commented his master, pondering gravely. "And I have your loyalty and fidelity now, good Hauptner. . . . So. Then——" Suddenly in a great cry of venomous frenzy that showed the man for what he was—"I'll make sure of it while I have it. You cur, you'll die faithful to the feeding hand you bit!" Then came a crash and a great scream; the fearsome cry of an old man meeting his death. Then came silence.

It had happened in a breath; a foul, brutal murder that was typically Hohenstauffian in its every phase. It happened so cruelly swift that I had had no time to interfere.

That cry of the old steward's set the

devil blazing within me. I threw caution to the dogs. Already my hand was on the door, about to fling it open, when a tense, whispered voice sounded at my ear:

"Move a step, and I'll drive this home!" I felt the bite of steel between my shoulder-blades. I remained motionless for a breathless space, staring grimly at the door. Dawn was creeping into the room.—I could see the pattern beginning to appear on the wood-work.

"Your highness," I whispered dryly at length. "if you don't know my back, permit me to disclose my face."

Instantly the pressure of steel was withdrawn from my vertebræ. I turned. Zenia stood confronting me, pale, haggard of face and eye, the dagger I had given her clenched in her hand. The approaching morning was slowly illuminating the room.

"Oh—it's—it's you," she breathed mechanically, lifelessly, her stark, somber eyes never leaving mine.

They held a brooding misery that had not yet fully reckoned their loss. I was at loss to understand their message. I saw that she had been crying; ravages of the tempest were unpleasantly apparent. And still she stood staring at me starkly with never a word.

"Your highness——" I began, Boris and all forgotten in the mystery of her gaze and attitude.

Still she did not reply, and my eyes wavered momentarily, and—yes, a bed had come into their angle of vision; a bed with a huddled something upon it; something that set memory to working furiously; set my heart a-thudding. Merciful God above! I had forgotten until that awful moment; completely forgotten until that awful, realizing moment of judgment that Heimruh harbored this. For the cold, unsympathetic dawn disclosed, in pitiless relief, the wan, pinched, boyish face of Prince Hugo.

My eyes, willy-nilly, sought those of Zenia; sought and found returning consciousness; hate, loathing. Now the blood was sweeping to her cheek in a

surging tide; then back went her skin to a dreary white.

"You murderer," she whispered, with calculating, judging eyes. "You murderer."

CHAPTER XX.

I ACCEPT A DARE.

At length I softly locked the door. "Your highness," I began, as best I could, "it is no time for villification, judgment. Boris is out there, the castle awake. He thinks us gone, and has sent men in pursuit. He is confident of our capture. As for Prince Hugo, it was fair fight, fair fight, madame, and none of my choosing. And I left him in his uncle's care with all chances for recovery."

"You lie!" she said steadily, quietly. "Fair fight. Aye, and he but a boy fallen among ruthless, conscienceless scoundrels. Aye, you wince at that. And you left him in the tender, ministering care of his good uncle. Oh," she cried wildly and with fine scorn, "I have to thank you for much, Sir Knight. O most gallant knight, seemingly breaking a lance in my poor, needy service. And you knew all the time that my brother lay here with his death-wound, dealt by your hand; the hand offered in help to his sister. O Sir Knight, my most worshipful thanks. Look well upon your work—the sister you have tricked; the brother you have murdered."

"Out of whose mouth am I condemned, madame?" I asked, striving for some control.

"His," she cried tragically, pointing to the bed. "I knew his cry: left alone to gasp his life out; dying by inches; his sister but a half-score yards away. Oh, I am alone—alone: all—all alone!" and she broke down in a tempest of weeping; hard, dry sobs that racked me.

In grim silence I went to the bed. Yes, Prince Hugo was dead. The ad-dled princeling had found his own at last. I saw that the bandage stanching the wound had been removed, and nature too weak to make a bid for continuance, the glimmering spark of life

was soon exhausted. Yes, it was murder. Uncle Boris had planned well. Another noose had been skilfully looped about my already greatly encumbered neck. Again I had been the scapegoat.

I had nothing to say. I turned to Zenia, but she, ignoring my presence, fell on her knees by the bed, mothering the lifeless hand, bowing to her grief. And so Prince Hugo had died; with enough strength left before he went to say who gave him his wound; with not enough to explain Boris' brain in the affair. Yes, he had said it was Grey-stone, and Zenia, knowing I had assumed that title and of my stay at Heimruh, had guessed the rest.

"Madame," I ventured heavily, "pardon the intrusion, but we must think of escape. Perhaps you will so far accept my word as regards my innocence of Prince Hugo's death until such time as we reach Schillingsberg."

She rose with difficulty, pushing back the wild tangle of hair from her ravaged face. She had found some self-poise.

"Why keep up the farce?" she asked stonily, scathingly, raising wan, drear eyes.

"Farce, madame?"

"Aye, farce. I don't know your object, but this I know, you and Boris are hand and glove: you and Heimruh's bloody crew: all fashioned from the same vile cloth. You have tricked me before. Now come out from behind the curtain of treachery and deceit. I am sick to death of seeking to peer behind the mask. Sick to death of putting faith in the faithless. Sick of everything. Complete your work. Stop your play-acting. Take me to Boris, and tell me what you demand of my person. I have no stomach for intrigue—intrigue that counts murder and treachery. Make your price worth while, for when my time comes God will not wait to judge you. I am only a girl handicapped by honesty. Come, I am ready."

Every word stuck in my vitals like vitriol-tipped arrows. She had spoken wildly, fiercely, the victim of over-wrought nerves and racked heart. I answered as wildly, victim of the same.

Hotly I denied the accusation, even explaining how Boris had slipped the bandages on the young prince: pointing out his hand in the affair. Then came her answer, biting scornful:

"Enough of words! Confront Boris with them, and I will see which, if either, to believe. Enough of skulking. Face your enemy for once in the open—if he *is* your enemy——"

"Madame," I caught her up notly, bitterly. "I have skulked for your person, not my own——"

"Mine?" she echoed, with a mocking bow. "Oh, surely, Sir Knight, you are mistaken. What interest can we possibly have in common? Surely you have been thinking of your own safety—petticoat protection. That has finished my credulity," and she pointed to the bed. "Concern yourself no longer about me. Kienert is dead. Saxonia knows how to guard her own. Come, am I to face Boris alone? Or am I to say, Sir Knight"—and she laughed harshly—"that you are hiding in the closet, immersed in plans for my safety?"

Then at this lash of the whip I spoke hurriedly—and I have since expiated the slur.

"And by whose wish did I hide in the closet, madame?" I asked bluntly, and watched the blood sweep to her face.

She made no reply, but her eyes hardened and her lips quivered.

"I beg your pardon," I added, and in silence flung wide the door.

For the merest instant her eyes sought my face, then head up, without a word, she passed ~~it~~ out. Down the empty, echoing corridor I went, she at my heels. Morning had come in all its delayed glory. I was reckless, weary, devil-may-care of everything. Eternity had caved in. The vitriol-tipped arrows were gnawing my vitals.

As I descended the stairs, I caught sight of Boris seated at a long oak table in the hall beneath, the light from a stained-glass window showing redly on his patriarchal head. He was listening with courteous smile to the account of non-success recited by the detachment sent in pursuit of my person. His quick

ear was too absorbed to catch the message of the stairs, so I spoke first:

"Good morning," I said calmly. "I hope we are in good time."

Instantly I was covered by some half-dozen guns, but Boris, no whit startled, looked up and nodded easily.

"Good morning, my friend, and a very good morning to your highness."

He arose and bowed with some ceremony. He was ever a great stickler for these little forms of etiquette.

"We crave an audience with your highness," said I, with some irony, laying my revolver upon the table.

For the nonce he was completely taken back, and plainly showed it. He eyed, then examined, the weapon; and, finding it fully loaded, his gaze next traveled to the stairs. Plainly he was wondering why I had not killed him and made a fight of it.

"Oh!" he murmured softly; and "Oh!" again. "Search the gentleman," he next ordered briefly. Having done so, the troopers were curtly dismissed. "Now," offered Boris suavely, "pray be seated."

The chairs were accepted, for we were utterly spent and weary. Boris occupied one on the opposite side of the table, my gun at his elbow. Certainly, in my wildest imaginings, I had no thought that we three should ever be seated thus, and under such conditions. All this time the Hohenstauffen's clever eyes were striving to read our faces. The foolhardiness, the mystery behind the venture claimed his breath.

"Well?" he asked at length.

"I think," said I, "that her highness wishes to know if you and I bear any great love toward each other; are partners in her highness' tribulations. Also if Prince Hugo died of his wound, taken in his duel with me, or if you insisted upon his staying in Heimrüh, knowing all the time that you intended to slip his bandages when occasion offered. I think that is all."

I heard Zenia give a quick breath. Until that moment I think she imagined I would not dare to accept the gage she had flung down. If she had any doubts of how Boris and I stood

with each other, they were quenched now and for all time. For a long moment he did not reply, but he could not keep the hate from his eyes. Zenia, arms on table, chin on hands, was gazing at me, not at him. I felt her eyes. Again the Hohenstauffen was temporarily stumped, his keen brain figuring upon what move to make. I laughed suddenly, thinking of the trouble I was giving him. But his next words showed me the unexpected strength of my hand: strength I had not reckoned.

"Am I to understand," he asked, ignoring me, "that this gentleman is under your highness' protection?"

"I am under no protection but my own and the British consul's," I inserted grimly, still smarting bitterly under the allusion to skulking.

"Good," commented Boris. "Then consider yourself my prisoner, Mr. Mortimer."

"On what charge?" said I, humoring the farce.

"For inciting rebellion and taking arms against the throne of Zollenstein. For the death of Prince Hugo. You will have a fair trial."

"Thanks," said I, yawning in his face. But Zenia was on her feet, eyes blazing.

"Not so fast, not so fast," she cried menacingly, clenching her hands and staring narrow-lidded at Boris. "Mr. Mortimer is an English subject, and under Saxonia's protection. You reckon with me, sir. I came for truth—I find it. Heimruh has to answer for many crimes. I know that you had no hand in my abduction; I know that two kingdoms are searching for my person. Prince Hugo's death is my affair, and I will attend to it. I know," she ran on impetuously, heedlessly, "what hand you had in it. I know you for the scheming, illegitimate regicide you are. All this I know. Now order round the horses. Mr. Mortimer goes with me to be tried under Saxonia's rule. Hurry, for I have seen and heard enough, and this atmosphere reeks of all humanity's vileness."

Boris, pale and sneering, sat still, watching her.

"Have a care, a bridle on that tongue," he warned menacingly. "You speak like a queen—remember you have no subjects here. You own much knowledge, madame," he continued ironically; "knowledge lent by an adventurer, a puppet. You choose a worthy companion. Your champion is but the hireling of the chancellor, paid to keep me from the throne. A nameless, homeless vagabond. You threaten me. Good. Remember that I, too, have knowledge. And I warn you now to keep out of what does not concern you. Pah, you and your woman's meddling ways. Because you wear a skirt you think yourself immune. And you wish Mr. Mortimer, or whatever his name may be, to accompany you? Surely, surely. Remember I, too, have knowledge——"

"That for your knowledge," she cried, white-faced, snapping her fingers. "I have given an order; see that it is obeyed. By your work, I am queen of Saxonia."

"Aye," he sneered; "and do you know my knowledge? You forget that on my return I found you two here in Heimruh; living together for over a week in one room——"

"You lie!" I cried, jumping to my feet. I felt Zenia's hand on my arm, and saw my own revolver staring me in the face, with Boris' smiling eyes behind it.

"You forget," he continued, as if he had never been interrupted, "that the two kingdoms are ringing with your elopement—you and the fool. Now get you back home, child, and I will honorably explain your absence. Show your teeth, and the least you can forfeit is your good name."

"I think I understand," said Zenia slowly, while I sat impotently raging, and she stared fixedly at Boris. "I think"—measuredly—"I understand."

"'Tis well," he commented dryly. "Now you have chosen to call me certain names; charge me with certain crimes. I give them back to you. Now, madame, your champion remains here, my prisoner. You are free to return to Schillingsberg. Before you go you

will sign a paper setting forth how I found you and Mr. Mortimer here in Heimruh; under what conditions you lived for over a week. You understand? Any influence exerted against me, the slightest sign of double-dealing, and I will publish your confession all over Europe. And let me remind you that Europe is waiting for the first breath of suspicion against your good name. Already it is suspected that you have eloped with Mr. Mortimer. My word alone can save you from scandal. I can explain how you were nursing your brother, and wished to keep the news from Saxonia, or I can—tell the truth."

"And if I refuse?" she asked quietly, cheeks flaming.

Boris shrugged. "I am lenient. You forget that I could keep you here forever. They would attribute your absence to a—honeymoon."

"And what proof have I," she asked, in the same quiet, unemotional tone, "that once possessed of this so-called confession, that you will not use it in any case?"

"My word of honor," he returned, smiling.

"Your word of honor," she echoed, with regal scorn. "Oh, surely it should be enough. And so I am to trust you with the paper? Trust you with Mr. Mortimer's life? Trust you to afford him a fair trial? I am to do all the trusting? Hardly." She laughed harshly. "I only sign the paper, and promise to let you play for your crown unmolested on condition that Mr. Mortimer awaits his trial in Schillingsberg. That is the only condition."

"You fool," he snapped. "I am the dictator. I have you both in my power. At a word Heimruh will keep you forever."

"Madame," I pleaded, "go when you can—on any conditions. The world will not believe the lies. A cur will go to any lengths."

"Only on the conditions I have named," she stormed. "He dare not keep me. Look at him! Poor, starveling usurper. Dare he hold prisoner

Saxonia's ruler? He knows where even he must stop."

"I dare anything," said Boris gently. "You have decided? Good. You have sacrificed your liberty, your life, perhaps, for the sake of a fool in motley. Madame," he finished menacingly, "the world will never hear of you again. Enough. You are Heimruh's guest forever."

He arose, grim decision stamped in every line of his face.

Zenia, white-faced, but brave-eyed, smiled. "We shall see," she said quietly. "how many laws you can break, and for how long, before the rope finds its own."

"Madame, it will find its own very shortly," returned Boris pleasantly, with a certain grim humor. "Your fool in motley will hang to-day."

"You dare not, you dare not," she whispered, wide-eyed. "You dare not!"

His answer was a shrug. She stood there, transfixed, her throat pulsing. Then she broke out in a passion, at first fiercely daring, then finally incoherently pleading. "Name your price, name your price," she repeated over and over again. "Name your price for his life. This is all my work. I brought him to this. I would not believe. I was unnerved, unstrung. . . . Name your price."

Now he was sneering, suave. "So it is another tune?" he asked satirically. "The queen is lost in the mere woman; the woman who pleads for her lover's life— Pray restrain yourself, Mr. Mortimer, or the rope will be cheated by the bullet. . . . Aye, another tune, my queen, and one sung too late."

From cheeks of flaming crimson, Zenia's went to a dead, hopeless white. She groped blindly for a chair, and, finding it, sank down weakly. I dared not look at her. I knew that remorse, not love, owned her. In her passion she had given a dare, and like a fool I had accepted. And this was the reward.

Here a trooper entered, saluting.

"Your highness, a messenger has arrived, and demands an audience. He will take no refusal."

Zenia looked up quickly, a wild hope in her eyes. Boris turned, his attention for the moment diverted from the revolver lying at his elbow. I coughed. Zenia's eyes met mine. I nodded, and her quick intuition grasped the hint. I could not move, but she, owing to her position, might win that with which to make a bid for freedom. As Boris still stared angrily at the trooper, I saw Zenia's hand steal by fractional inches across the oaken board.

"Will not take a refusal?" echoed the Hohenstauffen harshly. "Who dares to give orders to Heimruh? Send the fool about his business, and let me not have to remind you who is master here."

Zenia's hand gained another inch as the trooper hesitated.

"The messenger is from the British consul," he said stubbornly.

Boris drew in his breath sharply. There could be no denying the audience.

"I think," I lied, diverting his attention from the encroaching hand, "that my government is anxious about my disappearance. England keeps track of her subjects."

He eyed me, rubbing his hand across his working mouth. For all he knew, I might be a most worthy representative of my country.

"Show the gentleman in," he ordered curtly at length. The trooper saluted and retired. "Now," added the Hohenstauffen harshly, "it will not do for the pretty lovers to be seen. Up-stairs—quick! A word, a hint, and I'll—"

Zenia had jumped back from the table, and with blazing, triumphant eyes was facing him with leveled gun. "We will see the gentleman together," she said softly. Then, as he stood impotent, white-faced, snarling, I relieved her of the weapon. The under-secretary from the British consulate was here ushered in upon this strange tableau.

He recognized her highness instantly, and bowed; then his eyes traveled from the revolver in my hand to Boris, and back again. As we did not speak, his English phlegm and sang-froid ignored the unusual situation. He turned to

smiling Boris, whom he evidently knew by sight.

"Your highness, it is learned that an English subject has disappeared; that he was made prisoner for some unknown reason, and carried by force to Heimruh. We are in possession of indisputable facts. We have the informant, a trooper who served under a Captain Kienert, who committed the offense. This is, as you know, a very serious matter, one of the utmost gravity. My government is inquiring into it, and will leave no stone unturned to punish the offenders and exact indemnity. In the meantime I demand Viscount Greystone's immediate release."

"Viscount Greystone?" echoed Boris slowly, and in sudden relief. "There is some mistake. 'Tis true that one of my men, acting on his own authority, arrested an unknown trespasser and lawbreaker who had fomented trouble in the kingdom. At present he is awaiting fair trial. But he is hardly such a personage of note as Viscount Greystone. Hardly."

Before I could stay her, Zenia had cried swiftly in English:

"Sir, a tissue of falsehoods. This gentleman is Viscount Greystone!" and she pointed dramatically at me. "You know who I am, Princess Zenia, of Saxonia. I was waylaid, taken prisoner, when this gentleman assisted me—" And hurriedly but succinctly she related the adventure of the deserted mill, and the subsequent happenings at Heimruh.

The under-secretary listened gravely, perplexed at this recital of inter-family feud, while Boris found not a word to interpose.

"And," concluded Zenia stormily, "your countryman was to be hanged like a common thief, without trial of any kind, while I was to be kept prisoner for life. Your timely arrival, sir, gave us the upper hand. See the filched weapon with which we commanded an audience. Now I seek the protection of the English flag until such time as Saxonia can right her sovereign's wrongs."

The under-secretary gnawed his incipient mustache. He was troubled

with youngness, I could see that, and had not been trained in such complex, desperate business.

"Madame," he said at length, "I do not understand. Certainly our informant stated that your highness was taken prisoner in company with Viscount Greystone—but this gentleman is certainly not Greystone. I held a published description of his person; one sent broadcast. And, madame, I hold no authority to meddle in Zollenstein's and Saxonia's affairs. It is not within my province. Your country, madame, will take all necessary steps. It was appraised this morning by us of your whereabouts. As for this gentleman—" He shrugged stolidly. "Again I have no right to meddle. He is not the viscount; that is enough."

"Exactly," commented Boris courteously. "All this seeming difficulty is entirely explainable. One of my men acted entirely without my authority, and has paid for it. This gentleman, as you say, comes under our jurisdiction, not yours. He must answer for the laws he has broken. As for her highness, she is at liberty to depart whenever she sees fit. But, as you wisely say, my dear sir, whatever little inter-family differences between the sister kingdoms might occur is no affair of England's. You are fully convinced that this gentleman is not Greystone? Very well. I regret the inconvenience you have incurred. Good morning."

"Hold on," said I, choosing the fire rather than the frying-pan. "It is true that I am not Greystone—the title was temporarily forced upon me through circumstances—but I am an English subject, and as such demand the protection of my flag. My name is John Mortimer. I dare say England will have heard of it."

"Lies—all lies," said Boris imperturbably. "He is a Zollenese, flesh and bone. A notorious blackleg, and at this very moment under indictment for the murder of Prince Hugo, of Saxonia. Ask the boy in the street for his record. He only wishes a moment's freedom in which to make good his escape. He uses his knowledge of the English

tongue to trade upon your credulity and the protection of your flag, sir."

"Order round the horses," I said harshly to Boris, leveling the weapon. "I'll prove my right by this. Quick! I stand here at your side. A look, a word other than the command and I fire. And you, sir, I go to the consulate. Your superior will have cause to know me if you do not."

I meant as regards the Carlton affair and my natural indictment, but he took it in another light, and a sudden belief and respect dawned in his boy's eyes. He remained impassive, while Boris, checked at last by the law of might, the law he himself had used so well, struggled desperately against voicing the command that meant frustration of his dearest desire. Then, as he felt the steel pressing into his side and read the resolve in my eyes, he shrugged in his old nonchalant manner.

"Needs must when the devil drives," he murmured, and shouting for a trooper, obediently gave the order.

"Now," said I to Boris, "you lead us to the postern-gate. I will walk directly behind, the gun concealed in my handkerchief. You know just how far you can trifle with me. I don't care a curse for my life, and I don't give a damn for yours."

The postern-gate was reached, and I ordered him through to the road beyond. The under-secretary's horse and two others—one bearing a side-saddle—were awaiting us in charge of a trooper, who, on our appearance, saluted and retired. I motioned the under-secretary to assist Zenia in mounting. Then, bareheaded, disheveled, utterly weary and spent, I swung on to my mount. Boris stood, the morning sun glowing like a halo about his frosty head.

"Good-by," I called. "And many thanks for your hospitality. Some time I hope to repay it."

"Good-by and a pleasant journey," he called, with the utmost courtesy. Certainly there were no half-measures about Boris von Hohenstauffen. He was consistent even in defeat.

Down the road we galloped at full

tilt—straight into the maw of an approaching body of horse.

"Saxonia! Saxonia!" called Zenia exultingly. "See the scarlet. At last, at last!"

"Aye, madame, I see," I replied grimly. "And I also see the blue and silver of Zollenstein." I, too, was at the end of my tether, and I prayed for the Hohenstauffen's iron nerve with which to meet it.

CHAPTER XXI.

I ENTER THE CONFSSIONAL AND FIND IT EMPTY.

I cannot set down all the incidents of the meeting. The chancellor, it seemed, had joined hands with Saxonia, by right of the relationship existing between the sister kingdoms, upon learning from the British consulate of Zenia's whereabouts. They had not expected to find me in her company, having no knowledge that I had masqueraded as Greystone. They had caught two birds with one stone. At my side sat my old friend Lieutenant Von Lindowe, rather white of face, but as insouciant as ever. He raised his eyebrows and smiled slightly as his gaze met mine. It now developed that in the interim the old king of Saxonia had died. A trusted, weather-beaten colonel of hussars broke the news. Zenia, with bowed head, listened in stern-lipped silence.

"And," concluded the old colonel, "we are waiting for your highness to grasp the flying reins of government. For young King Hugo is absent. They say he has gone pleasuring—pleasuring at such a time!" He evidently owned the liberty of expression accorded an old and faithful servant.

Zenia's eyes grew dark through the unshed tears, and her lips quivered.

"Aye, a-pleasuring," she whispered tensely. "He lies there, sir," pointing menacingly to the distant towering buttresses of dark Heimruh. "Lies there—dead!"

Von Lindowe sucked in his breath, while a ripple of suppressed rage swept down the troop.

"Dead—in Heimruh?" asked the old

colonel incredulously. "Then 'fore God, madame, it's murder. Boris' hand is in this. He will answer for it. I would that your majesty had gained the throne in another manner. 'Fore God, madame, it is terrible. We feel your bereavement as only loyal soldiers can. . . . And—and now we await your command to bring the Hohenstauffen to book. Give the word, madame; give the word," he finished, his gnarled face working.

I saw plainly the struggle going on in Zenia's heart.

"No," she cried tensely, at length, "I cannot. I can only accord my brother a fitting burial. That is all that is left for me to do. That is all that I, his sister, his queen, can accomplish. Oh, most royal, mighty sovereignty! My hands are tied. I have no proof—proof, the shibboleth of justice! . . . And for political reasons, as you well know," she added bitterly, "we cannot afford a public trial. Vengeance must wait."

"Madame," said I hardily, "you are endeavoring to shield me through an overnice sense of honor. Your hands are *not* tied. You know that I, though innocent of Prince Hugo's death, dealt him his wound. I am indirectly responsible. I am ready to face my guilt."

She eyed me for a moment, then flung out in white-faced scorn:

"And do you think, sir, that an overnice sense of honor would restrain me from seeing my brother's murderer brought to book? Surely you overestimate a queen's generosity and your own importance. Be quite sure, sir, I have not forgotten your part in the affair, and I will exact full reparation. But common justice prohibits the tool from footing the master's score."

Then oblivious of audience, I lashed back in equal scorn.

"I see," said I quietly, "that it is one thing to serve a woman in distress—quite another to serve a queen in full possession of her restored liberty."

She flushed hotly, but her lips sneered.

"A queen," she replied coldly, "can reward services if she can exact justice. You will not go unrequited——"

"Madame," said I hotly, "it is beyond your price to buy me."

She shrugged haughty, indifferent shoulders, but her lips were all a-quiver. "Then that leaves only justice, sir. You will consider yourself Saxonia's prisoner. Your country will see you afforded a fair trial."

"Pardon, madame," inserted Von Lindowe, speaking for the first time, "but I think Zollenstein has the prior claim upon Mr. Mortimer. I think he will agree with me. The chancellor is most anxious to see him. We will answer for his person to your majesty."

"Oh!" said Zenia softly, a satirical light beginning to glow in her eyes. "A hireling? U-m-m. . . . I remember that Boris claimed the chancellor had in his pay a puppet—surely, surely it was not the truth——"

She was cut short by Von Lindowe's warning glance and expressive nod to where the under-secretary sat absorbed in the contemplation of his elementary mustache, completely bewildered by this turn affairs had taken. I felt Zenia's eyes upon my face, but I gave no sign.

"Very well," she said dryly, at length, "I yield temporarily to the chancellor's first claim. But remember that you are responsible to me for Mr. Mortimer's person. I give him in your charge. In time Saxonia will exact her due."

Here I was being bartered like so much common chattel on the king's highway; disposed of out of hand by a mere nod of the head. It was a most elevating position, and I felt my cheeks burn and my heart grow bitter and black.

"Madame," I said coldly, "and you, sir," turning to Von Lindowe, "you have forgotten one thing in your haggling—England. That country, my own, has first claim upon me. I am not to be disposed of so easily. I go with neither of you, but to England."

"Oh!" softly exclaimed the lieutenant, sucking in his breath and beetling brows, while Zenia, coldly silent, eyed me curiously. "Surely you also are forgetting something, Mr. Mortimer."

"England," put in Zenia meaningly, menacingly, "can have no such claim

upon you as Saxonia; not so pressing a one."

"England," said I grimly, looking her fair in the eye, "has a greater, prior claim, madame. I have been scape-goat long enough. England, at least, does not mete out blackmail with justice. You understand, lieutenant? Good. Come, the market-place is closed, and I am bought in by the rightful owner. I give myself in charge of the British consul represented by this gentleman. You will take me," I added to the greatly astounded young man, "to your superior. When I acquaint him with my name and history, he will know how to act. Madame and all, I have the honor to wish you good morning."

"What does this mean?" cried Zenia.

"It means, madame," said I, "that I am no longer a puppet. It means that I have at last crawled from under the yoke. It means that Saxonia and Zollenstein, saving your royal presence, can go to the devil for all I care; that the chancellor must find some other fool to pull his chestnuts from the fire. I have paid bitterly for my credulity. I am awake at last. It means, madame, that I would rather take my chance in England against a charge of murder than be longer the tool and toy of infinitely degraded powers."

"You're mad! You don't know what step you're taking," threatened Von Lindowe through set teeth.

"I know thoroughly." I laughed harshly, "I'm going from a degraded life to a degrading death. That's all. You have tricked me long enough; traded long enough upon my misery and cowardice. Understand now that I am England's prisoner, and that you have to deal with her might, not my extremity. And as for you, madame," I concluded cynically, "kindly understand that Saxonia and your feelings will have been accorded full reparation, sufficient balm, when England has exacted her due. Death, I think, wipes out all obligations."

Von Lindowe was silent, his mouth twitching strangely.

"Am I to understand, Mr. Mortimer," put in the little under-secretary,

clearing his already overexcited throat, "that—that you charge yourself with murder?"

"That or manslaughter. I don't really care which. I believe extradition treaties exist between the countries. You can cable to Scotland Yard, and in your custody I will await their disposition."

My last recollection of the group was of Von Lindowe smiling and shrugging; of the old captain of hussars, hand at grizzled mustache, watching me with hard, incredulous eyes; of Zenia, stern and cold and proud, sitting her horse like a statue. I remembered now that she had received my confession in silence, and I had not cared to read what her eyes might hold. Well I knew that in them could be nothing but loathing and contempt; contempt and unutterable hatred. How she must shrink at the thought of a murderer's lips having touched her own. And then I laughed. I was in a very dangerous humor that morning. I could not analyze it; I could not explain it.

In a measure I was free again, yielding sovereignty of dominion to the law alone; that law to which every man has sacrificed a measure of his freedom in order to guarantee the greater liberty to all. Yes, I was under the hand of the law, not under the thumb of one man to crush or direct as he pleased. And humbly I hugged this poor fragment of liberty to my heart. Thus in chastened mood I spoke freely to the youthful under-secretary regarding my crime.

"You remember that affair at the Carlton some weeks ago? Well, I am the man who killed Colonel Gratz. I was insulted over cards, and struck harder than I knew. What had the papers to say regarding it? I left England that night."

Parker, for so in a boyish sort of way he had granted his name to me, thoughtfully pinched nose with nervous fingers, and slowly shook his head.

"I don't remember the case," he replied slowly, puzzled. "I haven't been home for a year. It must have been hushed up."

"But surely it got into the continental papers?" I argued. "I have had no time to read them. I'm not bragging of the honor, but there were some well-known men present at the time. Greystone, for instance."

"You forget that Greystone has disappeared," he reminded. "The club must have hushed it up."

"They don't usually go to the extreme of providing burial," I commented. "Of course, the British consul here would have been notified of the affair?"

He nodded. "Yes, seeing that you are an Englishman, and knowing that you had fled to the continent. So would the police. And descriptions would have been sent out. And yet, although I am in touch with such sources of information, the matter has escaped me."

"The consul will know me well enough," I said grimly. Then my thoughts turned to Zenia.

For a space how well we had gotten on together. I could never forget those dear nights of intimacy; the nights I had read to her in the gloomy castle, in the midst of alarms. All that had been wiped out in the bitter aftermath of her brother's death. And how she had resented my suggestion that she was striving to shield me. That had been a fatal error of mine. Of course she had resented it; any woman would.

I had forgotten Boris' words concerning how the world had been talking of our flight together. But she had remembered, and smarting, hypersensitive under it, had resented the insinuation, so crudely put, so unintended, that she cared one iota for me. It had been womanhood that had fiercely taken arms. Ah, well, it mattered little now. Another thing had come between us, as it would have inevitably come. That thing was the gallows.

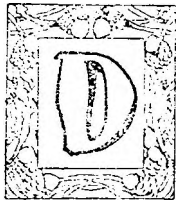
The Adventures of Felix Boyd

By Scott Campbell

Author of "Below the Dead Line," Etc.

XXII.—THE PICKPOCKET

(A Complete Story)



DEAD—yes, Jimmie." Mr. Felix Boyd glanced up at the grim face of the Central Office man, bowed back of his chair to gaze over his shoulder. "He's a dead one, all right. He cashed in his chips a month ago in Buenos Ayres, where so many American delinquents find the atmosphere conducive to the uninterrupted pursuit of happiness. The fact has not been published, I think, and very possibly it has been suppressed; but I received a line yesterday from Arkright, the Equity Trust absconder, another of the American colony in that quarter of the globe, and the report no doubt is true. Don't know the face, eh?"

Jimmie Coleman shook his head.

"Can't say I do," he tersely rejoined. "Take your thumb from the name, Felix. I may remember that."

Boyd moved his thumb to the edge of the photograph at which both were intently gazing, and revealed the name written with a pen on the lower border of the card—Paul Odey Candor.

It was a striking face, that depicted—the face of a man in middle life, smoothly shaven, with a broad brow, an abundance of wavy dark hair, a pair of large and dreamy eyes under cleanly pencilled brows, a straight and rather prominent nose, with the thin, sensitive nostrils of a thoroughbred, a firm mouth and square chin, obviously those of a man

of iron will and nerves of steel. A hand also pictured was as shapely as that of a woman, as long and slender as that of an artist, or a musician—or possibly that of a pickpocket.

"Humph!" Coleman vented a grunt and resumed his seat. "Paul Odey Candor, eh? Dead, is he? Where did you get his photograph? I never knew that he was mugged for the Gallery."

"Nor was he, Jimmie," said Boyd, slipping the photograph into his desk drawer. "I picked it up by chance several years ago, thinking I might some time find it useful. That's all off now, I reckon."

"Most likely, since we're hardly called upon to chase a crook into Hades."

"No, he was never mugged, as you inelegantly term it, nor even arrested. He jumped just in time to save his pelt and avoid—— I infer, by the way, that you recall the man and the episodes in which he is said to have figured."

"Not very clearly, Felix," growled the Central Office man indifferently. "I was busy below the dead-line in those days. A swell society guy, wasn't he?"

Boyd smiled faintly, and relit his cigar, while he responded in ruminating mood:

"It would be hard to say, Jimmie, who can tell the whole truth about Paul Candor. It is six years since he fled from New York. I knew him tolerably well, and, to be frank, I thought him one of the most fascinating men I ever met.

He then was about forty years old, a handsome, affable fellow, well-bred and finely educated, a popular club-man, and a figure in the most exclusive circles of society. There are many of his old admirers who believe, even to this day, that he was innocent of the startling string of crimes laid at his door, although he jumped the country the moment charges were made and his arrest was imminent."

"Jewel robberies, weren't they?"

"Yes," Boyd thoughtfully nodded. "For two years fashionable society here and in Newport, as well as abroad at intervals, was victimized by an unknown and exceedingly clever thief, who got away with costly jewelry in a most mysterious manner, and to an amount that aggregated close upon half a million."

"Perdition!" Coleman exclaimed, in surprise. "I was not aware it ran up to that."

"Fully that, Jimmie. Nearly all of his thefts, moreover, were from the person of his victim. Hardly a woman of the smart set escaped his deft and elusive fingers. Rarely a social event occurred without such a robbery. Rings, brooches, pendants, sunbursts, and necklaces—all vanished in the same mysterious way."

"With not a trace of the rascal, eh?"

"Not the slightest, Jimmie. The reign of terror, for such it became, both culminated and abruptly ended with the lifting of a magnificent string of pearls from the neck of Lady Valerie Rutherford, a guest at a ball given by one of the Vanderbilts. The pearls have never been recovered, Jimmie, but a curious combination of circumstances plainly indicated that Paul Otley Candor, also one of the guests, was the thief, and steps were speedily taken to arrest him. Either he had been warned, however, or at once realized his danger and the folly of putting up a fight, for he fled before an officer could reach his residence."

"A sufficient proof of his guilt," growled Coleman, with furrowed brows.

"So I think, Jimmie," Boyd gravely assented. "Yet there are some who still believe, as did his wife and daughter,

that he fled only because the accusation alone was a greater shame than he could bear."

"Bosh! No man would have done that."

"Poor thing—I refer to his charming wife, whom I frequently had met—she lived only a year after his departure. The disgrace of it killed her."

"That's the hell of such knavery, and——"

"His daughter, Medora Candor," Boyd went on without heeding the other's remark, "then a sweet girl under twenty, weathered the storm, and now is the wife of Gideon Dalrymple, the American agent of a French wine house. She is a very beautiful woman, too, and Dalrymple as fine a fellow as ever stood in leather; but they are out of the social whirl."

"Naturally," Coleman said, with a shrug. "What was Candor's legitimate business—or were his robberies so profitable that he needed none?"

"He was an architect, Jimmie, of much ability," Boyd rejoined, smiling faintly. "He designed and built the superb residence now occupied by his daughter and her husband. It is unique in its artistic grandeur, its deviations from conventional lines, and it evinces the genius of the man. Attempts were made by his victims to wrest the property from his daughter, in whose name it stood, but no judgment could be obtained, Candor never having been tried and convicted. What became of his plunder, if he was guilty, is still a mystery. None of the jewels were recovered, nor could the slightest trace of them be found. If he concealed them—a vast accumulation, with a design to subsequently convert them gradually into cash——"

"Very likely his daughter now is doing so," Coleman bluntly vouchsafed.

Boyd quickly shook his head.

"I don't think so, Jimmie," he said. "She resembles her mother, and her sweet, womanly face, for sorrow has aged her beyond her years, evinces her lofty character. She never has ceased to assert, moreover, her belief in her father's innocence. Dalrymple, further-

more, is said to be a man of wealth and sterling integrity, one who would connive at no evil. If his wife, contrary to all outward indications, is guilty of—what is it, Terry?"

"Lady, sir. Wants to see you."

Felix Boyd took the dainty card tendered by the lad who had entered his private office, and read the name engraved on it—Mrs. Gideon Dalrymple.

The Central Office man, who had dropped in upon Boyd only for their customary morning chat and smoke, already was about to withdraw. Boyd arose from the seat at his desk and said, without a change of countenance:

"Return in time to lunch with me, Jimmie. You may show the lady in, Terry."

Boyd placed a chair for her when she entered—a slender, graceful woman still under twenty-five, with a pale, exceedingly pretty face, and soft blue eyes, an expression that was irresistibly winsome because of its grave frankness and subtle pathos, and whose mingling of graciousness and dignity evinced a character warranting his recent comments. She smiled faintly, and murmured a word of thanks and greeting, but Boyd replied only with a nod until he had closed the door and resumed his seat, when he quietly responded:

"Good morning, Mrs. Dalrymple. What brings you to see me so early?"

"Trouble—of which, Mr. Boyd, you know I have had more than my share."

The answer was like the woman, frank in its grave simplicity and ineffably touching. Boyd drew nearer to her, saying with sympathetic gentleness:

"I am sorry to hear that, Mrs. Dalrymple."

"I knew you would be, for I remember that you were one who had only kind words for my poor mother at a time when she most needed them."

"Ah, Mrs. Dalrymple——"

"Pardon my speaking so," she had drawn off her glove and laid her hand on his arm; "but I am not one who forgets. I know, too, that you are one who can give me the best advice. That's why I have come to you, Mr. Boyd."

"I will endeavor to do so," Boyd said earnestly. "Command me in any way, Mrs. Dalrymple, I beg of you. What is the nature of your trouble?"

"I fear, alas! that my husband is losing his mind. Either that, Mr. Boyd, or he is in some terrible personal danger, that threatens even his life."

"Indeed! Why do you think so?"

"Because of his recent extraordinary conduct."

"Of what does it consist, Mrs. Dalrymple, and when did you first observe anything unusual?"

"About ten days ago I noticed at dinner one evening that he appeared very nervous and disturbed. Twice after the meal I saw him search all of his pockets, and examine several letters contained in one of them. When I questioned him, however, he only laughed and explained his perturbation by saying that he had mislaid his pocketbook, containing a small sum of money. That bricily reassured me, Mr. Boyd, for I never had known him to deceive me. He has always been very loyal, loving, and devoted to me."

"Why do you think, then, that he deceived you?"

"I was convinced of it by what followed. We occupy adjoining chambers, Mr. Boyd, yet I know that he passed a sleepless night. He repeatedly stole into the hall to listen, at times for nearly half an hour, and once when I called to him and asked why he was so uneasy, he replied, with a laugh so nervous and unnatural that I knew it was forced, that he thought he heard noises downstairs and feared there were thieves in the house."

"Is it lighted with electricity?" Boyd inquired.

"Yes, throughout."

"Did he switch on any lights?"

"He did not."

"Nor say anything next morning in explanation of his conduct?"

"On the contrary, Mr. Boyd, he persistently evaded my inquiries, and my solicitude seemed to annoy him," Mrs. Dalrymple said, with pathetic inflection. "He went to his business as usual, however, only to return twice during

the day, stating that he wanted documents that were in his library desk."

"Has he ever done so before?"

"No, no, never."

"Did he sleep well that night?"

"Far from it. His strange conduct of the previous night was repeated, which naturally increased my fears and misgivings. The next morning, moreover, he discharged our butler, a very capable and trustworthy old servant, and immediately advertised for another. When I asked why he had done so, he declared that Parsons was too old for good service. My protests were overruled, not unkindly, but firmly; and Mr. Dalrymple remained at home the entire day, stating that he wanted to balance his domestic accounts and answer some letters. I soon was convinced, however, that he remained only to meet any applicants who called in answer to his advertisement, for he employed the first man who responded."

"Were you present during their interview?"

"No. It was held in the library."

"Is the man now in your employ?"

"He is not. Mr. Dalrymple discharged him the next morning and hired another within an hour—as before, the first who applied. That man still is serving us—or was last night."

"Why did you add the last, Mrs. Dalrymple?"

"Because he asked for a leave of absence last evening, Mr. Boyd, and he had not returned when I left home this morning. I am not at all sure that he will return."

"Ah, I see," Boyd thoughtfully murmured. "What is his name?"

"James Beckwith."

"Is he a capable butler?"

"Quite the contrary. He is not familiar with his duties, and is very awkward in his attempts to perform them."

"Yet Mr. Dalrymple retains him?"

"He insists upon it, despite that I have remonstrated," Mrs. Dalrymple said, with feeling. "Nor is that the worst of it, Mr. Boyd, nor the most extraordinary. I have repeatedly seen him stealthily watching Beckwith, and he appears constantly alert, day and

night, as if in dread of impending evil. He remained at home for three days, after employing this man, stating that he felt out of sorts, and would not go to his office."

"This does appear strange, I'll admit," Boyd quietly remarked, with his eyes half-hid by their drooping lids. "Is there anything more, Mrs. Dalrymple?"

"Alas, yes! The most extraordinary of all."

"Indeed?"

"Day before yesterday he had several books sent up from his office and said he wanted one of his clerks to work in the library, as he was crowded for desk room at his office. He left home a little later, saying that he felt able to resume business. The clerk arrived in about an hour, apparently an elderly, bearded man, and I went with him to the library, where he prepared to begin his work. Imagine my amazement and dismay, Mr. Boyd, when I suddenly discovered that the man was—Mr. Dalrymple himself, very cleverly disguised."

"Disguised in his own house, eh?"

"Can you conceive of anything more extraordinary?" Mrs. Dalrymple cried, in distressing perplexity. "Such conduct is inexplicable. Either he is mad, Mr. Boyd, or——"

"How did you detect the deception, Mrs. Dalrymple?"

"Entirely by chance. Mr. Dalrymple is in the habit of using a scented oil on his hair——"

"Ah, I see," Boyd again interrupted, with the shadow of a smile. "A wig did not entirely suppress the odor. Did you tell your husband that you recognized him?"

"No, no, Mr. Boyd, I did not," Mrs. Dalrymple replied, with a half-choked sob. "How could I do so? I had vainly implored him to explain his earlier conduct, only to be evaded with equivocations, which, despite his invariable gentleness, convinced me that he did not wish to confide in me. I therefore have said nothing, despite the fact that I am filled with fear and misgivings. He has remained at home the past two days in this assumed character, going out only to make the necessary changes, and re-

turning at night, as if he had come from his office. I know that he has been secretly watching Beckwith, both day and night, for I have seen him in the halls, peering cautiously about and listening intently. He is rapidly losing flesh, moreover, and looks as worried and haggard as if from a long illness. Oh, Mr. Boyd, unless something is done to relieve my anxiety and suspense——"

"Pardon me," Boyd gravely checked her. "I will do what I can for you, Mrs. Dalrymple. Does your husband know that you have come to me for advice?"

"No, indeed! I have told nobody."

"Have you overheard any talk between him and Beckwith?"

"Only that relating to the butler's duties."

"Have you observed anything indicating a previous acquaintance between them?"

"I have not."

"Has Beckwith conducted himself properly?"

"So far as I know."

"To whom did he apply for an evening out?"

"To Mr. Dalrymple, immediately after dinner."

"Was the request readily granted?"

"Yes, without any objection," bowed Mrs. Dalrymple. "Yet Mr. Dalrymple must have known that Beckwith did not return last evening, for I heard him steal out of his chamber about two o'clock this morning and listen for a time in the hall. Not hearing him return, I stepped into his room, and found that he must have been partly dressed, for some of his garments were missing."

"Do you know how long he was absent?"

"I do, Mr. Boyd; also that he left the house."

"How so?"

"After listening nearly half an hour, I heard the side door quietly closed. Presently my husband came stealthily up the rear stairs and returned to his chamber. Oh, Mr. Boyd," Mrs. Dalrymple's voice fell to a tremulous whisper, imbued with dread and distress;

"I heard his teeth chattering under the chill of the night air. He was clad in his bathrobe and slippers. And when I entreated him for an explanation this morning, his unusual asperity and the dismay with which he regarded me——"

"One moment, please." The telephone on Boyd's desk was ringing noisily. He turned and took up the receiver, saying quickly: "Hello!"

"That you, Felix?"

"Yes."

"Tim Coleman. Can you meet me at Daly's garage in ten minutes? I want you to go with me to Dalrymple's place, Washington Heights, the party you spoke of this morning."

"For what?"

"The body of the butler, evidently murdered, has been found back of some shrubbery near the house."

Boyd's voice took on an ominous ring, his eyes a sharper gleam and glitter. He cried curtly: "I'll come at once, Jimmie!" and replaced the receiver.

II.

"Moran—Chick Moran—that's his name, Felix."

"Are you sure?"

"Sure—of course I'm sure," Coleman growled impatiently. "Don't I know that face?—well, rainer! He's of the light-fingered gentry, but only a second-rater. A pickpocket, that's what he is. What's that he's saying about—why do you detain me? What are you waiting here for?"

"Nothing, Jimmie."

"You be hanged! I'll keep quiet, since you've advised it and cautioned the woman; but if you——"

"Let there be no buts, Jimmie."

Boyd released the arm of his companion, then followed him over the low stone wall at which he had briefly detained him. It formed the side boundary of Dalrymple's magnificent estate. On the broad lawn, a short distance away, nearly within the shadow of the palatial wooden residence, was a throng of people restrained by several policemen, all intently watching a physician

who was kneeling beside a man on the ground.

The latter was a smoothly shaven man of fifty, evidently the victim of a brutal assault, followed by robbery. His head was terribly battered, his features and garments covered with blood. His hat was lying several yards away, yet the ground bore no signs of a struggle. Obviously, he had been thoroughly searched, for his coat and vest had been opened, several of the pockets partly turned, while even his shoes had been removed and his stockings nearly drawn from his feet.

As he approached the scene with his companion, Felix Boyd appeared to have no interest in the man whose remarks, addressed to the police sergeant, he had briefly paused to hear. He was a slender, yet well-built, wiry fellow, in the twenties, with a thin, peaked face, a nose like the beak of a vulture, and a pair of shifty, steel-gray eyes, as sharp as needles. He was clad in a suit of rusty brown, baggy at the knees, and then was forcibly protesting, with sinister inflection and a vernacular evincing his low type of character:

"Seen him—sure I seen him! What d'ye think, sergeant, that me lamps go smoky in the night? Not much, old man! I seen him, all right. He was a big guy, bareheaded, with a long, loose robe on, tied round the middle with a rope, or a——"

"A bathrobe, is that what you mean?" demanded the sergeant.

"Mebbe that's what 'twas. What's the odds, anyhow, since I seen him plain and could tell him again if——"

"Ah, here's Coleman and Mr. Boyd," cried one of the officers, interrupting. "It now is up to them."

Moran turned quickly and glanced sharply at both, but he detected no sign of recognition. Coleman paused to speak to the sergeant, while Felix Boyd at once approached the physician and the man above whom he was kneeling. There was a subtle gleam deep down in his keen gray eyes when he surveyed the senseless man, yet he tersely inquired, with an air of indifference that could not fail to impress all observers:

"Dead, doctor?"

"Ah, Mr. Boyd, is it you?" The physician glanced up quickly. "No, not yet dead, but it will be a close call. His skull is fractured, and he is injured internally. The brute who did this job kicked him after he was down and out. Long exposure, added to his injuries, may prove fatal."

"The hospital is the place for him, I should think," Boyd drawled, thrusting his hands into his pockets.

"I have sent for the ambulance."

"How long ago was the crime committed?"

"Ten or twelve hours, at least. Late last evening, Mr. Boyd, or early this morning."

"When was it discovered?"

"About half an hour ago, by one of the house servants. This man is the butler, I'm told, named Beckwith. The residence is that of Mr. Gideon Dalrymple."

"Any clue to the assailant?"

"Not unless that fellow——"

"There appears to be nothing to it, Jimmie, but a case of assault and robbery," Boyd interrupted the physician, and turned to Coleman, who then was approaching. "There are no indications of a fight. Evidently the man was knocked out before he could defend himself. He has been searched from top to toe and robbed of all his valuables. What were you about to say, doctor? No clue, unless——"

"Unless that fellow can give one," said the physician, with a nod in the direction of Chick Moran. "He says he saw somebody about here at two o'clock this morning."

Without a change of countenance, with a lackadaisical air that appeared entirely out of keeping with the duties he had assumed, Boyd turned for the first time to look directly at the man mentioned.

"What are you?" he asked, with a quizzical smile. "A milkman?"

"Milkman——" Moran echoed the word with a stare of sinister resentment. "Sure, I'm no milkman. Why d'ye spring that at me?"

"I wondered what earthly business

brought you out at two o'clock in the morning," said Boyd, with a dryness that evoked a laugh from several hearers.

Moran flushed hotly, with a gleam of suspicion leaping up in his shifty eyes.

"I've a right to be out when I like," he retorted sharply. "I went broke in Paradise Park, me and my friend, here, and we was hoofing it back to town. I'll leave it to him—wasn't we, Fogarty?"

"That's right, sir," vouchsafed a freckled fellow who was standing nearby. "Moran's giving it to you straight, sir. We went broke for fair, with a bun on, at that, and——"

"Well, well, it doesn't matter," Boyd carelessly interrupted. "As you say, Mr. Moran, you have a right to be out when you like. You saw a man about here at the hour mentioned, did you?"

"Yes, the two of us seen him," Moran quickly replied less churlishly. "Didn't we, Fogarty?"

"That's what we did, sir, and we watched him a bit, in the bargain."

"Are you sure this wasn't the man?" Boyd glanced again at the stricken butler.

"Him—not much!" Moran derisively cried. "The guy we saw was half as big ag'in. He didn't have on a tile, either, and I reckoned he was in slippers, or mebbe no shoes at all, he trod so still on the gravel-walk. He acted as if he was looking for——"

"Stop a moment!" Boyd's air of indifference suddenly vanished. It gave place to a display of interest the more startling because of the contrast. "Bare-headed and in slippers, you say? By Jove! Jimmie, he may have been an inmate of the house."

"I believe your story," Coleman quickly nodded.

"Where is Mr. Dalrymple?" added Boyd, frowning. "Isn't he at home, or his wife, or some of the family? Why aren't they out here to tell what they know of this man and why he——"

One of a group of awed servants to whom Boyd had turned and quickly addressed, interrupted him in her haste to respond.

"There be only two in the family, sir, the master and mistress," she cried, venturing nearer. "She went to town this morning, sir, and hasn't got home. Mr. Dalrymple's gone to his office, so he has, and——"

"Hasn't he been notified?" snapped Boyd impatiently. "Why wasn't he sent for at once, sergeant, and informed of this affair?"

"He was—he was, Mr. Boyd," cried the officer. "His chauffeur went after him with an auto. He may arrive at any moment."

"Well, well, that's more like it," said Boyd with less asperity. "By the way, Moran, my good fellow, did you see this man at all last night?"

"No; we seen only one," Moran glibly answered.

"Did you hear any dispute, or sounds of a wrangle?"

"No, nothing like it."

"Yet you watched the man, Fogarty says. What was he doing?"

"Nosing round the house, like as if he was looking for somebody."

"Looking for somebody—that's significant, Jimmie," cried Boyd, with another glance at Coleman. "How long did you watch him, Moran?"

"Bout a minute—mebbe less. It was home and the blankets for us, so we didn't hang round here long."

"Where was he when you first saw him?"

"Over there near the side door," said Moran, pointing. "Then he sneaked to the front of the house, where I seen him quite plain in the starlight. He was so——"

"So plainly that you would know him, if you saw him again?" Boyd interrupted.

"Know him ag'in—sure, I would! He was a full-faced man, with a clean shave and black hair. He was like—oh, holy smoke!" Moran darted nearer to Boyd, grasping his arm and pointing toward the open gate at the end of the long driveway, adding, with haste and eagerness, to which the latter was by no means blind: "That's him—the one I seen. That's him in the back of the

auto. Ain't I right, Fogarty?—look! Sure, that's the man!"

"No, it's not, and you're a liar!" the same servant who had previously spoken now cried angrily. "That's the master, Mr. Dalrymple, sir, and he——"

"Silence!" Boyd sternly commanded, interrupting. "Not another word from any of you. Arrest the first person, sergeant, who opens his mouth. I'll learn the truth from this man, or know the reason why. Get behind him, Jimmie, in case he shows fight. Remember, sergeant, arrest the first person who interferes."

Boyd was not wisely to be opposed at such a time. There was a ring in his lowered voice, a gleam in his frowning eyes, that none cared to ignore. He appeared to grasp with rather malicious avidity the opportunity presented by the situation, and just as his last threatening words were uttered, an automobile, which Moran had been the first to observe, left the driveway, up which it was speeding, and quickly approached the throng on the sunlit lawn.

Dalrymple sprang out of the car before it stopped. He was a handsome, splendidly built man, close upon forty, yet his face was ghastly pale when he strode through the group that briefly hid from his view the motionless figure on the ground. When he beheld it, moreover, he staggered as if struck a blow, then stood staring at Beckwith's shoeless feet for a moment, with a look of mingled dismay and distress that startled every observer.

Not in the least inclined to mince matters, Boyd at once took advantage of his perturbation, saying sharply:

"What's the trouble, Mr. Dalrymple? You appear greatly disturbed."

Dalrymple wheeled upon him, as if pricked with a knife, yet it was plain to all that he quickly tried to govern his feelings.

"Disturbed!" he exclaimed, staring straight at Boyd. "Why not, indeed? Such a sight would shock any man. Who has done this?"

"That's what we are trying to learn. The man is one of your servants, isn't he?"

"Yes, my butler."

"How long has he been in your employ?"

"Less than a week."

"What do you know about him?"

"Very little. He——"

"He had recommendations, didn't he?"

"Recommendations——"

"Certainly. By whom was he formerly employed?"

"I don't know," stammered Dalrymple. "I——"

"Don't know!" Boyd again interrupted, with a display of incredulity bordering upon insolence. "Are you in the habit, Mr. Dalrymple, of engaging servants without any voucher to their ability and honesty? That's hardly reasonable, sir, in a man of your cloth. Come, come, you must know something about this man, or you would not have employed him."

If Boyd was aiming to anger the other with a view to evoking some involuntary self-betrayal, he was progressing finely; for a flush of resentment had appeared in Dalrymple's cheeks, and he was trembling with suppressed passion.

"You're an insolent fellow!" he cried. "Who are you, that you presume to question me in this rude fashion?"

"One whose authority warrants it," Boyd curtly retorted. "Why don't you answer my question, instead of evading it? Have you any reasons for suppressing what information you possess? In that case, Mr. Dalrymple, we shall have no alternative but to place you under immediate arrest."

"Arrest!"

Dalrymple echoed the word in his throat. Boyd's offensive attitude, his rapid fire of questions, his last insinuating inquiries, the silence of the staring throng, the misgivings in the many eyes that were fixed upon him, the frowning faces of the several officers near-by—these seemed to give a new significance to the scene, as Dalrymple viewed it. He glanced again at Beckwith's shoeless feet, then cried resentfully, with a look of utterly indescribable anguish:

"You don't think—— Good God!"

you don't think that I had a hand in this, do you?"

"Didn't you?" Boyd sharply demanded. "Come, come, out with the truth—didn't you? If not, why were you out here at two o'clock this morning? That's about the hour when the crime was committed. And why, of late, have you been neglecting your business, in order to watch——"

"You insolent scoundrel!"

That at which Boyd had aimed had come to pass. As if his last remark, or something it suggested, was the last straw to break the camel's back, Dalrymple sprang toward him with his clenched hand uplifted and his hueless face convulsed with frantic rage.

Boyd side-stepped like a flash, then forcibly thrust his assailant into the outstretched arms of the Central Office man. There was a brief struggle, a flash of steel in the sunlight, a metallic clicking noise on the noonday air—and Dalrymple stood in the midst of the several officers with his wrists in manacles.

"Take him away!" Boyd commanded, with terrible austerity. "Take him away at once, sergeant. Not a word from him here—not a word! We'll see what he'll have to say at the police headquarters. Away with him, sergeant, at once!"

The arrest was startling in its abruptness—but that served the purpose of Mr. Felix Boyd.

In less than a minute, Dalrymple was on his way to the city. In less than five, the body of the wounded butler was on its way to Bellevue, and the immediate scene of the crime was deserted.

Felix Boyd, having sent the Central Office man away with his prisoner, sauntered alone into the house to make an investigation. In one room only, a basement laundry, did he find anything confirming his secret suspicions. That was a damaged lock on one of the rear windows.

As he returned up-stairs and was about departing, he encountered Mrs. Dalrymple in the hall, just arrived home from his office. He saw at a glance that she had heard of her hus-

band's arrest, for she was in tears, and her face was as white as the knot of lace at her throat.

"Was it for this," she cried, a bit resentfully; "was it for this that I consented to follow your advice? Was it for this that I agreed to be silent and to——"

"Hush!" Boyd reached her with a stride and took her hand in both of his. "Don't be alarmed, Mrs. Dalrymple. The prosecution has not rested. The evidence is not all in."

She stared amazedly at him through her tears—for he was smiling.

III.

"Time enough, Jimmie, time enough. It's early yet, hardly one o'clock. Give the rascals time to reconnoiter and size up the probable chances. They'll take them, old man, I'll wager my year's income. It's a hundred-to-one-shot that they now are nosing around outside. We soon shall hear some harbinger of their coming, some indication—ah! there's the hour. Just one, Jimmie. At three we should have them in irons."

The single stroke of a tall, old clock in the gloom of the adjoining hall was mingled with the whispered words of Mr. Felix Boyd. The mellow note of the sonorous bell was echoed by others of higher pitch and more remote. One shrill "cuckoo" issued from a distant chamber. The sounds seemed to linger with prolonged, throbbing vibrations on the still air, then died away to absolute silence, as profound as the darkness shrouding nearly every nook and corner of the great, sumptuously furnished mansion.

In the library only, entering below one slightly raised curtain, the rays from a distant street-lamp relieved the gloom, indistinctly revealing the various objects in the room, the partly shelved walls, the heavy carvings adorning the black walnut woodwork, and the faces of the two men seated motionless on a couch in one corner.

In no other quarter of the house was there a ray of light. There only was the stillness broken at intervals by their

low breathing and occasional whispered words. Elsewhere there was only the stillness of a tomb.

"You're mighty confident they'll attempt the job to-night," Coleman doubtfully muttered. "I hope you're not banking too heavily on it."

"Have no fear, Jimmie," Boyd laughed softly. "Trust a crook, when he has such a job on hand, to seize what looks like a golden opportunity. I've shaped it up for them, all right. That's why I arrested Dalrymple and made sure that every evening paper should contain a story of the crime, of his silence concerning it, of the mystery as to his motive, and a statement that bail has been refused him. The death of Beckwith in Bellevue makes it all the stronger. Believing Dalrymple to be in jail, these rascals will waste no time against a chance that he may confess the whole truth and be liberated to-morrow. No, no, Jimmie, it's to-night, or never, for these chaps."

"Did Dalrymple kick hard over showing you his hand?"

"Not when he found I had him up to the ring-bolt," Boyd quietly answered. "I was wise to most of his game from the start, however, though I'm blessed if I fathomed the causes."

"What first put you wise, Felix?"

"His wife," Boyd chuckled softly in the darkness. "It's a curious fact, Jimmie, that women think with their hearts instead of their heads. A child should have seen through his conduct. Yet I admit I had a slight advantage over her in knowing that her father, poor devil, died in a South American prison just one month ago."

"What did you make of her story?" Coleman inquired curiously. "You've not yet mentioned your deductions."

"They are exceedingly simple, Jimmie," Boyd quietly explained. "She began by describing her husband's nervousness and distress over the loss of something about ten days ago. He told her it was a pocketbook, yet she repeatedly saw him search his pockets and examine the letters in them. If her discernment had been as great as her faith in him, she would promptly have rea-

soned that his loss was not what he had stated, but a letter for which he was seeking."

"That's right, too," muttered Coleman. "Actions speak louder than words."

"He was awake most of that night and the following, Jimmie, at times listening cautiously in the hall. Quite obviously, then, he had reason to fear that some person might break into the house; and as such conduct on his part was without precedent, his fear reasonably might be attributed to the loss of the letter."

"Yes, yes, surely."

"Despite her entreaties, however, he refused to confide his fears to his wife," Boyd continued. "Recalling her father's unenviable history, Jimmie, I at once inferred that the lost letter might have come from him to his son-in-law, possibly a death-bed letter, containing information relative to his past crimes, together with instructions or requests, which he had begged Dalrymple not to disclose to his wife. It further occurred to me, while Mrs. Dalrymple continued describing her husband's strange conduct, that Paul Otley Candor, the mysterious and accomplished jewel thief of six years ago, might somewhere have concealed his vast accumulation of plunder, and that the lost letter possibly referred to that."

"Yes, yes, I see," Coleman nodded.

"That being the case, Jimmie, Dalrymple's conduct plainly indicated that the plunder was in some secret hiding-place in this house, which was designed and built by Paul Candor, and occupied by him during the period of the robberies."

"Why, then, hasn't Dalrymple removed the stuff? I'm not so sure, Felix, that his statements are true."

"The same question occurred to me, Jimmie, but I soon hit upon the truth. I reasoned that he must have lost the letter very soon after receiving it, also that it contained complex directions for locating the secret concealment, and that he was unable to remember them. This was confirmed by his subsequent conduct."

"How so?"

"Because he discharged his butler and advertised for another, instead of for the letter. He reasoned, I at once inferred, that the letter would be voluntarily returned if found by any honorable person. With so much at stake, however, a crook would keep it and attempt to rob the house. Naturally, too, he would jump at any easy method of doing the job."

"So Dalrymple advertised for a butler, hoping to lure the crook into the house and catch him removing the plunder?"

"Exactly," said Boyd. "He hired the first man who applied, but discharged him the next morning, having discovered that he was not the man he wanted. Beckwith warranted immediate suspicion, however, because of the fact that he knew next to nothing of a butler's duties, and naturally would not have applied for the position unless he had some ulterior motive. It was obvious to me that Dalrymple, after watching Beckwith, felt sure that he had the letter, and was there to secure the jewels."

"Why didn't he throttle the fellow and take the letter from him?"

"That would have been a fool's move. Instead of having it with him, Beckwith might have memorized its contents, anticipating such a move."

"That's right, too. I ought to have thought of it."

"To go a step further," Boyd continued; "Dalrymple overleaped his saddle in remaining at home to constantly watch Beckwith, for the latter was crafty enough to suspect his design and defer his own. He then pretended to go to his office, returning in disguise to watch him."

"Humph! Not so bad a move, at that."

"Beckwith must have suspected the scheme, however, and decided that he could accomplish his own object only by some crafty counter-move. So he broke the lock of a basement window and asked for an evening out, intending to secretly enter the house a few hours later and quietly do the job. Dalrymple suspected his design, and laid in wait for

him, however, stealing out of doors to look for him, when he failed to appear at two o'clock."

"Yes, yes, I see," muttered Coleman. "Did you reason out all of these points before hearing Dalrymple's story?"

"Certainly, Jimmie. Later I was puzzled by the vicious assault upon Beckwith, for Dalrymple's previous conduct did not indicate that he would resort to violence. When I saw how thoroughly the body had been searched, however, and encountered a professional pick-pocket on the scene, who plainly was aiming to fix the crime upon Dalrymple, I quickly guessed the truth. Dalrymple had not lost the letter, but Moran, while engaged in his rascally vocation, had picked his pocket and incidentally secured it. He evidently had lost it after reading it, however, and could not remember the directions contained in it. But he, too, rightly reasoned that a crook, if he found it, would attempt to rob the house."

"So Beckwith, in reality, found the letter."

"I have no doubt of it, Jimmie. After seeing and hearing Moran, I soon suspected that he was the chief crook, that he had been watching the house since losing the letter, that he had caught Beckwith attempting to enter, and that he had, after knocking him out, searched him and recovered the letter. All this occurred to me when I saw that Beckwith's shoes, even, had been searched."

"But why do you feel so sure that Moran found it on him?"

"Because he remained near the house after the assault, probably designing to enter it, or he would not have seen Dalrymple outside, which naturally deterred him from further work last night."

"I see the point."

Furthermore, in order to corroborate the story by which he was aiming to fix the assault upon Dalrymple, he evidently took Fogarty into the scheme," Boyd quietly added. "To blind them to my suspicions, therefore, I arrested Dalrymple and lodged him in jail, feeling sure that the two rascals would seize

upon the opportunity afforded by his absence and attempt to complete the job this very night."

The Central Office man vented a low growl and gravely shook his head in the darkness.

"It's a curious mix-up, Felix, and you may be right," he doubtfully admitted. "Yet I'll not believe it until——"

"Hush!"

Boyd's slender right hand closed hard on the brawny wrist of his companion. Breathless, with ears strained, with his gaze searching the deeper gloom through the open door of the adjoining hall, he sat as motionless as a figure of bronze, in a vain effort to confirm with some audible token the remarkable deductions he had briefly outlined.

Presently he crept to the window and peered under the curtain. The broad avenue in the near distance, the gray driveway approaching the house, the expanse of verdant lawn, darker and indistinct under the elms and beeches—these only, silent and deserted, met his searching gaze. Yet the gleam and glitter of his frowning eyes, bright in the narrow beam of light that fell on his stern, white face, convinced his unwavering faith in his deductions and the grim resolution with which it inspired him.

"A flash in the pan, Jimmie," he whispered, rejoining his companion of this midnight vigil. "I thought I heard something."

Coleman made no reply for several moments. Then he thoughtfully remarked, as if their subdued discussion had suffered no interruption:

"I'm blessed if I see why Dalrymple refused to confide the circumstances to his wife."

Boyd leaned nearer to him, till their shoulders touched.

"I'll tell you why, Jimmie, as he told it to me this evening at the police headquarters," he said, in low, impressive whispers. "Paul Otley Candor died one month ago in a prison cell in Buenos Ayres. On his death-bed he wrote a confession to this man who, despite the father's dishonor, had married his only child. He confessed, Jimmie, the ama-

zing crimes of six years ago. He wrote that he, a man of affluence and social distinction in those days, had become a thief only because he could not help stealing, that he was the victim of a mania he could not govern. He confessed that he thrice had been arrested for stealing since his flight from New York, and that he then was dying under sentence in that South American prison."

"Good heavens!" Coleman muttered. "He was a kleptomaniac."

"Nothing else, Jimmie, as I hope the sequel may prove," Boyd earnestly continued. "For he further stated that he had not stolen for gain, that he had disposed of none of the fruits of his crimes, and that the vast accumulation of almost priceless jewels had been left in a secret concealment constructed under his directions when he built this house."

"Mebbe so, Felix; mebbe so."

Doubt died hard in the mind of the Central Office man.

"The motive of the confession was worthy of the man, as I recall him. He sent Dalrymple directions for finding the secret concealment, and implored him to remove the jewels and devise some method by which, without disclosing the true facts, he could restore them to their owners. One stipulation only he rigidly imposed—that Dalrymple should accomplish this without revealing the truth to his wife, who, Candor must have known, had cherished an erroneous yet abiding faith in her father's innocence."

"Oh, ho! Now I see why he was so close-mouthed."

"But that's all off, Jimmie, now." Boyd's subdued voice had a tinge of sadness in it. "The existing circumstances precluded longer concealment. Perhaps, too, it's better as it is. For when I told her the whole truth, which I did this evening in the presence of her too loyal husband, when I told her of her father's death, of his voluntary confession, of his wish to make reparation, of the evidence indicating his moral irresponsibility, that he undoubtedly was the victim of an acute form of klepto-

mania, and showed her in how far the restitution of the stolen property, if found, would serve to set him right in the eyes of the world—I think, Jimmie, it brought to her troubled heart the sweetest balm—— Ha! To cover, Jimmie!”

The hand on Coleman's wrist closed with a grip like that of a vise, drawing him to the floor back of the couch.

Through the gloom of the hall there had shot a single swift gleam of light. It came and went in an instant, like a lightning-flash at night, leaving the darkness more intense from the contrast.

“A flash-lamp!” whispered Coleman. “They're here, all right.”

“Yes,” Boyd murmured.

“We might hold them up when they enter.”

“No! The directions may have been committed to memory and the letter not on his person. We must be dead sure of—— No more, Jimmie! Wait!”

Again that one swift flash shot through the hall.

The two men drew back on the floor until the heavy draperies at one of the windows hid their crouching forms.

Boyd's hand stole back until it closed on the butt of his revolver.

Two minutes passed—in absolute silence and unbroken gloom.

Then a beam of light, brighter than before, lingered for a moment on the door-casing. It vanished, then came again, and then it leaped from the casing to one of the shelved walls.

“Here we have it!”

The announcement was only breathed, but a breath breaks such intense silence and reached ears so strained.

“The library?”

“Sure! Pipe the books.”

“Close the door, then—easy!”

It creaked a little on its hinges, once only, and then it was closed. The beam of light traveled over the walls, into shelves filled with numberless volumes, over the heavy carvings with which the casements were mounted, and into every nook and corner of the silent room.

Yet two figures crouched unseen under the draperies.

And two figures, grim and cautious, visionary in the faint glow, stood and peered briefly from side to side.

“Got it all in your nut, Chick?”

“You bet! But the letter's in my shoe, in case I forget, the same as that bloke had it last night. Better luck for us, Fogarty, than what I handed him.”

“Dry up and find the way. We can't nail the stuff and get out too quickly.”

“The left shelves from the door—gimme the glim on 'em!”

The light leaped to one of the side walls, to the six-foot shelving flanking it, and remained there.

Into the beam of light a face was thrust, masked to the tip of the nose, and two hands that looked strangely white in that one ray of light amid so much gloom. They moved here and there on the shelves, then over the massive carvings, first to the right, then to the left, then back over the scrolls and knobs of the dark, ornamental wood-work.

Boyd watched them from his concealment.

“Counting the knobs and scrolls in various directions—no wonder that Dalrymple couldn't remember so curious a combination.”

Presently one hand rested on the top of the carving. The other drew out a tape and measured back toward the wall. Then, while the grim figure stood on a chair in order to reach, the hand bore down obliquely and—a faint click, the snap of a hidden spring, broke the silence.

A small section of the shelves sprang out a trifle, and the man stepped down and drew it open—a narrow, cleverly constructed, and hidden door.

“Good for you, Chick! Now, get a move on!”

“Easy! Gimme time. There's a knob inside that lights the way. It's wired clean down to the hiding-place. Here 'tis.”

The bright glow of electric light illumined a narrow passage, evidently constructed between double walls of the great house. Into this, without delay, the two thieves crept and vanished.

Boyd waited a moment, then whispered softly:

"Shoes off, Jimmie! We'll follow them!"

Into the passage, barely two feet wide; down a flight of stairs with a turn near the base; with only the bare walls at either side, and a close, confined air filling the place: stealthily, noiselessly, the detectives followed the crooks until they reached the threshold of a small room, a boxlike place scarce six feet square, evidently located under one of the broad main stairways.

There, near one of the walls, was a long, narrow table covered with black velvet; and upon this ebon background, lying there in picturesque confusion, gleaming with a million scintillating rays in the glare of light above them, were the myriad of gems and jewels stolen by Paul Otley Candor six years before. In their midst was the rope of pearls removed from the neck of Lady Valerie Rutherford within an hour of his precipitous flight.

"By God, we've got 'em, Fogarty!"

"Yes, Moran, and we've got you!"

The pickpocket turned, with a yell—only to recoil from the leveled revolver of Mr. Felix Boyd.

"Yes, Jimmie, it was a good day's work, as you remarked." Felix Boyd was seated at lunch next day with the Central Office man. "There'll be many a heart made lighter and brighter by the return of cherished treasures long since given up as lost. Yet there'll be

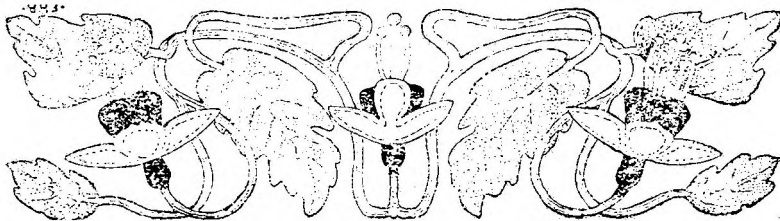
no heart relieved of a greater burden than that of the woman we have served."

"That's right, too," nodded Coleman, with an unusual glisten in his serious eyes. "Last night, when we brought her husband home to her and told her all—why, why, her face was fairly transfigured."

"So 'twas, Jimmie; so 'twas," Boyd assented. "What a sweet face, too! No wonder Dalrymple was averse to disabusing so sensitive a heart of its delusion, or that he strove so hard to follow the instructions of her unfortunate father. Try as he would, Jimmie, and he spent hours over it, he could not discover the spring that threw that secret door."

"Humph! Nor could I, Felix, after we closed it."

"It is rather curious, too, that a pickpocket should thus have figured in the recovery of property he had no hand in stealing. He now will get his, all right, along with his rascally running-mate. As for Paul Candor—but he's dead and gone. It would be hard to say in how far he was morally responsible. Kleptomania—I suppose there really is such a disorder. As I remember him, he was a strange, reserved, wonderfully magnetic chap, irresistibly attractive. Irresponsible—ah, well, be that as it may, or whatever his sins, there must have been some good part in him. So here, Jimmie"—Boyd reached for his claret—"is to the better part of Paul Otley Candor."



A Chat With You

THERE must be such a thing as thought-transference, mental telepathy, or whatever the experts in psychology choose to call it. Some months since we were looking over some of the published books of S. Carleton—"The Ribbened Way" and "The Micmac" being among them. We decided that the author of these books should belong to THE POPULAR all-star cast. The result of this decision took visible form in an arrangement for the next novel that S. Carleton should write. A day later we received a letter asking us why we didn't get S. Carleton to write something for the magazine. Next day two more to the same effect, and for the week following a regular succession of such letters. We were just a little bit ahead of our friends and readers, but we were both moving in the same direction. They knew what they wanted, but we knew it just a little earlier. The complete novel, the result of our agreement with S. Carleton, appears in the December issue of the magazine.



A BAFFLING mystery, a virile lovable hero, a girl worth knowing and fighting for, a plot that is new and fascinating in its novelty—these are some of the qualities that go to make "Lastluck Lake" a novel worthy

of its place in the best issue of THE POPULAR that we have ever published. We don't want to spoil a good story by telling you too much of it in advance. "Lastluck Lake" is in the frozen Northwest. Somewhere near its shores there is a gold-mine definitely located once, lost again and never rediscovered. The search for the mine, the struggle that followed its discovery, the sudden unfolding of plots and counterplots, all go to bring out in bold relief the characters of Sophie Ridgeway, Paul Hazard, and the unscrupulous but attractive Atherton. Then there is the mysterious "wolf-man," whose identity is not discovered until the end. Altogether we feel that it is the best novel S. Carleton has ever written.



NO doubt you have already read the first instalment of "The Hemlock Avenue Mystery," which appears in this number. We believe that it is absolutely the finest story of its kind since "The Leavenworth Case." We are sure that it will place Roman Double-day's name among the few *best* writers of this class of fiction. It will appear in three divisions. In a magazine containing 224 pages of solid type we are able to give our readers a monthly instalment about three times as long as

A CHAT WITH YOU—Continued.

the average. The best of this story is not the opening chapters. The second part of it is stronger and more interesting, and the third—but there will be time to speak of that later on.



YOU liked "The Perfume of Madness," which closes in this issue. We were sure that you would, and the letters which we received after the publication of the first half of the story showed us that we were right. To the next issue of the magazine, J. Kenilworth Egerton contributes another story about the fascinating and irresistible Tommy Williams, entitled "The Weapons of Woman." In this story Tommy meets a woman who fights him with weapons of her own, which prove to be quite as effective, by the way, as any of those in the armory of the artist-hypnotist-detective. There is only one way to beat a clever and determined woman. Tommy found out the way. You will acquire this valuable secret when you read the story.



OUR old friend Norroy will reappear next month. "The Brotherhood of Suppression" is the title of George Bronson-Howard's tale in which he tells how the diplomatic agent foiled an anarchistic plot to cause a war between Japan and the United States. If you want to read some inside history

told in the form of an unusually fascinating story, read this. George Bronson-Howard never wrote a better story.



THERE is a rattling college football story in the December number of THE POPULAR, by Harold C. Barr; a sea-story with real thrills in it by T. Jenkins Hains; a racing-story, "The Chariot Wheels of Chance," by Charles S. Pearson, and a funny story, "The Mate's Romance," by A. M. Chisholm.



WE think that the present number of THE POPULAR is the best that we have ever issued. If anything, the December number is a shade better, but we want to confess to you at this point that we are getting to the place where it is harder and harder to improve. We won't quote anything about painting the lily or gilding refined gold, but we will remind you that no one expects to build a bigger or faster ship than the *Lusitania* for some time. Whatever money can do, whatever experience, determination, hard work, and a splendid organization can accomplish, is being done for every issue of THE POPULAR. We are turning out the best fiction magazine that we can get together by using every ounce of steam pressure. If any one knows how to make a better one we would like him to tell us how. That's all.

HOW MEN MAKE BIG SALARIES.

BY VICTOR FORTUNE.

The Story of Workers Who Make Their Work Pay Big Dividends—How They Do It.

Does your work pay?

Not just day wages, but a good, round, stiff salary.

If not, why don't you make it pay?

You see men about you who earn dollars where you earn dimes, yet they work no harder than you.

Why don't you make your work count, too?

You can.

What makes the difference? Luck?

Not often. What then?

In one word—*training*.

To illustrate: A. M. Fowler, Springfield, Mo., was a journeyman pattern-maker when he faced the proposition that now confronts you.

HOW ONE MAN DID IT.

His first step was to enroll for a Mechanical Course in the International Correspondence Schools, Scranton, Pa., an institution whose sole business it is to raise the salaries of workers. Mr. Fowler is now General Manager of the Phoenix Foundry and Machine Company, Springfield, Mo., at an increase in salary of about 400 per cent.

In telling how he made *his* work count, he writes:

"I must say that I think the International Correspondence Schools the greatest boon existing for the working man. In my own experience, they have been worth to me, without any exaggeration whatever, *thousands of dollars*."

That is how one man did it. Take another case: Russel Cooper, 2340 North Penn St., Indianapolis, Ind.

Mr. Cooper was janitor of a church at the time he enrolled for the Electrical

Course of the I. C. S. Within two years he became Electrician in charge of the Main Shop of the Terminal Railroad Association of St. Louis. He is now Superintendent of the Indianapolis Light and Heat Company. He writes:

"My earnings are now over six times as much as when I enrolled, and I can see even further progress ahead."

AN INCREASE OF 1,000 PER CENT.

How G. A. Collins made *his* work pay would read like romance if it were not actual fact. Mr. Collins was a chainman with a Railroad Maintenance of Ways Department at the time of enrolling with the I. C. S. After a few months he was promoted to rodman, and then to transitman. Not being satisfied, he resigned and went into irrigation work for the government. Now he has an office of his own as Civil Engineer and, in addition, is Chief Engineer of a large coal company. He reports: "My earnings have been increased during this time nearly 1,000 per cent. I can recommend your schools to any ambitious and earnest man. The I. C. S. is certainly a wonderful institution."

1,000 per cent is a pretty fair return on the small investment required for an I. C. S. Course, isn't it?

Mr. Collins' address is 717 New York Block, Seattle, Wash.

Here is the name and address of another worker who made his work return big dividends with aid of the I. C. S., Joseph Cain, Searles, Ala.

When Mr. Cain enrolled for one of I. C. S. Mining Courses he was a Mine Foreman at \$90 per month. He now holds the position of Mine Superintendent with the Alabama

Consolidated Coal and Iron Company, at a salary of \$225 a month. Mr. Cain says:

"I know of no other method than the I. C. S. by which a man can advance so quickly and surely."

Advancement quick and sure, right where you are, is the record of I. C. S. men throughout the world. At your present work, without the loss of a minute's time or a dollar's pay, the I. C. S. takes you, trains you and shows you how to make that work pay, how to advance in it, or how to change to a more congenial occupation.

The I. C. S. can do this because it has a staff of 2700 people and an invested capital of \$6,000,000 devoted to the express purpose of training you to make your work pay.

When a man who is willing to do his part gets the I. C. S. organization behind him, don't you think it ought to help—a little?

Take, for instance, the case of a young man like Wilson P. Hunt, Moline, Ill. While still a machinist's apprentice, 20 years of age, Mr. Hunt enrolled for the Mechanical Course. On finishing the course and receiving his diploma, he became a draftsman and then a machine designer. Later he started the Moline Tool Company, Moline, Ill., becoming Secretary and Superintendent of the concern. The I. C. S. supplied just the help needed by Mr. Hunt to realize his ambition.

When Chas. E. Norberg, 1026 Albany Street, Los Angeles, Cal., got in line with the I. C. S., his income began to increase in a most surprising way.

Mr. Norberg's remuneration as carpenter

was \$3 a day when he enrolled for the Architectural Course. He tells us: "Previous to this I had only a common school education, but the instruction given was so plain, so easy to follow, and so practical that I have now become a General Contractor, and my earnings range from \$75 to \$100 a week. The I. C. S. is certainly a great blessing to the wage earner."

What Mr. Norberg says about the simplicity of his instruction is characteristic of all I. C. S. lessons and text books. They are easy to learn; easy to remember; easy to apply. Not even a common school education is required, only the ability to read and write. But one obstacle can stand in the way of the success of an I. C. S. man—his own lack of ambition.

Still another Californian who dates his rise from his enrollment with the I. C. S. is Albert K. Harford, 854 Fifty-third Street, Oakland, Cal.

At the time of enrolling Mr. Harford held the position of engine-room storekeeper at \$35 a month. Let him tell what happened in his own words:

"For those who have to work for a living, there is no better way of advancement than through the I. C. S. Their excellent instruction and help enabled me to advance from one position to another rapidly,

and I am now Superintendent of the Electrical Power Plant for the Pacific Steamship Company, at a salary of \$200 per month."

WHAT A BRICKLAYER DID.

Does training pay? Can you make it pay? Ask Daniel K. Albright, 319 McKean St., Kittanning, Pa. Mr. Albright writes:

"When working as a bricklayer at



Wilson P. Hunt



FROM APPRENTICE TO PROPRIETOR.

bricklayers' wages, I was *induced* to enroll in the I. C. S. After studying nights, through the perfect manner in which the schools carry on their instruction, I was soon able to read blueprints and was appointed foreman at an increase of wages."

Note that the I. C. S. taught him, not to work harder, but to *read blueprints*—trained him to make his work *pay*.

Was Mr. Albright satisfied with this advance? Being a true I. C. S. man—*never!* Hear the rest of his letter:

"Resigning this position (foreman). I entered the employ of the Kittanning Plate Glass Company, of which firm I am now General Superintendent, and my earnings are now nearly 600 per cent. more than when I enrolled. The I. C. S. instruction is so simple and easily understood that any man may gain unspeakable good through it."

Knowing what he does now, how much persuasion do you think would be necessary to *induce* Mr. Albright to enroll with the I. C. S., if he had it to do over again?

WHAT WOULD PERSUADE YOU?

If you were really awake to your own interests, how much persuasion do you think ought to be necessary to induce you to write and ask how the I. C. S. can help you?

But, you say, these men are exceptions. On the contrary, they are cases picked at random out of thousands of successful I. C. S. men. The I. C. S. has gone to the trouble of putting a thousand of their names and addresses with their stories in a book, which will be sent to you for the asking. The I. C. S. organization is so perfect that it reaches, instructs and trains these men in any state of the Union or in any part of the world.

Here is former street railway worker T. T. Buzzill, care of J. E. Henry & Son, Lincoln, N. H., who writes:

"I knew nothing about electricity when I took out my course in the I. C. S. I now have charge of the telephones and lights for J. E. Henry & Son, and my salary has been increased 100 per cent. *I would never have been able to get above the pit work in the power house, if it was not for the instruction received from the I. C. S.*"

Another New Englander, Harry E. Green, Waterville, Me., a former transitman, writes:

"I now have an office of my own and have increased my earnings 200 per cent.



ADMINISTRATION AND INSTRUCTION BUILDINGS—I. C. S.

THE SOLE BUSINESS OF THIS GREAT INSTITUTION IS TO RAISE SALARIES.

My course has made me more valuable to my customers, and I have been enabled to understand many things which I could not have learned otherwise. I will gladly correspond with anyone desiring to better himself by taking a Course."

Henri B. Bixler, Akron, Ohio, a former mill-hand in a screen-door factory, testifies:

"I have advanced to Superintendent of Construction of the Tri-County Telephone Company, and have increased my earnings 250 per cent. All this success I attribute to the I. C. S. I consider this method of instruction the *best plan in existence* for the young man who has his own way to make in the world."

A SURE AND QUICK WAY.

The I. C. S. gives a man who has no regular trade or profession a paying start. Before enrolling with the I. C. S., Harry M. Moxley, 1427 Williams Building, Cleveland, Ohio, was office boy, farmer boy, and painter by turns. He writes:

"After I had gone a short way in my Course, the Students' Aid Department secured for me a position with a firm in Cleveland, and from that time I have had steady advancement up to my present position as chemist with the Cleveland Steel Casting Company. During this time I increased my earnings \$80 a month. My experience with the Schools proves that the I. C. S. plan is the most *sure and quick way* for any ambitious man to gain advancement and increased earnings."

The Students' Aid Department, which helped Mr. Moxley to obtain a higher position, is organized specifically to assist all I. C. S. men in their efforts to make their work pay. Its connection with the largest employers of trained men in the country has enabled it to place thousands of men in better positions at larger salaries. During 1906, voluntary reports were received from 3376 I. C. S. men who had been advanced in salary or position—only a fraction of the thousands who were advanced and did not report. What the

I. C. S. did for them, it can and will do for you.

ARE YOU GETTING YOURS?

This is an era of unexampled wealth. These dozen men named are just a few of the thousands whom the I. C. S. has helped to place in the stream of prosperity. They are *trained* to get their share, and are getting it.

Are you getting *yours*? If not, why not? It's waiting for you!

The I. C. S. points the way, but you must take the initiative. The first step is yours. The expression of willingness must come from you. Are you willing to write to the I. C. S. and ask to be shown how to make your work pay? Or are you content to sit back with small wages and let your companions, who work no harder than you, walk off with all the rewards?

Bear in mind, no man need leave his own state, or town, or work. Right where he is, the I. C. S. is most valuable. *It goes to the man*, stands by him, works with him and for him, equipping him to secure that due share to which his energy and talents entitle him.

Why labor for little, when with training you may have much? Indicate on the following coupon the position you prefer. Cut out coupon and mail at once. Do not be a laggard in the race! *Make your work pay!*

Here is a List of Good Positions

International Correspondence Schools,
Box 855 W. SCRANTON, PA.

Please explain, without further obligation on my part how I can qualify for a larger salary in the position before which I have marked X

Book Keeper
Stenographer
Advertisement Writer
Show Card Writer
Window Trimmer
Commercial Law
Illustrator
Civil Service
Chemist
Textile Mill Supt.
Electrician
Elec. Engineer

Mechanical Draftsman
Telephone Engineer
Elec. Lighting Supt.
Meehan. Engineer
Surveyor
Stationary Engineer
Civil Engineer
Building Contractor
Architect's Draftsman
Architect
Structural Engineer
Bridge Engineer
Mining Engineer

Name _____
Street and No. _____
City _____ State _____

A BLANK COUPON FOR YOU.

My razor is the only new idea in razors for over 400 years. It is absolutely safe in its work—uses a thin wafer blade with double edges, which, by a turn of the handle, is adjusted for either a light or close shave.

The "GILLETTE" is always ready—**no honing, no stropping,** and with proper lathering you can shave yourself in three to five minutes any and every morning in the year at a cost of a fraction of a cent per day.

Just try it yourself and you will find you would not part with it for many times its cost. The double-edged, flexible blades are so inexpensive that when they become dull you throw them away as you would an old pen.

The Gillette Safety Razor consists of a triple silver plated holder, 12 double-edged blades—24 keen edges, packed in a velvet lined leather case and the price is \$5.00 at all the leading Jewelry, Drug, Cutlery, Hardware and Sporting Goods dealers. Combination Sets from \$6.50 to \$50.00.

If substitutes are offered refuse them and write us at once for our booklet and free trial offer.

GILLETTE SALES COMPANY
288 Times Building, NEW YORK CITY

Ask your dealer for the "Gillette" today and shave yourself with ease, comfort and economy for the rest of your life.



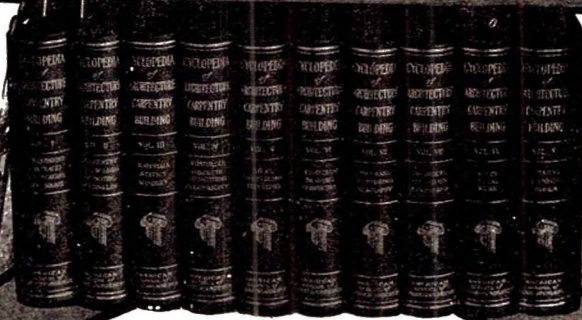
Gillette Safety
NO STROPPING NO HONING
Razor



Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."



Climb to your level



It's ambition that distinguishes MAN from the lower animal. MAN'S natural tendency is to *climb* to seek *higher levels*. If you are not advancing it is your own fault. Here is an opportunity for YOU NOW.

CYCLOPEDIA of ARCHITECTURE, CARPENTRY and BUILDING

Ten Massive Volumes each nearly one foot high, handsomely bound in red half morocco. Over 4,000 pages; 3,000 illustrations, full page plates, plans, sections, etc. Printed on highest grade paper; entirely new type—DE LUXE books in every particular.

In order to advertise the *superior methods of instruction* of the American School of Correspondence, Chicago, a limited number of sets of this great cyclopedia will be sold at *one-third regular price*. It is compiled from representative instruction papers of the School. *We employ no agents*, believing our books offer the best method of acquainting the public with the superiority of our *regular* courses of instruction. The work *itself* is a masterpiece of complete, concise, practical, "ready-to-use" information. There is not one iota of theory in its 4,000 pages. Every demonstration is derived from the *practical* experience of the greatest experts in the building industries of the world.

Less than 1/3 Regular Price

Free for Examination \$19.80 Instead of \$60.00 No Advance Payment

Only a few sets remain to be sold at this price Orders will be filled in order received. Sent prepaid by express. Pay \$2.00 within one week and \$2.00 a month if satisfactory; otherwise notify us to send for them. *In any case you lose nothing.*

There are over 200 complete plans of artistic moderate priced houses, chosen by a staff of architects as typical of the best work of the best architects of the entire country—invaluable to anyone contemplating building. Also over 40 practical problems in construction based on the Rotch Scholarship Examinations of Boston, compiled and solved by S. T. Strickland, Ecole des Beaux Arts, Paris, with Charles H. Rutan, of Shepley, Rutan & Coolidge, the well known firm of architects, as collaborator.

The chapters on Reinforced Concrete—Steel Construction—Superintendency—Carpentry—Masonry—Contracts and Specifications—Estimating—The Law of Building Contracts—Plumbing—Heating—Ventilating—are very complete, thoroughly practical, and illustrate the most modern and up-to-date ideas of the building industry. There are chapters on Architectural Drawing—Perspective Drawing—the study of the Orders—Rendering in Pen and Ink and Wash as well as on hundreds of other vitally important subjects, and each topic is handled carefully and exhaustively by the best known practical authorities in this line of work.

AMERICAN SCHOOL OF CORRESPONDENCE CHICAGO

Popular 11-07

Handbook describing over 60 of our regular Engineering Courses FREE on request.

Please send set Cyclopedia Architecture, Carpentry and Building for week's free examination. I will send \$2 within a week and \$2 a month until \$19.80 is paid; otherwise I will notify you to send for the books.

Name.....

Address.....

CUT THIS COUPON AND SAVE \$40.20

Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."

POMPEIAN

Massage

Cream

The Pompeian Massage movement illustrated here makes the cheeks plump, round and rosy. A few minutes each day suffices. The results are sure and lasting.

The Pompeian Book which we send free with sample, and which accompanies every jar of Pompeian Massage Cream, describes and illustrates all facial massage movements.



Pompeian Massage Cream is a preparation that occupies a logical place on the toilet table. It is not a make-up or cosmetic, but a natural cleanser and beautifier. Pompeian Massage Cream restores and maintains natural conditions in a natural way. It clears the pores, revives the blood circulation, softens the skin and muscles, and makes the flesh firm and full. No imitation has the properties of the genuine, and many of the imitations are actually harmful. Remember the exact name.

Test it With Sample and Booklet—Sent Free



Simply send us your name on a postal and we will send you a liberal sample, together with our illustrated book on Facial Massage, an invaluable guide for proper care of the skin. We prefer you to buy of your dealer whenever possible, but do not accept a substitute for Pompeian under any circumstances. If your dealer does not keep it, we will send a 50c. or \$1.00 jar of the cream postpaid to any part of the world on receipt of price.

POMPEIAN MFG. CO., 12 Prospect Street, Cleveland, Ohio

Pompeian Massage Soap is a fine toilet soap with the same medicinal properties as Pompeian Massage Cream. Sold wherever the cream is sold. 25c. a cake; 60c. a box of 3 cakes

CUT OUT THIS COUPON AND SEND IT TO US
Pompeian Mfg. Co.,
12 Prospect St.,
Cleveland, Ohio
Gentlemen—
Please send, without cost to me, one copy of your book on facial massage and a liberal sample of Pompeian Massage Cream.
Name.....
Address.....
.....

And the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."

for CHRISTMAS GIVE President Suspenders

President Suspender Christmas boxes



When you decide to make presents of suspenders for Christmas you naturally think of President Suspenders, because most men wear Presidents. When you buy President Suspenders you are sure of giving the easiest, most comfortable and most durable suspenders.

50c.
A PAIR
Including
a
Christmas
box



So many stores sell President Suspenders because so many men refuse to take other kinds.

President Suspenders in handsome Christmas boxes, decorated with splendidly colored reproductions of Boileau paintings, make excellent presents for Father, Husband, Brothers, Brothers-in-law, Cousins, Nephews, and Friends. Give each a Christmas Box of Presidents.

If your home stores have no President Suspenders in Christmas boxes, buy of us by mail. 50 cents, postpaid.

THE C. A. EDGARTON MFG. CO., 617 Main Street, Shirley, Mass.

1908 Calendar and three PHILIP BOILEAU Panel Pictures for 25 cents

The President Calendar for 1908 marks our best—its distinguishing feature being three delightfully modish American women—painted by Philip Boileau.

Each of the three subjects is in the most fetching style of that most charming of artists, illustrative of American femininity, in its most attractive form.

The natural floral decoration on each is the queen Rose, so unalterably associated with affection—one with the rich, red American Beauty, another the pink, delicate Bridesmaid, and the third the glorious yellow de Dijon. The whole Calendar is a work of art, fragrant with suggestion, yet marking the lapse of Time.

There are four parts. No printing on the pictures. The 1908 Calendar in full is on a separate sheet. All four, the three pictures and the Calendar, are done in twelve colors on heavy, highly finished plate card, 6 1/2 x 15 inches, making very attractive panels for framing, or they may be grouped and arranged artistically without frames. To be sure of a President Calendar, order early. The entire set—4 parts mailed postpaid for 25c. **Now Ready.**

THE C. A. EDGARTON MFG. CO.
617 Main St., Shirley, Mass.

CARUSO

The greatest tenor of modern times sings only for the

VICTOR

\$1.00 to \$10.00. At all leading music houses and talking-machine dealers.

Write for complete catalogues of Victors and Victor Records.

Victor Talking Machine Co.
Camden N. J., U. S. A.

See other Victor advertisements on other pages.

COLONIAL MADE-TO-MEASURE UNDERWEAR FOR MEN AND WOMEN

Free Offer

of two pairs of hosiery to introduce this famous made-to-measure underwear to those who have not worn it, we will send with first order of two suits or more two pairs of Ladies' or Gentlemen's first quality hose.

Colonial Underwear is **made-to-order for you**, reinforced where the wear comes, not only fits you right but wears longer, is made of better, newer materials and **costs no more** than the ready made article, that is not made to fit you.

Take advantage of this opportunity to get two pairs of highest grade hose **free** with your first order for the **best fitting, longest wearing underwear you have ever worn.**

We make two-piece garments or Union Suits (\$2.50 a suit and up) for men and women.

Satisfaction guaranteed or money refunded.

Send for our catalog **now its free.** You can take your own measurements. **This offer is limited.**

COLONIAL KNITTING MILLS

Wabash and Adams, Chicago

Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."

"DIRECT FROM WORKSHOP"



Baird-North Co.

PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND.

Any Article will be sent Post Paid upon receipt of the List Price.

Solid Gold		Gold Plate		Sterling Silver	
A13 Brooch, baroque pearls \$8.50	A17 Stock pin, plain .75	A18 Odd Fellow's pin .50	A19 Brooch, crescent 1.00	A20 Brooch, pearls, 14k 6.00	A22 Stock pin, plain .50
A24 Stock pin, bead edge .50	A29 Brooch, pearls and baroque 2.75	A32 Brooch, pearls 2.00	A33 Scarf pin, wishbone .80	A39 Brooch, pearl sunburst 6.50	A40 Locket, 2 pictures, Monogram .50 extra 7.00
A42 Neck chain, 18 in. 8.75	A48 14k Bead necklace 14 inches long, 9.00	A28 Brooch, pearl .35	A30 Waist pin, one initial free .35	A31 Monogram 25 extra. Dress pin, pearls .50	A34 Barrette, bead edge .50
A36 Brooch, pearl .35	A37 Dress pin, plain .25	A38 Locket, 2 pictures 1.50	A41 Neck chain, 16 in. .75	A12 Brooch, maple leaf .25	A14 Brooch, hearts .25
A15 Thimble, lily of the valley .50	A16 Rose coffee spoon ea. 50c. doz. 5.00	A21 Brooch, Dutch girl .30	A23 Violet coffee spoon ea. 50c. doz. 5.00	A35 Scarf pin, wishbone .30	

You should have a copy of our beautiful new Catalog. It will be ready for mailing November first. The book contains 160 pages, illustrating Diamonds, Fine Gold and Silver Jewelry, Rings, Watches, Toilet and Leather Goods, Table Ware, etc.

You will find our Catalog interesting; you will find our prices low, and the quality is fully guaranteed. Our "Direct from Workshop" plan will save you money—it will enable you to buy more and better holiday gifts.

We guarantee safe delivery and we guarantee to please you or to return your money. We have done this for eleven years from our former location, Salem, Mass. We have thousands of satisfied customers in every state and territory.

Send for the catalog. It tells all about our goods and our way of doing business. Write the note or post card NOW, while you have it in mind. Write it before you turn another page of this magazine and be sure of receiving the book.

Address, Baird-North Co., 889 Broad St., Providence, R. I.

Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."



Pabst Extract

The "Best" Tonic

For Old Age

In the evening of life, when age is full of beauty, precaution should be taken to keep the forces of life at their best. Without the vigor and active recuperative powers of youth, we must ward off those little ailments that with impaired age are often forerunners of serious sickness. Nature to an extent should be aided and the system fortified by a nourishment that will enrich the blood, strengthen the nerves and revitalize the entire body. These properties are all found in

Pabst Extract

The "Best" Tonic

Glowing and sparkling with vitality, it is the staunch vigor of barley malt and hops, rich in the tissue building qualities of the former and the splendid tonic properties of the latter. This highly nutritious liquid food, in its palatable and predigested form, is welcomed and retained by the weakest stomach, being easily assimilated by the blood, and carries in it those properties that revitalize and rebuild the muscles and nerve tissues.

Pabst Extract

The "Best" Tonic

strengthens the weak, builds up the run down, cheers the depressed. It will nourish your nerves, enrich your blood and invigorate your muscles. It gives sleep to the sleepless, relieves the dyspeptic and is a boon to nursing mothers.

*For sale at all Leading Druggists
Insist upon the Original*

Guaranteed under the National Pure Food Law
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Free Picture and Book

Send us your name on a postal for our interesting booklet and "Baby's First Adventure," a beautiful picture of baby life. Both FREE. Address

Pabst Extract Dept. "43" Milwaukee, Wis.



SOUSA

The celebrated "March King" with his band—the finest concert band in the world—makes records only for the

VICTOR

\$10 to \$100. At all leading music houses and talking-machine dealers.

Write for complete catalogues of Victors and Victor Records.

Victor Talking Machine Co.
Camden N. J., U. S. A.

See other Victor advertisements on other pages.

RHEUMATISM

Let Us Send You a Dollar Pair of Drafts Free to Try. They Are Curing Thousands in Every Stage of This Cruel Disease.

Send Us Your Name Today

Don't take medicine for Rheumatism, but send your address to the makers of Magic Foot Drafts—the great Michigan External Cure. Return mail will bring you, prepaid, a regular dollar pair of Foot Drafts to try free. If you are satisfied with the benefit received from them, you can send us One Dollar. If not, we take your



word and the Drafts cost you nothing. You can see that we couldn't afford to make such an offer if the Drafts didn't cure. Our Free Book explains how the Drafts cure and contains many grateful letters about the wonderful cures they have accomplished. Don't put it off, but write today to Magic Foot Draft Co., 1136 E Oliver Bldg., Jackson, Mich. Write now.

Tell the substitutor: "No. thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."

IVER JOHNSON SAFETY AUTOMATIC REVOLVER

The ONLY revolver you can buy at any price, that simply CAN'T be fired until you pull the trigger, is the

IVER JOHNSON SAFETY AUTOMATIC REVOLVER

No button to press, no lever to set before you can shoot. The safety feature IS the mechanism itself. When you pull the trigger, the rest follows—swift, hard and SURE. Our FREE Booklet "SHOTS" tells all about it and will convince you.

IVER JOHNSON SAFETY HAMMER REVOLVER

3-in. barrel, nickel-plated finish, 22 rim-fire cartridge, 32 or 38 center-fire cartridge, **\$6.00**

IVER JOHNSON SAFETY HAMMERLESS REVOLVER

3-inch barrel, nickel-plated finish, 32 or 38 center-fire cartridge, **\$7.00**

Sold by Hardware and Sporting Goods dealers everywhere, or sent postpaid on receipt of price if dealer will not supply. Look for the owl's head on grip and our name on barrel.

IVER JOHNSON'S ARMS & CYCLE WORKS, 165 River St., Fitchburg, Mass.

New York: 99 Chambers St.
Pacific Coast: Alameda, Cal.

Hamburg, Germany, Pickhuben 4
London, Eng.: 17 Mincing Lane, E. O.

Makers of Iver Johnson Single Barrel Shotguns and Iver Johnson Truss Bridge Bicycles.



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or present one as a gift to some loved one. If considering a diamond, watch, or other article of jewelry as a gift on anniversaries, birthdays, weddings or holidays, you will find the Loftis Credit System a great and timely convenience. You do not need much ready cash when you make a purchase from us. We make \$5 or \$10 do the work that \$50 does in a cash store. A small payment entitles you to the goods; the balance you pay in eight equal monthly payments. DO YOUR CHRISTMAS SHOPPING NOW, conveniently and leisurely in the privacy of your own home. Don't wait until the Christmas rush is on. Now is the time to make first and choice selections. Select what you desire from our catalog and we will cheerfully send it to you on approval. Catalog free, write today

LOFTIS THE OLD RELIABLE ORIGINAL DIAMOND AND WATCH CREDIT HOUSE
BROS. & CO. DEPT. M 256 92 STATE ST., CHICAGO, ILL.



DON'T PAY TWO PRICES FOR STOVES & RANGES

Order direct from our Stove Factory and save for yourself all Jobbers' and Dealers' big profits.

HOOSIER STOVES AND RANGES

"The best in the world." Are sold on 30 days' free trial. We pay the freight. Guaranteed for years. "backed by a million dollars." Hoosiers are "fuel savers and easy bakers." Very heavily made of highest grade selected material, beautifully finished, with many new improvements and features. Our large Stove and Range Catalog shows the greatest bargains ever offered.

Write for Catalog and Special Free Trial Offer.

Hoosier Stove Co., 254 State Street, Marion, Ind.

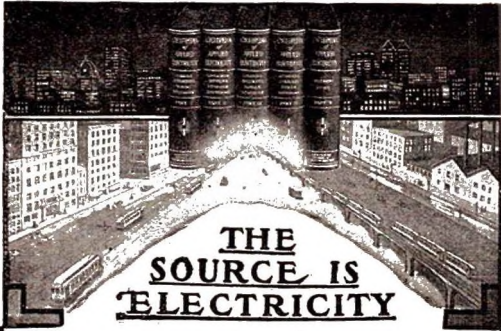


HOOSIER STEEL



HOOSIER OAK

Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."



THE SOURCE IS ELECTRICITY

Almost every comfort, convenience and luxury of modern life is dependent on it

¶ If you are a young man without a profession or trade the study of electricity offers you endless opportunity for a successful career.

¶ Under these circumstances with such opportunities open before you, do you think you can make any mistake by devoting a few hours a day to the study of electricity?

**— CYCLOPEDIA OF —
Applied Electricity**

¶ Five handsome volumes, compiled from the most valuable instruction papers of the American School of Correspondence. The success which the School has had in teaching thousands of electricians is in itself the best possible guarantee for the work.

¶ Five handsome volumes, containing the essence of the most successful methods yet devised of getting a practical knowledge of Electricity at home. Storage batteries.—The Telephone—Telegraphy—Trolley Car—Electric Light—Wiring for Light and Power—Burglar Alarms—Door Bells—and hundreds of other daily uses of electricity are explained in a simple manner within the understanding of any intelligent man. All rules and formula are stated simply and illustrated with diagrams and practical examples.

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Special Price \$19.80, Regular Price \$30.00

¶ Sent express prepaid if you mention Popular Magazine, Nov., '07. These books are compiled from the best instruction papers in our Electrical Engineering course, and to bring our home study course widely before people interested in electricity, we have made this great offer. Pay \$2.00 within one week and \$2.00 a month until the Special \$19.80 Price is paid. If not adapted to your needs we will send for the books at our expense upon notification. Order before the advance.

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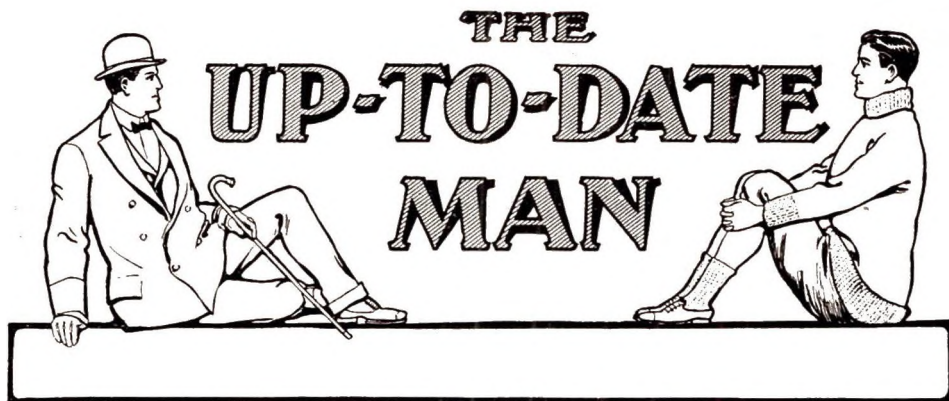
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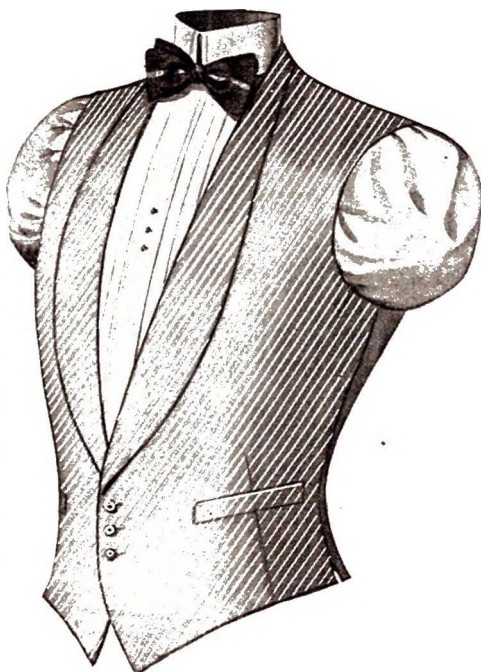
WELL-dressed men may be divided or, rather, divide themselves into two groups. Those who follow every whim and winding of the mode and want to be the first to do it, and those who are concerned only to dress tastefully and becomingly in a broad sense. The first class is as keen for fads as a hungry fish that darts after a crumb; and the more daring an innovation be, the more acceptable it is. Few of us have either the leisure or the leaning to be "leaders of fashion." The touch-and-go of modern life and the crowding of duties upon the individual make dress, if not a minor, at least a secondary consideration. In Europe the elegant idler flourishes as a distinct type. He does nothing and does it well. Most Americans, however, at least make a pretense of being engaged in some occupation and, therefore, cannot undertake to follow the fashions, save in a general way.

Such colors as brown, green, slate, olive, drab, and wood are "smart" for autumn and winter. Rough-finished cloths rather than smooth, are most approved, because they "drape"

better and adjust themselves more readily to the curves of the figure. The best tailors long ago discarded the very long sack coat with creased side seams. The correct autumn jacket has higher and blunter lapels, which are left soft and rolling; narrow turn-back cuffs and a small center vent in the back, without any trace of outlining the figure.

Tuxedo dress naturally allows greater freedom in its details than ceremonious dress. Being in effect merely a "polite lounge suit," the tuxedo is only suited to occasions when women are absent or when the spirit prevailing is one of marked informality. Thus, a

family dinner or a gathering of relatives or very intimate friends does not require the swallowtail because, by either spoken or silent agreement, the women of the party waive their undisputed and traditional right to formal dress. Again, open-air dining, an evening at the theater so much in favor among the town-bound, and smaller gatherings where everybody knows his neighbor very well, permit the substitution of the tuxedo for the swallowtail. It is



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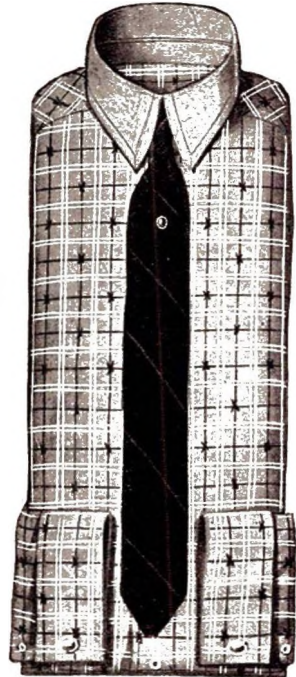
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well to remember, however, that the swallowtail is always correct where the tuxedo is, whilst the uses of the tuxedo are sharply limited. All this is not new, but now that the winter season is a-swing, a summary of the accepted rules governing the wearing of formal and informal evening dress is not amiss. Men who aim to dress with punctilious care deprecate the indiscriminate wearing of the tuxedo at times and



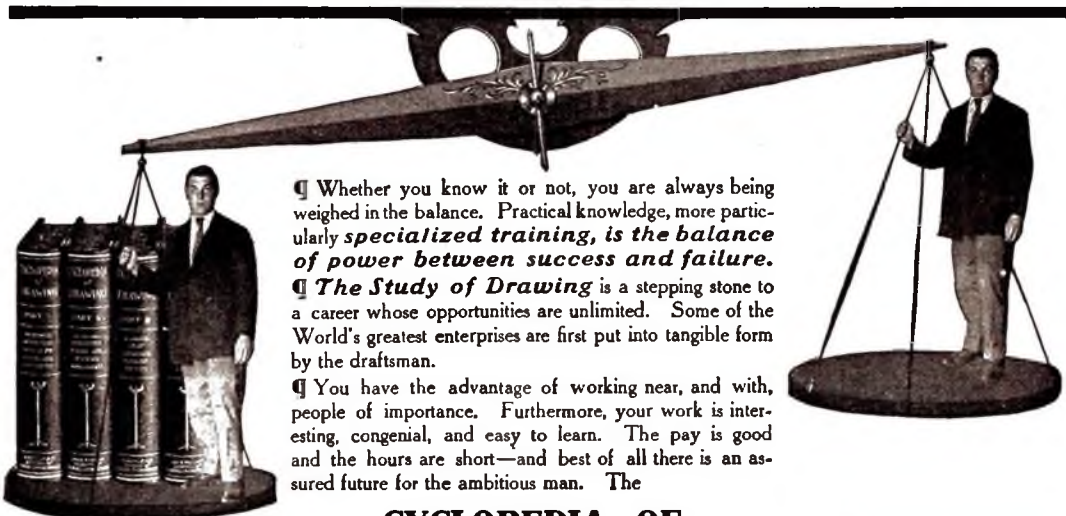
Fashionable Shirt and Collar.

places to which neither good form nor good taste entitles it. Indeed, because of this the tuxedo has lost caste within recent years and unjustly so, for within its legitimate province it is both convenient and correct.

The jacket is of good length and the lapels are very long, peaked and ironed with a soft roll, not pressed flat. The cuffs are folded back and curve at the edge as they near the button on the side. The trousers are cut much roomier and the jacket is ventless and just perceptibly shaped to the back, no more. Light fabrics, rather than the heavy, should be used for the summer tuxedo, as they drape better and adjust themselves more readily to the figure. Moreover, they soon shake themselves free from creases and wrinkles.

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The tuxedo waistcoat is usually of gray silk or linen, plain or ribbed, with a lapel-opening cut V-shaped or midway between V and U, a sort of oval. The old U shape has been discarded and so, too, has the double-breasted cut. It is quite the vogue to have one's waistcoat-buttons, shirt-studs, and cuff-links match, and pearls, moonstones, jades, carbuncles, cat's-eyes, and amethysts are variously used by the young dandy of the day. The waistcoat-buttons are, of course, detached. Among the newest tuxedo ties is a butterfly with a narrow pinched-in knot and very broad flaring ends. This is intended to accompany the fold collar. Therefore, silk ties have been used nearly altogether, but silk-and-satin stripes, some with fringed ends, make up more richly.

A novel idea in evening pumps is one which, instead of having the plain, flat silk bow over the instep, has a bow with a narrow center and wide ends. Little can be said for this, save that it is an innovation. Pumps of soft black calfskin are worn with tuxedo dress, while patent leather pumps accompany the swallowtail. The correct pump is pointed, but not exaggeratedly.

Dress ties are yet cut broad, so as to form a full, round knot. Besides the usual plain weaves in linens and cottons, there are corded and figured fabrics a-plenty, including some silks. In tuxedo ties grays are more prominent than ever, notably in dark oxford shades.

Ascots and once-overs are now reserved wholly for afternoon wear. Except the canary-colored silks to match chamois gloves, one sees nothing that is worthy of special note. There seems to be a tendency to depart from the flat ascot with ends evenly crossed and again take up the full, protruding knot. In ascot silks, a new color has appeared—snuff-brown. It is intended to be worn with the gray morning coat and a white waistcoat.

Knitted scarfs in weightier silks are worn for early autumn. The sales of cheap goods have dwindled of late, and it seems certain that if the knitted scarf is destined to endure in favor it will be altogether a high-class article. The low-cost scarf ravel, crinkles and loses its luster after a week's wear, and it is impossible to give it the appearance of the better product. **BEAUNASH.**

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CONTAINS NO COCAINE

Morphine or Other Injurious Drugs—Most Other Remedies Do

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It has the scent of fresh-cut Parma Violets



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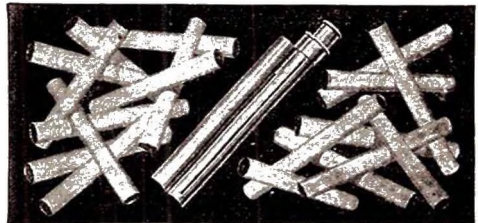
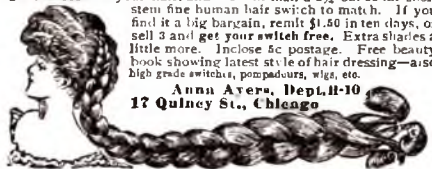
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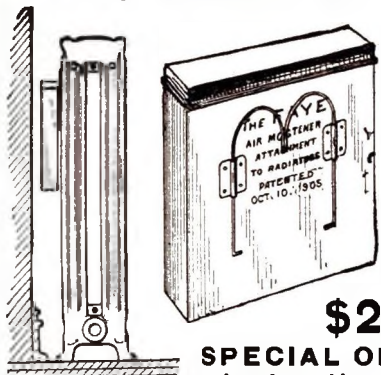
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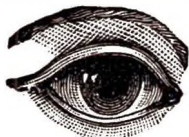
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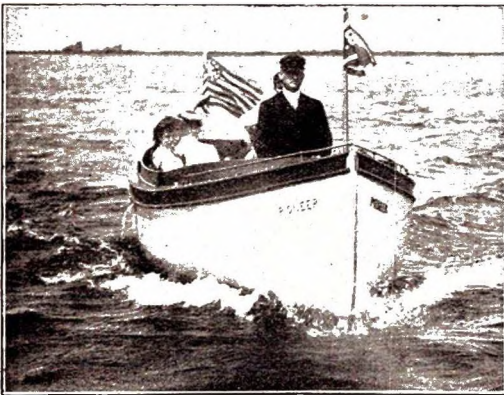
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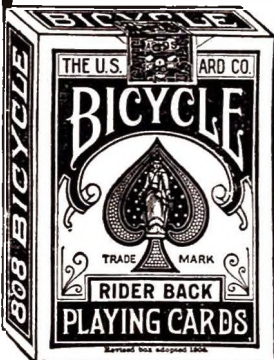
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Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."

Looking for Work



WHAT a world of meaning is contained in that one little phrase! If you ever have been thrown absolutely on your own resources, with no prospect of immediate employment, nothing will stir you so deeply as the above photograph. If you have ever known what it means to haunt the offices of the big daily papers, awaiting the extra editions containing the daily "help wanted ads" in order that *you* might be the *first applicant* for a position, you can readily understand the hope and discouragement, that animates the individuals in this picture. This is a scene that is enacted daily in front of the Chicago Daily News offices. From 200 to 500 men, women and children assemble there every day waiting for the papers to appear with their long columns of "help wanted ads."

¶ How easily any one in this crowd could put himself forever above such a quest for insignificant poorly paid positions. The only reason that it is necessary to race with hundreds of others to apply for such a position is that almost any one is qualified to fill it and the first applicant will doubtless secure it. *It is only positions that require special training, special skill, special knowledge that must and do seek the man.* Hundreds of such positions are advertised day after day and still cannot be satisfactorily filled. Why not put yourself above the *mediocre* and qualify yourself for a position of responsibility and trust where your earnings are gauged *by what you know and not by the time you spend at your daily task.*

¶ The American School of Correspondence is constantly fitting thousands of young men to start life in positions where there is an assured future for a man of ambition and brains. It is taking older men from poorly paid uncongenial work and placing them where they can secure better pay, better future, better hours and better work for the rest of their working days.

¶ *We employ no agents* to annoy you with repeated calls at your home or place of business. We talk to you only by mail. The money you pay us is not used to maintain an expensive organization of high priced agents, but is used to give you better instruction at a lower cost.

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